



UNHCR
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With you

Protection for the most vulnerable in Mindanao



What's Inside:

- Displacement Trends in Mindanao
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The families of Hadja Eva (56) and Bai Kamotan (42) share a room with two other families after being forcibly displaced during Ramadan in a skirmish between the government troops and armed groups. *"This war is untimely -- fasting or not -- it just happens. But we got used to it. We were displaced just a few months ago because of election-related violence. Now, we are here again because of the conflict."* says Hadja. ©UNHCR/S. Sambutan

Message from the Country Representative



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Looking back to the year that has passed, it was a year of challenges for this country and all over the world. But notwithstanding the pains and difficulties, 2014 has also been a year that has shown us, once again, the unassailable strength of the human spirit. The displaced families in the Philippines - from out of typhoon Haiyan in the Visayas to the conflict-affected regions in Mindanao- all bear a plight that no one wishes for themselves nor their family. Nevertheless, they do not give up hope – and through their perseverance and their humanity, they give us the strength we need to do our work.

Throughout 2014's spiralling crises for the displaced populations of this country, your support allowed us to make sure the displaced could be safe. When you heeded our appeal for help on their behalf, you have reached out to people struggling to survive and to live in dignity, you have listened to them, and you have empowered them. You allowed yourselves to be moved by the experiences of those you encounter and to believe in their capacity to achieve solutions.

I want to mention some of the highlights of 2014 both at the global and national scales. With Syria, CAR, South Sudan and Iraq, UNHCR and its partners had to respond to four simultaneous Level 3 emergencies in 2014, which together accounted for about 40% of both UNHCR's financial requirements and its workforce in 2014. We deployed 437 staff and partners to 41 mainly emergency operations, continuing the strong trend set in the past two years.

Within our own backyard, UNHCR has concluded its emergency response in the Haiyan-affected areas whereby over 700,000 have benefitted from life-saving emergency supply assistance. During the early recovery phase, some 90,000 have been issued civil documentation to accord them the services of the state. And to date, we continue to capacitate the 18 remote local government units with power supply equipment thru the provision of 15.2 KVA generators to reach the most vulnerable sectors in the municipalities of concern. In Zambaonga, we continue our advocacy to find durable solutions for the 6251 families who are still displaced by conflict in 2013.

I will not hide from you that I am worried about the year ahead. There is but a glimmer of hope for immediate improvements in any of the large crises we currently face in the Philippines and across the world. We ourselves have reason to be concerned over our funding in 2015, as a result of major exchange rate losses and budgetary uncertainties.

But I have absolutely no doubt that we will face these challenges together in the same strong spirit of passion, courage and generosity that has steered us safely through 2014. I wish all of you, and your families, a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Bernard Kerblat
Country Representative, Philippines
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNHCR commemorates first year of typhoon Haiyan



A year after one of history's strongest typhoons ravaged three regions in central Philippines, the vast majority of displaced people have returned amid efforts to seek longer-term solutions for people remaining in temporary shelters.

"One year on, the country has made impressive achievements in recovery," said UNHCR's Representative in the Philippines, Bernard Kerblat. *"This shows the power of collective action between the government and humanitarian actors on the ground, and the indomitable will of the communities and survivors to rise above the tragedy."*

On 8 November 2014, IDP Day was observed in the three UNHCR Protection hubs in Ormoc, Guiuan and Tacloban where displaced families were treated to a day of fun and games. A photo exhibition entitled *The story of the 1 family forced to flee: A Haiyan Retrospective* at the DZR Domestic Airport in Tacloban City anniversary was also showcased. Through the lens of documentary photographers commissioned by UNHCR, the exhibit depicted the power of mankind's recovery from devastation and their emotional fortitude amidst despair.



