

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 91,000 people displaced by armed clashes in Central Mindanao
- Protection Cluster continues to advocate durable solutions for all IDPs in Zamboanga
- IDP women in Mampang take an active role in camp management
- Weak El Niño may trigger draught and erratic behaviours of tropical cyclones in the coming months

## FIGURES

### Central Mindanao Displacement

# of displaced population	91,600
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# of IDPs in evacuation centres	75,400
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# of evacuation centres	79
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# of IDPs hosted by relatives and friends	16,200
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Source: ARMM-HEART (as of 28 March 2015)

### Zamboanga Crisis

# of IDPs in evacuation centres	5,100
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# of IDPs in transitional sites	12,500
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Estimated # of IDPs hosted by relatives and friends	15,000*
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Source: CCCM Cluster (as of 25 March 2015), \*Protection Cluster (as of October 2014)



UNHCR/E. Monato

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## Assistance to conflict-displaced people in Central Mindanao continues

A month-long law and order operations lead by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) left over 91,000 people displaced in 13 municipalities of the province of Maguindanao in Central Mindanao. Local authorities supported by the national government and humanitarian partners are providing food packs, medical aid and other life-saving assistance to the internally displaced persons (IDPs) or *bakwits*.

"People can cope with short periods of displacement, but the *bakwits* are now on their second month of displacement and that concerns the UN", said Julie Hall, the acting UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Philippines at the CNN Philippines interview on 27 March.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao-Humanitarian Emergency Action and Response Team (ARMM-HEART) is coordinating the relief operations in the affected communities with bilateral assistance provided by of UN agencies, the Red Cross movement and NGOs operating on the ground. A joint Rapid Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (RDANA) on 5 March identified priority needs of the IDPs including food, clean water, medical supplies, emergency shelter, and psychosocial and other protection support. IDPs also voiced concerns over their disrupted livelihood and education of children.

On 30 March, the AFP announced that the Government's joint military operations against BIFF ended. Authorities and aid agencies will continue to assist the displaced communities in the coming months through addressing residual humanitarian needs and challenges they may face upon returning home, while closely monitoring the security situation.



Credit: UNHCR/R. Abdulah. Pagalungan (4 March 2015)  
Displaced families evacuate in the Old Public Market in Pagalungan, Maguindanao.

## Zamboanga: Long Way Home

Heavy fighting erupted in Zamboanga City between the Government forces and the faction of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in September 2013 that destroyed over 10,000 houses and uprooted some 120,000 people from their homes. While aid rushed in at the outset of the crisis, much of the humanitarian attention and resources was diverted to the central Philippines where Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) hit just two months after the Zamboanga conflict. After a year and half, over 32,000 IDPs remain without

*Protection Cluster will continue to identify IDPs and advocate their basic humanitarian needs until all IDPs are able to find a durable solution to their displacement in Zamboanga*

durable solutions to their displacement in Zamboanga. This includes about 15,000 IDPs who have been staying with host families.

### Securing a sustainable future for all IDPs

Some positive steps have been made in recent months. Displaced families from the island districts of Leha-Leha, Layag-Layag and Simariki have been allowed to temporarily return to their places of origin and access their traditional livelihoods of fishing and seaweed farming.

The City's approval of the Code of Beneficiary Selection Policy for permanent housing this month is also hoped to facilitate fair and transparent allocation of permanent houses to the remaining IDPs. Under the Zamboanga City Roadmap to Recovery and Reconstruction (Z3R), the National Housing Authority is constructing some 6,800 permanent houses across 16 sites planned to be completed by June 2015. So far 827 units have been built, of which 258 units were handed over to IDP families. The majority of permanent houses are to be constructed in coastal areas of Kasanyangan, Mariki, Buggoc and Rio Hondo, which will help the IDPs to rebuild communities in or near their places of origin where they can be self-reliant instead of being dependent on humanitarian assistance as they have been for the past 18 months since they were displaced.

