



Municipal Protection Profile conducted in Agusan del Sur

La Paz



Municipality of La Paz

Province of Agusan del Sur | Region XIII: Caraga

Overview

Risk rating: High ■■■

Quick facts

The Municipality of La Paz, or La Paz, is a first-class municipality in the province of Agusan del Sur, Caraga region. It is a landlocked municipality that is part of the Agusan River Basin. La Paz has a total land area of 1,481.12 square kilometers and is composed of 15 barangays. The municipality covers about 15 percent of Agusan del Sur's total land area.

La Paz has a total population of 28,217 based on the census conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in 2015. Its population is 4.03 percent of the province's population, and 1.09 percent of the total population of Caraga region. Although La Paz is a first-class municipality, the poverty incidence of La Paz is 58.44 percent.

As per the PSA's record, 50 percent of the residents of La Paz are male and 50 percent are female. Also, 41 percent of the municipality's population are children, 40 percent are adults, and 19 percent are elderly persons.



A majority of La Paz's gainfully employed workers aged 15 years old and above are skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers and manual laborers or those who are engaged in basic occupation. Manual labor, as defined by the PSA, is work that involves "simple and routine tasks which may require the use of handheld tools and considerable physical effort."



Population

28,217



Families

5,643



Income Class

1st Class



Land Area

1,481.12sq.km.



Barangays

15



Climate type

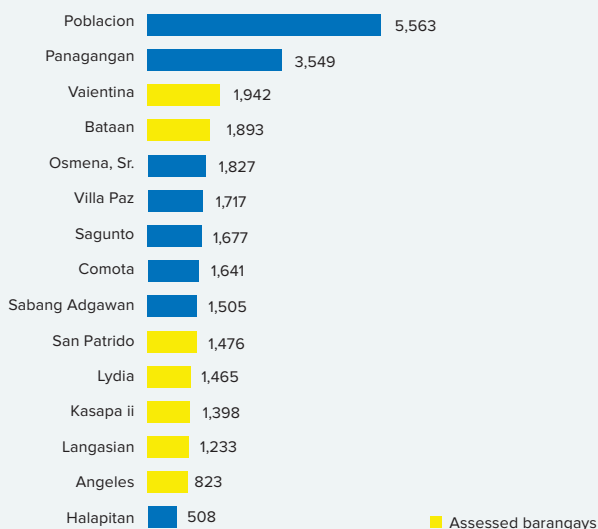
Tropical



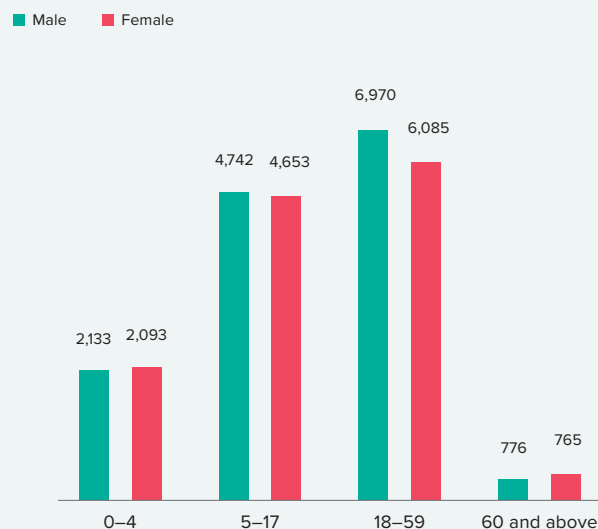
Languages spoken

Agusan, Butuanon, Cebuano, Higaonon, Tagalog

Population¹ by barangay



Population¹ by sex and age group



¹ 2015 Census of Population, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)

Assessed barangays

The table below shows the population of barangays in La Paz that were assessed for the MPP.