#Ibelong: UNHCR launches the campaign to end statelessness in ten years

UNHCR is today launching a global *"I Belong"* campaign aimed at ending within 10 years the problem of statelessness – a devastating legal limbo for the millions of people worldwide who lack any nationality and the human rights protections that go with it. The goal of eradicating statelessness is looking increasingly possible thanks to dramatic recent progress in the number of States acceding to two key UN human rights treaties.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie and more than 20 celebrities and world opinion-leaders today published an Open Letter, saying that 60 years after the United Nations first agreed to protect stateless people, "now it's time to end statelessness itself."

At least ten million people worldwide are currently stateless and a baby is born stateless every ten minutes. Not allowed a nationality, they are often denied the rights and services that countries normally offer their citizens.

"Statelessness can mean a life without education, without medical care or legal employment... a life without the ability to move freely, without prospects or hope," the Open Letter said. "Statelessness is inhuman. We believe it is time to end this injustice."

The Philippines is the only country in Southeast Asia to be a party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, having ratified the Convention in 2011. The country is in the process of developing a national statelessness framework and is implementing status determination procedures with the support of UNHCR. UNHCR has been working with the Government of the Philippines to address the situation of population at risk of statelessness, and identify solutions.

Displacement Trends in Mindanao

Region XI and XIII has the highest number of displaced population in the last 2 ½ years. Main cause of displacement in these regions was due to Typhoon Bopha that affected more than 3 provinces in the region. Typhoon Bopha displaced over 1,392,938 persons. As of June 2014, about 87% have returned while 175,489 persons are still in need of a durable solution, mainly originating from the Davao Region.

2012

Typhoon Bopha displaced at least 1,392,938 persons

2013

AFP vs a faction of MNLF armed conflict displaced at least 137,261 persons

AFP vs BIFF armed conflict displaced at least 61,930 persons

2014

Typhoon Agaton displaced at least 223,665 persons



24.5%



25.5%



50%

CHILDREN comprised at least half of the total population displaced in the past 2 ½ years.

68,341,808.00

\$ Income loss or earning of IDP families (assuming 20% of pop. are earning) in USD

3,075,381,360.00

₱ Income loss or earning of IDPs (assuming 20% of pop. are earning) in PESO

Displaced Population per Region

- 5% REGION IX
- 11% REGION XII
- 12% REGION X
- 17% ARMM
- 25% CARAGA
- 31% REGION XI

Feature Story



A Young Mother's Hope for Peace in Mindanao

Buggoc Transitory Site, Zamboanga City, November 2014 - Nursida Amil, 24, and her family are from the Badjao tribe, an indigenous population that traditionally live by the sea. Their home in Rio Hondo, a seafaring community on stilts, was burned to the ground a year ago in September. "We fled our homes, leaving behind all our belongings. Two of my siblings went missing during the chaos." The Amil family, along with thousands of other Rio Hondo residents, were evacuated to the city's sports arena, known locally as the 'Grandstand'.



© UNHCR/G.Maramag

Nursida, her husband, Raymond, 25 and their young daughter ended up staying at the Grandstand for a year. "We were among the first to arrive. It was overcrowded and the stench was constant. People were getting sick and we had a couple of break-ins at our tent. My husband had to stop his schooling." Despite the overwhelming challenges, in the year that they spent at the Grandstand, Raymond was able to resume his studies, eventually passing his board exam for Education. Nursida was eventually reunited with her siblings. One day, their name was announced. "We were told we were going to be transferred to a temporary site in Buggoc. I packed up the little that we had – cooking pans and containers I received from UNHCR, family photos, and some clothing."

Today, Nursida sells food by the front porch of her woven home at the Buggoc Transitory Site, where they have been staying for the past two months. She shares her earnings with her widowed mother, who also lives at the site nearby. She is thankful that her whole family was able to flee the siege and that they are together in one community. Raymond volunteers as a teacher at the nearby Evangelista Elementary School. "He got his teaching license, but there haven't been any job opportunities."

There is no running water or electricity at Buggoc. "The water is delivered to main tanks by the City Water District and we use jerry cans to bring water to our homes. We use flashlights at night. We don't sleep very well at night because there are rumors among the neighbors that there might be another siege. It gets very dark, and I try my best to comfort my young daughter."

