

Monthly Mindanao DISPLACEMENT Dashboard

September 2015, Issue No. 20, Page 1

This publication aims to provide an overview of the protection environment of displacement incidents in Mindanao for each month. Displacement incidents were collected with the support of Protection Cluster members in Mindanao.

CONTINUED DISPLACEMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (IP) IN MINDANAO

Forced evacuations of indigenous peoples (IPs) communities from the provinces of Sarangani, Bukidnon, Davao del Norte, and Surigao Del Sur continue to be a concern. They are fleeing their homes and communities, out of fear of targeted killings, arrest for being associated with the New People's Army (NPA) and presence of armed groups on their ancestral lands. (See Protection Cluster Bulletin, 6 October 2015).

As of the time of this report, the number of displaced Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in eastern Mindanao has now reached over 6,000 individuals with the most recent displacement of 954 people fleeing because of the presence of armed groups. IDPs state that they fled from the municipality of Marihatag, Surigao del Sur, due to the continuing security threats in their community and are making their way to different evacuation centers in the province. The circumstances and events which led to the displacement of this group of IPs is similar to the approximately 600 IDPs from Talaingod and Kapalong who remain sheltered in the UCCP Haran Davao church compound (see last month's PC Dashboard for detail).

Not previously reported, in August the arrest by the AFP of 14 farmers including four women and one child for alleged ties to the New People's Army (NPA) in Kitaotao, Bukidnon, caused another displacement of 32 families (estimated 146 persons) from sitios Dao and Malinao in Kitaotao, Bukidnon who are temporarily hosted by the Tri-Farmers Training Center of the Diocese of Arakan Valley in North Cotabato. According to IDPs, after the arrests of members of their community, the military and barangay officials continue to identify individuals who

are believed to be supporters of the NPA. The IDPs said they were told by the barangay officials of a list of 64 individuals to be questioned and potentially arrested. Fearful of being associated with the NPA and their potential arrest, some IPs decided to leave the community with their families until they obtain assurances that they would not be arrested. There is concern that these IDPs in Arakan will move to Haran where adequate humanitarian conditions do not exist to accept more IDPs.

In Misamis Oriental, fresh fighting erupted again between the AFP and the New People's Army (NPA) in Barangay Mat-i of Claveria municipality on 29 September displacing around 40 families (estimated 200 persons) mostly belonging to the Higaonon tribe. Most of the IDPs fled their homes from sitio Abakahan due to fear that the conflict will escalate in the entire village of Mat-i. A firefight ensued as the AFP made a rescue operation of a soldier who was abducted in July and remains captive by the NPA. To date, the IDPs are temporarily staying in evacuation centers in Claveria town proper.

The attacks by paramilitary groups on indigenous communities displacing thousands of families in Mindanao have been widely condemned by civil society organizations and human rights groups. Calls have been made to the President for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to disband paramilitary groups. The AFP states they have no involvement with arming the paramilitary groups or control over them. According to the AFP, the killings and displacement are related to inter-tribal conflict. The AFP has offered to support a peace process between indigenous community members. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has initiated a special investigation unit to examine the causes of the attacks and killings in Surigao del Sur. Progress on return of indigenous IDPs will be delayed until security is provided in their communities of origin.



An indigenous group of 32 Manobo had to flee their homes in the hinterlands of Kitaotao, Bukidnon after the AFP arrested their members including women and a child. They are temporarily hosted by the Diocese of Arakan Valley in North Cotabato. © UNHCR/E. Monato 2015

GPH/MILF PEACE PROCESS UPDATE

The House of Congress and the Senate state did not finish the deliberation of the substitute bill of the Bangsamoro Basic Law in September as scheduled due to lack of quorum in the House and inquiry of the provisions of the bill in the Senate. With the focus on the national budget, both chambers agreed to move the deadline for the passage of the BBL to 16 December this year.

At this time, charges of murder have been filed against 26 fighters of the MILF, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and members of private armed groups in connection with the Mamasapano encounter that killed around 60 individuals including 44 Special Action Forces of the police and 17 MILF members last 25 January 2015. The filing of charges has again raised emotions in Mindanao surrounding the peace process and chances for an agreement.

