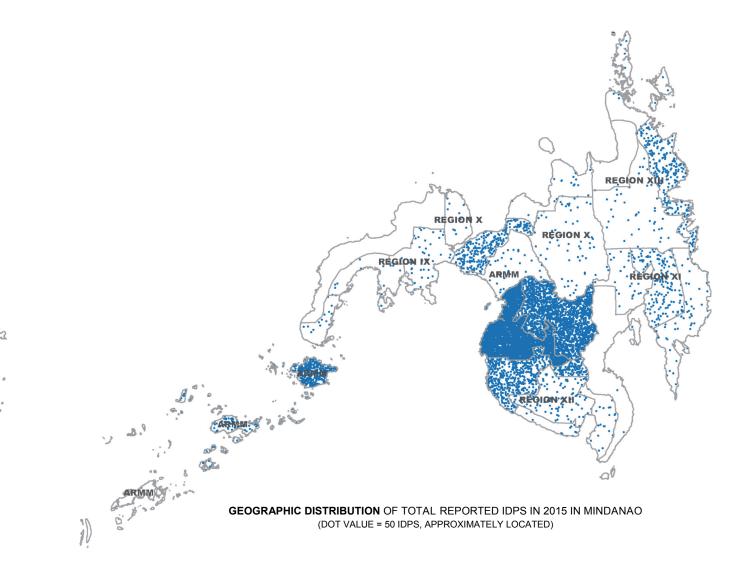
# DISPLACEMENT DASHBOARD Mindanao, Philippines Forced Displacement Annual Report, 2015

The UN Refugee Agency

protectioncluster MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES

# **MINDANAO DISPLACEMENT AT A GLANCE**

Forced displacement due to various forms of conflict and natural disaster continue to confront most of the marginalized and vulnerable population in Mindanao. In 2015, a total of 407,397 persons have been forced to flee their homes of which around 37,000 persons have been repeatedly displaced mostly because of armed conflict, clan war, and generalized form of violence including human rights violations. These conflict-related displacements recorded an increase of 127% compared to 2014. The largest of which was the Law Enforcement Operation of government forces against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) which displaced more than 148,000 persons in central Mindanao. To date, durable solutions among these displaced population continue to be a pressing concern especially in an environment where peace and order remains to be elusive.



WARSH.

Central Mindanao Island Provinces Eastern Mindanao-IPs

# ARMED CONFLICT Related Displacement

Non-international armed conflicts are protracted armed confrontations occurring between governmental armed forces and the forces of one or more armed groups, or between such groups arising on the territory of a State [party to the Geneva Conventions]. The armed confrontation must reach a minimum level of intensity and the parties involved in the conflict must show a minimum of organisation. This category also includes cases where there is an allegation of an unusual presence of armed groups that results in people seeking safety elsewhere, as well as where arbitrary detentions, disappearances or raids are initiated by a recognized armed group that targets civilian community.

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('How is the Term "Armed Conflict" Defined in International Humanitarian Law?' International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC Opinion Paper, March 2008)

The UN Refugee Agency

protectioncluster



# **Armed Conflict Displacement: Central Mindanao**

In 2015, displacement resulting from armed conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and recognized armed groups recorded the largest number of people forcibly displaced in a single year in central Mindanao and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) since 2011.

In the first quarter of 2015 alone, Mindanao experienced the largest displacement since the rejection of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) in 2008<sup>1</sup>.

