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# The State of Research on Internal Displacement in Asia

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### Abstract

This paper reviews the research landscape on internal displacement in Asia by looking at the growing trends therein in order to assess the state of current scholarship. It begins by mapping trends in conflict-induced, disaster-induced and urban internal displacement and highlighting the importance and absence of reliable numerical data. Then it elaborates on the research concerning (i) the legal and policy framework relating internally displaced persons (IDPs) in this region; (ii) issues in the wider social sciences and humanities and (iii) in the area of health and medicine. While a policy vacuum and geographical diversity heighten the absence of legal accountability, the enquiry into the causes and outcomes of internal displacement in research in the social sciences and humanities highlights the need to focus on the participatory role and agency of the IDPs themselves. The gender dimension and the differentiated impact of internal displacement on women is accentuated and spotlight is also thrown at literature addressing the intersectionality of health and gender when research on the physical and mental health conditions of the IDPs is explored. This paper points towards areas of future research and the countries it broadly covers are India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Myanmar, Nepal, Japan and Indonesia.

### Keywords

Internal Displacement, IDPs, Conflict, Disasters, Asia

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## 1. Introduction

Concern for the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) became increasingly prominent in international humanitarian and human rights discourse in the 1990s. Asia found its place into this discourse as, at that time, some of the world's largest IDP populations were emerging from Myanmar, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Conflict-induced displacement and development-induced displacement were thus recognised to be of critical concern in Asia as long as two decades ago.<sup>1</sup>

The challenge of addressing these growing trends of internal human displacement in Asia were succinctly noted by Roberta Cohen in 2006: "In Asia, of course, there are widely divergent political, economic and social systems as well as ideological differences, making it difficult for governments in the region to come to an agreement on measures to take with regard to internal displacement"<sup>2</sup> Since then, while substantial efforts were made at the global level to create an international system to respond to the needs of IDPs, there is undeniably still a long way to go in this particular region in resolving issues of sovereignty, legal frameworks, institutional arrangements and strategies to protect people being displaced within the borders of their own countries.

In this paper the attempt is to provide an overview on the status of research on internal displacement in Asia by looking at the trends therein through the perspective of numbers, causes, law and policy and issues in social sciences and humanities like health and gender and assess current scholarship in all these areas. The countries covered in this research review are India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Myanmar, Nepal, Japan and Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Report on the Regional Conference on Internal Displacement* (Bangkok, Thailand, 22-24 February 2000) accessed at [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/20000222\\_AsiaReport.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/20000222_AsiaReport.pdf) on 26 May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen has rightly noted then that "within Asia, forced displacement is a serious issue. With regard to displacement caused by conflict and human rights violations, the cases of Afghanistan, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Tajikistan, and the Philippines feature significantly. Development-induced displacement would add many more to the total, not only from the countries listed above but from China, Malaysia, Nepal and Thailand. Moreover, displacement caused by natural disasters affects many countries, and may be compounded by human rights violations, such as is the case in North Korea. The return and reintegration of the displaced in particular affect Cambodia, East Timor, Laos and the Philippines." See [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/regional\\_orgs\\_asia.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/regional_orgs_asia.pdf) accessed on 26 May 2020.

## 2. Trends in internal displacement in Asia

Conflict and disasters triggered 33.4 million new internal displacements across 145 countries and territories in 2019 (IDMC, 2020). The fact that 24.9 million new disaster-related displacements erupted across 140 countries and territories in 2019 due to nearly 1,900 disasters is the highest figure recorded since 2012 and three times the number of displacements caused by conflict and violence (ibid). In Asia it was increasingly visible in the form of large-scale displacement of peoples brought about by severe weather and other types of natural disasters bringing the spotlight on the plight of so-called 'environmental' or 'climate' refugees in the region.<sup>3</sup> The Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 and Cyclone Nargis in 2008 are examples that illustrate this. In 2019, an overall total of 9.9 million new displacements were recorded in East Asia and the Pacific, and 10 million in South Asia (IDMC, 2020). In East Asia and the Pacific region more than others, storms, particularly tropical cyclones, and monsoon rains forced more people from their homes than anywhere else. In fact, during 2019, the Philippines and China recorded 8.1 million new disaster-related displacements between them, mostly pre-emptive evacuations as typhoons approached (ibid.).

In Indonesia, geophysical events such as earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions accounted for most of the new displacement, whereas in Myanmar monsoon rains and flooding displaced hundreds of thousands more. Along with small island states in the Pacific who were affected by geophysical activity and floods, Japan was also struck by an unusually high number of disasters from storms to landslides. Besides, conflict and other forms of violence triggered new displacement in the Philippine region of Mindanao and Myanmar's Kachin and northern Shan states, though this was on a smaller scale in comparison.

In South Asia, the monsoon season took a heavy toll and resulted in 5 million new displacements in India alone, among the highest figures in the world. In the south-western state of Kerala in India, monsoon floods and cyclones were responsible for much of the displacement. Conflict and communal violence also triggered new displacements. Along with India, Bangladesh also suffered the onslaught of the monsoon season which brought significant flooding. On the other side of the spectrum of natural disasters is drought, which triggered 371,000 new displacements in 2018 in Afghanistan, a similar number to those associated with the country's ongoing conflict. Pakistan has to face the brunt of inter-communal violence and localised floods, as both triggered a similar number of new displacements. The trends of research on internal displacement by climate change attempt to fathom the slow onset of events that trigger such displacement, to understand the potential scale of the displacement and analyse displacement risks and policy responses (IDMC, 2019 and 2018).