Barangay	No. of HH	No. of Families	No. of People	No. of Male	No. of Female	No. of Children	No. of Adults	No. of Elders
Angeles	250	300	869	500	369	405	359	105
Bataan	430	438	1,987	917	1,070	561	820	606
Kasapa II	360	365	2,256	1,010	1,246	896	650	710
Langasian	236	305	1,305	657	648	583	627	95
Lydia	498	563	1,569	872	697	519	625	425
San Patricio	283	291	2,115	1,022	1,093	892	1,167	56
Valentina	310	318	1,129	619	510	729	320	80
TOTAL	2,057	2,580	11,230	5,597	5,633	4,585	4,568	2,077

Protection Profile Summary

The Municipality of La Paz in Agusan del Sur can be placed in a 'High' risk rating due to the municipality's exposure to natural and human-induced hazards in the area, compounded by existing vulnerabilities and protection risks. Recently, an armed attack by the New People's Army led to the killing of a member of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in La Paz, Agusan del Sur on May 30, 2019. Previous incidents of displacement due to armed conflict included an armed encounter in 2015, which forced 17 families to evacuate to nearby municipality of Cabanglasan, Bukidnon for their safety. This incident was cited in a Protection Cluster report released in October 2015.

Meanwhile, aside from the clashes between the NPA and AFP, La Paz residents reported presence of other armed groups like the Magahat and 'Rebeldeng Bukot-Bukot'. These armed groups allegedly extort money and perpetrate conflict and violence in the municipality. On December 2016, the provincial government called on the Magahat to stop the atrocities in upland villages of La Paz and Loreto which claimed the lives of 20 residents. The atrocities committed by the paramilitary group in Agusan del Sur forced the impoverished farmers to abandon their farms due to fear.

Aside from armed conflict, the municipality is also prone to natural hazards. In 2017, the residents of La Paz were affected by flooding. Flood waters reached 6 feet high, and almost all of the houses in Brgy. Angeles were destroyed. As a result, some residents of the municipality were relocated. However, the relocation site is also prone to landslides, as reported by the community. With the recent earthquakes that took place in Mindanao, in



which La Paz was jolted by a 4.2 quake, the possibility of occurrence of landslides is high.

While the frequency of occurrence of man-made and natural hazards is high, existing vulnerabilities in the area underpin the high-risk rating of the municipality. While La Paz is a first class municipality in terms of income, it has a 60 percent poverty incidence, and vulnerable communities have limited access to basic services.

Given the risks the communities face, almost all of the participants reported that the duty-bearers need to improve their services to the communities before, during, and after emergencies. Moreover, majority of the participants reported that the Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (BDRRMC) of the municipality's barangays are existing but not functional.

Protection analysis

Displacement

Nature of Violations and Threats

A majority of the participants reported that the municipality has experienced displacement from either armed conflict or natural disasters. Seventy-four percent of the participants said that natural disaster was the cause of their displacement, while 40 percent said that it was armed conflict.

The natural disaster in the area that they remembered was flooding in 2017 and Typhoon Pablo in 2012. In 2017, residents from Brgy. Angeles reported that all of them evacuated to a safer location. The participants said that when the river overflows due to heavy rains, the flood waters would reach up to 6 feet. According to news reports, 42 of the 46 houses in the barangay were swept away by flood waters. There was no typhoon at the time. According to the Office of Civil Defense in Caraga region, La Paz recorded the second highest number of people displaced in Agusan del Sur during this disaster.

Armed conflict in the municipality is caused by the attack of an armed group the participants called 'Magahat'. Reportedly, this armed group would lurk while waiting for an opportunity to kill their targets. Another cause of displacement in the area is the conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the New People's Army (NPA).

During emergencies, 89 percent of the participants reported that they go to the evacuation center within the barangay. Some 10 to 15 percent of the participants reported that they also go to their relatives within the barangay, relatives within the municipality, and evacuation centers within the municipality.