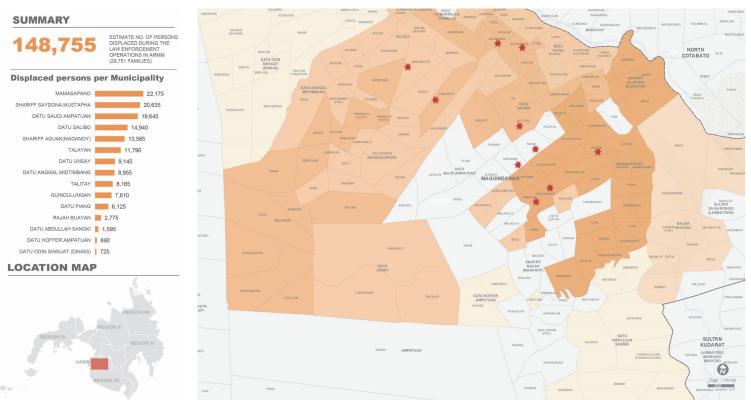
By the end of December 2015, 233,887 persons had been forcibly displaced in central Mindanao. The large majority, over 80%, was displaced in the ARMM. Armed clashes between the AFP and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) continue to be the main driver of displacement in the provinces of North Cotabato and Maguindanao.

The largest single displacement took place in February following what is known as the Mamasapano incident – when

44 members of the Special Action Forces (SAF) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) were killed along with 18 members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and six (6) civilians – and the subsequent declaration of the AFP's All - Out Offensive and Law Enforcement Operation (LEO) against the BIFF that lasted until the end of March uprooting over 148,000 persons. The military's all-out offensive was gradually scaled down but its impact on the displaced and affected population was felt until August with reduced, but continuing LEOs.

A thousand IDPs were still recorded by the Protection Cluster members six months after the initial conflict. IDPs who had initially returned home, had to go back to informal displacement sites or in host communities because they did not feel safe in their villages due to continued, sporadic clashes between the AFP and the BIFF. Some were also unable to return without government support for the rehabilitation of their damaged or destroyed houses. At the

> page 5



#### MAP 2: GEOGRAPHIC DISTIRBUTION OF IDPS IN MAGUINDANAO DURING LEO IN FEBRUARY 2015

<sup>1</sup>http://www.mindanews.com/peace-process/2015/07/30/beyond-mamasapano-tough-road-still-ahead-for-bangsamoro-peace/



## Armed Conflict Displacement: Central Mindanao

time of the publication of this document, these issues remain a concern for populations repeatedly displaced by this conflict.

The Mamasapano incident had negative repercussions on the deliberation of the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) in the Congress and Senate hearings, while non-state armed actors also took advantage of the precarious state of the peace process to continue attacks on government and military targets throughout the year.

The BIFF harassment of military detachments in the towns of Datu Saudi Ampatuan (Barangay Salbo), Datu Salibo (Barangay Pagatin), Mamasapano, and Shariff Aguak (SPMS box) in Maguindanao during the height of the LEOs continued unabated. BIFF attacks on civilian communities in MILF-stronghold areas in North Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces, and in communities with identified internal conflict with other BIFF member, further confounded the complex security situation in the area.

Early November, the BIFF tried but failed to overrun a military detachment displacing 30 families (estimated 150

persons) in the municipality of Shariff Aguak. On Christmas Eve, the BIFF launched synchronized attacks on military detachments, which resulted in 232 families (estimated 1,039 persons) being displaced from their homes in Pigkawayan municipality in North Cotabato province.

Overall, during the last quarter of the year, incidents documented by Protection Cluster members resulted in the displacement of 260 families (estimated 1,189 persons) in central Mindanao.

A new armed-group called the Ansar Khilafah Philippines (AKP), claiming to support the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), emerged in Palimbang municipality of Sultan Kudarat province causing fear amongst communities in the area. The group's activities were thwarted in a pursuit operation conducted by the Philippine Marines, which resulted in the displacement of 50 families (estimated 250 persons) in late November. This group, and other small radical groups, contributes to the displacement of civilian populations in areas where there are unresolved conflicts between the MILF, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and government forces.

#### **MINDANAO PEACE PROCESS**

The year concluded with no significant progress made in the passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which would have laid down the foundation of an autonomous political entity, the Bangsamoro, thus paving the way to lasting peace with the MILF. In the absence of a law instituting the new Bangsamoro entity, armed groups are likely to continue engaging the AFP with ensuing LEOs and subsequent displacement. Protection Cluster partners advocate for the pursuit of peace in Mindanao as it is the primary condition for all the population of Mindanao - particularly those most marginalized and under threat - to see their human rights fulfilled and for the displaced to find a durable solution to their plight.