DISCLAIMER

The Monthly Mindanao Displacement Dashboard aims to provide a starting point for information and analysis that can help protection 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 Monthly Mindanao Displacement Dashboard 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 UNHCR Mindanao, Philippines takes no responsibility for the incompleteness or inaccuracy of the information. The information provided in this Monthly Mindanao Displacement Dashboard does not necessarily reflect the views of UNHCR or any individual member of the Protection Cluster.

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ZAMBOANGA PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT SITUATION

Two years on, there are still over 28,000 IDPs living in unacceptable humanitarian conditions in Zamboanga City. Severe protection concerns exist particularly for women and children in the transit locations where adequate services do not exist. Progress has been achieved with some IDPs now being allowed to return to their communities of origin, but the slow rate with which durable solutions are being provided has seriously impacted on the IDPs (all minorities) life over the past two years. There is concern that many of the home based IDPs who are not in identified transit sites are not being equally prioritized for permanent housing.

Around 5,000 families continue to live in transitory sites or with host families waiting to be transferred to permanent shelters. Out of the 6,638 target permanent housing units of the Z3R Housing Project, only 1,608 housing units (24.22%) have been completed as of September 2015. The closure of the Grandstand last July has left some 146 families in makeshift houses and tents in Lupa-Lupa/Rio Hondo. The local authorities announced that they are planning for the relocation from the different transitory sites to permanent sites by mid-October with the caveat that installation of power, water, and sanitation facilities will take 18 months to 2 years.

At this time, the City Government of Zamboanga in partnership with the Local Civil Registrar (LCR) and the City Social Work and Development Office (CSWD) has started the registration of IDPs in the different transitory sites in relation to the civil documentation exercises in issuing or reconstituting civil records and other legal documents including birth, marriage and death certificates. In addition, CTC (Certified True Copy) of the documents will be released for free to all the IDPs.

CLAN FEUD IN ALAMADA, NORTH COTABATO

Around 582 families (2,910 persons) in Sitio Marabuay of Alamada municipality in North Cotabato province fled their homes fearing a conflict following an ambush of two farmers by unidentified armed men that are allegedly from the Christian community in the area. The relatives of the victims who are affiliated with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) vowed to avenge the deaths of the victims. Local police authorities are collaborating with Muslim religious leaders who are trying to prevent a full-blown conflict between the Christian and Moro communities. Displaced families from both the Christian and Moro communities say they will not return to their habitual residences unless peacekeepers are stationed in their villages. Historical accounts of incidents in this province indicate that this recent killing is perceived to be a result of a long-standing land dispute affecting three towns along the tri-boundary of the provinces of Maguindanao, North Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat.

Based from the recent field mission of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the IDPs identified the following as their priority needs: (1) non-food items such as sleeping mats, blankets, and jerry cans; (2) temporary shelter or plastic sheeting for home-based families but whose host families have limited shelter space; and (3) food supply.

ARMED CONFLICT IN LUTAYAN, SULTAN KUDARAT

On 09 September, a total of 795 families (estimated 6,085 persons) from two villages in the municipality of Lutayan, Sultan Kudarat province were displaced as a result of an armed conflict between two Moro groups emanating from a land dispute in Barangay Simsiman. The warring parties have reached an agreement facilitated by the local authorities and the International Monitoring Team (IMT). In less than a week, all 795 families have returned to their places of origin.

DISPLACEMENTS DUE TO NATURAL HAZARDS

On 10 September, heavy rains in Davao Oriental resulted to flooding in the municipalities of Lupon and Banaybanay. Around 20 families (estimated 100 persons) from Barangay Mogbongcon in Lupon were evacuated in the barangay's gymnasium while 2,358 families were affected in eight (8) barangays in the municipality of Banaybanay.

About 188 families (estimated 940 persons) from sitios Upper and Lower Misolong of Barangay Sto. Nino in Talaingod, Davao del Norte were evacuated as a preventive measure of the local government from an imminent landslide in the area. On 15 September, an initial 53 families (estimated 265 persons) moved to nipa huts and tribal halls designated as evacuation centers in sitio JBL. This was followed by the movement of another 59 families (estimated 295 persons) on 18 September. As of 30 September, 120 families (estimated 600 individuals) remain in the evacuation centers after the local authorities gave order for residents of Upper Misolong to return. This community has been identified by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) as a no-build zone attributing its geography as landslide-prone.