Sixty percent of the participants said that the longest displacement in the municipality took less than 30 days, while about 15 percent said that displacements took 31 to 60 days and another 15 percent stated that the displacements lasted 61 to 90 days. During displacement, 91 percent of the participants reported that they have problems with their access to assistance. About 10 percent of the participants also reported that they have experienced problems on discrimination, shelter, family separation, harassment, and human trafficking.

Twenty-six percent of the participants said they have been a host of internally displaced people (IDP), while the rest of the 74 percent said they have not experienced hosting IDPs. According to those who have hosted IDPs, the causes of the displacement were armed conflict and natural disaster and it could last up to 30 days. The primary issue of the IDPs they have hosted is access to assistance. About 10 percent also said they have experienced discrimination and harassment.

Currently, there are still displaced persons in La Paz, according to 31 percent of the participants. Upon validation, these IDPs were displaced in 2014 and are currently staying in Barangay Lydia. These IDPs are staying in the area because they are afraid to go back, the government does not allow them to go back, there is a lack of livelihood source in their place of origin, and their shelters were totally destroyed.

Impact and Effects of Violations

The participants reported that during emergencies they have experienced hunger due to lack of food. They said that the displacement has affected their farms and other sources of income. According to the IDPs, the flooding in their farms has destroyed their rice, corn, sweet potato, among others. These crops are their sources of livelihood and food. For those farms that were not flooded, wild boars consumed all of their crops leaving them with almost nothing when they return. The IDPs also reported that emergencies have also cost them their jobs as farm workers. They also left their livestock animals to death because they cannot carry them during emergencies.

The IDPs also said that they have difficulty accessing water. Some participants reported that they have to walk for 30 minutes in order to reach a river that could provide them with water. Their shelters were also totally damaged.

Children's education was also affected by the flooding in their communities, as they cannot go to school during floods and when they are in the evacuation centers. Some participants said that there was a time when they sent their children - though they are hungry - to school. Sickness and lack of available medicine was also an issue raised by the IDPs during emergencies.

Protective Capability and Compliance

64 percent of the participants reported that another displacement may happen in their municipality, while 34 percent said that they do not know. The displacement that may take place will affect every one of them, especially those living near the river. The IDPs also reported that it will have a greater effect on children, women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.


More than 50 percent of the participants also said that they were able to raise their concerns and protection needs to the concerned agencies. The participants mentioned that they can speak directly with the barangay officials regarding their concerns. For instance, they were able to raise the issue that their relocation site is landslide-prone and they have difficulties in accessing water.

To cope with their situation during emergencies and displacement, the participants said that they work together as a community in order to cope with their situation. By working together, it involves cooperation with the local government units in addressing their problems and understanding one another. For instance, the MLGU also created an ordinance or resolution in order to support the IDPs. The community members were also monitoring each other to ensure that everyone is safe. Working hard is also one of the coping strategies, some participants said.


Forty-nine percent of the IDPs reported that they are aware of their rights, 37 percent said they do not know if they are aware of their rights, and 14 percent said they do not know their rights. When asked to elaborate, a majority of the participants reported that they have the right to receive assistance, especially food, from the government or other duty-bearers. Some participants also said they have the right to live, to farm, to complain, to speak, to send their children to school, and to be safe.

Eighty percent of the participants said that they are open to sharing information about their protection situation and needs, while the 16 percent are either not open to sharing information or they do not want to share information. As for the reasons why they do not want to share information, some participants said that they are just shy.

Recommendations



The IDPs also suggested that the duty-bearers need more trainings and seminars on the rights of the IDPs in order to improve their services. The willingness of LGU officers to assist the IDPs were recognized, however, capacity strengthening will be necessary to improve the delivery of protection services to the IDPs.



