



Municipal Protection Profile conducted in Tawi-tawi

Bongao





Municipality of Bongao

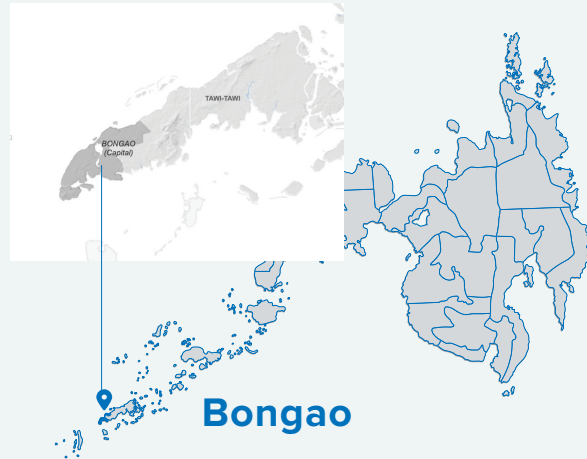
Province of Tawi-tawi | Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)

Overview

Risk rating: **Medium**

Quick facts

The Municipality of Bongao, a 2nd class Municipality is the capital of the island province of Tawi-Tawi with a total land area of 365.95 square kilometers and total population of 100,527 people (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census). The municipality's territory includes Bongao Island (where the población is located), Sanga-Sanga Island, Pababag Island, and the western end of Tawi-Tawi Island. Bongao is politically subdivided into 35 barangays. The population of Tawi-Tawi represented 25.73% of the total population of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region



Population

100,527



Families

20,105



Income Class

2nd Class



Land Area

365.95sq.km.



Barangays

35



Climate type

Tropical



Languages spoken

**Sama,
Tagalog,
Sabah Malay**

in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Based on these figures, the population density is computed at 275 inhabitants per square kilometer or 711 inhabitants per square mile.

The municipal center of Bongao is situated at approximately 5° 2' North, 119° 46' East, in the island of Bongao. Elevation at these coordinates is estimated at 6.3 meters or 20.7 feet above mean sea level.

Based on the great-circle distance, the cities closest to Bongao are Isabela City, Lamitan, Zamboanga City, Pagadian, Puerto Princesa, and Cotabato City. The nearest municipalities are Simunul, Panglima Sugala, Sibutu, Languyan, Sapa-Sapa, and Sitangkai. Its distance from the national capital is 1,065.75 kilometers (662.23 miles).

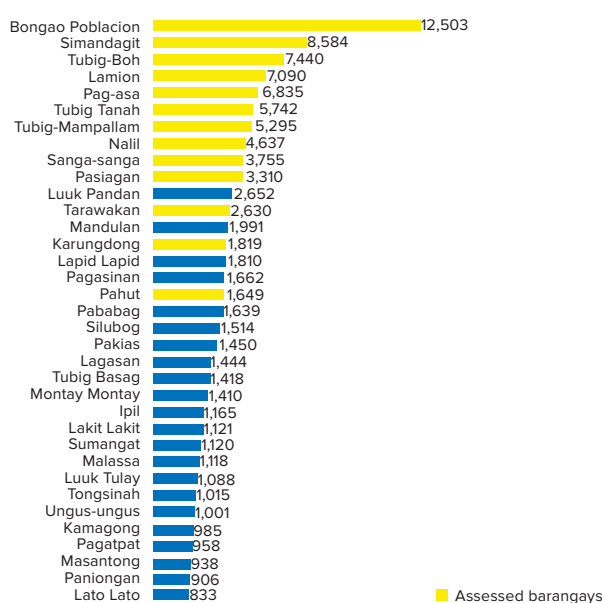
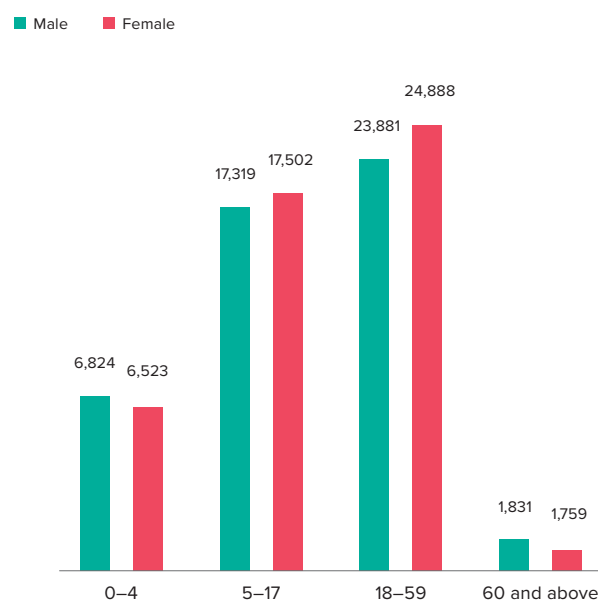
Much of the Bongao area was the center of Bajau culture and arts for hundreds of years. By the 14th century, Muslim missionaries from Arabia arrived and established the first ever mosque in the Philippines. The area was heavily converted to Islam, especially when the Sultanate of Sulu in nearby Sulu province was founded.