#### Armed Conflict Displacement: Island Provinces, ARMM

While the AFP continues their LEOs against remaining members of the BIFF in central Mindanao, they also carried out offensives in the island provinces of the ARMM in Basilan and Sulu. These operations, conducted against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), have resulted in displacement and destruction of civilian properties and public structures.

From January to December, Protection Cluster members have reported six (6) incidents of armed confrontations between the AFP and the ASG, which resulted in the forcible displacement of 3,715 families (estimated 20,421 persons) from five municipalities in Basilan and Sulu provinces.

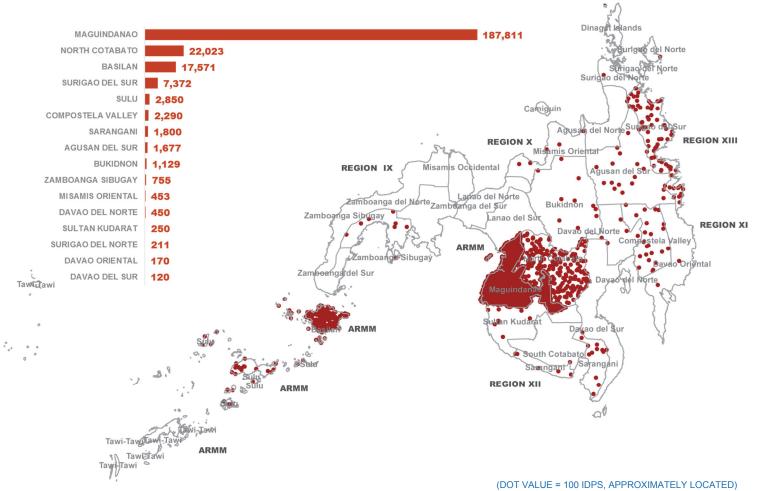
Most of the affected IDPs come from the municipality of Al Barka in Basilan province, reportedly the current stronghold area of the ASG. All IDPs have returned to their places of origin with displacement lasting three months on average.

Timely and adequate intervention and accurate reporting of displacement in the island provinces remain a challenge due to the lack of access because of the security situation.

The main protection issue reported by local authorities in the region is the absence of formal evacuation sites in their respective villages, which explains why thousands of persons are hosted by their friends and relatives in other towns and villages, making the monitoring of IDP movement even more challenging. However, with ongoing conflict in and around communities, the establishment of evacuation sites may not provide a suitable safe haven for IDPs.

As long as military operations are ongoing, it is expected that substantial displacement will continue to occur in central Mindanao, mainland ARMM, and the ARMM island provinces.





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#### Armed Conflict Displacement: Central Mindanao



#### Displaced and disillusioned in Maguindanao

**MAMASAPANO, The Philippines** – In this seemingly sleepy town in the southern island of Mindanao, as in many other towns in the area, peace has yet to materialize in spite of years of an ongoing peace process. For the people who live here, fear and displacement have been unwanted features of everyday life for generations.

"We have grown tired of this game of hide-and-seek," said Guibanea Lasam, a mother of 7 camped out in a madrasah just a few kilometers from where a mis-encounter between government security forces and the armed groups, the Mindanao Islamic Liberation Force (MILF) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) took place on 25 January this year. The incident jeopardized a three-year ceasefire and led to events that caused thousands of civilians to flee their homes in its aftermath.

Considered as one of the world's longest running insurgencies, the armed clashes between the state forces and Moros seeking some form of independence in the central region of Mindanao have been ongoing for 4 decades now and has over the years generated hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people who are usually left fending for themselves in congested and unplanned informal settlements such as Mahad Libutan. Many families are displaced multiple times during the same year.