Amongst the 33.4 million new internal displacements in the world in 2019, 8.5 million were conflict-induced. In East Asia and the Pacific, 9.6 million were disaster-induced and 288,000 were conflict-induced. Meanwhile, in South Asia, 9.5 million were disaster-induced and 498,000 conflict-induced (IDMC, 2019). These increasing numbers point out that mere humanitarian response will not reduce the risk of displacement and that national responsibility and leadership has to be tied to local action. Displacement might then be regarded as a transformation—a process—rather than a fixed (and temporary) reality in people's lives.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the work has focussed largely on how to make structures more enabling to empower the agency of the IDPs and what challenges they face in that process, and how to treat them as not passive spectators but as active participants in the process of rebuilding their lives post displacement. The State is also called to look at better ethnic management instruments.<sup>5</sup>

A trend that has been visible in Asia is that of internal displacement as an increasingly urban phenomenon. On the one hand, people are driven from rural to urban areas due to reasons like conflict, climate shocks and large-scale development projects. In Bangladesh, many IDPs flee climate change impacts in coastal regions to the capital city of Dhaka. On the other, in the city of Marawi in the Philippines intense urban warfare waged by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) affiliates resulted in urban-urban displacement in 2017 and despite the start of reconstruction a year later, around 65,000 people remained displaced as of

<sup>3</sup> Lavell and Ginetti (2014), viewing disasters as primarily social, rather than natural, phenomena had facilitated their reconceptualisation which signified a shift from a retrospective, post-disaster approach to an anticipatory way of thinking about and confronting disasters.

<sup>4</sup> According to Malhotra (2007, 2008) all writings on the conditions of the Kashmiri IDPs in India appeal to this broader perspective of empowering the agency of the displaced Kashmiris who still are Indian citizens.

<sup>5</sup> Goswami (2007) in her work on Northeast India cautions that an apathetic attitude on the part of the government towards IDPs may breed further insurgent activities

the end of 2018. In tandem, rapid urbanisation in cities has also increased displacement risk as many cities in East Asia and the Pacific Rim are expanding into areas highly exposed to hazards, such as the tropical cyclone belt and the Pacific Ring of Fire. Many times, urbanisation in South Asia may be equated with development gains, but it also exposes already vulnerable people to the risk of secondary displacement in the form of evictions (IDMC, 2019).

Any accurate assessment of the true global scale of internal displacement will be incomplete if valid data on numbers is not available. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2019) rightly claims that many IDPs remain unaccounted for as the biggest challenge is getting reliable data on their numbers. In South Asia, Myanmar and Pakistan, are two countries where available figures are usually underestimates and gender-disaggregated data even more lacking. In India, it is noted that there is a challenge in identifying the total number of IDPs due to armed conflict or ethnic and communal violence as there is no central government agency to monitor the number of people displaced every year.<sup>6</sup> Besides, in India political sensitivities at state levels often prevent the release of data on the precise extent and nature of displacement.<sup>7</sup> In Pakistan, reports have shown that more than 5 million people had registered with the government and/or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as an IDP at some point since 2008 due to violent clashes in the country's northwest region made up of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province.<sup>8</sup> In Myanmar, the biggest dilemma has been access, or as South says, 'the amount and quality of political and humanitarian 'space' available', which has curtailed the ability of local and international agencies to collect data or address the protracted and interrelated internal displacement crises in large parts of that country.<sup>9</sup> The dilemma of absence of reliable numerical data on the IDPs thus only compounds their problems. In north-east India, in many parts, violent ethno-national conflicts have produced significant internal displacement.<sup>10</sup> But again, estimating their exact numbers is not possible.

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6 Most of the data had also not been collected due to lack of access to some conflict-affected areas, especially in India's North East (Hussain 2006). Only those IDPs living in camps were registered officially. The IDMC reported that a considerable number of IDPs remain uncounted due to the typical official-level gap between the central and state governments data (IDMC 2013). A large number of IDPs not included in the official records were also seen to be living outside the official camps, including in urban areas. Humanitarian authorities and human rights agencies have limited access to these sensitive areas (Sahoo and Pradhan, 2016).

7 According to Lama (2000), it would also be a 'herculean task to monitor' given the varying nature and frequency of the causes of internal displacement in a country as vast as India. There is also discrepancy in official estimates. Two decades ago, while the *World Refugee Survey* put the total number of IDPs in India as 507,000, the Indian Social Institute in Delhi and the Global IDP Project had put the number at 21.3 million.

8 The 2015 IVAP report stated that the IDPs in FATA and KP were vulnerable to food insecurity, living in poor conditions, limited access to clean drinking water, highly susceptible to community disruption, living with insecure access to sources of livelihood, chronic illness, lower rates of school attendance amongst school children, psychological and social distress amongst other indicators.

9 It has been noted that in Myanmar, much less is known about the internally displaced populations and areas not accessible to the armed opposition groups with which cross-border aid agencies cooperate. Another problem is that the literature on the political economy of conflict and displacement is sparse, and the majority of investigators have been constrained by their own socio-political agendas. According to South (2007) their emphasis on 'problem-finding' has not taken account of the positive trends that have emerged in the past decade.

10 Hussain (2000) wrote on how the Indian state of Assam's peripheral location and its resultant under-development and distorted political response to underdevelopment made the society there perpetually vulnerable to various kinds of violence, conflict and displacement.

### 3. Scholarship on IDPs in Asia

Keeping these trends as the backdrop this next section attempts to provide an overview of a few aspects of internal displacement on which research has been published in Asian countries. The first area is that of the legal and policy framework (3.1), followed by the wider social sciences and humanities (3.2) and finally health and medicine (3.3).

#### 3.1 Legal frameworks and policies on IDPs in Asia

Existing literature has analysed the international and national legal avenues that exist to address the rights and needs of IDPs. The United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement of 1998 have been key point of reference for the development of normative frameworks for the protection of IDPs in domestic laws and policies and they appropriately reflect international law and recognise that the primary responsibility lies with the national government to prevent the phenomenon of IDPs. Although the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are not legally binding, in recent years that these principles have assumed a legal significance beyond their status as a mere declaration of principles.