The main thoroughfare is Datu Halun Street, where the Town Hall is situated. Poblacion is the commercial hub of the Municipality. Most of the businesses here are owned by local people.

Bongao is home to the Mindanao State University, Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography

(MSU-TCTO), Tawi-Tawi Regional Agricultural College (TRAC), Mahardika Institute of Technology (MIT), Abubakar Learning Center Foundation College (ALCLC), and Tawi-Tawi School of Midwifery (TTSM). The first two are government owned state colleges, while the last three are privately owned.

There are several secondary high schools in Tawi-Tawi such as the MSU TCTO - Science High School, MSU-TCTO Preparatory High School, Tawi-Tawi School of Arts and Trade, Notre Dame of Bongao, and Tawi-Tawi School of Fisheries (TTSF).

Population¹ by barangayPopulation¹ 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 Bongao 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
Bongao Poblacion	2,113	2,156	12,503	6,202	6,301	5,864	6,625	14
Karungdong	340	364	1,819	902	917	853	935	31
Lamion	1,078	1,223	7,090	3,517	3,573	3,325	3,686	79
Nalil	694	799	4,637	2,300	2,337	2,175	2,428	34
Pag-asa	1,108	1,179	6,835	3,391	3,444	3,206	3,586	43
Pahut	305	330	1,649	818	831	772	769	108
Pasiagan	592	662	3,310	1,642	1,668	1,552	1,734	24
Sanga-sanga	597	648	3,755	1,863	1,892	1,924	1,761	70
Simandagit	1,715	1,907	8,584	4,258	4,326	4,026	4,480	78
Tarawakan	495	526	2,630	1,305	1,325	1,233	1,353	44
Tubig Tanah	984	990	5,742	2,848	2,894	2,693	2,966	83
Tubig-Boh	1,248	1,283	7,440	3,690	3,750	3,489	3,928	23
Tubig-Mampallam	1,037	1,059	5,295	2,627	2,668	2,483	2,782	30
TOTAL	12,306	13,126	71,289	35,363	35,926	35,595	37,033	661

Protection Profile Summary

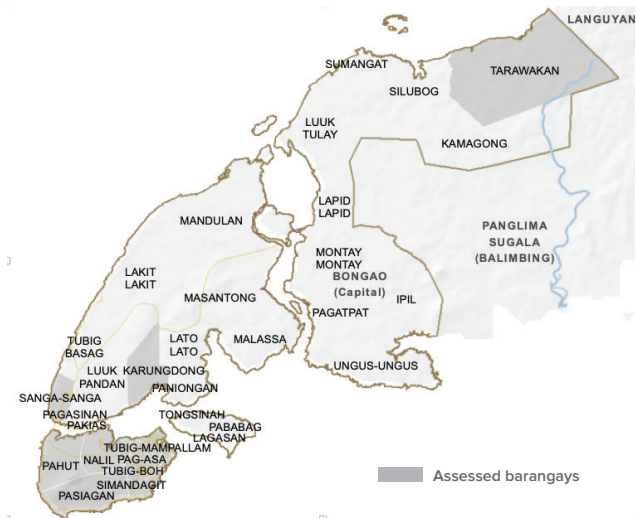
Tawi-Tawi Province is at the southernmost tip of the Philippines. It has been a place of refuge for families displaced by armed conflict in Sulu and deportees from Malaysia. Its peaceful conditions have encouraged permanent settlement of these internally displaced peoples, particularly in Bongao.

