

Philippines: Mindanao Earthquake 2019
Information, Communication and Accountability Assessment (ICAA)



Consultation with women in Malasila elementary school evacuation center.

To better understand and validate the information needs, preferred two-way communication channels and accessible accountability mechanisms in various evacuation centers, OCHA conducted series of initial community consultations on behalf of the Mindanao Humanitarian Team (MHT). Using the Information, Communication and Accountability Assessment (ICAA) tool, seven (7) evacuation centers were visited in the municipality of Makilala in North Cotabato.

The ICAA tool is generally used by organizations and teams (or individuals) conducting assessment or any form of consultation to collectively analyze lifesaving and evolving needs of at-risk communities and affected population. This is in terms of inclusive access to information coming from government and other agencies, avenues to provide feedback and opportunity for both government and other sectors to address various gaps and concerns in the overall humanitarian response. Combined focus-group discussions and key-informant interviews were employed in the process of consulting displaced households in Malasila elementary school, Barangay Buena Vida rubber tree plantation area, Boy Scout of the Philippines elementary school, Santos private land, Makilala elementary school and Makilala Institute of Science and Technology.

The conduct of ICAA is not a one-time consultation or assessment but can be adapted as a regular collective approach (as needed and required) in a prolonged displacement situation. OCHA advocates that MHT members and concerned local governments should use or adapt key questions in the ICAA to consistently highlight the importance of information as a form of aid and providing feedback is a basic right of the displaced communities to make responding agencies more accountable of their respective actions.

Background information

Region	12
Province	North Cotabato
Municipality / City	Makilala
Barangays	7 (Batasan, Buena Vida, Buhay, Calibao, Garsika, Luayon and Poblacion)
Evacuation Centres	6 (Malasila elementary school, Barangay Buena Vida rubber tree plantation area, Boy Scout of the Philippines/BSP camp, Santos private land, Makilala elementary school and Makilala Institute of Science and Technology/MIST)
Indigenous people	60 percent (estimate)
Date conducted	From: 29 November 2019 To: 02 December 2019

Number of people in need (if known)	
Number of families in the ECs	2, 457 families/12, 285 people (Malasila, 535; BSP, 395; Santos Land, 300; Makilala, 166; MIST, 905; Buena Vida, 156)
Vulnerable groups interviewed/consulted	4 (Pregnant women, children, persons with disabilities and indigenous people)

Priority (Information needs after 1 month)

- Local government plans on the decampment, earliest time for safe return and possible relocation before the end of the year
- Provision of temporary shelter or permanent shelter
- Livelihood support while in the evacuation centre

Priority (Preferred communication channels after 1 month)

- Government official (local government, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Philippine National Police and the Philippine Army)
- Tribal Chieftain, family, relatives and neighbours
- Local radio
- Use of SMS/Calls

Priority (Accountability mechanisms after 1 month)

- Community assembly to address current status of displaced communities and plans of the local government on their safe return and possible relocation
- Dialogue between government and affected communities on livelihood opportunities
- Consultations on the evolving needs of the displaced communities considering prolonged displacement

1.) On information needs:

- Majority of the displaced communities interviewed and consulted were aware of the humanitarian aid and other support provided by the government (province and local) and other organizations (UN agencies, Philippine Red Cross, international/national/local non-government organizations, civic groups like Rotary and Tzu Chi Foundation, media groups like GMA and ABS-CBN).
- However, most of the displaced communities were not informed of the cash assistance provided by both government and other civic groups in the evacuation centres.
- Majority of the displaced communities were aware of the ongoing consultation meetings on safe return and possible relocation plan of the local government, representatives from the displaced communities (including tribe chieftains), DSWD, Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) and Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).
- Other affected communities observed that the main aid component by the local government and other agencies in the first few weeks was more on relief packs instead of their preferred hot meals and fresh food. Some private group provided a “one-time distribution” of bananas and some vegetables in selected evacuation centres.
- Other displaced households are in need of updates related to shelter assistance (available materials), alternative livelihood (most rubber tree plantations were affected and damaged), cash (as part of transportation cost going back to respective residences, means to buy fresh food and hot meals and shelter materials).
- There is a confusion on the messaging by the local government and PHIVOLCs as regards declaration of no build zone and high risk zone. Most affected households seek more detailed and transparent information as to when they can all safely return back to their respective properties.

2.) On preferred communication channels:

- Aside from local government, concerned agencies like DSWD and the Department of Health/DOH, displaced communities trusted the Philippine Army or PNP stationed in each evacuation centre as one of the sources of information for updates including distribution of humanitarian aid.
- Majority are still relying on local radio and use of SMS/calls. Both radio and SMS/calls are the common reliable communication platforms used even before the earthquake.
- Those with limited access to radio and have lost their mobile phones are dependent on family members, friends, relatives and neighbours for information and other updates.
- In some evacuation centres, affected communities are using feedback box as a channel to communicate with camp coordinators and the local government.



Some displaced communities preferred feedback box to engage and communicate with camp coordinators and local government.

3.) On accountability mechanisms:

- Majority expect that before Christmas (25 December 2019) the local government will call for a general community assembly to clearly discuss the procedure for their safe return and any plans for temporary or permanent relocations.
- Series of consultations between local government and affected communities are expected by those interviewed to happen at some point to know more about their evolving needs while staying longer in the evacuation centres. While those consulted are relatively satisfied with the provision of food and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and some psychosocial activities, most of them worry about prolonged displacement.
- Vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, persons with disabilities, farmers (rubber tree and banana plantation) and indigenous people should be properly consulted in terms of their specific needs the longer they stay in the evacuation centres.
- Military/police personnel and other designated camp coordinator are leaving various evacuation centres by first week of December. Displaced communities must be informed of the transition plan from region to the province in terms of the role and function in the overall camp management and camp coordination.

- Both the government and other humanitarian agencies should be more sensitive of the evolving needs of the displaced communities in anticipation of the possible prolonged displacement.
- Prolonged displacement would mean more protection issues to be anticipated and should be addressed in the shorter time possible.
- Early recovery issues and concerns must be properly and inclusively communicated with the displaced communities to combat confusion and rumours circulating around early safe return and possible temporary or permanent relocation.
- Displaced communities are constantly reminded that they cannot stay longer at schools used as evacuation centres.

Recommendations

- Follow-up conduct of ICAA as part of community consultation, evaluation and monitoring. MHT could adapt the ICAA as a collective and systematic process to consolidate data in consulting the affected population.
- Identify collective common service platforms in line with the ICAA findings that would directly engage displaced communities and would help in the improvement of any community engagement/accountability activities inside the evacuation centres.

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