

Incident date: 16 May 2018
Issue No. 01; 26 July 2018

Pre-emptive Evacuation of IP Community in Surigao del sur

INCIDENT BACKGROUND

On 16 July 2018, around 328 families (approximately 1,607 persons) left their homes in remote villages in municipalities of Lianga and San Agustin, Surigao del Sur due to ongoing military presence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the area.

According to the IDPs, their departure is in response to the month long military encampment in Km 9, Barangay Diatagon, Lianga. Alleged cases of human rights abuses perpetrated by the military, the forced recruitment of IP men to the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), threats, harassment and intimidation of TRIFPSS (Tribal Filipino Program for Surigao Del Sur) learners and teachers in Sitio Simowao, barangay Diatagon, Lianga were cited as reasons why they moved out from their villages. As a consequence, the schooling of around 568 students and 48 teachers from eight IP alternative community schools of TRIFPSS and the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV) were also suspended.



Photo: UNHCR/E.Monato

Evacuees from remote villages of Lianga and San Agustin, Surigao del Sur temporarily sheltered in the gymnasium at Bgy. Diatagon, Lianga.

Prior to the IDP movement, a series of dialogues were held at the barangay and Municipal Peace and Order Council (MPOC). On July 11, 2018, a dialogue between tribal leaders, the military under 401st Brigade and the provincial governor was organized at the provincial capital to discuss the IPs concerns about the encampment and legality of installation of new military detachments in their villages. The legality of MAPASU People's organization representing the communities affected was in turn questioned by the military. The tribal leaders mentioned that they would voluntarily evacuate without any influence from outside organizations should the military insist to pursue their plan to set-up detachments but they were informed by the governor that setting-up of military detachments is under the mandate of the military and only the National Government can instruct them to put on-hold any military activities if deemed necessary. He further noted that, should they evacuate from their villages, there is no assurance that LGUs can immediately provide for their basic needs because of the administrative processes needed in the utilization of calamity funds.

These IPs belong to the same group of people who were displaced for over a year in 2015 in Tandag Sports Complex due to military activities in their communities and the killing of the executive director of an Alternative School as well as the execution of two tribal leaders by a paramilitary group in front of the fleeing IPs. They are known as 'anti-mining' communities. They oppose development projects like the coming of Benguet Mining Corporation, Great Wall Mining, and Abacus Coal Mining Corporation whom they believe are set to operate in the coal and gold rich forest of Andap Valley situated in Surigao Del Sur, the ancestral land of IPs.

CURRENT SITUATION

Most IDP families are now temporarily staying in Barangay Diatagon Gymnasium, while some are staying with their relatives. Upon their arrival at the barangay proper of Diatagon on July 16, 2018, they were refused access to the gymnasium as evacuation center by the barangay and municipal local government units. After negotiation with the municipal mayor and barangay officials, they were finally given the permission to use the gym at around 3 pm of 16 July. On July 23, 2018, the IDPs decided to transfer to Tandag City Sports Complex. According to IDP leaders, they were compelled to move due to inadequate assistance that they received from the LGU, the lack of water and sanitation facilities in the gymnasium, and the inaction of the military to their requests to pull out military troops in their community and halt the deployment of detachments.

On the same day, an emergency MPOC-TWG meeting was held at 2:00 pm to discuss the situation (about the plan of the IDPs to transfer in Tandag City). After the meeting at around 5:00 pm, they went to the evacuation center and the municipal mayor addressed the IDPs:

1. He encouraged them to return to their communities since there was no actual armed encounter in their community. He also emphasized that the LGU and the provincial government could not use their calamity fund because the situation does not fall under the category of a “disaster” (referring to their constraints on justifying the utilization of calamity funds based on the Commission on Audit policy and guidelines). He also gave assurance that once they return, the local government unit would provide necessary assistance and programs in support to the community. About military abuses, he encouraged the IDPs to immediately report to him and to the battalion commander of the 75th IB any alleged human rights violations of their troops for appropriate action.
2. Furthermore, he noted IDPs are free to leave the evacuation center, whether to return to their communities or transfer to Tandag Sports Complex or anywhere they want. With a caveat that once they arrive in Tandag, the Provincial governor will also not allow them to use the Sports Complex and no assistance will be provided.
3. The military under 75th IB will pull-out from the perimeter of the Gymnasium.

After the activity, UNHCR consulted some IDP leaders to verify whether they would pursue their plan to transfer or not. The IDP leader shared that they will stay inside the Gym for the time being and discuss/consult first the other families and leaders about their next steps. The IDPs stood firm with their decision not to return unless the military will pull-out from their community. The IDPs reiterated also their call to provide them with necessary assistance especially food aid.

The Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO) of Lianga is currently facilitating the distribution of Disaster Assistance Family Access Cards (DAFAC) to register the evacuees.

As of July 19, 2018 report of the MSWD office of Liangga, the total number of IDPs is 269 families with a total of 1408 individuals.

PROTECTION ISSUES AND RESPONSES

ISSUES	RESPONSES	RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAYS FORWARD
PHYSICAL SECURITY AND INTEGRITY		
Threat to life, safety and security		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conflicting views of IDPs and the military about safety and security remain a challenge; the IDPs narrated that they feel safer without the presence of military in their community, on the other hand, the military is invoking their presence especially in areas with alleged presence of armed group to provide security and promote peace in conflict affected areas. 2. The IDPs claimed that they were not consulted in the installation of detachment in their communities. According to them, they respect if the military will conduct combat operations but do not like them to stay and established encampments within populated areas which they feel would expose them crossfire should armed groups attack the military. 3. Alleged cases of human rights violation were raised by the IDPs such as the forced recruitment of IP men to the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), threats, harassment and intimidation of TRIFPSS (Tribal Filipino Program for Surigao Del Sur) learners and 	<p>According to the municipal mayor of Lianga, prior to the IDP movement, a series of dialogues were held at the barangay and Municipal Peace and Order Council (MPOC), and medical missions were conducted in km 9 and adjacent communities as part of their peace and confidence -building activities.</p> <p>On July 11, 2018, a dialogue between tribal leaders of Malahutayong Pakigbisog Alang sa mga Sumusunod (MAPASU), the military, LGU and the provincial governor was conducted at the provincial capital to discuss the IPs concerns about the encampment and legality of installation of new military detachments in their villages. The legality of MAPASU People’s organization representing the communities affected was questioned by the military. The tribal leaders mentioned that they would voluntarily evacuate without any influence from outside organizations should the military insist to pursue their plan to set-up detachments but they were</p>	<p>The issues presented are difficult to address at the local level since currently there is little common ground on how to address the displacement; IDPs will not return unless their demands and reasons of their displacement are met, while military continue to invoke their mandate in securing the communities against armed groups,. A dialogue including the regional and national authorities should be pursued especially since there is a real risk the displacement will become protracted under the current circumstances</p> <p>For the immediate and medium term, civil society organizations, International and National humanitarian agencies and the UN should consider increasing their presence (Protection by presence) in Eastern Mindanao.</p> <p>UNHCR and Protection partners to advocate with Government counterparts like the Commission on Human Rights to provide an avenue to discuss balancing military operational</p>

<p>teachers in Sitio Simowao, barangay Diatagon, Liangga.</p> <p>4. Limited movement of IDPs because of the presence of military and PNP within the perimeter of the camp. There are alleged intimidation and coercion of IDPs by alleged members of the military and paramilitary group who continue accusing them of being members of the New People's Army.</p> <p>5. The IDPs state that until now, they continue to feel the traumatic experience they felt in 2015 when two of their tribal leaders and alternative learning school administrator were killed by the paramilitary group. They complained why leaders of the group with standing warrants of arrest continue to roam around in the presence of the military, and even kept on entering the vicinity of the IDP encampment.</p>	<p>informed by the governor that setting-up of military detachments is under the mandate of the military and only National Government can instruct them to put on-hold any military activities if deemed necessary.</p> <p>The military denied all the accusations of human rights violations allegedly committed by their troops, adding that they are well-aware of the rights of civilians. During the dialogue on July 20, 2018, they reiterated that they will not pull-out their troops and detachment in Km 9 because of the presence of threat groups in those areas like the NPA. They will continue their stay unless an order from the President will say otherwise.</p> <p>The IDPs requested to the TWG during the July 20, 2018 dialogue that suspects allegedly involved in the killing of their tribal leaders and organizer of the paramilitary group be banned from visiting or going near the vicinity of the Gym.</p>	<p>requirements and avoiding un-needed displacement of civilians.</p>
---	---	---