Out of 35 Barangays in Bongao, 13 communities were piloted for Municipal Protection Profiling (MPP). Selected sectoral community leaders such as women, Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) Officers, Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (BDRRMC), Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT), elderly, deportees, youth, Barangay Chairpersons, Person with Disability (PWD) and other barangay officials and community leaders participated in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and another selected community representatives were selected to be part in the Key Informants Interview (KII). All in all, there were 13 FGDs and 71 KII conducted for the 13 covered barangays.

The data shows that these 13 communities are vulnerable to natural hazards (geological, weather-related and man-made) and high rate of social and security protection risk for women, men and children as well as for people with specific needs. Out of 13 communities, 8 communities of Bongao are located at the coastal areas, and 3 barangays are located on the hilly portion of Bongao Island. One, Barangay Tarawakan, is an interior community situated in mainland Tawi-Tawi and is approximately 30 kilometers from Bongao proper.

The baseline data shows that the majority of the families has low source of income because most are laborers, fisherman, vendors and farmers. The poor delivery of basic social services to the community greatly affects the lives of the people. Scarcity of potable water, toilets, complete equipment for the barangay health center, proper waste disposal, evacuation centers, etc. is considered a burden for every family in the community. There is no long-term intervention made by the Local Government Units (LGUs).

Neglectful waste disposal has caused considerable damage to the natural resources of the area. There are no indications that communities practice neither garbage segregation nor the “reduce, reuse, recycle” schemes. Effective governance as well as civic engagement is needed in order to correct this environmental threat. Leaders need to realize the crucial role each small



environment plays in the global web of life through retraining raising consciousness. They also need technical support that will enable them to exercise stronger political will and engage the community in a participatory process that will address natural resource management issues.

The community, on the other hand, needs re-education on civic responsibility, environment and natural resources management. They should also be provided with alternative livelihood opportunities so that they will not destroy the environment for the sake of income generation.

Bongao faces different protection challenges. The Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (BDRRMC) in the concerned barangays are actively performing their duties but have limited resources and capacities to manage the effects of the incidents, thus reporting systems are at stake.

Data also shows that the capacities of the members of the BCPC and VAWC desk require attention to ensure that all the protection issues of vulnerable groups will be catered particularly persons who are older, persons with disabilities, women and child protection cases.

The project needs to support and enhance the capacities of the protection mechanisms of BDRRMC, VAWC desk and BCPC through trainings and be rolled-out at the community level to ensure participation and protect vulnerable groups. Reporting system mechanisms must be installed accordingly.

Protection analysis

Displacement

Nature of Violations and Threats

In the 13 barangays covered by the profiling, 4 have experienced displacement. Barangays Pasiagan and Simandagit had experienced storm surge; Tubig Tanah experienced both storm surge and fire incidents; while residents of Karungdong were affected by crime and violence due to family feud. The other nine barangays had no displacement history.

Displacement due to storm surge happened in 2017 where 200 houses were destroyed; 200 families were affected. They were accommodated in Barangay Pag-asa’s covered court for 8 days while rebuilding their houses pending their return. Those affected by fire in Barangay Tubig Tanah last April 2019 sought temporary shelter in the functional madrasa and school since the barangay has no evacuation center; this lasted not more than 10 days. The incident affected 15 families, or 59 total individuals, who rebuilt and returned home except for 3 families who opted to stay with their

respective relatives.

Assistance in the form of food and non-food products like tents, tarps and bedding was provided to the evacuees in the declared evacuation center; evacuees also sought shelter with relatives. Those who were accommodated by host families/relatives did not benefit from the distributed items. Immediate shelter assistance could have alleviated the plight of the affected families since this would enable them to rebuild makeshift houses or temporary shelter.

Sixty-three percent of the respondents signified that their barangays hosted IDPs. Respondents narrated that families who temporarily evacuated to adjacent barangays stayed not more than 10 days, while those coming from Malaysia as deportees stayed longer. Some stayed with the residents for almost 3 months or more.

Impact and Effects of Violations

The presence of deportees from Malaysia has disrupted the registry of the barangays and re-prioritized the concerns of the LGU. Families and individuals from Sandakan, Malaysia arrived in Bongao and were accommodated, fed and provided with transportation ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 Pesos to go back to their families in the Philippines. After a few weeks or months, they returned to Bongao to be re-accommodated.