However, all the South Asian states consider internal displacement to be their internal matter. As such, authors like Banerjee, Ray Chaudhury and Das, have evolved a set of “ethics of care” for the South Asian countries based on UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, although this proposal has not yet been implemented by any State.<sup>11</sup> In South Asia, most countries neither have a national policy on resettlement and rehabilitation nor are they party to regional or international treaties or frameworks. Instead what results are reactive or ad hoc policies, which are useful for the short term but may not address long-term issues.<sup>12</sup>

Pakistan, for example, has neither prepared nor enacted any specific domestic legislation or policies addressing internal displacement (Din, 2010). In Nepal, the emergence of vigilante groups, media bans and restrictions on NGOs have hampered relief efforts for conflict-induced IDPs and civil and military authorities throughout the country require training on the rights of IDPs and the protection of the civilian population. (Singh et al, 2007) Both parties to the conflict should make a public commitment to the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, they need to respect the basic principles of international humanitarian law and ensure the smooth functioning of the United Nations Human Rights monitors in Nepal. “The NGOs in Nepal must acknowledge the problem of IDPs and develop emergency relief packages and long-term programmes for their assistance. The reinstatement of parliament and the recent understanding between the Maoist rebels and the government can be a real opportunity to address the concerns of this marginalised population.” (2014:108)

In the Asian region, academic literature has addressed the problem of differentiating between the terminologies of IDP. It has also addressed how the absence of national policies protecting them increases their vulnerability.<sup>13</sup> In India, denial of the reality of displacement has overshadowed the creation of domestic legislation for IDPs. Besides in India, the normative legal framework that the Guiding Principles provide has to be seen in the context of the country’s land acquisition laws<sup>14</sup> and how the Indian courts determine

11 See Banerjee, Ray Chaudhury and Kumar Das (2005). The authors’ argument is that right to life as against arbitrary eviction is regarded as sufficient reason for promoting the cause of IDPs, is preeminent. Care and protection on the principle of community and kinship have been advocated. In keeping with the humanitarian argument of achieving one’s higher moral self, care of sufferers is considered as a form of self-help. These approaches set the task of applying UN Guiding Principles to the displaced persons in the case studies in this book.

12 Although the declared policies of various countries emphasise the welfare of IDPs, they do not recognise the rights set out in the Guiding Principles. In South Asia, Banerjee (2006) argues, programmes for rehabilitation and care for IDPs must fall within the framework of rights and justice, and governments have to recognise that they cannot give aid to one group of IDPs and deny it to others. The bulk of conflict or development-induced IDPs are *adivasi*, lower caste, rural and urban poor and/or women.

13 Bert Suykens (2011) explore the didactic and complex nature of the IDP question, particularly the ‘IDP-Migrant Continuum’ in Andhra Pradesh in India, which demands a close assessment of vulnerability contexts.

14 In India the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 replace the age-old colonial Land Acquisition Law of 1984. For more see <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/five-years-on-has-land-acquisition-act-fulfilled-its-aim/articleshow/65639336.cms?from=mdr>.

Accessed on 13 Jul. 2020

compensation levels for the displaced persons.<sup>15</sup> It is important to acknowledge the historical conditions and institutional context in which regional ethno-political conflicts take place that lead to ethnic violence and internal displacement.<sup>16</sup> In the absence of national guidance to regulate assistance and protection to IDPs, state authorities are the sole decision-makers of the extent and scope of the relief provided to IDPs. As a result, responses are often ad hoc and discretionary with significant differences between regions and sometimes between IDPs.<sup>17</sup>

Although a country like India has strong civil and human rights provisions in its Constitution, it has no national policy, guidelines, or legislation that addresses the needs of IDPs displaced by armed conflict, inter-communal violence or human rights violations. Studies like that of Collado (2018) have shown that even in the Philippine authorities need to work on the legal frameworks that seek to protect the IDPs in the country and that what is lacking is a comprehensive policy that would focus on the needs of IDPs whether they are in more decent temporary housing facilities or in relatively hidden evacuation camps.

Even development-induced displaced persons fall into this legal vacuum. Literature has suggested that project authorities need to, first, look for alternatives that minimise displacement and, secondly, involve the Project Affected Persons in the planning and implementation of their resettlement *prior* to displacement.<sup>18</sup> The rights of people displaced from development projects and rendered homeless and jobless need to be considered within policy priorities.<sup>19</sup>

Absence of national legal framework and dilemma of accountability, geographical and regional diversity and contrast, thus make state responsibility paramount.<sup>20</sup> In India's North-East, uneven migration, autonomy movements and conflicting interests have seen a violent conflict and displacement situation. Government abuse of power has been the most significant factor driving displacement and has resulted in a lack of commitment to protecting IDPs, with violations of human rights under the Armed Forces Special Power Act causing a failure to accept responsibility to protect those displaced by military action.<sup>21</sup> In countries like India, regular monitoring is not possible as it is a vast country that lacks an authority responsible for coordinating data from the centre and states; the nature, frequency and extent of causes of internal displacement in India are so varied that it would be a herculean task to record them; and political sensitivities at state level prevent the release of information on the exact nature and extent of displacement.

In countries like India, there is a dilemma on what should be the framework within which IDPs are to be addressed. Conflict on the appropriateness of the use of the term 'IDP' or migrant is also witnessed as in

15 Singh (2012) has argued that a rights-based approach can enhance the quality of the services delivered by authorities, that to protect the basic human rights of displaced persons, human rights guarantees must be incorporated into appropriate legislation and that principles, norms, etc., on which implemented policies and plans are decided, should also be part of the legislation.