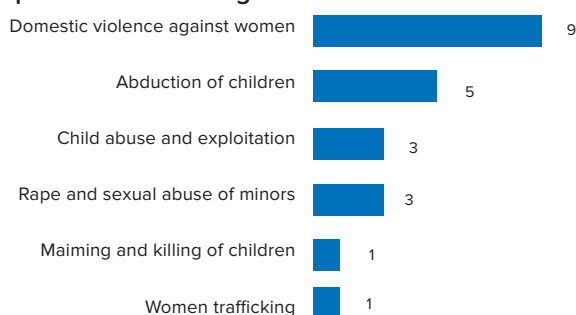
It is also recommended for the LGU, particularly the MSWDO and MDRRMO, to strengthen the system for monitoring and reporting systems and mechanisms for displacements, in partnership with the communities.

Protection of women and children

Nature of Violations and Threats

Sixty-three percent of the participants reported that women have access to security services in their communities. Seventeen percent said they do not know, 11 percent said they do not have access, while the rest did not respond to the question.

Reported violations against women and children



Note: Values represent combined no. of responses from KII informants.

Coping Mechanism of Affected Population

Forty-three percent of the participants reported that they are familiar with the Violence Against Women and Children Law (VAWC Law). Twenty-eight percent said that they do not know about the VAWC law, and 26 percent said they do not know if they know the law.

Protective Capability and Compliance

Seventy-one percent of the participants reported that women know their rights, and 92 percent said that women are able to exercise their rights. When asked to elaborate about their rights, the participants mentioned that women have the right to take care of their children and family. By taking care of their children, it also entails their capacity to ensure that their children are sent to school, have enough food, and have access to medicines when sick. The participants also added that women have the right to live, love, be protected from abuse, and have access to assistance.

Eighty-eight percent of the participants reported that parents and children are aware of the rights of every child, and 84% of the participants believe that children are able to exercise their rights. These rights, the participants said, are the right to eat nutritious food, to continue and finish education, to read and write, to achieve their dreams, to join with other children, to be protected, and to play.

In terms of sharing information, more than 70 percent of the participants reported that women and children are willing to report information. However, 37 percent of the participants are not aware if there is a referral mechanism for women and children. Twenty-six percent of the participants believe that there is no referral pathway, and the same percentage also reported that there is a referral pathway. Those who responded with 'yes' and believes the referral pathway is functional explained that it works by going through the barangay officials.

Besides the referral pathways, 91% of the participants identified community awareness sessions as one of the measures to prevent the abuse of women and children. Forty percent said the formation of local committees, and 23 percent said the distribution of awareness-raising materials can help prevent the abuse of women and children. Establishment of hotlines and training of local monitors were also identified as a protection mechanism.

Eighty percent of the participants reported that there is no facility for gender-based violence (GBV) survivors in the municipality, while the remaining 20 percent said that they do not know if such facility exists. The same with GBV survivors' facility, 63 percent of the participants reported that there is no facility for child protection, 17 percent do not know if such facility exists, and 20 percent said there is a facility for child protection in the municipality.

The community and duty-bearers rated the capacity of the duty-bearers in responding to the needs and protecting the rights of women and children as 'needs improvement.' Almost 97 to 100 percent of the participants said the duty-bearers need improvement because the community, especially women, lacks knowledge and information about women's rights. The participants suggested that there should be seminars and awareness-raising activities to

increase the knowledge of the community on the rights of women and children.

The participants also reported that a lot of children are not in school. The duty-bearers should also cooperate with the IDPs and provide livelihood and farming support. They also raised the need to have dignified evacuation center that has complete facilities.

Recommendations

-  Capacity building for the LGU officers and staff who are directly providing protection services to women and children
-  Promote and disseminate information on the rights of women and children through seminars and awareness-raising activities at the LGU and community level - include information on the facilities and services available for victims of gender-based violence and child abuse
-  Ensure that dignified evacuation centers with complete facilities are available for the IDPs

Persons with specific needs



Nature of Violations and Threats


Immediate Needs of the PWSNs

Sixty-six percent of the participants said that the PWSNs, specifically the persons with disabilities, need assistive devices. About 60 percent of the participants also said that medical care for persons with chronic illness is one of the immediate needs of the community. They also reported care mechanisms for children and elderly, humanitarian assistance for vulnerable persons, medical treatment for survivors of sexual violence, and psychosocial treatment as immediate needs.