However, significant challenges remain for the Protection Cluster, led by the City Social Welfare Department, to ensure all IDPs are identified and their rights are protected under recognized standards and Philippine law. Most important is that all IDPs are provided a durable solution. The majority of the IDPs are from the indigenous *Sama Badjao* and *Tausug* groups who have been living along the coast of Zamboanga for many years. After their homes were burned during the fighting, some 3,200 IDPs were not recognized as official victims of the conflict partially due to their lack of civil documentation. This may prevent them from receiving the permanent housing assistance similar to all other IDPs. Also of concern is the fate of over 5,000 IDPs who are being supported with rental assistance that will end in June.

In addition to addressing immediate protection issues – such as cases of child labour, gender-based violence, abuse and other forms of exploitation particularly of women – in Mampang and other IDP sites, the Protection Cluster will continue to identify IDPs that have not been properly registered and advocate to ensure basic humanitarian needs are provided until all IDPs are able to find a durable solution to their displacement in Zamboanga.

## IDP women take an active role in camp management

*Inclusion and participation of IDPs in decision-making processes and communal actions are integral to ensuring accountability in camp management*

As the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster in the Philippines describes, “Displacement renders people vulnerable and dependent, and if they additionally become passive beneficiaries of support and assistance, their dependency and therefore their vulnerability are further increased. Actively developing positive partnerships with the camp population is one way of using and developing the capacities, and thereby restoring the independence and dignity of the camp population.”

In Mampang transitional site, which is becoming Zamboanga's largest IDP site, some IDPs take part in several camp committees: water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, health, protection, and nutrition.

A constant fixture in the command post is 27-year-old Sarah, an eight-month pregnant woman busily checking entries in the camp logbook. Until January this year, she worked as a “peacekeeper” to maintain peace and order at the camp, roving



Credit: OCHA/S. Taulani. Zamboanga (March 2015)  
A former “peacekeeper” of Mampang, Sarah continues to volunteer at the camp management office.

*“It is my happiness and fulfillment to be able to help my fellow evacuees. I learn a lot of things and this keeps me busy”.*

- Sarah, IDP volunteer

the boardwalks, visiting bunkhouses and hearing concerns of the fellow IDP families. She would refer illegal activities spotted to the local district council for action, and bring any family disputes to the attention of the camp management office. Even after her term as a peacekeeper ended, she continues to volunteer at the command post. Asked why, “It is my happiness and fulfillment to be able to help my fellow evacuees. I learn a lot of things and this keeps me busy”, she responded.



Credit: OCHA/S. Taulani. Zamboanga (March 2015)  
Sitti also volunteers at the camp management office in Mampang to help the fellow IDPs.

Sitti, a 35-year-old mother of three, also takes time to assist camp managers in the command post. “I love my fellow *Badjaos* and I wanted to serve them in my own little way,” says Sitti. As camp volunteers, Sarah and Sitti work closely with the fellow IDPs, especially those who are illiterate, to ensure they are on the distribution lists. The two volunteers also help camp managers with gathering accurate IDP population data, distributing food packs and attending visitors from the government and aid agencies.

Volunteering provides IDPs with a rewarding opportunity to learn and facilitate the assistance directed to them, to enrich their social life and to gain respect for their own community. Despite the continuous hardships, the two volunteers manage to maintain hope and focus in life. “It is my strong desire to finish college even when I am old. I believe education is a key to success in life”, says Sitti. “I want my children and the fellow *Badjaos* to be educated so that they can learn to resist any discrimination and enjoy life”.