16 Baruah (2003) says that the way out of the dilemma in North-East India is not a regime of undifferentiated nationwide citizenship and elimination of all controls over immigration in that area but "defining political communities in civic rather than ethnic terms that could incorporate the ethnic outsider."

17 See IDMC Reports in the Bibliography to this paper (IDMC 2007, 2013, 2015a, 2015b).

18 De Wet (2009) notes that genuine participation and consultation remains a vexed topic and raises the question if any common ground is at all possible. He emphasises that development should focus on the enhanced welfare and human rights of the Project Affected Persons, it should be about participatory decision-making, dialogues and discussions. However, at the end, it all boils down to implementation.

19 See Mathur Velath (2011, 2009).

20 National responsibility has been accepted only for those displaced by the Kashmir conflict, although these people are identified as 'migrants' rather than IDPs in order for the government to avoid providing assistance on humanitarian grounds and deny state weakness in protecting. Though there are over 650,000 IDPs nationwide, there is no central government agency or policy for monitoring and implementing strategies for IDPs and the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) in the semi-autonomous Jammu and Kashmir has no policy to manage issues of internal displacement (Dey and Chaudhury 2007:6; Lama 2000: 25). India has denied the access of international agencies in several areas, believing that 'humanitarian assistance' is becoming a facade under which larger states can interfere in its affairs. Additionally, the government has placed restrictions on staff from humanitarian relief agencies in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur (IDMC 2010a: 19).

21 The lack of federal acknowledgement of the existence of IDPs in India has greatly enhanced the ability of state governments to modify their responses and justify the amount of protection and relief. The difference between state government responses to IDPs in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast is strongly apparent in the literature. "Ultimately, the political interests and attitudes of the state governments have overshadowed responses to IDP needs, dictating measures taken, the groups to whom relief is provided, and how needs and rights are protected. In both circumstances, these have been determined by the nature of the conflict and security situation alongside the government's role in conflict. Where the government are in significant part the perpetrators of the conflict, IDP needs are less likely to be protected, as is evident in the Northeast. Where the victims of the conflict are aligned with government interests, as demonstrated by the case of the Kashmiri Pandits, protection and rehabilitation of IDPs becomes a greater priority for the state government. With the absence of a national framework for the protection of IDPs and the close monitoring of human rights, state governments are likely to continue to respond to IDP needs in weak, unsatisfactory and varied manners highly dependent on political agendas and interests." (Rao, 2013).

the case of the Kashmiri Pundits.<sup>22</sup> National responsibility has been accepted only for those displaced by the Kashmir conflict, though these people are identified as “migrants” rather than IDPs. This is because the government wants to refute state weakness in protecting citizens and also wants to avoid providing assistance on humanitarian grounds.

In Japan, while inclusive and equitable protection mechanisms have been fulfilling protection duties toward the vulnerable migrant population by building, these policies have been more salient at lower levels than at the upper level of the state. Endoh (2017) has highlighted the legal, normative, and institutional gaps of migrant protection from disasters at international and national levels and the need to build a more adaptive and resilient disaster mitigation framework in culturally diverse environments.

Along with other conflict-induced and development-induced research has also highlighted the legal problems faced by those affected by conservation-induced displacement.<sup>23</sup> Rangarajan and Shahabuddin (2008) connect the discouraging results and frequent injustices of current policy on conservation and displacement in India to a fundamental incoherence in the very framing of policy. They attribute this incoherence in part to the stark irresolution of debates among policy professionals, intellectuals and activists about how to conceptualise the issues. They recognise also the importance of basic political structures to the substance of this policy.<sup>24</sup>

In Sri Lanka, there has also been research on the role of corruption complaints in relation to a number of highly politicised and ethnicised post-conflict land issues, ranging from the return of IDPs and alleged new resettlement schemes to land grabbing for military, ‘development’ and/or commercial purposes.<sup>25</sup> Literature on Sri Lanka has also shown particularly focused on human capital asset based livelihood strategies that are used by IDPs which have demonstrated ways in which Korf’s (2004) livelihood model can be stretched to capture impacts on livelihood in extreme conditions such as when conflicts induce forced displacement.<sup>26</sup>

When it comes to gender issues, it has been seen that despite the 1991 Executive Committee Guidelines for the Protection of Refugee Women, the systems of protection and care in the camps aided by the UNHCR are also gender insensitive, especially in South Asia, where national laws reinforce gender discrimination (Manchanda, 2001). This is further elaborated in the following sections of this paper.

### 3.2 Social sciences and humanities research

When it comes to interrogating the causes behind displacement, literature in Asia has shown that people leave home due to a combination of interconnecting coercive and economic factors, along with the traditional ones like war and conflict, compelling an acceptance of the whole process leading to displacement rather than a single, immediate cause (South and Bosson, 2008). Besides, literature on local agency and humanitarian protection has shifted towards a greater focus on resilience and capacities for self-protection for the IDPs themselves. This approach reinforces the idea that assistance to help IDPs and refugees and to find durable solutions to forced migration will be most effective if framed by an understanding of the

<sup>22</sup> It is hard to predict when the Guiding Principles will acquire a binding character through adoption and ratification by governments. When governments are put under pressure by IDP demands articulated on the basis on the Guiding Principles will the Principles become a framework and serve their purpose. “It is this hope which is at the heart of the demands of the Kashmiri Pandits to be regarded and be accorded rights associated with that status,” says Saha (2000).

<sup>23</sup> Kabra (2013) has written on a good practice of relocation of over 400 households from the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka, India in the late 1990s that was held up as a case where both conservation goals and local people’s livelihoods gained from displacement. She examined a rare case of conservation-induced displacement and resettlement where the livelihood outcomes for the displaced people were said to be positive and delved into the process and politics of displacement, resettlement and rehabilitation in Bhadra from the point of view of examining this claim and assessing its replicability elsewhere.

