

INCIDENT BACKGROUND

Armed confrontations, between the combined forces of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (MILF-BIAF) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) against the Jamaatul Muhajirin Wal Ansar (JMWA), has been ongoing since April 2017. This has caused the displacement of families originating from the area known as the SPMS (Barangay **Salbu**, Datu Saudi Ampatuan - Barangay **Pagatin**, Datu Salibu – **Mamasapano** - **Shariff Aguak**) Box in the province of Maguindanao, and has escalated to different municipalities of Maguindanao and North Cotabato. These recent incidents contribute to the overall pattern of recurring displacement and heightened vulnerability of conflict-affected communities in Central Mindanao.

The JMWA is a splinter group of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), formed under the leadership of Sheikh Esmail Abdulmalik, aka "Abu Turaiife." The group publicly pledged allegiance to the Islamic State movement in April 2017, and has reportedly been recruiting new members in the towns of Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Datu Salibu, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Mamasapano, and Datu Piang in Maguindanao province.

As part of the BIFF main group, JMWA members had already been actively engaging the AFP in combat as early as August 2011, when the BIFF launched its first major attack against the AFP in 11 municipalities. The BIFF has since been in conflict with government forces in numerous municipalities within Maguindanao, North Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat. It has since splintered into different factions, one of which, the Karialan Group, also started to engage in combat with the AFP as a distinct group on 27 July 2016 in Barangay Pamalian, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Maguindanao. Another faction, the Abunawas Group, still recognizes the leadership of the main group but carries out tactical operations separately, notably on 22 June 2017, when it attacked Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT) outposts in Barangays Malagakit and Simsiman in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato. The AFP continually launches offensives against each of these factions, as well as against the main group and the JMWA.

The MILF-BIAF's Task Force Ittihad, officially launched operations against JMWA on 02 August 2017 in the vicinity of Datu Salibu, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, and Datu Piang municipalities.

The AFP then joined forces with the MILF-BIAF on 03 September 2017 when a series of airstrikes was launched against JMWA positions, and troops from the Army's 57th Infantry Battalion reinforced BIAF combatants in Brgy. Tee, Datu Salibu.

CURRENT SITUATION

As of this report, clashes continue between the JMWA, on the one hand, against the MILF-BIAF, local law enforcement groups, and/or the AFP, on the other.

On 28 September, the MILF-BIAF reportedly forced the JMWA out of their strongholds in Barangays Andavit and Tee in Datu Salibu municipality, Maguindanao. A number of their fighters, however, were allegedly able to escape.

As of 16 October 2017, initial information has been received by protection partners regarding pre-emptive evacuation of an unconfirmed number of people from Barangay Kalbogon, Pagalungan, Maguindanao. This was reportedly triggered by movement of MILF-BIAF troops in preparation for another armed engagement with the JMWA. Sightings of JMWA members have also been reported within Pagalungan and in the adjacent towns of General S.K. Pendatun and Sultan sa Barongis (both in Maguindanao province) and Pikit, North Cotabato province.

The latest wave of armed encounters displaced over 28,000 people, most of whom are currently staying with relatives or friends (see table below). As of end of September, the total displaced population in Central Mindanao from JMWA- and BIFF-related incidents is estimated at more than 36,000 (see map). To date, no verified information has yet been received on the IDPs' return.

The dynamics of recurring displacement in the affected areas often manifest as short-term displacement followed by temporary return before the next displacement cycle occurs, or as apparent local integration in the place of displacement but without renewed access to livelihood sources and with persistent protection concerns linked to the cause of displacement. This has come to be regarded as "normal" over the course of several years, and has led to the urgency of the issue being largely overlooked by

Key Advocacy Messages

1. Improved access to humanitarian assistance, including food and other basic needs, and protection for IDPs;
2. In line with UNHCR's community-based protection approach, support to local response capacities and continued sensitization of Government and humanitarian actors to respond to recurrent displacement, which has become a "normalized" state in the area spanning several years;
3. Provision of emergency livelihood assistance, such as alternative skills training, for IDPs whose livelihood has been disrupted by recurring or repeated displacement.

government and non-government humanitarian actors alike. This negatively impacts both the overall situation of the affected population as well as the provision of humanitarian assistance in response to continuing needs.