The PWSNs also have problems with their access to food because their movement is very limited (in the case of PWDs and those with chronic illness, and some other vulnerable persons like the elderly and pregnant women), and their immediate families are also having a hard time to buy or find food. Also, the PWDs are experiencing difficulties with their livelihood as they cannot move easily and they have challenges finding work. PWDs also experience discrimination that results to lack of confidence.

Recommendations

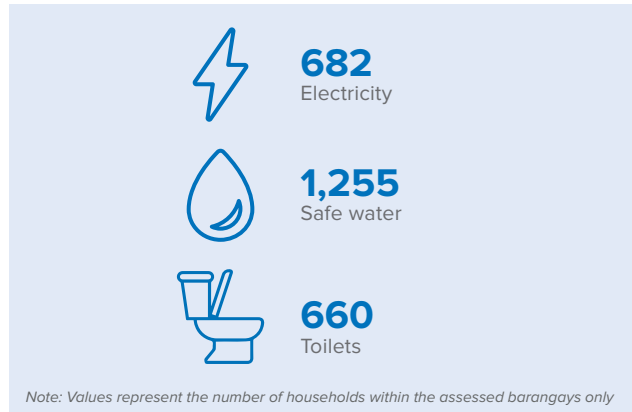
-  Regular monitoring and profiling of PWSNs—e.g. having gender, age, and disability disaggregated data available, will provide helpful information on the number of PWSNs, their specific needs, and gaps
-  Address the immediate and long-term protection needs of the PWSNs, such as inclusive social services that include education, livelihood support, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, and other support and ensure that government programs are accessible for this sector



Support community-based organizations that focus on the welfare PWSNs, such as strengthen the capacities of PDAO (Persons with Disability Affairs Office) and the association of senior citizens

Access to basic social services

What is the estimated number of households without the following services:






Coping Mechanism of Affected Population

All of the participants said that they have access to the 4Ps programme. Sixty percent reported that they have access to Philippine Health Insurance (PhilHealth), 34 percent have access to Free Birth Registration services, and 6 percent reported that they have access to Social Security System (SSS) benefits.

Protective Capability and Compliance

Forty-eight percent of the participants reported that the community has programs and services to assist the displaced population. Twenty-nine percent said that they do not know and 14 percent reported that they have no programs to assist the IDPs. Those who said "yes" explained that they have received food assistance and livelihood support and have moved to either an evacuation site or relocation site. However, the relocation site that was provided is prone to landslides and has posed a risk to the IDPs, aside from the fact that water is difficult to access from the site.

Recommendations

-  Reassess relocation site when it comes to safety and availability of accessible basic social services (such as water and livelihoods).
-  Incorporate risk mitigation measures in planning for relocation sites.
-  Consider augmentation of water, toilets, and other WASH facilities in the municipality's development programming. Alternative options for providing water facilities—such as rain water collectors in remote barangays with limited to no access to water, can be pursued.