<sup>24</sup> Lustig and Kingsbury (2006) address the same issues from the standpoint of international law and institutions and note broad parallels between the evolution of approaches in India as chronicled by Rangarajan and Shahabuddin, and the wider international law on displacement of people for development or conservation. They add that participation of the directly affected people tends to involve them becoming part of a balancing process which can result in the deontological dimension of rights being surrendered in a purely instrumentalist calculation.

<sup>25</sup> Lindberg and Dhammika (2014) note that comparatively high visibility of land use along-with land-related corruption is likely to affect a specific set of people who lay claim to the land, makes it a particularly important area to address in research on corruption and post-conflict peace building.

<sup>26</sup> This leads to the observation that Korf’s endowment assets can in most cases be mapped onto impoverishment risks presented in Cernea’s IRLR model and its extension to the CID case by Muggah. Amirthalingam and Lakshman (2009)

approaches to protection undertaken by the communities themselves.

Literature in Myanmar suggest that external support should be geared towards supporting local coping strategies and attempts to achieve dignified and durable solutions to their plight.<sup>27</sup> Scholars like Brooks (2007) have also argued that in Myanmar international actors have not taken sufficient action to address the problem of internal displacement in Myanmar, that they should live up to their 'responsibility to protect', as endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit, that traditional techniques for finding durable solutions have not worked and that more creative mechanisms are required to exert international pressure, to promote national responsibility and to meet acute humanitarian needs. As Lanjouw et al (2000) had stated, the situation remains quite the same – there remain significant gaps in knowledge regarding the needs of the internally displaced and the scope for international intervention to support them.<sup>28</sup>

In Sri Lanka, Amirthalingam and Lakshman (2009) also uncover and provide an economic quantification of the increased impoverishment risk that sets in with the loss of livelihoods due to displacement to show that people forcibly displaced as a result of conflict are not static victims. Muggah (2008) has used a unitary yet multi-disciplinary approach to understanding and researching the phenomenology of internal displacement and resettlement. He attributes relocation failure and problems with resettlement policy in Sri Lanka to the ethnic divisions amongst the people, community-adaptability issues, technocratic biases, political favouritism, lack of structural conditions and narrow interpretations of state sovereignty. There has been also been research to highlight the religious impact of Sri Lanka's civil war and the plight of the Muslims of the North and East, particularly the former who became victims of the Sri Lanka's long running ethnic conflict<sup>29</sup> and also to advocate for an integrated approach to return and recovery in the transition to peace, which will foster a new social contract between the government and IDPs.<sup>30</sup>

Besides, in Sri Lanka, in addition to calling into question who is defining what protection means, IDPs are now also questioning how current protection initiatives are designed and implemented, contending that displaced Sri Lankans of all faiths should have the right and the possibility to participate in protection programmes and to define and lead those initiatives in tandem with government, international and other civil society organisations.<sup>31</sup> Thus in the island nation, the protracted crisis of internal displacement there had local consequences of people being designated as IDPs as the group 'internally displaced person' became a 'social category' (modified from the original definition made by the humanitarian regime).<sup>32</sup> Thus in literature, it has been accepted that migration is often a matter of 'household strategy', particularly for coping during times of adversity, and internal displacement can be combined with labour and asylum migration, depending largely on the socio-economic background of the household concerned.<sup>33</sup> Even Bradley, Sherwood et al's (2016) work in Haiti and the Philippines focus on challenges associated with post-disaster displacement by examining the experiences, views and strategies of households in disaster-affected communities and their relationship to local, national and international interventions.

In Sri Lanka, scholarship has examined the process of local integration as a durable solution for IDPs, showing that for the process of local integration to succeed, active participation by all groups involved in the local integration process is a prerequisite. Not just the IDPs themselves but even their host local communities have a critical role to play. Brun (2000) had studied integration and segregation as related processes for the IDPs, emphasising that the local integration also involved local people also redefining their places by reconstructing and negotiating 'space'.

27 South and Joliffe (2015) analyse the decision-making processes and approaches to return, resettlement and rehabilitation of forced migrants, internally displaced people and refugees in Myanmar

28 They had significantly concluded that there is presently no common authoritative policy regarding the problems of IDPs in Myanmar.

29 Imtiyaz, ARM and Iqbal, MCM (2011) analyse that solutions are needed to address the impact of the protracted ethno-political conflict based on power-sharing and easing the special problems of the Northern Muslims.

30 Price (2010) researched on the links between resolving internal displacement and the transition to a positive peace in Sri Lanka in the context that under the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement, both the government and the LTTE failed to integrate return with recovery, undermining the wider peace-building process and contributing to further violence.

31 A Buddhist Sri Lankan NGO provides an example of how endogenous faith-based civil society organisations can help mobilise IDPs in owning and defining strategies for their own protection in the work of Barry-Murphy and Stephenson (2014).

32 Brun notes that war and the ensuing movement of people created unequal access to citizenship rights and the IDP status became essential in order to secure special needs and protection (2003)

33 Van Hear (2000) has attempted to place internal displacement in the broader arena of forced migration and located internally displaced people within a simple schema which seeks to account for different forms of forced migration and to show the connections between them.

Literature in areas of conflict induced displacement has also reflected on the politics of humanitarianism, as evidenced during Kachin internal displacement at the China–Myanmar border, where apart from the Kachin struggle for autonomy, a resource war is also fuelling the conflict.<sup>34</sup> Hedman (2009) has studied that it is difficult to discern, much less document, a definitive logic to the pattern of conflict, violence, and displacement observed in various parts of the southern Philippines. What ultimately matters, however, is the agency and ‘power of the displaced’, as noted by Canuday (2006) wherein the displaced produce new relations in and beyond their respective communities, and use their own actions to transform difficult conditions to new realities by continuously reordering their lives and social relations, ushering in new socio-political arrangements that enable them to evacuate, return and rebuild their communities. In the Philippines, work done in transitory sites in the city of Zamboanga, has illuminated the use of art forms like puppetry and photography as facilitating communication amongst IDPs.<sup>35</sup> Here too it was also seen that more participative processes and more human rights commitments made at the institutional level could greatly improve the responses to internal displacement (Bermudez et al, 2018).