In the western region of Mindanao, 583 families (estimated 2,915 persons) were displaced as a result of two separate incidents of flooding.

At least 249 families (estimated 1,245 persons) from four barangays in Zamboanga City were pre-emptively evacuated on 15 September due to flooding when two river basins reached their critical level. The 58 families (estimated 290 persons) from Barangay Ayala, 15 families (estimated 75 persons) from Barangay Maasin, 158 families (estimated 790 persons) from Barangay San Jose Gusu, and 18 families (estimated 90 persons) from Barangay Sinunuc were evacuated to five identified evacuation centers in Zamboanga City.

In the village of Tiguma of Pagadian City in the province of Zamboanga del Sur, on 22 September some 334 families (estimated 1,670 persons) had to leave their homes when the village was inundated with flood waters. Non-stop heavy rains caused the nearby river to swell and overflow. At least 8 houses were totally damaged. The owners of the houses are staying with relatives while others have already returned.



There are two groups of IDPs in Alamada, North Cotabato: the Ilonggo group who are sheltering in a multi-purpose gymnasium near the barangay hall and the Maguindanao group who are situated more interiorly in the village. © OCHA/M. Malang 2015

DISCLAIMER

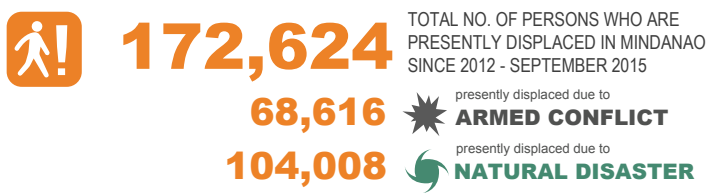
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The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* note that “internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”

Durable Solutions - UNHCR with Protection Cluster members continue to identify communities that are subjected to protracted displacement over the course of the year to ensure all IDPs are identified and the appropriate attention and resources can be obtained to support finding a durable solution to their displacement.

CURRENT NUMBER OF IDPS IN NEED OF DURABLE SOLUTION



CLARIFICATIONS

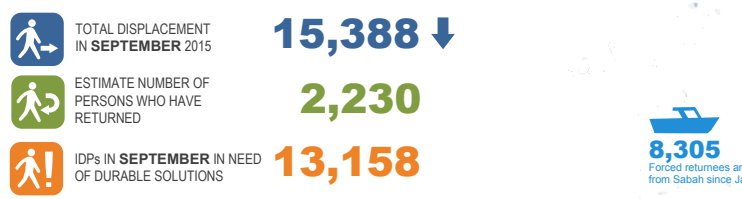
Typhoon Pablo displacement - A large number of IDPs remain displaced from Typhoon Pablo in December 2012 in Eastern Mindanao, Region XI who are still in need of a durable solution. Many of these families remain in temporary shelters where local authorities have been slowly obtaining access to land and constructing permanent housing for these IDPs. As of March 2015, there are still an estimated 76,568 IDPs in need of a durable solution in this region.

Forced Returns from Sabah - Filipino nationals continue to be forcibly returned from Sabah, Malaysia to the Island province, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga City. After the standoff between the Royal Army of Sulu and the Malaysian Security Forces in March 2013, a large number of Filipinos living and working in Sabah are arrested, detained and forcibly returned to the Philippines. Reports obtained from the ARMM DSWD describe that each week hundreds of individuals, many separated from their families living in Sabah, are forced to depart Sabah by boat and arrive in Tawi-Tawi or Zamboanga. While there are no exact figures of the number of persons arriving at this time, it is estimated that over 50,000 persons have been forcibly returned to the Philippines since March 2013. According to the DSWD, many of these individuals are vulnerable and are in need of assistance and many more immediately return to Sabah where their families reside and where they have found employment.

NUMBER OF INCIDENTS CAUSING DISPLACEMENT IN 2015

	TOTAL IN AUGUST 2015		TOTAL SINCE JAN 2015	
	INCIDENTS	DISPLACEMENT (persons)	INCIDENTS	DISPLACEMENT (persons)
ARMED CONFLICT incidents with displacement	6	11,433	44	260,605
NATURAL DISASTER incidents with displacement	4	3,955	14	100,946

DISPLACEMENT MOVEMENT IN SEPTEMBER 2015 (see details in boxes)



LEGEND

