
PROTECTION FORUM

TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

Firefights broke out between ISIS inspired militants and the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur on the afternoon of 23 May 2017. On the same day, President Rodrigo Duterte issued Proclamation No. 216 declaring a state of Martial Law in the entire island of Mindanao for an initial period of sixty (60 days) which was subsequently extended for another period of six (6) months until 31 December 2017 and once more until 31 December 2018.

The conflict led to displacement of 98% of the total civilian population of Marawi City (201,785 individuals) who sought refuge with families, relatives and friends (96%) and in evacuation centers (4%) in Iligan City and nearby cities and municipalities in Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte. The crisis also affected economic and trade activities in nearby municipalities which also led to displacement.

On May 27, 2017, the Government set up the Regional Command Center (RCC) composed of ARMM Regional Government, Field Offices 10 and 12. On June 17, 2017, the national Government managed the response and established the National Emergency Operations Center in Iligan City with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSW) as the cluster lead for Protection of Internally Displaced Population (IDP). On July 26, 2017 the national response cluster was deactivated and the Government established Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM), a multi-agency task force designated to oversee the early recovery and rehabilitation of Marawi City.

With this shift in priority (i.e. from relief to early recovery and rehabilitation), placing protection at the heart of the response is taking a backseat. Hence, the need to ensure that protection should always be at the center not only of humanitarian actions but includes recovery and rehabilitation initiatives. It is imperative to supplement and provide support to duty bearers (as a way of reminder also) to continuously address the protection needs of displaced populations as government prioritizes the movement towards recovery and rehabilitation.

In order to realize this, it is thus necessary for a multi-sectoral fora such as the Protection Forum to ensure the continuance of putting the protection needs of displaced populations on the forefront of any relief, recovery, and rehabilitation programs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The work of protection forum will be guided by the protection minimum standards in humanitarian action. The core humanitarian principles of the humanitarian imperative, neutrality, impartiality, independence, and do no harm principles, respect for culture and customs shall be followed by its members.

The protection forum members will ensure and take all measures including the confidentiality of the information, to ensure that its work will not lead to any violence, neglect or exploitation. No individual sensitive cases will be discussed during the meetings of protection forum especially Child Protection & Gender based violence (GBV) related cases.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF PROTECTION FORUM

The overall objective of the protection forum is to uphold the rights of the vulnerable population affected by the Marawi conflict and ensure persons affected by the conflict have access to safe and dignified services that mitigate and respond to rights violations.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Protection Forum, convened and facilitated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), aims to put protection at the centre of humanitarian action and commits:

1. To share information on protection risks, needs, and facilitate coordination and intervention among Government, UN agencies, international inter-governmental organizations, humanitarian organizations, non-government organizations and civil society organizations involved in IDP response programs and projects;
2. To assist various member agencies in identifying protection risks, gaps and needs, and develop appropriate prevention and response strategies;
3. To identify training needs and undertake capacity building of Government agencies, local government units, humanitarian organizations, civil society organizations and communities of displaced population on IDP relevant issues such as protection, protection monitoring and reporting, establishment and maintenance of protection referral mechanisms, rights of Internally Displaced Population, Mine Risk Education, paralegal training, human rights documentation, gender-based violence in emergencies, DRRM, through inter-agency training initiatives etc.;
4. To facilitate the development of joint advocacy materials on specific protection issues and available intervention strategies provided by various actors;
5. To collectively engage and respond to the humanitarian needs of the displaced population as part of its accountability and to support existing Government structures and affected communities in addressing situations of displacement;
6. To develop a referral pathway and a tracking mechanism on the progress of protection issues raised by the members and collectively respond to the issues.

MEMBERSHIP

The Protection Forum aims to convene humanitarian and developmental organizations and agencies engaged in protection including government agencies, UN Agencies and civil society organizations.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Forum shall closely coordinate and will provide support to the Areas of Responsibility to wit: Regional Child Protection Working Group (RCPWG), Gender Based Violence Working Group (GBV), and other Working Groups under the umbrella of protection that may be activated such as Communication and Community Engagement Working Group, Housing, Land and Property and Mine Action.

MEETINGS

The Forum shall convene every month on a Thursday at 8:30 am until close of business (no later than 12 NN). The meeting venue will be announced days prior to the forum until we are able to determine a regular venue. The meeting agenda will be circulated before the meeting. If applicable, a read-out of urgent protection issues will be circulated the same day. The minutes of the meeting will be circulated to members the day after the protection forum meeting. The forum may hold ad-hoc meeting upon request of any member to address emerging and/or urgent protection issues.