Scholarship has looked at the conditions of deprivation and heightened vulnerability, that IDPs live in, at times, in places like New Delhi, India, Kathmandu, and Nepal (Singh, Sharma et al, 2007). In India, the literature on repatriation and resettlement policy, gets added with literature on the Kashmiri Pundits experiences revealing multiple meanings to ‘return’ as an inconclusive phenomenon that critically raises questions of home and uncertainty.<sup>36</sup> Much of the work further illustrates how the displaced locate themselves in the world, along with their experiences of violence and victimhood. As Datta (2017:1125) says, “While the Pandits respond to their journeys differently, their experiences demonstrate how return compels the displaced to engage with the meaning of home over time. Their experiences also provide a way to look at an issue in South Asia that has been discussed mainly in the case of transnational migration”. Studies have also explored the vulnerabilities of IDPs in Pakistan to identify the social protection delivered by various government and non-government stakeholders.<sup>37</sup>

‘Policy Research’ studies have attempted to advance discussions on the relationship between research, policy and practice in forced migration that explicitly address and make recommendations regarding the questions and challenges facing governments, international organisations and non –governmental organisations (NGOs) working with displacement-affected communities. Fernandes et al (2007) have pointed out that while globalisation led to a burst of policy studies, the language of policies is not always the language of rights when it comes to the displaced.

Specifically on gender issues, we can see that women and girls make up the majority of the IDPs in Asia, but the problem lies in the fact that both the aggregate numbers and the gender disaggregated percentages are estimates and at best these numbers are thus indicative of the scale of the problem. The real numbers, similar to trends highlighted earlier in the paper, are difficult to ascertain. Rajagoplan (2010) says that the numbers are also likely to be much higher in reality as women outnumber men in most conflict displacement contexts. During displacement it is very hard for women and children to stay safe from gender violence and sexual predators when their social support network has been shattered.<sup>38</sup> The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement enjoin governments to protect women and girls, both by safeguarding them from gender violence as well as assuring their rights. While war has given women IDPs the opportunity

34 Lynn-Ee Ho (2019) examines the constraints posed during the delivery of humanitarian aid within the framework of the connections that bring displaced populations and an array of social groups together, while keeping in view the global power geometries through which such connections are forged.

35 Bau (2015), instead of focusing on the therapeutic effect of the activities, looks at their ability to provide adolescents living in the context of community-based conflict, such as that of a displaced people’s camp in Zamboanga, Philippines, with a safe space to participate and collaborate in art and media production to express themselves and communicate with one another.

36 Datta (2017:1101) argues that “return for displaced populations is inherently inconclusive and could instead be seen as journeys through which the displaced try to address the meaning of home and deal with the uncertainty that affect their lives.”

37 Amir-ud-din and Malik (2016) show that vulnerability takes a number of forms and requires different types of social protection mechanisms.

38 According to Rajagopalan (2010), “A displaced person, even within her own country, may not have a vote in the constituency to which she has moved. She will not have address and identity proof. She will not own property there. A displaced woman or girl who experiences sexual violence has nowhere to lodge a complaint and seek justice. This compounds the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of gender violence within that society. She is much more vulnerable in the new location but has the same level of protection from the judicial system as before.” Besides, the internally displaced depend not on these special tribunals or processes for justice but the workings of the local legal system. By the time a specific case comes to court, the victim may have had to relocate again, the perpetrator may have been killed or displaced and evidence which is hard enough to gather in peacetime, may simply not be available.

to assume leading economic roles which pushes them to navigate public spaces denied to them before conflict.

However, the literature on internal displacement in Asia has shown that post displacement gender equity, particularly in terms of decision making and control of resources in relation to livelihoods, is still rare among IDPs; that women IDPs have used their agency to work towards more sustainable processes of conflict transformation; that mere access to livelihoods is not a guarantee that durable solutions to displacement will be achieved and that gender gaps will be reduced, as men may wrest control of the livelihood opportunities and gains associated with them (Cagoco-Guiam, 2013). In the Philippines, research has highlighted the critical need for greater coordination and a more systematic approach to mainstreaming gender in conflict-affected regions, and the need to address gender through multi-sectoral approaches (Margallo, 2005).

In a patriarchal society women have to face the worst kind of persecution, as in the process of resettlement and rehabilitation, men end up controlling the resources, and treating women as pariahs in the community.<sup>39</sup> The internally displaced Pashtun women in the FATA of Pakistan have been deeply impacted by militancy and the patriarchal code which has influenced the treatment and behaviour of women in and out of the IDP camps.<sup>40</sup> Although in India, displacement and consequent resettlement may lead to the reversal of the power dynamics existing in the traditional home, as in the case of internally displaced Kashmiri women (Sawney and Mehrotra, 2013). Besides, the experience of displacement is different for individuals with social and cultural capital as compared to those who do not possess such capital and are confined to camps (Malhotra, 2008).

Displacement also leads to certain changes in gender roles within social and cultural contexts. In Sri Lanka, the internally displaced Muslim women's experiences were different from their male counterparts as the forced regional boundary crossing had resulted in Muslim women playing a different role in public space as the targeted population for NGO activities.<sup>41</sup> Interestingly Swiss et al (2019) in their work on IDP women in Sri Lanka have looked at the significant imbalance in the risks-to-benefits ratio and they recommend that random-sample surveys that included questions about sexual violence be avoided at that time, especially in the displaced persons areas.<sup>42</sup> Jayatilaka (2015) has shown that since displacement impacts on traditional marriage practices, including dowries, it is important for aid agencies to consider local cultural traditions when designing assistance programs. The failure to recognize these traditions can adversely impact women's family lives, the sustainability of their livelihoods and their security.