Nursida's wish is simple: "I just want peace and safety for my family."



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Our Staff Speaks

What was your motivation in pursuing a career with UNHCR?

This is my passion! Before joining the humanitarian world, I experienced several displacements caused by natural disasters but more often due to the protracted conflict in Mindanao. I experienced living in schools, living in the evacuation centers. I know what it feels. It is degrading. So it makes me proud to work with them, and for them.

Through UNHCR, I am given the opportunity to work with the IDPs, work for the improvement of the welfare women, children, and other vulnerable sectors of the community; become their voice to help alleviate their sufferings; ensuring that their rights are protected. Our field work with UNHCR is not just about collecting information but ensuring that the rights of the IDPs and other persons-of-concern to UNHCR are protected.

What were your impressions of the situation in the Mindanao?

Mindanao is so diverse, so complex, so volatile, so dynamic yet very historic. Despite all differences, people continue to share one common goal, i.e., holistic peace and justice to all regardless of tribe, culture and religion. Aside from the yearly typhoons leaving thousands of people homeless, the historic conflicts and the never ending struggle for the Right to Self-Determination for the Bangsamoro are among the causes of displacement. Innocent civilians, women, children, and elderly continue to live in evacuation centers; and the search for a holistic remedy seems to be very elusive.

The struggle will be carried out from generation to generation until a comprehensive solution to this struggle is reached. Until then, conflicts will have no closure and the risk of being forcibly displaced continues. Peace and justice remains a vision, a hope!

What is the situation there like at present?

The minorities remain to be the most vulnerable. They are in dire need of more protection intervention - protection from discrimination especially. Thousands families continue to face lingering protection issues in the evacuation

centers due to lack of basic services such as water, electricity, health facilities, school facilities and scarcity of food.

Women, children and elderly are exposed to different type of risks due to the continued relocation from one area to another which is proving to be unsustainable; basic facilities do not adhere to the SPHERE standards; over all there are limited interventions. To date, Mindanao awaits for a holistic and durable solution to yet to resolve displacement.

How has UNHCR responded to the crisis and what is your main role?

UNHCR is among the agencies according life-saving interventions with the provision of emergency shelters, solar lanterns, and core relief items like kitchen sets, hygiene kits to affected families. UNHCR assists and supports the authorities to perform its function as the cluster lead of the Protection Cluster. UNHCR, as the co-lead cluster assist in the protection monitoring, referral to respective clusters, coordination of the issues and concerns for proper solution.

As Field/Protection Associate, in addition to collecting information and, and protection monitoring, I also facilitate community-based orientations on IDP protection; contributing to the organization's mandate to safeguard the rights of IDPs.

What are the challenges that you and your team have faced when carrying on a response?

Security is a challenge especially when we aim to bring timely assistance to remote communities. As a protection agency, our main advocacy is to safeguard human rights, protection of the IDPs, protection monitoring and coordination.

There are challenges in lobbying this as there are parties to the conflict who may need a clearer understanding and deeper appreciation of our advocacy.

There are times where UNHCR comes across as critic to authorities and

non-state actors because of the sensitivities of the work that we do.

But we need to do what we need to do for the IDPs who deserve nothing less but be accorded the standards of protection

What was your most rewarding moment/experience in the as Protection Field Associate

It is rewarding when you see people are starting to go back to their places of origin and start rebuilding their lives according to the way they know. Nothing is more rewarding when you see them smile at you and say "Thank you, UNHCR".

What do you think are the most pressing/remaining needs of the POCs? Why do you think we still need the support from donors?

The IDP needs of a more holistic solution to end their displacement and that is allowing them to return to their original places, providing them with appropriate livelihood support to rebuild their lives. The crisis for them is isn't over, the humanitarian needs are visible in the evacuation centers. With no clear plans for all IDP, it is more justified that there is a need to extend humanitarian efforts.