BASIC NECESSITIES OF LIFE

Access to food aid and nutrition

<p>1. IDPs are not receiving adequate food assistance from the local government unit of Lianga.</p> <p>2. Alleged food blockade and restricted entry of food and non-food items from non-government organizations and church institutions. One parish Priest from San Francisco, Agusan Del Sur who brought food aid was prohibited from distributing the goods to the IDPs.</p>	<p>The local government of Lianga provided hot meals to the IDPs. However, due to presence of military in the vicinity, some even entered in the EC, there are instances where IDPs declined to eat the food being served.</p> <p>The LGU made it clear that they could not provide food and non-food assistance as the situation or reasons for displacement do not fall under the category of "disaster" because there was no armed encounter prior to the displacement, adding that they could not justify to the Commission on Audit their procurements and expenses of goods using the 5% calamity fund. They have already requested augmentation from the regional DSWD with pending approval.</p> <p>The LGU has established an Incident Command Post (ICP) for proper coordination and protocols on the provision of assistance. All provision should be coordinated and coursed through the Technical Working Group of MPOC or to MSWDO for proper recording and distribution of goods. The LGU explained that the San Francisco parish priest was barred due to lack of coordination to the established protocol.</p> <p>Other church institutions like Tandag Diocese were able to distribute food supply to the IDPs in coordination with</p>	<p>Should the government not provide aid due to administrative constraints, humanitarian agencies, CSOs, church institutions and private individuals should be given unimpeded access to the evacuation site to provide necessary assistance to address the pressing needs of IDPs. UNHCR will continue to follow-up with government counterparts about this.</p> <p>The intervention of the regional and national authorities is necessary to address the administrative constraints of local governments units in this type/context of displacement.</p>
--	--	--

	the MSWD and ICP. On July 24, 2018, they provided eight sacks of rice to the IDPs.	
Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The IDPs are in dire need of accessible potable water supply. The water source near the Gymnasium is no longer functioning compelling the IDPs to fetch water from privately owned sources. The gymnasium is not equipped with latrines/comfort room compelling the IDPs to openly defecate outside while others IDPs are asking favor from the host community to use their comfort rooms. The open defecation has caused a foul smell in the vicinity of the gymnasium putting the IDPs and host community at risk of air and water-borne diseases. 	<p>Installation of water source near the Gymnasium was discussed and agreed during the July 20, 2018 dialogue between IDPs, PSWD, PDRRMC and LGUs of Lianga and San Agustin, Surigao Del Sur.</p> <p>In support to the LGU/BLGU of Diatagon, Balay Mindanao is planning to set-up a 300 liter water tank beside the Gymnasium.</p> <p>Provision of latrines was also discussed and agreed during the July 20, 2018 dialogue between IDPs, PSWD, PDRRMC and LGUs of Lianga and San Agustin, Surigao Del Sur.</p>	<p>UNHCR to follow up with the BLGU and MLGU their agreement last July 20, 2018 dialogue; installation of potable water source and latrines within the Gymnasium.</p> <p>Protection cluster through UNHCR will share these issues to other humanitarian organizations with expertise on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Promotion for support.</p>
Access to health services		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> IDPs especially children are at risk to illnesses due to the humidity and unhealthy conditions inside the Gymnasium. There are reported cases of children having Shingles that potentially become endemic. There are also cases common diseases like cough, cold and flu, and diarrhea. Most of the affected are children. 	<p>DOH personnel has been deployed in the area to monitor the health condition of the IDPs and conducting medical check-ups and providing medicines for common diseases.</p> <p>The barangay Health station of Diatagon adjacent to the gymnasium is open to cater the IDPs' health concern. The IDPs were directed by the MPOC-TWG to submit for check-up before they will be provided with medicines.</p>	<p>UNHCR and protection partners on the ground will continue to monitor the health status of the IDPs and advocate for a sustained presence of health personnel providing medical support in the evacuation site.</p>
Basic Shelter		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The space of the Gymnasium is not proportionate to the number of the IDPs resulting in the congestion. IDPs are in need of sleeping materials like sleeping mats and blankets. They are sleeping in a concrete floor exposing them especially the children to health related problems. 	<p>The option to transfer 51 IDP families from municipality of San Agustin, Surigao Del Sur was presented during the July 20, 2018 dialogue. However, this was declined by the IDPs and they opted to stay in Diatagon Gym together with IDP families from Lianga.</p>	<p>While the LGU is still exploring other options to de-congest the Gymnasium, mitigating measures to address the difficult condition of IDPs must be explored. Provision of mats and other sleeping materials is indispensable.</p> <p>Local government of Lianga, sent a formal letter to UNHCR asking for support on Food and Non-food items. UNHCR will discuss this with government counterpart in consideration of their role as primary responsible in providing relief assistance. Should the administrative constraints (COA guidelines) continue to hamper them, UNCHR will act as "provider of last resort" based on available resources.</p>
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL PROTECTION		
Access to livelihood		
<p>IDPs are far from their main sources of living (farming activities), and don't have the buying capacity to cover their basic needs. IDPs are now relying on humanitarian and Government assistance. The lack of assistance from the government agencies exacerbates their living conditions inside the evacuation centre with regards to food and other life-saving necessities.</p>	<p>No responses monitored.</p>	<p>The IDPs most likely will remain displaced away from their livelihood for a long period of time. UNHCR, and Protection partners will continue to discuss and raise to government counterparts and other humanitarian agencies about sustained and unhampered assistance while IDPs are not yet able to access their livelihood sources.</p>