The MILF's operations against the JMWA is largely seen as a sign of support for the government's fight against violent extremism and is also aimed at forestalling the collapse of the ongoing peace process. Under the Joint Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, the MILF is bound to cooperate with the government on law enforcement and peacekeeping matters. Furthermore, the emergence of groups such as the BIFF and JMWA was reportedly rooted in frustration with the peace negotiations, and thus threatens to undermine the legitimacy and continuity of the process.

Many of the IDPs monitored are living in difficult conditions. Most are taking temporary shelter in madrasahs, along school perimeters, in self-made shelters, and in relatives' houses. IDPs are also staying in five (5) evacuation sites in Barangay Pusao, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, as well as in Kuloy Elementary School and Bagong Upam Elementary School in Shariff Aguak. Access to their livelihood sources has been severely limited by the security situation.

The situation is even more challenging due to frequent armed clashes, as well as flooding caused by heavy rains in the affected areas, which aggravates the already difficult living conditions of IDPs and causes further displacement.

The numbers of displaced and affected people are difficult to establish because many are believed to be repeatedly displaced, in addition to a number being protractedly displaced since 2015. A number still share dwellings with their relatives, while some have already built makeshift shelters in host communities or semi-permanent shelters in nearby villages. Their source of livelihood, however, remains in their place of origin.

The continuous fighting has negatively impacted the livelihood of the local population, whose main sources of income are fishing, farming, and mat weaving. To date, these activities have been disrupted. Fisherfolk, particularly, are affected by security restrictions because they cannot access parts of the Liguasan Marsh that have been declared as "no-go areas" by the authorities. In addition, even those who take risks to carry out fishing are unable to sell their catch, because people generally avoid buying fish from the affected communities due to rumors that the bodies of some of those who died during the armed encounters were not retrieved and have been eaten by fishes. Some resort to working temporarily as laborers or selling livestock at lower prices, but most of the displaced families and others living in the affected areas have no alternative source of income.

Six of the affected municipalities are targeted for provision of livelihood assistance to particularly vulnerable individuals under the Humanitarian Development Action Plan (HDAP) of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), implementation of which is ongoing. IDPs who were displaced in August 2017 only started receiving humanitarian assistance in mid-September. Provision of food and other basic necessities has become problematic for the affected population.

This pattern of recurring displacement combined with ongoing displacement has thus become a cross-cutting protection/development/peacebuilding issue, and each repeated incident of displacement exacerbates the fragility of the IDPs' protection situation and strains their ability to address their families' needs, rendering them more vulnerable to the effects of further displacement.

PROTECTION ISSUES AND RESPONSE

ISSUES	RESPONSES	WAYS FORWARD
PHYSICAL SECURITY AND INTEGRITY		
Threats to life, safety, and security		
<p>Firefights continue to be a regular occurrence along the highway in Datu Salibo in recent weeks due to the ongoing military operations conducted by the AFP and the MILF-BIAF, respectively. These firefights are in close proximity to the current locations of home-based IDPs.</p> <p>Aerial strikes, mortar shelling and IEDs have caused destruction and have displaced civilians.</p>		<p>Strengthen the advocacy with Government protection actors and the security sector regarding civilian protection concerns.</p> <p>For Protection Cluster members to continue protection monitoring at the community level to ensure that the rights of the IDPs are upheld, as well as to conduct protection training among stakeholders and duty bearers at the community level.</p>
<p>There have been unconfirmed reports of looting of property in abandoned households in Barangay Kilalan, Talitay.</p>		<p>Advocate for systematic assessments of damage to/loss of civilian properties, and refer to appropriate grievance mechanism of Government.</p>
<p>Around 200-300 armed men from the Abunawas Group of the BIFF occupied the Malagakit Elementary School in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato on 22 June 2017. They took approximately 70 hostages, including</p>	<p>The Hostages were later released by the Abunawas Group and the authorities facilitated their safe return to their families.</p>	