On the bigger picture, there is an urgent need to fast track the IDP Bill to become a LAW. I strongly believe that the IDP Law is a big help, if not to end displacement, it will minimize and reduce the numbers of the displacement not only in Mindanao but entire Philippines. This will end the displacement eventually, human rights will be better protected. Protection is fulfilled.



Rasul Kulat has been working with UNHCR Philippines for over four years now. His job as Field Protection Associate focuses on the monitoring the movement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mindanao. Since joining UNHCR, he has been involved in responding to four mega-emergencies namely typhoon Washi in 2011, Pablo in 2012, Haiyan in 2013, and the Zamboanga-conflict in 2013 as well.

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Feature Story

Pockets of Stability

The year was 2008. Waking up to what may have seemed an ordinary day in Barangay Tina in Shariff Aguak, Sapia did not expect the turmoil her family was about to experience. They were all too familiar with the rido (clan wars) and banditry, but no one expected the unsettlement that would come in the days and years to follow. Most of the people affected by these conflicts have been children and women such as Sapia. Most if not all, have experienced multiple displacements since the Marcos regime. "We used to be threatened by clans wars - the violence would displace us for a week or so. This time it was different. We didn't expect the conflict to be this bad."

Rumours erupted regarding the government's refusal to sign the initial Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD). The said agreement between the MILF and the government sought broadened the economic and political powers to the Muslim leadership. Due to the unfortunate turn of events, clashes with government forces, attacks to civilian communities, and ultimately a desperate humanitarian crisis ensued for the next two years.

Sapia along with 750,000 individuals were forcibly displaced due to clashes with government troops and the MILF in a failed "All out Peace" process. With no choice but to flee for their lives, Sapia and her family sought shelter in one of the crammed evacuation centres housing over 3,000 other families. Sapia recounts, "We had to be placed and lived in evacuation centres. For others this became their home for two years. It wasn't home to me. Life wasn't easy there but we had no choice. It wasn't safe to return home. We had to wait for that day we could finally return home."

Renewed Hope

They knew their lives and homes would never be the same again. Sapia and the other families returning were greeted with rubble and whatever was left of their demolished homes. Families had to build their houses from scratch, some were damaged and others were ransacked. Sapia assessed, "It was good to be back but we were devastated at what we saw. There was a lot of work that had to be done and we were determined to rebuild our lives."

A renewed hope came in the form of a Quick Impact Project (QIP) designed to establish and organize community-based organizations. These projects help to strengthen and stabilise returning communities by encouraging members of the community to work together in improving and rebuilding their lives.

"With the guidance and provision of the UNHCR and its implementing partners, the women from the community met and formed our own organization as a solution to our situation. We're back with our houses but we needed to know how to restart our lives."

Sapia and her group of women facing the same plight established the Tina Women's Association for Sustainable Development in 2011. UNHCR donated the facility and five sewing machines utilized for the women's means of livelihood and training. A few years into the project, the facility has served as venue for various community initiated activities like a learning center for unschooled mothers where they hold basic reading and counting classes; training center for new livelihood activities like bio-intensive gardening and mat-weaving. For their sewing activities, the women candidly shared that they now have some modest earnings in the bank which they hope to grow as they expand into other livelihood opportunities.

"With this center in place, we finally get to rebuild our lives. These sewing machines are not just machines. They are our hope. If there will be any war again, we will take them with us."



UNHCR remains optimistic that displaced persons in Mindanao will return to their homes and live in an environment of peace. The creation of pockets of stability like in Barangay Tina may help secure this aspiration as a reality. "When people see that one area is stable, they want to aspire to be like that and it will have a trickle-down effect where more and more communities want more than what conflict and displacement can give them," says Bernard Kerblat, UNHCR Country Representative. "The project in Barangay Tina rolled into something bigger and bigger. Other agencies came in to provide help. Today, 95% of [the villagers] have come back home," Kerblat says. "It's not absolutely safe and secure but it's a place of hope and hope is the first step." ©UNHCR/M. Liquigan

#IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

Without nationality, women and children are more
vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.



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