This recurring scenario has been going-on since the Lahad Datu Incursion in 2013 and has been creating tension for both the LGU and the IDPs. The government's incapacity to assert territorial rights and to provide livelihood and motivation for the deportees to stay is resulting in a cycle of deportation and a waste of resources.

Prolonged accommodation of deportees is now resulting to sanitation problems within the host barangay.

The ones affected by natural calamities (storm surge and fire) have experienced profound stress. No mental health intervention has been provided since then.

The present immediate needs of the IDPs/deportees are clustered into three. These are survival needs such as food, health services and shelter; start-up inputs such as transportation to their desired location and livelihood; and documentary identification like birth certificates and identification cards.

The deportees from Malaysia need permanent shelter and livelihood after they have been sent back to their home provinces. Survivors of storm surge, crime/violence and fire incidents need health services, shelter and livelihood and support from BDRRMC capacity building.

When local incidents such as fire and storm surge happened in 2017, the concerned barangay LGUs immediately listed affected families, provided food when local stocks were available, and secured basic needs from the municipal mayor to distribute to evacuees. With regards to deportees' needs, duty-bearers provided timely and appropriate response by recording and referring to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) for assistance. Transportation requirements were instantly provided when it was available.

Thirty-one percent of the FGD respondents reported ongoing presence of IDPs in their barangays. Reasons for still being displaced include lack of livelihood, decision to stay permanently in current location, fear of returning to place of origin and loss of home.

On the possibility of another displacement, responses vary but most said "yes". They say that the communities hosting the deportees are likely to be affected because

of their bad influence, particularly pertaining to prohibited drugs. They are also considered as an added burden to a relatively poor LGU, where PWDs and other vulnerable groups are not being taken care of. Residents along the coast are always prone to storm surge unless natural mitigating structures are built or relocation happens. A neighborhood that experienced big fires will continue doing so unless they are organized and have a self-monitoring system.

Coping Mechanisms of Affected Population

Respondents from 10 out of 13 barangays in the FGDs believe that IDPs are able to raise their concerns through formal and informal reporting to EC managers/staff, barangay LGUs and DWSD.

There are also investigations and monitoring activities by municipal LGUs and DSWD. Barangay captains also conduct house-to-house monitoring of those affected by storm surge and fire.

These interventions from the municipal government and other line agencies such as the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) and DSWD to the deportees and IDPs serves as survival mechanism to alleviate their situation.

Respondents said that BLGUs should prioritize the needs of PWSNs and children because they are most likely to be affected and highly vulnerable during displacement.

Recommendations



BLGUs must include the community in creating a barangay disaster plan, to make it more suitable to their needs.



LGUs should establish safer evacuation centers which can cater to larger groups and disaster facilities to quickly respond to any calamity faced by the barangay.



LGUs to strengthen the operation of BDRRMC, particularly in establishing community-based early warning systems for the three profiled barangays to facilitate exchange of real-time information between the communities and local authorities, thus preventing or minimizing the effects of conflict.



Both the community and local officials need to be trained or oriented on protection and IDP rights with emphasis on United Nations guiding principles on internal displacement.



Officers and members of the protection mechanism such as BCPC, VAWC desk and BDRRMC must be trained on handling women and children protection cases in emergency situations or gender-based violence prevention and response in emergencies.



The BDRRMC must strengthen their relationship with MDRRMC to ensure complementary support in terms of resources and capacity in responding to the needs and protection of the rights of IDPs. Thus, installation of a reporting system must be fully implemented since it is a concern issue of both BLGUs and LGUs.

Protection of women and children

Impact and Effects of Violations

Depression, stress, fear, distrust, mental health problems and psychological disturbance have been identified by the communities as effects of violence towards women and children.

The BLGUs work to address cases of violence, and even endorse higher authorities for further investigation and legal charges. On the other hand, victims of this violence need long-term intervention such as continued psychosocial treatment and counselling.

The immediate needs of the women and children who have experienced violation against their basic human rights were moral support, shelter, food, medical care, and protection. Long-term protection needs were counselling/parental guidance, education, skills training, legal and livelihood support, family protection and barangay protection orders.

Women and children are also vulnerable individuals in the communities, which must guarantee full respect for human rights.