*El Niño is expected to cause reduced rainfall that can result in drought and shortage of water supply in parts of the country.*

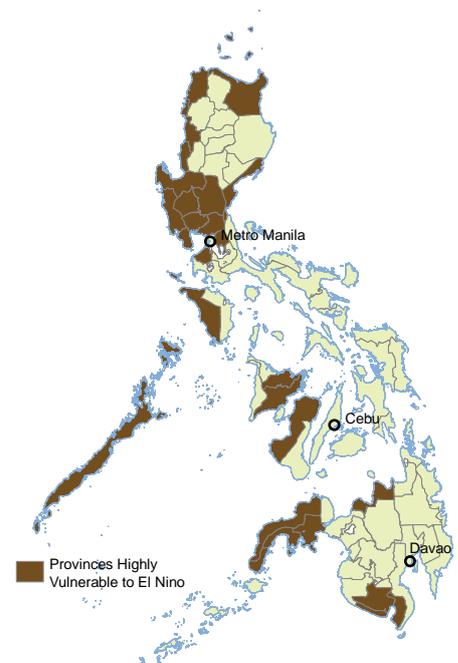
## Weak El Niño in progress

The Philippines is experiencing a weak El Niño that may affect the rainfall patterns across the country up to the end of 2015, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA). The phenomenon may also trigger erratic behaviours of tropical storms in the Asia-Pacific region, influencing their track and intensity. The Philippines is affected by an average of 20 tropical cyclones every year.

El Niño is expected to cause reduced rainfall that can result in drought and shortage of water supply in parts of the country. Water rationing is already in effect in Zamboanga and may be expanded to other areas should the rainfall storage further decreases in April. With less rainfall, shortage of water supply may also affect power supply, especially in places where electricity is sourced from hydropower plants.

The country experienced the worst El Niño on record in 1997-1998 during which nearly 74,000 hectares of agricultural lands in 18 provinces were affected and the country’s rice and corn production during the first half of 1998 dropped by 27 and 44 per cents, respectively. The phenomenon also lead to widespread water shortage including in Metro Manila, as well as forest fires in the nature-rich Palawan and food insecurity in Mindanao.

### Early warning and other adaptation initiatives for the communities



Credit: OCHA  
Source: PAGASA

*Government agencies including PAGASA, DENR and DA intensify public awareness campaigns about the effects of El Niño and adaptation initiatives for communities.*

Since mid-2014, PAGASA issued a series of public announcements on the expected timing and the potential effects of El Niño.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) produced information-education-communication (IEC) materials to raise awareness on El Niño and to promote conservative water consumption through measures including the use of recycled laundry water for gardening and flushing toilets. The DENR also proposed that community and the management boards of protected areas review strategies to implement local regulations against smoking, *Kaingin* (slash-and-burn farming practice) and other risk factors for forest fire.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is fast-tracking the construction of small-scale irrigation projects – including rainwater harvesting and drainage facilities – as well as desilting of reservoirs and canals. Since last year, the DA distributed shallow tube wells and drought-tolerant crop varieties to farmers. The Environmental Science for Social Change, a Jesuit research institute, also organized learning sessions for small-scale farmers in Mindanao. Though rice is the country's primary agricultural product, it is highly vulnerable to drought due to its high water requirement. During the sessions, farmers were given guidance on how to use drought-tolerant crop varieties to mitigate their dependence on rice harvest.

As a more proactive initiative, the DA also coordinates the country's cloud seeding operations – a process to induce rain over watershed areas and drought-affected farmlands.

## In brief

### Humanitarian ID rolled out in the Philippines

The Philippine pilot of Humanitarian ID (H.ID) – a new, online contact management system with centralized authentication mechanism – was rolled out in late February. The H.ID aims to replace traditional contact lists, which are frequently outdated, by allowing aid workers to self-manage their profiles and contact details on a real-time basis and to “check in” to emergencies to which they are responding.

The H.ID development team from OCHA Geneva and Phase 2 Technology conducted induction training for the members of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and Mindanao Humanitarian Team (MHT) as well as NGO partners and government counterparts. The team also gathered feedback to improve the system throughout their two-week mission in the country. To date, nearly 500 humanitarians have registered to be part of the H.ID Philippines contact list. OCHA Philippines and trusted partners in the country will maintain oversight and update the list as necessary, while the development team will continue to fine-tune the system in preparation for the global launch of H.ID later this year.

For further information, please visit: <http://humanitarian.id/>



Credit: OCHA/A.Verity. Manila (2015)

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