

Philippines

October 2017

Armed confrontation between government troops and pro-ISIS militant groups has been ongoing since 23 May 2017 in Marawi City in the southern Philippines.

Massive civilian displacement occurred as a result of the tension. The government has pegged the number of displaced to **359,680** individuals.

The government-led response has transitioned to early recovery and rehabilitation, but return of IDPs is not yet feasible.

KEY INDICATORS

359,680*

Total number of **internally displaced persons**, based on the Disaster Assistance and Family Access Cards (DAFAC)

95%

Percentage (estimated) sought shelter with relatives or to community-based evacuation centers

5%

Percentage (estimated) stay in evacuation centers**

* The number of displaced persons has been pegged since 26 July by government sources at 78,466 families (359,680 individuals). This is a 33.4 percent reduction from the 117,875 families (534,127 individuals) reported prior to the data cleansing initiated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development based on the encoded data from the DAFAC. Data provided does not anymore indicate the number of IDPs that are home-based and are found in evacuation centers.

** As of 5 October, 61 evacuation centers remain open out of the total 135 that were opened.

INCIDENT BACKGROUND

A composite group of ISIS-inspired militants ambushed a military vehicle that was reportedly on a mission to serve a warrant of arrest upon Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) leader Isnilon Hapilon, who was believed to be hiding in the area in the afternoon of 23 May 2017. This began a protracted armed confrontation between this group and the AFP.

By the same evening, the confrontation escalated to other barangays in the city as the pro-ISIS group began to occupy civilian structures. In less than 24 hours, the pro-ISIS group was able to control strategic locations in the center of the city, including government facilities.

The situation prompted President Rodrigo Duterte to place the whole island of Mindanao under **martial law** for 60 days, which was later extended to 31 December.

Massive civilian displacement occurred as a result of the growing tension, starting in the early morning of 24 May. More military troops were deployed, and clashes continued over the next months. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) launched a combination of mortar shelling and air strikes against the MG.

An estimated 98 percent of the total population of Marawi City (201,785 individuals in 96 barangays, based on the 2015 census) have sought shelter in different evacuation centers or with their relatives. The crisis has also affected economic and commercial activities in the rest of Lanao del Sur province, triggering further displacement.

Update On Achievements

Context

A number of IDPs, especially those who were staying with host families, have been moving from one location to another. Others have returned to some villages in Marawi that have been cleared by the military, although the authorities have not given any advice on which areas are safe for return. A key reason for movement is that dwindling or delayed government assistance (food and non-food items) has caused some of these families to look for other means to secure basic services. Delivery schedules of government aid have been erratic. IDPs are also unable to access information relevant to this concern.

UNHCR is also in partnership with other actors to address prevailing protection concerns, namely the lack of documentation and lack of freedom of movement, which has restricted the movement of IDPs, and the lack of access to relevant information for IDPs.



Dwindling assistance is a prevailing concern for most IDPs, more than four months into the Marawi conflict. UNHCR/A. Gonzales/September 2017



Near an evacuation center in Saguwaran, IDP families have taken to occupy abandoned buildings nearby for temporary shelter. UNHCR/A. Gonzales/September 2017

Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR spearheaded a massive **Intention and Needs Assessment survey** in August participated by 5 UN agencies (IOM, OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP), 3 INGOs (CFSI, Oxfam, Samaritan's Purse) and 17 NGOs/CSOs deploying 205 field enumerators in 3 cities and 30 municipalities. The survey yielded 14,491 respondents, which is **18.47%** of the 78,466 families registered with Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The initial findings have been handed to the Secretary of National Defense who concurrently heads the Task Force Bangon Marawi, which is in charge of the early recovery and rehabilitation efforts of the government.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The IDPs are subject to lack of documentation and lack of freedom of movement, which has restricted their movement. The IDPs are also subject to the lack of access to relevant information.

- In relation to freedom of movement, IDPs continue to fear for their safety due to **lack of identification documents amid strict security protocols**. A large number of the displaced population have left behind vital identity documents in their haste to flee the fighting in Marawi City. Loss of identity documents in the course of displacement tend to heighten protection risks including difficulties in accessing public services, such as education and health care, livelihood opportunities, limits to freedom of movement and heighten risk of harassment, exploitation or arbitrary arrest and detention. Lack of documentation also risks curtailing the ability to voluntarily opt for available durable solutions after displacement.
- These rights being denied or not achieved, under martial law, exposes IDPs to prolonged detention and lack of participation of communities in the determination of the most pressing needs. All this reduces their capacity and resilience while the institutional response to address their basic needs is still weak.
- UNHCR, through funding from UN CERF, has explored a partnership with the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), with the support of the local government and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). UNHCR is working with PhilHealth for the provision of identity documents to IDPs who do not currently possess the same. Aside from addressing security issues and restrictions on movement arising from lack of documentation, which also prevents many IDPs from seeking livelihood and employment, the PhilHealth registration process and issuance of IDs will also facilitate access to basic health services for IDPs.
- Another partnership with telecommunications company Smart Communications is being forged to enhance the access of IDPs to relevant information on their rights and essential services. UNHCR is working with Smart to establish a two-way communication with the IDP population, with the objectives of informing the IDPs with their rights and access to aid, and to get their feedback on the situation on the ground.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Achievements and Impact

- Through UN CERF funding, UNHCR distributed last September **specialized/targeted assistance** to meet the specific needs of extremely vulnerable individuals or those with special needs. The first batch of items distributed included wheelchairs and walking aids, mattresses and pressure relief mattresses, blankets, pillows, nebulizers, solar lights, school kits, and kitchenware sets.
- The first batch of items was distributed from 14 to 16 September 2017, where **228 persons with special needs** from Saguiaran, Pantao Ragat, Pantar, and Balo-i received targeted assistance. The beneficiaries included the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- The distribution of the second batch of items is ongoing and is set to finish before the month ends. As of 9 October, **723 beneficiaries** have been reached and given targeted assistance.



Latipah Macaangun was one of the elderly who received targeted assistance from UNHCR. UNHCR/A. Gonzales/September 2017

Working in partnership

- UNHCR and members of the Protection Cluster continue to engage the government in capacity-building activities. Local Social Welfare and Development Officers and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Officers receive training on IDP protection, protection mainstreaming, and information management.

External Relations

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LINKS

www.unhcr.org/ph/marawi-crisis - www.protectionclusterphilippines.org - @UNHCRPh -
@UNHCRPhilippines - IDP youths pursue hopes of being a voice for the community