Coping Mechanisms of Affected Population


Communities revealed that through social media, television and distribution of Information and Education Campaign (IEC) materials, locals have broadened their awareness of protection rights. The duty-bearers also formulated local committees and established community hotlines to address local protection issues.

Protective Capability and Compliance


Duty bearers in line with other government agencies work together in monitoring and securing the protection rights of women and children. Communities play a vital role in this aspect. They are empowered to report abuses and violence through barangay officials.

Facilities and services to the community by the duty bearers should be improved. There should be authorized VAWC personnel that is capacitated and knowledgeable in handling cases.


Recommendations




Institutionalize and strengthen the protection mechanisms (Barangay VAWC Desk, BCPC, LCPC, MCAT-VAWC).




Train protection mechanism members on handling VAWC cases and gender responsive case management.




Continuously conduct community information sessions on women and child protection.



Develop IEC materials for community distribution.



Mobilize resources for the establishment of GBV facilities.



Establish stand-by funds for immediate needs of GBV/VAWC survivors (can be allocated from gender and development budget).

Persons with specific needs

Nature of Violations and Threats

The specific needs of PWSNs are assistance devices, humanitarian assistance (food, shelter, potable water, clothing and medicines) for vulnerable persons, mechanisms for the elderly and children, psychosocial treatment and medical care for people with chronic illnesses, medical treatment for survivors of sexual violence, registration of senior citizens and wheelchairs for those who need them.

Forty-six percent of PWSNs are unable to access assistance and 8 percent do not know and do not exercise their rights. PWSNs face and experience discrimination, and many cannot acquire a job to earn a living.

Impact and Effects of Violations

Communities revealed that most PWSNs are dependent on their immediate family. They are unable to address their problems, leading to frustration. They find difficulties in all aspects of life (opportunities, livelihood and financial), and scarcity in terms of their social needs.

Barriers on access to medical assistance, transportation, PWD-friendly establishments, negative attitudes towards PWDs, and being less prioritized by the government are just some of the several dilemmas faced by PWSNs in Bongao.

Protective Capability and Compliance

Communities emphasized that the PWSNs must be given the right to priority on health and social care services. Duty bearers need to conduct information drives with regards to the PWSN benefits given by the government.

Recommendations



The comprehensive social protection programs for PWSN must be developed and implemented in close collaboration with LGUs through the OSWD.



The BLGU must design and implement a sustainable livelihood program (like the concept of bahay kubo) to ensure food security for PWSNs.

Basic social services

Nature of Violations and Threats

In the assessed barangays of Bongao, 4,008 households have no access to safe water, 3,810 have no toilets and 1,902 have no electricity.

Barangay health centers cater to the needs of the community but sadly 3 out of 13 communities does not have functional health center. Others lack medical equipment, medicines and nurses.

Government assistance such as PhilHealth, SSS, HDMF, 4Ps, SOCPEN are accessible by the residents.

Impact and Effects of Violations

Poor water, sanitation and health care services greatly affect the lives of the communities. Vulnerable groups experience multiple burdens and increase the risk of their respected communities.

Coping Mechanisms of Affected Population

All assessed communities have access to deep wells, while some can also buy potable water at a refilling station. Deep wells are often located approximately 1km away from houses, which burdens women in the communities who act as water collectors. Some use open pits as temporary toilets while others directly flush it to the sea.

Protective Capability and Compliance

Communities suggested that the duty bearers should focus on basic social services which must be accessible by every community. LGUs must support and allocate funds to improve the social services of the BLGUs.

Recommendations



BLGU must have an intensive plan and program on water, sanitation and health care services.

Safety and security

Nature of Violations and Threats

All profiled barangays are vulnerable to natural hazards such as storm surge and fire, as houses are within the coastal area and are made of light materials.

The most common conflicts in the barangay are over land dispute, illegal drugs, domestic problems, and tensions during disasters. These conflicts have been settled by the BLGU.

Secondary and tertiary schools are located outside their respective barangays. This results in long-distance travel for children, which causes worry for parents and has resulted to some students dropping out.

Impact and Effects of Violations

If affected by disaster, the community's source of income is affected, classes are suspended, and community residents are threatened, which in the long run contributes to financial and health problems for every family.

Children were unable to finish their studies due to a lack of secondary and tertiary schools in their barangay.