Access to education		
<p>1. Schooling of around 568 students and 48 teachers from eight IP alternative community schools of TRIFPSS and the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV) was disrupted.</p> <p>2. Though awarded in 2014 as most outstanding alternative Learning School in Caraga and the 5th outstanding literacy program in the Philippines, these schools, their students and teachers seem to remain subject to scrutiny by the military because of their alleged affiliation to the New People's Army and issues related to the legality of its operation like issue of non-registration to the Department of Education and the lack of necessary permit to operate.</p>	No responses monitored.	Schooling of children is disrupted compromising their rights to education. In consultation and in agreement with the school administrators of TRIFPSS and ALCADDEV, the LGU and DepEd should explore opportunities to address this concern and provide options for students to continue their schooling and enjoy their rights to access education.

PERSONS OF CONCERN

No. of Fam	No. of Persons	Province	Mun	Barangay	Sitio	Province	Mun.	Brgy	Sitio	Exact Location
40	+/- 209	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon	Semowao	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
32	136	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon	Emerald	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
26	134	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon	Han-ayan	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
28	172	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon	Man-luy-a	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
12	69	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon	Km 14	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
18	113	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon	Decoy	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
9	65	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon	Mike	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
45	187	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon	Km 16	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
5	49	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon	Panukmuan	Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
14	81	Surigao Del Sur	San Agustin	Magkahunaw		Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
7	37	Surigao Del Sur	San Agustin	New Kabuluhan		Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
28	133	Surigao Del Sur	San Agustin	Old Kabuluhan		Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
5	23	Surigao Del Sur	San Agustin	Ladawan		Surigao Del Sur	Liang	Diatagon		Gymnasium
269	1408									

Note: figures are based on the July 19, 2018 official report of MSWDOs of municipality of Lianga and San Agustin, Surigao Del Sur.

SOURCES

LGU of Lianga, Surigao Del Sur
MSWD office of Lianga, Surigao Del Sur
PDRRMC and PSWD offices of Surigao Del Sur
Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)
Barangay Officials
AFP

The IDP Protection Assessment Form (IDPPAR)

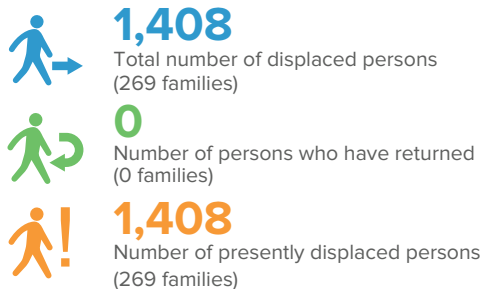
The IDP Protection Assessment Form aims to provide a starting point for information and analysis that can help humanitarian agencies, policy makers and other stakeholders concerning instances of forced displacement or solutions (repatriation, resettlement, integration). The number of people displaced/affected may differ from the number in need of humanitarian assistance. To the extent possible, the terminology used in the Dashboard reflects the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and other sources of international law and practice. The information reported in the IDP Protection Assessment Forms has been received from members of the Protection Cluster across Mindanao. Consequently, unreported cases of forced displacement and solutions are not reflected. Updates will be provided as and when more information is received from members. Although efforts are made to verify the data, the Protection Cluster takes no responsibility for the incompleteness or inaccuracy of the information. At the end of every month, this data is compiled and distributed through the 'Protection Dashboard'. The information provided in this IDP Assessment Report does not necessarily reflect the views of UNHCR or any individual member of the Protection Cluster.

The Protection Cluster

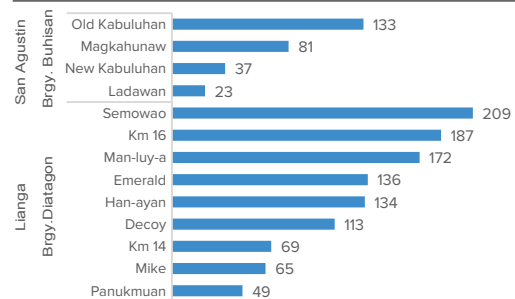
In the Philippines, the protection cluster has been established by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) Circular No 5 series of 10 May 2007 (Institutionalizing Cluster Approach in Philippine Disaster System). The cluster approach is part of a global response aimed at providing more timely and consistent help to the internally displaced and other affected people in complex emergencies and disasters. The Protection Cluster in Mindanao meets in Cotabato, Iligan, Davao and other cities on a regular basis. Currently there are 140 participating agencies including from the Government, State, Civil Society, international and national NGOs, and agencies, such as the United Nations. For more



KEY FIGURES



BREAKDOWN OF DISPLACED PERSONS PER PLACE OF ORIGIN



LEGEND