"In peaceful mornings we sneak into our home village so we could harvest our crops and we retreat back in the evacuation center when darkness falls," said Guibanea recounting the usual order of things every time clashes break out in the area. The fighting has now spread to neighboring villages causing other civilians to flee fearing arrest for being suspected of being in alliance with the BIFF or getting caught in crossfire and mortar shelling.

Since leaving their homes, people are desperate to return to their communities so they could resume their livelihoods as living conditions in the evacuation centers are becoming dire and relief assistance limited or non-existent.

"We want to go home. The assistance provided is not enough and sometimes we don't even receive food packs," said Guibanea. "The last time

we evacuated here, the relief goods were abundant," she added.

Just across from Guibanea's make-shift tent is a gathering of elderly women taking advantage of the cool afternoon breeze under a mango tree. Their welcoming smiles betray the years of witnessing constant gunfights and mortar shelling and their repeated displacement since they were teenagers.

"We are a very lucky lot. All the years of loud explosions coming from guns and battle tanks have rendered us deaf," laughed a 75-year old Kolot Mama from the neighboring town of Shariff Aguak. "At least we won't easily die of shock or pass out," chorused the group.

Amid the laughter shared by these women are stories of loss, suffering and families torn apart by the decades-long conflict. Their husbands had either joined the ranks of militant groups or perished in the fighting. Their children have grown up not completing school and joined the long list of the unemployed poor.

"We don't need anyone guarding us in our communities. We are not scared of going home. In fact, we have not unpacked our things as we thought they would allow us to return today. But then we wait for another day, and then another day goes by and then nothing. We've just grown weary of moving between places," said Kolot.

Elder people have also expressed their concern over the presence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in their communities. They say that the establishment of military posts in villages has limited their ability to move freely around without fearing for their safety.

"If I were to count the number of steps I took from all the running all these years, I think I have already explored the whole archipelago," said Kolot. "It would have been better if I was running for a cause. People are fleeing from a false idea of peace, that peace can be achieved by fighting is something I will never understand. I am at the twilight of my life and I may never see peace in this lifetime," she added. **END** 

By Keneath John Bolisay and Joel Andersson, UNHCR Philippines



### Armed Conflict Displacement: Zamboanga City

More than two years after fighting erupted between the AFP and a faction of the MNLF in Zamboanga City, driving 120,000 persons to flee from the mainly Moro communities, 4,117 families (estimated 23,938 persons) are still in need of a durable solution. While progress is gradually being made through the Zamboanga Roadmap to Recovery and Reconstruction (Z3R) Plan led by the city authorities, serious protection concerns still exist for those IDPs living in inadequate relocation sites identified and supported by international organizations.

As of December 2015, out of the targeted 6,500 permanent housing units to be constructed, only 2,338 (36%) have been built. Of this figure, 869 (13%) were awarded to beneficiaries. The slow pace of the rehabilitation efforts particularly on permanent housing construction is attributed to the lengthy process of expropriating lands for access road, installation of basic utilities, and the objective selection and inclusion of the most vulnerable, landless displaced population.

Improvements are needed for these transitory sites and permanent shelter sites where access to basic services such as adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, electricity, security, and access road (i.e. Kasanyangan) are outstanding concerns. Local authorities are working to address these issues, but the completion of these facilities is expected to take up to two years.

Although the cluster system has transitioned to an early recovery coordination structure in June, Protection Cluster actors continue to provide technical support to all the sectorleads with their main advocacy concerns focused on ensuring permanent shelter is constructed for all IDPs in areas where they can obtain basic services and immediately access their livelihoods, health care and education.

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For more than two years now, durable solutions for displaced population remain to be a major challenge. These IDPs in Mampang Transitory Site continue to endure their situation while waiting for their return or relocation.