Coping Mechanisms of Affected Population

The community felt protected because of the presence of 24/7 patrollers from the barangay, establishment of barangay hotlines, and implementation of curfews.

Recommendations



Strengthen BDRRMC with emphasis on early warning system



Train local officials on conflict management and resolution as well as dialogue facilitation

Documentation

Nature of Violations and Threats




Beneficiaries of the DWSD 4Ps program require live birth registration for their children, but there are still constituents who do not have civil documentation. Out of the total population of 100,527, an estimated 2.8 percent does not have birth registration; while 4.4 percent do not have marriage registration mostly due to the following:

- Lack of knowledge about the importance of birth and marriage registration;
- Lack of financial resources for transportation and fees required in acquiring civil documents;
- Illiteracy/lack of proficiency in basic reading and writing
- Lack of financial resources

Most of the populace who do not have proper civil documentation, both birth and marriage certificates, are of Sama-Bajau ethnic groups.

Respondents also said that although most have live birth issued by Municipal Civil Registrar, securing authenticated birth certificates is a common problem for all of Tawi-Tawi. Residents have to travel to the PSA Office in Zamboanga City for authentication and may spend around 10,000 pesos for transportation, board and lodging and other expenses.

Recommendations

-  Conduct barangay-based awareness campaign and mass live birth registration.
-  Authenticate live birth certificates in the PSA provincial office of Bongao.
-  Train officials on PD 1083, otherwise known as Code of Muslim Personal Laws in the Philippines, and facilitate processing of marriage contracts for officiating imams/ustadzdes.

Housing, land and property (HLP)

Source of land ownership/use

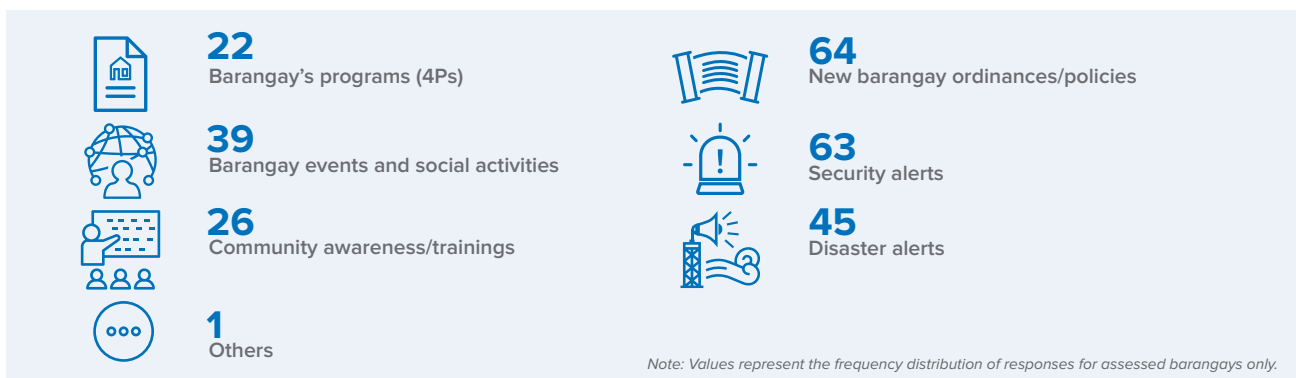


Recommendations

-  Recruit community in developing their barangay disaster plan and barangay development plan to make it more suitable to their needs.

Information

What are the types of protection information that the community received?



Coping Mechanisms of Affected Population

The information-dissemination venues of the BLGU include regular/emergency meetings and assemblies, women's participation, senior citizen and youth gatherings and others. However, the leaders should also give emphasis on protection issues and concerns as part of their agenda and programs.

Peace processes

Recommendations



Strengthen information dissemination regarding the status and development of peace processes from the grassroots level

Recommendations



Productions and make accessible IEC materials translated into local dialects. Creation a social media page advocating protection of children and women including PWSNs.

SOURCES / REFERENCES:

Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
 Key Informant Interviews (KII)
 Secondary Data Review
 Population Commission
 Municipal/Barangay Local Government Units
 Barangay Development Plans



Brgy Lamion, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi received Multi-purpose tents, solar lamps, rechargeable flashlights, and tarpaulins that will help them in disaster response and preparedness. ©IRDT