

The Mindanao Displacement Dashboard is a monthly publication of the Protection Cluster in Mindanao, Philippines, which is co-led by UNHCR with the Department of Social Welfare and Development. 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.

DECEMBER 2016



AFP vs. BIFF in Maguindanao

A series of clashes between the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) resulted in the displacement of a total of 1,316 families (approximately 6,580 persons) from the municipalities of Datu Salibo and Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Maguindanao province, in December 2016.

On 13 December 2016, the BIFF launched an attack against a police station and a military detachment in Datu Salibo, allegedly in retaliation for the killing of one of their commanders on 10 December. This resulted in a firefight between the BIFF and government troops in Barangays Pagatin and Gadong, causing residents to flee their homes. The Datu Salibo town hall and an electric transformer also reportedly sustained damage during the incident. The second attack against a military detachment occurred in Barangay Bagan, Guindulungan municipality on 15 December. On 23 December, BIFF members also reportedly blocked the national road in the same municipality for 10 hours. Further clashes occurred on 31 December, affecting several barangays in the municipalities of Datu Salibo, Datu Saudi-Ampatuan, and Shariff Saydona Mustapha, as well as some areas in Cotabato province.

As of this report, the affected families have remained displaced for almost two months. According to a Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) report dated 16 December, 941 families (4,705 persons) are in two evacuation centres, while 375 families (1,875 persons) are staying with relatives or friends. To secure their properties and to find ways to support their needs, some of the IDPs try to visit their homes and farms during the day and return to the evacuation centres or host families at night.

During UNHCR protection monitoring, IDPs expressed the need to improve their living conditions and to provide psychosocial support to affected children. Some also reported that they were being charged a monthly fee to stay in the evacuation centres, which are located on privately owned land. Concerns regarding safety and security were also noted, such as cases of mortar shells landing in the premises of evacuation centres.

Update on continuing displacement in Lanao del Sur (AFP vs. Maute Group)

Families affected by armed encounters between AFP troops and members of the Maute Group continue to be displaced in Lanao del Sur, raising concerns about persistent humanitarian needs.

Following clashes in February, May, and November 2016, at least 2,218 families (11,090 persons) were reported to be displaced, primarily from six barangays in Butig municipality. Most of them stayed with relatives in adjacent municipalities or in Marawi City. Despite the municipal government's declaration in December 2016 that safe return was possible in the barangays of Bayabao, Poctan, Ragayan, and Sandab, IDPs remain hesitant to return because of the unpredictability of the situation. As of this report, security remains volatile as fighting continued in January 2017. This has also resulted in limited access of humanitarian organizations and even government aid into the affected areas.

Through monitoring carried out by members of the Grassroots Protection Monitoring Network (GPMN) and other Protection Cluster partners, concerns such as occupation of civilian structures by armed actors; damage to community structures, religious and educational facilities, and crops; burning of houses; and allegedly unequal access to assistance were identified. Government actors have provided food assistance, and the Department of Education conducted psychosocial support activities in some displacement sites in Marawi City and in the municipality of Lumbayanague. State agencies and humanitarian organizations, in coordination with the security sector, continue to seek ways to address protection issues and other humanitarian needs among the affected population.



Clan feud in Banisilan, Cotabato

On 23 December 2016, armed clashes between two families led to the displacement of around 184 families (approximately 857 persons) in Banisilan municipality, Cotabato province. The incident was allegedly rooted in political rivalry and land disputes. Majority of the affected families sought shelter with relatives, while others stayed in abandoned buildings or houses in nearby communities.

According to an assessment by the local government unit and the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, at least 105 houses were burned in connection with the incident. Some of the IDPs lost identification documents during the fire, and as a result, faced difficulties in accessing government assistance.

The municipal government declared a state of calamity in order to provide assistance to the IDPs. A joint task force composed of the AFP, Philippine National Police (PNP), and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is currently stationed in Barangay Pantar, Banisilan, to monitor the presence and movement of members of armed groups allegedly affiliated with the conflicting parties.

UNHCR Cotabato distributed ridge tents and sleeping mats to families who lost their homes in the fire. The municipal government committed to provide roofing materials to help them rebuild their houses, as well as additional sleeping mats. This encouraged some of the IDPs to return to their habitual residences, while others resettled in nearby towns. As of this report, all of those displaced had found durable solutions.



In Sitio Balmdong Barangay Poblacion 2, Banisilan, Cotabato, a family takes shelter in the remains of their house that was destroyed by fire. Photo credit: S.Tulon/UNHCR

Update on protracted displacement in Zamboanga City

As of January 2017, a total of 1,996 families (approximately 11,412 persons) remain displaced in 11 transitory sites since September 2013. The city government is targeting to complete all of the permanent housing projects under the Zamboanga Roadmap for Reconstruction and Recovery (Z3R) by June 2017. Out of the 6,343 planned housing units, at least 69% (4,364) have been completed. More than half of these completed units (2,572 houses) have been awarded to IDP families. In December 2016, government stakeholders convened at a year-end activity, with technical support from UNHCR. The activity served as a venue to address issues and concerns related to Z3R implementation, such as the constitution of the Grievance Committee that would be tasked to resolve complaints and disputes related to the award of housing units, with the aim of facilitating the transfer of all IDPs to permanent housing sites.



