

## BRIDGING THE GAPS: SUPPORTING DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT IN SAN FERNANDO, BUKIDNON

### BACKGROUND

- In November 2018, an armed encounter between the government armed forces and the members of the New People's Army (NPA) occurred in the remote villages of San Fernando, Bukidnon. There were 99 families (approximately 495 individuals) who fled their homes from Sitio Tibogawan to Sitio Spring in Barangay Kawayan, San Fernando. These families belong to Tigwahanon tribe.
- Protest actions were carried out by the displaced families prior to their displacement because of their claims to an ancestral land that is still pending for application at the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP).
- Sporadic clashes continued between the government armed forces and the communist rebels in Barangay Kawayan. Despite the insecurities, 37 out of 99 families returned to their habitual residences in order to have access to their livelihoods and provide food for their

families, while others preferred to be reintegrated in the host communities because they fear for their safety and security.



*The displaced families in Brgy. Kawayan built makeshift houses made of light materials and which cannot withstand typhoons. © UNHCR | ADISOMA*

### CURRENT PROTECTION CONDITION OF THE PROTRACTEDLY DISPLACED FAMILIES

As of reporting, there are 64 families (approximately 320 individuals) who are sheltered in Sitio Spring, Barangay Kawayan. Of which, two families (approximately 10 individuals) are newly-added to the number of protractedly displaced families in 2018. These families would like to be reintegrated in Sitio Spring than to return in Sitio Tibogawan because of uncertainties on their safety and security due to fear that they may be misidentified as insurgents and supporters of the communist group or as informants of the government security forces.

A "private landowner" has donated a parcel of land for the displaced families, but it is allegedly part of the contested ancestral land. It has no specifications except for the landmarks of its boundaries and there are no reported documentations proving that the land is donated. The IDPs built their modest dwelling in the donated land but without given timeframe as to when can they occupy the land.

The IDPs are in need of durable solutions to their displacements. Hereunder are the protection issues faced by the displaced families sheltered at Sitio Spring, Barangay Kawayan:

#### Access to WASH

Women and children face protection risks because of the remoteness of the water sources to their location. Displaced families face difficulties especially when they need to go to toilet, as they need to reach the creeks and spring to get water. Hence, some kids who fetch water are at times defecating directly to water sources. Barangay officials distributed toilet bowls but these have not been used because of lack of water. The IDPs expressed to have accessible water system to address their hygiene and sanitation needs. As observed during the focus group discussions, due to poor hygiene and sanitation in the displaced location, some children seem to be under nourished.

#### Access to shelter

The current dwellings of IDPs are made of light materials that are now dilapidated and need repairs. The provincial government distributed galvanized sheets for their roofs, but the houses require other sturdy materials to improve the structure of their shelters. The IDPs expressed their need to be supported on their shelters to live safely and with dignity and privacy.

#### Access to livelihood

According to IDPs, there were no livelihood assistance extended to the IDPs since they were displaced. Some men are engaged on seasonal work in a sugarcane plantation in Valencia City, while some women work as

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helpers during harvest season to rice landowners. They expressed the need for livelihood assistance to fully integrate in the host communities. The regional government on the other hand particularly the Department of Social Welfare and Development reported livelihood support to the displaced families in close collaboration with various agencies.

### Access to education

Some displaced children have been enrolled at the primary school in the host community. This is among the reasons why parents opted to stay in their current location due to easy access to a nearby school where they can send their children to school and help them get better employment in the future.

### Access to health and nutrition

IDPs have limited access to health services because of the remoteness of the health center to their location. This have resorted displaced families to traditional means of treating the sick.

### Access to food

Due to disrupted access to livelihood, IDPs cannot adequately provide the basic food needs of their families. Some of them reported to only eat once a day. The government provided food assistance however, this was not sustained. The succeeding food assistance to IDPs from humanitarian agencies have been limited.

### Safety and Security

There is no electricity in the displacement sites which poses additional protection risks especially at night. A local NGO provided solar panel and lamps in 2019 but these are no longer functional as of the date of the monitoring.

IDPs fear that they might be “red tagged” or suspected as insurgents or supporters of the communist group. Thus, they prefer not to return to their places of origin. The IDPs are hopeful that with their presence in their current displaced locations, authorities will be aware and convinced that they are not sympathizers nor affiliated with the communist group.



Assessed IDPs express their protection situation and sentiments during one of the FGDs. © UNHCR | ADIsoma

## BRIDGING THE GAPS

The following are the recommendations to help the families with their integration in the host community:

- ✓ Provision of livelihood support to the IDPs which are accessible and readily available. Most of them are farmers who prefer to receive agricultural inputs. Skills training is also helpful for them to engage into other types of livelihood;
- ✓ Installation of water system in their current location. There are water sources nearby, but they lack installed water pipes to connect and deliver these water sources to the location of the displaced families;
- ✓ Installation of solar lights and provide solar lanterns as immediate solution to the lack of lighting in the area. Even if electricity will be installed, IDPs have little to no means of paying their monthly electricity bill;
- ✓ Provision of shelter materials to help improve their already dilapidated dwellings. IDPs mentioned the need of sturdy shelters for their safety, security and privacy;
- ✓ Provision of food packs and non-food items such as blankets, hygiene kits, mats, school supplies for their kids, and solar lamps;
- ✓ Regular monitoring of the protection situation of these protractedly displaced families and ensure the attainment of durable solutions.