## Armed Conflict Displacement: Zamboanga City

MAP 4: IDPS STILL IN NEED OF DURABLE SOLUTIONS IN ZAMBOANGA CITY AS OF DECEMBER 2015



The major positive development in 2015 was the facilitation of returns of IDPs to their communities of origin such as Mariki and Rio Hondo. IDPs from island villages such as Layag-Layag, Leha-Leha, and Simariki have been allowed to return temporarily to their habitual places of residence. A series of relocation exercises were also carried out to move IDPs from Mampang, the initial transit location where humanitarian living conditions have never met basic standards, to the largest agreed permanent housing site in Kasanyangan where IDPs can more easily access their livelihoods and other essential services.

The closure of the Grandstand in July 2015, which used to shelter 411 families, was also welcomed by IDPs and humanitarian actors. However, the lack of support provided to IDPs to relocate to new locations, including their communities of origin, were not in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement; including voluntariness, and in safety with dignity. Of the IDPs relocated from the Grandstand, there were families who were allowed to temporarily return to Lupa-Lupa living in makeshift shelters, while others were transferred to Mariki Elementary School without adequate water and other services.

A total of 1,224 families (estimated 7,638 persons) in homebased settings were reassessed in December 2015 and have been confirmed to be living still with their host families for more than two years now. The re-profiling originated from the concern that many of the home-based IDPs who are not in identified transit sites are not being equally prioritized for permanent housing and are not being included in the rehabilitation activities.

Reconstruction and rehabilitation activities are constantly being realized by local authorities, development and humanitarian actors. The planned joint civil documentation project for indigenous minority group in transitory sites spearheaded by the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) in coordination with the City Legal Office, the Local Civil Registrar, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), and the Governance and Rule of Law sector members with support from UNHCR in issuing or reconstituting civil records and other legal documents including birth, marriage and death certificates is set to be implemented in February 2016.

The island communities are being revitalized as support is being provided for the reconstruction and the restarting of livelihoods through the provision of Quick Impact Projects such as the seaweed solar dryers and outrigger boats in Layag-Layag and Leha-Leha and the boardwalk in Simariki, with the help of UNHCR, implemented by the church group Peace Advocate Zamboanga (PAZ) and other non-government organizations including UnyPhil-Women, to enable IDPs to return to their places of origin and reestablish normalcy.



## **Armed Conflict Displacement: Indigenous People**

The year marked a more pronounced and deteriorating picture of the plight of indigenous communities in Mindanao due to the complex security situation involving the AFP, the rebel group New Peoples' Army (NPA), and para-military groups. Compared to an annual average of 400 displaced IP families (estimated 2,000 persons) from the two previous years, 2015 posted a much higher number of 3,198 families (estimated 17,035 persons) displaced from January to December throughout Mindanao. Instances of attacks by paramilitary groups, including targeted killings and forced displacement occurred almost each month if not more.

Policing operations undertaken by state security forces and retaliatory attacks from non-state armed actors within and around IP communities in Mindanao have caused fear and insecurity. Of the 28 incidents recorded in Regions IX (Zamboanga), X (Northern Mindanao), XI (Davao), XII (SOCCSKSARGEN), and XIII (Caraga), 24 of these incidents have caused the displacement and human rights violations of 3,154 families of IP descent (estimated 15,417 persons) while 742 families (estimated 3,015 persons) fled from AFP and NPA armed encounters. These incidents include reported attacks and killings of IP leaders and activists, forced recruitment into various armed groups, extra-judicial killings, and reported arbitrary arrests from March to October 2015.

Human rights groups and volunteers have identified the followina issues affecting IPs that triaaer forced displacement: (1) economic interests of national and multi-national companies (agro-industrial and mining), including influential local landlords and businessmen seeking access to the mineral-rich soil of IP's ancestral lands; (2) extra-judicial killings (EJKs) which cause conflict. displacement, and divides amongst IP groups; (3) difficulty in obtaining

Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles due to overlapping laws that complicate land claims of IPs. The lack of protection of these ancestral rights forces IPs off their land often because of conflict. (4) IP representatives and CHR officers have also raised concerns on the capacity and effectiveness of the protection provided by the National



▲ Displaced indigenous population in Tandag City remain away from their homes and in dire situation in evacuation center. They continue to demand justice for the killing of their tribal leaders.