Safety and security

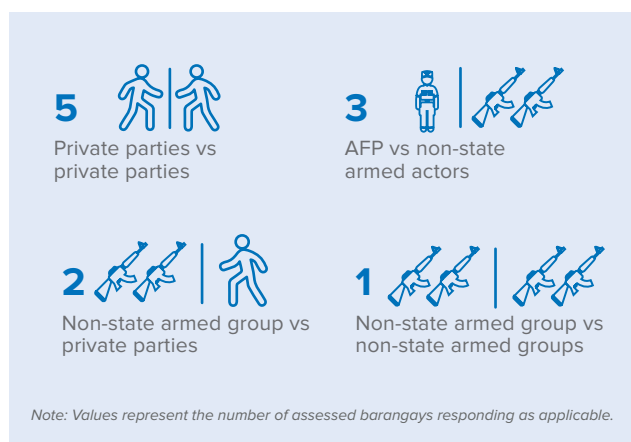
Nature of Violations and Threats

Eighty-eight percent of the participants reported that their barangay is affected by conflict, while 9 percent of the participants said their community is not affected by conflict. Unlike other areas, 66 percent of the participants reported that the nature of the conflict is between private parties. About 30 percent of the participants said that the conflict is caused by fighting between State security forces versus non-State armed groups. A few participants also reported that the conflict is caused by a dispute between armed groups and private parties.

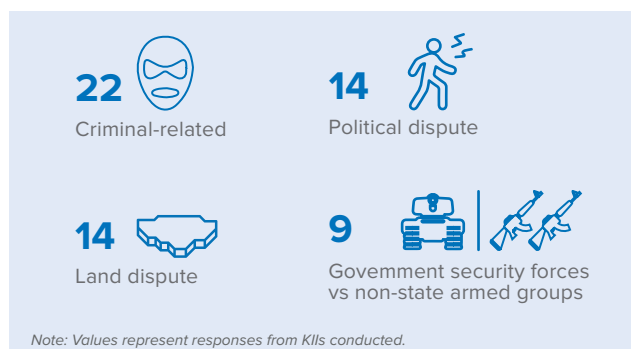
A majority of the participants, or 63 percent said that the cause of these conflicts is related to crime. Forty percent of the participants reported that conflicts in their area are caused by political disputes and land disputes. Some 10 percent also said that the cause is the conflict between government forces and non-state armed groups.

All of the participants reported that the primary security forces in their barangays are the BPAT. About 34 percent of the participants also reported the AFP as the security actor present in the barangays. Meanwhile, only 34 percent of the participants reported that they feel safe in their communities. Thirty-two percent of the participants said that they do not feel safe, while 34 percent reported that they do not know if they feel safe.

What is the nature of conflicts?



Causes of conflicts



Do residents feel safe?



Impact and Effects of Violations

Seventy-four percent of the participants said that they can move freely in and out of the barangay, while 14 percent said that they cannot move freely. Those who said that they cannot move freely explained that the activities of the armed groups and their lack of proper identification hamper their freedom to move freely in and out of the barangay. Tribal conflict and curfew hours were also identified as barriers to their freedom to move freely.

Due to the security issues in the municipality, the participants reported that they feel fear and sometimes they get hungry as they cannot go to their farms for food and livelihood. Indirectly, the security issues have affected their livelihood, especially their farms as they are afraid to visit and tend to their crops when the Magahat attacks. It has also affected the education of their children.

Coping Mechanisms of Affected Population

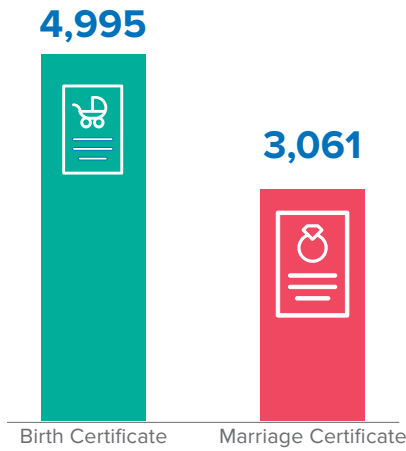
To cope with their situation, the communities said they seek the assistance of the government. They also share information with other IDPs in the community regarding security issues. Cooperation and unity of the members of the community are also considered as coping mechanisms against security issues. Staying at home for safety is also a coping mechanism to avoid security issues, the participants said.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the capacities of the BPAT
- Support the development and enhancement of barangay and municipal contingency plans that present mechanisms for securing the safety and security of the communities, particularly those that are exposed to high-risk to natural and human-induced hazards
- Support capacity building of communities to respond to emergencies, e.g. first aid and basic life support trainings in every barangay so that first aid responders are readily available. Along with these capacity building activities is the making of basic first-aid supplies and materials in the barangays available that can be used during emergencies.