Attack on an army detachment in Sirawai, Zamboanga del Norte

Unidentified perpetrators attacked a detachment of the Philippine Army in Sirawai municipality, Zamboanga del Norte province, on 04 January 2017, triggering the displacement of at least 26 families (approximately 130 persons). No casualties were reported from the incident. As of this report, all IDPs had returned to their places of origin.



Armed group presence in Cagayan de Oro City

Around 60 indigenous peoples (IP) families (about 200 persons) were displaced in three barangays of Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental, on 14 January due to the presence of armed elements in the area. The latter were alleged to be members of the New People's Army (NPA) conducting recruitment activities for the group.

Local officials and tribal leaders facilitated the evacuation of the affected families to their tribal centre. According to the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, movement of civilians from other communities due to alleged NPA presence has also been monitored.



Flooding in five Regions in Mindanao

A total of 77,704 families (approximately 387,138 persons) were displaced in Mindanao in January 2017 due to several days of massive flooding caused by heavy and continuous rain. The displaced population included: 216 families (791 persons) in Region IX (Zamboanga del Norte province); 10,565 families (55,717 persons) in Region X (provinces of Bukidnon, Camiguin, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Occidental, and Misamis Oriental); 6,703 families (32,601 persons) in Region XI (Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental); 13,441 families (65,259 persons) in Region XIII/CARAGA (Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, and Surigao del Sur); and 46,779 families (232,770 persons) in the mainland provinces of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur).

Some IDPs took shelter in evacuation centres in various locations in Regions IX, X, XII, and CARAGA; the rest stayed with relatives or friends. Based on a DSWD report dated 24 January, 176 houses in Region X and 396 in CARAGA were either totally or partially damaged. The DSWD also recorded at least 13 casualties: two minors died in Region IX; five persons died, three were injured, and two were reportedly missing in Region X; and one minor died in Region XI.

Disruption of education was reported in some areas due to the suspension of classes. Power outages occurred, particularly in some barangays of Surigao del Norte; land and sea travel were also affected. Some local government units (LGUs) implemented pre-emptive evacuation measures to ensure the safety of residents in flood-prone areas; rescue operations were also conducted in some localities. A state of calamity was declared by some LGUs. Local DSWD offices and LGUs, with support from some non-government organizations, distributed food packs and other relief items to the affected families.

To date, 65,567 displaced families (approximately 328,111 persons) had already returned to their respective residences. However, an estimated 55 families (272 persons) in Region XI and 12,082 families (58,755 persons) in Region XIII are still displaced.



AFP vs. armed group in Maluso and Sumisip, Basilan

A firefight between the AFP and an unidentified armed group on 12 January triggered the displacement of a total of 326 families (approximately 1,378 persons) in the municipalities of Maluso and Sumisip, Basilan province. No casualties were reported.

The confrontation started in Barangay Cabcaban, Sumisip, and spread to

neighbouring barangays. According to a report from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Humanitarian Emergency Action and Response Center (ARMM -HEART), all of the IDPs had taken refuge in their relatives' homes. To date, most of them remain displaced, and are reluctant to return to their respective residences out of fear of further clashes.

As of 18 January, the Provincial and Municipal Social Welfare and Development Offices have conducted assessment and validation among the affected families, and the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council has convened to plan the initial response to humanitarian needs.



Joint military and police operations in Ampatuan, Maguindanao

An estimated 837 families (approximately 4,185 persons) were displaced on 25 January due to an anti-illegal drug operation in Ampatuan municipality, Maguindanao province, which resulted in a firefight between alleged BIFF members and combined forces of the AFP and PNP. As of 30 January, the provincial government, DSWD, and other State agencies have extended food and non-food assistance, including to 330 indigenous families who were also affected by the incident. To date, the IDPs have started to return to their habitual residences.



Attack on military detachment in Matalam, North Cotabato

On 26 January, an attack on a military detachment in Barangay Tamped, Matalam municipality, Cotabato province, led to the displacement of at least 50 families (approximately 250 persons). Alleged NPA members were reported to have carried out the attack. The IDPs had returned to their habitual residences as of this report.

Update: Durable solutions for IDPs from Kapalong, Davao del Norte

Following a series of dialogues between tribal leaders, village officials, and paramilitary leaders, 46 indigenous families returned to their homes in the municipality of Kapalong, Davao del Norte province, on 27 January. The IPs had sought refuge in a church compound in Davao City for a year and a half, after being displaced due to harassment by paramilitary groups. UNHCR's local implementing partner, Silingang Dapit (SILDAP), facilitated the process. A traditional reconciliation ritual was conducted upon the arrival of the IDPs in their community.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development – Region XI distributed 200 sacks of rice to the returning IDPs, while the local government provided transportation support. Government stakeholders agreed to hold an inter-agency meeting to discuss recovery and rehabilitation services, including the implementation of a cash-for-work program. UNHCR provided solar lamps, as well as plastic rolls to be used as temporary roofing for their damaged/dilapidated houses.



Internally displaced persons who belong to the Manobo tribe in Municipality of Kapalong are well received by their communities. These IDPs have been forcibly displaced for one year and six months. Photo credit: E.Monato/UNHCR

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.