Commission on the Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and the implementation of its mandate enshrined in the Indigenous Peoples Act of 1997 (IPRA Law).

Protection actors, local authorities and international organizations have increased their calls for more protection of the IP population. The UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of IDPs, Chaloka Beyani, visited the UCCP compound in Davao City last July, which was then sheltering 700 IPs from Talaingod and Kapalong villages. Dr Beyani highlighted the lack of focus on this most vulnerable population, the indigenous peoples, who are potential victims of government involved extraction and business projects<sup>2</sup>. Likewise, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli - Corpuz, released a statement in September urging the Philippine government to launch an investigation to the spate of human rights violations committed against IPs in Mindanao<sup>3</sup>.

As of December 2015, approximately 8,090 IPs remain displaced not able to return to their communities of origin because of security concerns.

# CLAN FEUD Related Displacement

A type of violent conflict variously referred to as feuding, revenge killings, blood revenge, vendetta, inter-tribal warfare and clan conflicts. Characterized by sporadic outbursts of retaliatory violence between tamilies and kinship groups as well as communities this phenomenon frequently occurs in areas where government or a central authority is weak and in areas where there is a perceived lack of justice and security.

> ido: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao.' The Asia Foundation, 2007)

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#### **Clan Feud - Related Displacement**

Competing land claims, political differences, and division Lanao del Norte province has flared up twice in the year, contributed to 8 percent of recorded displacement in 2015. Of the 31 security incidents monitored, 18 of these have been reported to cause the displacement of 7,759 families (estimated 41,038 persons) in Central Mindanao, the island provinces and mainland provinces of ARMM, and a contiguous area of the ARMM.

The enduring land disputes in North Cotabato and border areas in Sultan Kudarat and Maguindanao provinces continue to trigger high levels of violence and forced displacement among its Moro (Maguindanaon), Christian (llonggo) settlers and in other parts, indigenous peoples (Manobos and Tedurays).

Fighting over the control of strategic patches of lands in the area, which is a productive 40-hectare agricultural zone, located along the tri-boundary of Columbio, Datu Paglas and Tulunan municipalities in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao and North Cotabato provinces respectively, has resulted in the combined and repetitive displacement of 2,597 families (estimated 12,539 persons) as of end of 2015. Nine (9) civilians killed were killed as a result of armed encounter.

According to local residents, despite efforts from the local authorities to settle the land conflict over the years, armed skirmishes have continued over time and could still flare anytime, especially during harvest seasons.

In some instances, intra-Moro conflict arises over land control and is further aggravated either by affiliations to, or through seeking support from established non-state armed groups such as the MILF, MNL, BIFF, and the ASG. Six (6) incidents attributed to this type of 'horizontal' conflict forced 2,194 families (estimated 13,080 persons) to flee their homes in North Cotabato, Maguindanao, and Sultan Kudarat provinces.

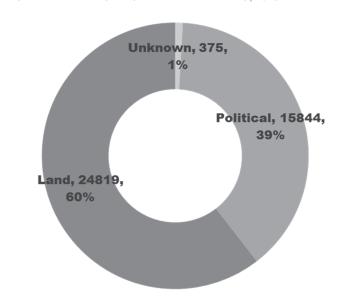
A simmering conflict between two political families in Pantar,

resulting in a firefight and triggering the displacement of 2,145 families (estimated 11,429 persons) from eight (8) barangays and reportedly injured four persons. As of reporting time, tension remains high in the area with the election period approaching.

In April, the displacement of more than 400 families (approximately 1,800 persons) in Wao in Lanao del Sur was prompted by an attack that killed four (4) and wounded seven (7) persons in a Moro community. Tensions and division between the Moro community and Christian settlers are growing despite efforts by the AFP, ARMM authorities and MILF leaders to calm the situation. A Christian organization has called for Wao to be excluded from the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

In Sulu, a political rivalry in the municipality of Old Panamao caused the displacement of 500 families (estimated 2,500 persons) in mid-April.