Documentation

What is the estimated number of individuals in the assessed barangays without:



Impact and Effects of Violations

The participants responded that the lack of birth certificates has effects on their access to employment, access to assistance, to 4Ps and other government programs, and pension claims. They also reported that it has affected their freedom of movement and access to education.

Coping Mechanism of Affected Population

The lack of birth certificates, the participants said, is mostly due to their limited awareness of its importance and the lack of knowledge on how to apply for one. Other reasons involve the lack of capacity to read and write, of accessibility to the Local Civil Registry (LCR), unavailable documentary requirements, or lack of financial resources, while others do not feel the need to get a birth certificate.

Protective Capability and Compliance

The Local Civil Registrar has regular programs to assist civil registration. However, residents from remote barangays find it difficult to travel to the town center to apply for birth certificates.

Recommendations



The local government, specifically the Office of the Local Civil Registrar needs to pursue initiatives to reach the populations in remote areas to make the civil documentation service more accessible and available to them.




Integrate awareness-raising activities on the importance of civil documentation and the processes for applying for this essential document in the local government program

Housing, land and property (HLP)


Estimated number of land owners, land tenants, house sharers, and house renters




Coping Mechanism of Affected Population

Thirty-seven percent of the participants reported that the land or properties were acquired through ancestral domain, 20 percent said they were purchased, and 14 percent said that the properties were acquired through right of use. The participants also estimated that there are 165 individuals who are renters, and 3,828 individuals who are sharers.

Recommendations



Housing and relocation projects for those who are located in high-risk areas



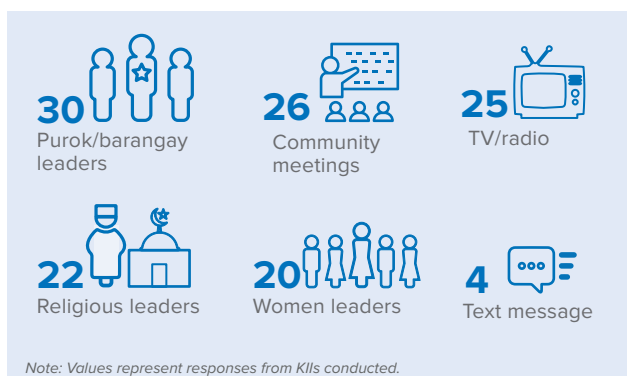
The participants in the FGDs and interviews recommended that on top of the need for housing projects, there is also a big need for the community to have access to safe water.

Information

Nature of Violations and Threats

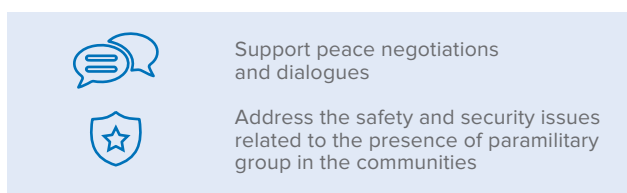
Ninety-seven percent of the participants reported that they have received information regarding disaster alerts. Sixty-three percent said they have received security alerts, 60 percent received information on barangay policies and ordinances, 46 percent received information about barangay programs, and 11 percent were informed of barangay social events and community awareness-related information.

Preferred means of the community to receive protection-related information



Peace processes

Recommendations



Recommendation

Strengthen information and communication, particularly in far-flung communities. Transistor radios are still popular among households and can be used to disseminate life-saving alerts and information in such communities.

SOURCES / REFERENCES:

- Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
- Key Informant Interviews (KII)
- Secondary Data Review



Community focus group discussion conducted in Brgy. San Patricio, La Paz Municipality
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