In Nepal, young internally displaced women are forced to work as commercial sex workers for their survival. A survey among recently displaced women in the Kathmandu valley by a local NGO, Meet Nepal, supported by the Lutheran World Federation, reported that a significant proportion of displaced women were found to be working in high-risk occupations, which made them vulnerable to sexual exploitation (23.6 per cent in cabin restaurants, five per cent in the dance restaurants and 11.4 per cent in massage parlours) (Singh et al, 2014:107). In the next section, we look at the literature on health and medicine.

### 3.3 Health and medical research

<sup>39</sup> Banerjee (2005) presents a case-by-case approach to portray this vulnerability.

<sup>40</sup> Mohsin (2019) claims that the women of FATA are leading an oppressed life in the IDPs camps because they lack access to education, confidence, exposure and awareness of their rights.

<sup>41</sup> While the state, the humanitarian agencies and the urban Muslim community amidst they live now all shape the gendered subjectivities of internally displaced Muslim people the very same discourses allow women to transcend barriers they formally faced in entering public space and to negotiate positions within and against the subjectivities created for them. They have become "a needed body of persons," through a skilfully negotiated traversing among fluid boundaries, most of which are not physical says S. Hewamanne (2009).

<sup>42</sup> Swiss et al (2019) recommended that three strategies be given priority in situations in which the risks for women are too great to justify a random-sample survey. First, maximize the use of existing information. Second, collect survey data only in partnership with a strong community organization that will use the data for direct tangible benefits. Third, share knowledge that will help build the capacity of local organizations to design surveys that address their priorities, and collect and use their own data following ethical guidelines that maximize the protection of individuals and the wider community. Then these recommendations are implemented in a partnership with a local organization with a strong history of advocating for women's rights.

In Sri Lanka, the devastating effect of conflict on public health has been mapped in the research landscape to show that there have been many affected groups whose needs are still unmet.<sup>43</sup> While mortality due to the 2004 tsunami was concentrated in the first few days of the disaster, the increase in mortality amongst the displaced persons was not recorded according to Nishikiori et al (2006). There has been literature that has recorded the health conditions of Kashmiri Pandits in India. The physical and mental health of many Kashmiri Pandits is deteriorating following years of trauma and adjustment to unfamiliar circumstances, resulting in stress-related disorders and health problems (IDMC, 2008: 5; Shekhawat, 2006: 36). In Nepal, the conflict has had an impact on the physical and mental health of the displaced resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression. The displaced women and children lack access to medical personnel and basic health services such as immunisation, children were underweight and wasting. There was also fear that conflict-induced migration might also be fuelling a localised HIV epidemic in Nepal (Singh et al, 2014:107). In Nepal also, it has been seen that perceived needs such as financial help, housing, food and education for their children, self-reported health, and disability among IDPs are associated with distress.<sup>44</sup>

Studies have revealed a very high degree of prevalence of Hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection amongst IDPs in rural areas the Malakand division of Northern Pakistan and the prevalence is higher amongst males and the elderly that might be due to their high exposures to the common risk factors.<sup>45</sup> Studies have also tried to assess the association between poverty, household roles and distress among IDP in Ambon, Indonesia, to identify different risk factors of psychological distress across household roles.<sup>46</sup>

In Myanmar, widespread human rights violations in conflict zones in eastern Burma are associated with significantly increased morbidity and mortality rates.<sup>47</sup> Besides, it has been seen that despite international assistance to Burmese refugees along the Thai-Burma border, traditional humanitarian models have failed to reach these IDPs within Burma. Nevertheless, through the cultivation of a model (cross-border local-global partnerships) IDPs in eastern Burma now receive critical health services where, otherwise, there would be none.<sup>48</sup> In the China–Myanmar border area, human movement and the resettlement of IDPs has influenced malaria transmission.<sup>49</sup>

Literature on reproductive rights of IDPs, when linked with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) show that IDPs in camps are susceptible to a number of health problems due to their exposure to physical and environmental threats, violence and trauma. Policy gaps are highlighted and measures that can be taken to address them are suggested by Sahoo and Pradhan (2016, 2018) who show that newly arrived IDPs in the camps have complex needs and health problems, face a loss of social networks and assets, knowledge and information in the new environment, and lack food security, inadequate shelter, healthcare services, sanitation and access to safe water amongst other things. Psycho-social health issues have also been examined in literature in countries like the Philippines.<sup>50</sup>

There is need for more research on IDPs that assesses the relationship between psychological distress and selected variables in low income countries. Malaria in IDP camps was significantly lower than the surrounding villages through effective control management. The observation of *P. vivax* outbreaks in the study area highlights the need for increased control efforts. Expansion of malaria intervention strategies in IDP camps

43 Siriwardhana and Wickramage (2014) contend that further research should be done on individual, community and health system resilience, to provide better evidence for health programmes and interventions after more than two decades of conflict.

44 Thapa and Hauff (2011) found that factors independently associated with disability were higher age, self-reported health, depression, anxiety but not PTSD amongst IDPs in Nepal. There was good correlation between WHO-DAS II and the locally identified items of disability measurement.

45 Khan et al (2011) recommend proper awareness about the possible risk factors and extension of immunization to the rural areas to avoid the transmission of HBV infection.