In the island provinces, two incidents of clan feud in the municipality of Al Barka in Basilan province erupted in October and November, resulting in the combined



#### **CHART 1: PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF CAUSES OF CLAN** FEUD - RELATED DISPLACEMENT IN MINDANAO, 2015



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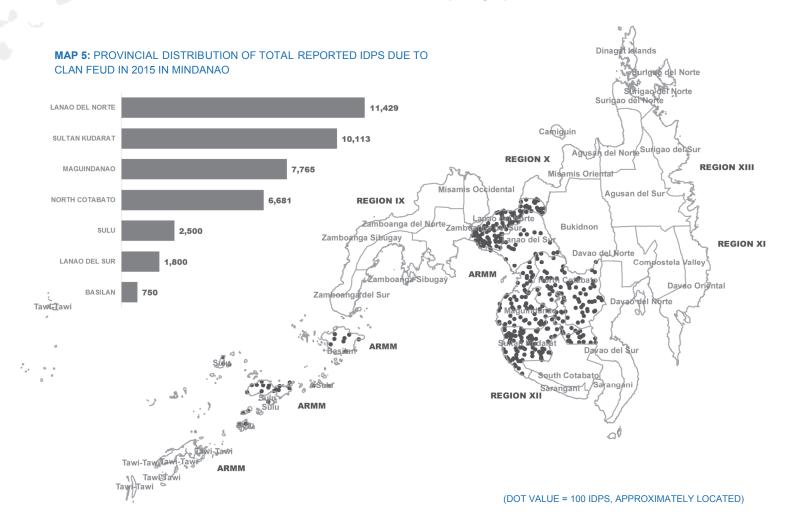
## **Clan Feud - Related Displacement**

displacement of 135 families (estimated 750 persons). Clan feuds in the island provinces are reported to prompt clan members to join the ASG to seek further protection and reinforcement from clan wars they have been initially involved in<sup>4</sup>.

Protection Cluster members have identified these main protection issues associated with clan feud displacements: (1) inadequate access to humanitarian assistance; (2) fluid movement of IDPs due to insecurity e.g. IDPs visit their farms at daytime and return to evacuation camps at nighttime; (3) burning of houses; (4) killing of minors; and (5) murder of civilians.



▲ Of the total reported population displaced due to clan feud in 2015, around 10% has been repeatedly displaced due to unresolved cases of *rido*. Most often these displaced population find themselves in evacuation centers or host families for a prolonged period of time.



# NATURAL DISASTER Related Displacement



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## **Natural Disaster - Related Displacement**

The most vulnerable communities and families weakened by pre-emptive evacuation in the last guarter of 2015 in Region years of conflict suffered the double displacement whammy of natural and man-made disasters in Mindanao. By the end of 2015, displacement from natural disasters uprooted 24,337 families (estimated 119,427 persons) in six (6) regions.

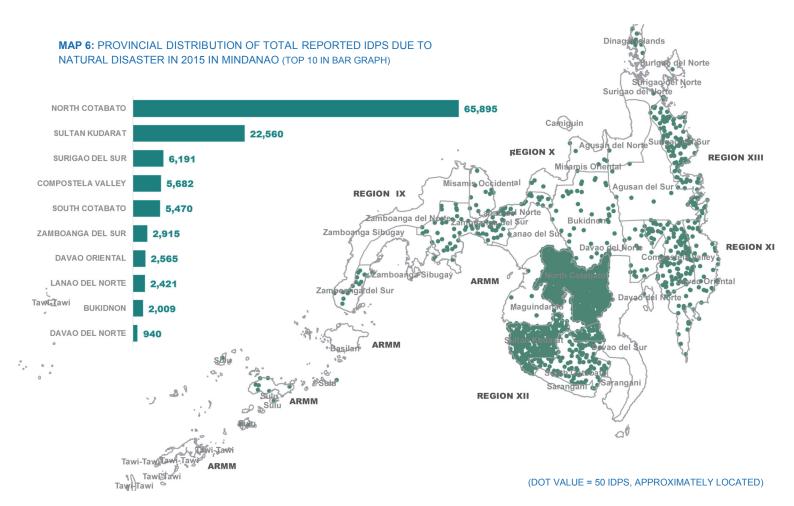
Throughout the year, displacement was caused either by flooding due to heavy rainfall in low-lying areas, or by pre-emptive evacuations ordered by local authorities before imminent flooding and landslides.

In Western Mindanao, around 583 families (estimated 2,915 persons) were displaced because of flashfloods in Zamboanga del Sur and 3,495 families (estimated 16,350 persons) were reported displaced in three instances of XI (Davao Oriental, Davao del Norte, and Compostela Valley) and Caraga region.

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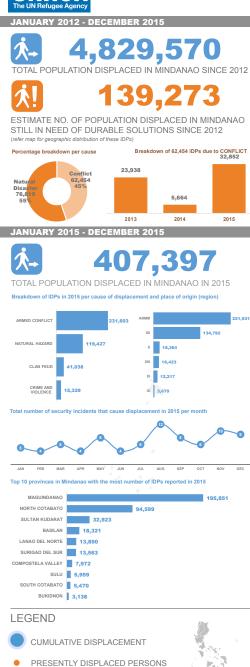
Central Mindanao posted the largest displacement from rain and flooding with 20,259 families (estimated 100,162 persons) who fled their homes in Region X (Misamis Oriental, Misamis Occidental, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, and Bukidnon), Region XII (North Cotabato, South Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat) and the ARMM (Maguindanao and Sulu).

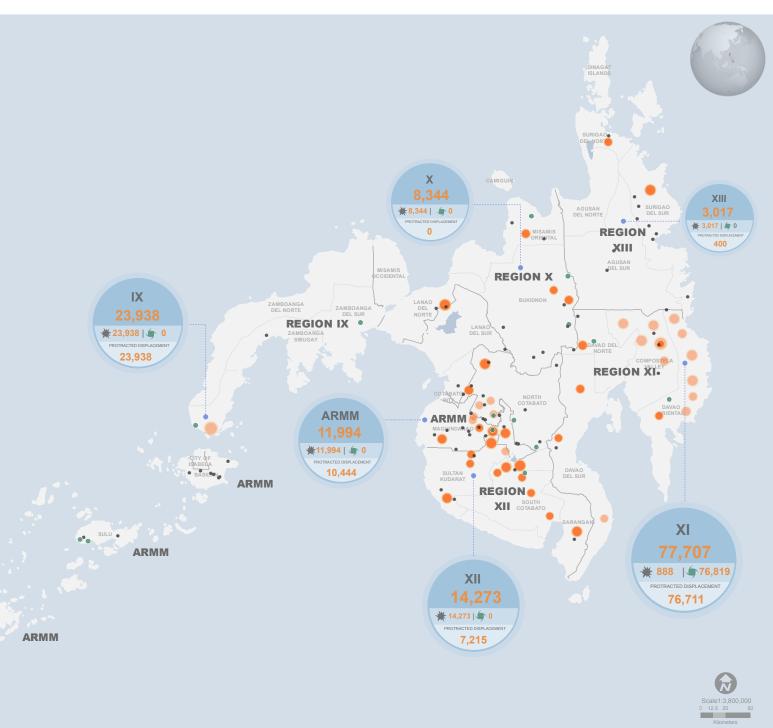
It should be emphasized that the same IDPs who continue to bear the brunt of armed conflict are the ones affected by the yearly flooding from typhoons and monsoon rains in many of the same areas.





As of 31 December 2015





SOURCES: UNHCR, Protection Cluster

ARMED CONFLICT INCIDENT

NATURAL DISASTER INCIDENT

CREATION DATE: 19 February 2016 FEEDBACK: phicoprc@unhcr.org

DISCLAIMER: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



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