46 Turnip and Hauff (2007:103) have identified some of the possible reasons for deteriorating mental health among forced migrants as poverty, traumatic experiences before migration and post-migration negative life events in Indonesia. They say that, "The implication is that when providing assistance to the IDP community, one should be particularly aware of "fathers" who have long-term illness and "mothers" who have witnessed murder and there is a need to identify culturally appropriate and contextually based indicators of poverty."

47 Mullany et al (2007) claim that epidemiological tools can be used to quantify the association between human rights violations and population-level health indicators amongst IDP populations, but further refinement and expansion of the method is necessary.

48 Mahn et al (2008) have analysed the role of local partners like role of the local partner like Backpack Health Worker Team (BPHWT) who have indigenous access to the IDP populations and have programmatic autonomy.

49 Zhou et al (2016) found that comparison of disease incidence and vector densities between IDP camps and surrounding local villages allows for better understanding of current epidemiology and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions in treating for malaria in the region.

50 High symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was found amongst mid-to-late adult and children IDPs who were forced to flee and relocated into different evacuation centers because of Marawi City siege in the Philippines in May 2017 (Pangandaman et al, 2019).

to local surrounding villages is critical to malaria control in the border area. Expansion of malaria intervention strategies in IDP camps to local surrounding villages is critical to malaria control in the border area in particular and malaria elimination in China in general (Zhou et al, 2016). In Sri Lanka, studies have been conducted to integrate mental health into primary healthcare to provide for the mental health-care needs of conflict-affected IDPs returning to their area of origin after prolonged displacement. So accordingly at the wider policy context training of primary care workers could be replicated and modulated. Alongside literature has also noted highlights the threat of enteric diseases like shigellosis to vulnerable populations such as internally displaced persons in Papua New Guinea.<sup>51</sup>

There is literature which looks at the intersectionality of health and gender. Previous studies suggest that the prevalence of psychological distress of forced migrants is higher among women than men. Psychological distress was again found to be highest among women, regardless of their household roles and lowest among men and different risk factors for psychological distress were identified for each household role. Poverty-related risk factors were only significant among 'mothers'. An important risk factor for "fathers" was long-term illness (lasting more than three months), and for "mothers" was witnessed murder. Different risk factors were identified for each household role of IDP, indicating that their mental health care requirements may be different. In the Jalazoi camp in Pakistan, it was found that females were found higher on internalizing problems and lower on psychological well-being, whereas family loss during displacement affected the results in the same way. Well-being, gender and family loss emerged as significant predictors of internalising problems, and gender moderated the relationship between well-being and internalising problems (Mujeeb, 2015)

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51 Benny et al (2014) highlight the need for control strategies to be developed.

## 4. Conclusion

Literature and scholarship on IDPs in Asian countries, despite having grown in the last two decades, still remains inadequate in addressing certain conceptual questions. These are, as Mooney (2005) rightly points out, definitional issues and the different points of view as to who is an IDP; the debate as to whether IDPs should even be a special category of concern and; the question of when internal displacement ends or, in other words, when would it be appropriate to cease identifying IDPs as such. Although it has been stressed that the 'voices' of the IDPs themselves must be mapped to enable humanitarian and protection measures to become more effective (CRG, 2006).<sup>52</sup>

The Asian region, despite hosting a large number of internally displaced persons, still lacks normative as well as institutional mechanisms for protecting the interests of IDPs.<sup>53</sup> Thus research on developing a theoretical and conceptual framework within which long term public health improvements can be visualised are needed. Thus, to meet the twin goals of preventing and ending displacement what is needed are partnerships.<sup>54</sup> However, the formulation of a regional approach to IDPs, within the framework of the Guiding Principles, remains a challenge as internal displacement is not just a widespread phenomenon in the region, but a diverse one with each country case being unique. Thus future research may explore such challenges within sub-regional groupings of long-standing and, at the same time, recent innovation (Hedman, 2009). Another neglected area has been the role of the media in highlighting the conditions of IDPs.<sup>55</sup>

Research that explores the vulnerabilities of all internally displaced people, addressing their humanitarian and sustainable development is needed. Research that focuses on the need for development and humanitarian actors, along with local communities, to work collectively to respond to needs of IDPs is needed. It is important to identify the IDPs, profile them and create a database, sensitise local/state education and legal institutions, provide time to time inductions on issues related to sexual and reproductive health-related rights, and taking action when they are violated, to understand social and cultural influences, language barriers on health outcomes and health-seeking behaviours, of different IDPs, displaced due to ethnic conflicts, natural disasters and development projects. Thus research and intervention in this region needs to focus on local autonomy, local access, multi-ethnic collaboration – coordination and sharing of information. The problems that remain to be addressed are advocacy, service delivery, continuity of international support and verifiability of data.

Future research can look at in-depth analysis country-wise, to cover the geographical limitation of this study, focusing on ways in which the use of the Guiding Principles would reinforce national legal frameworks to protect IDPs. To adopt international standards is not an additional burden but on the contrary, stronger emphasis on international standards will provide a more robust and sustainable framework for future work on this subject.

<sup>52</sup> With IDPs participatory research experiences show that dialogic knowledge is more intense, detailed, and democratic in nature (Dey and Basu Ray Chaudhury, 2007; CRG, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> Balajinaika (2014) notes that as Asia's experience in creating a human rights mechanism have failed and analysing the factors that have hindered its progress lead to the suggestion that the African example here may be followed.

<sup>54</sup> These partnerships should be developed among states; between states and civil-society; between states and financial institutions; between states, civil-society, and international protection and assistance agencies; and between international humanitarian agencies and development agencies. According to Kumar (2019) it is important to develop mechanisms to ensure the participation of IDPs in the political-processes, in decisions affecting their lives during displacement, and in developing and implementing solutions to bring an end to their displacement.

<sup>55</sup> Hussain and Sirj (2016) looked at the types of frames, especially the kind of slants used in favour and against the government's policy to handle the situation of IDPs from Swat.

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