schoolchildren and teachers.		
Threats to liberty and freedom of movement		
Entrance to Barangay Tee is reportedly closely monitored by the MILF and AFP, and access is not possible for civilians.		With government stakeholders and the security sector, identify ways forward to address the impact of current restrictions on civilians' access to livelihood while still taking into account the safety of the local population.
GBV and child protection		
Due to the lack of privacy and WASH facilities, young women have expressed protection concerns, such as lack of privacy when changing clothes, lack of partitions between males and females at night, very limited number of latrines and bathing facilities, and increased exposure to risk due to having to use open fields and bush areas as WASH facilities.		Ensure that information on the GBV referral pathway is disseminated to all IDPs through camp managers (in areas with evacuation centers), Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officers, and community leaders.
BASIC NECESSITIES OF LIFE		
Access to food aid and nutrition		
IDPs are reportedly experiencing food shortage, with most having only one meal a day. IDPs displaced in August 2017 did not immediately receive humanitarian aid.	Family Food Packs, each containing 5 kilos of rice, canned goods, coffee and noodles, for about 3,000 families in three locations have been extended by DSWD Region XII starting 12 September.	For Food and Non-Food Cluster members to ensure inclusion and coverage of home-based IDPs, including those in self-settled structures, in assistance efforts. Coordinate with barangay governments for information dissemination and facilitation of distributions.
Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene		
There is no access to clean water due to the floods. IDP families buy water from water trucks that charge PHP5.00 per gallon. Host families share their water basins and toilets with IDP families. Wells that are unsafe for drinking are being used by IDPs of 3 of the 5 evacuation sites in Barangay Pusao. This has caused several cases of diarrhoea.		For WASH Cluster members to facilitate access to water and provision of aquatabs or hyposol to IDPs, as well as covered jerry cans that will keep water clean and safe from waterborne diseases. For WASH Cluster members to strengthen WASH interventions in host communities and evacuation sites to avoid disease outbreaks.
3 of the 5 evacuation sites do not have suitable WASH facilities which leads to open defecation in these sites.		For WASH Cluster members to provide latrines, hygiene kits and basic sanitation items.
Access to shelter		
IDPs are currently staying with relatives along the main roads. However, these host dwellings are congested. Sources also indicate that temporary shelters were erected by a number of IDP families themselves and house 3 to 4 families per shelter. These self-constructed shelters are made of rudimentary materials and built on stilts due to frequent flooding in the area. There are no available evacuation centers in some of the affected municipalities, while the designated evacuation center in Barangay Pagatin could not be used due to flooding.	Construction of evacuation centers is ongoing in 15 vulnerable municipalities in Maguindanao under the HDAP.	For Protection Cluster members to provide tarpaulins for the construction of temporary shelters.
Access to health		
Cases of fever, skin diseases, cough and colds have been reported in the evacuation sites in Barangay Pusao, Shariff Saydona Mustapha.		For Health Cluster members to refer individual health cases to the local Rural Health Units for treatment.
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PROTECTION		
Access to education		
Some displaced children from Barangay Tee have no access to education.	There is an ongoing free education program implemented by UNICEF for children until Grade 6, but there are limited options for children of economically challenged families beyond grade 6.	For Education Cluster to facilitate inclusion of affected children in the ongoing free education program.
Pupils of Kuloy Elementary School and Bagong Elementary School, Sharif Aguak have been unable to go to school since 27		For Education Cluster to facilitate establishment of Temporary Learning Spaces for affected learners.

August.		
Access to information		
IDPs have limited access to information on how they can access assistance.		For Protection Cluster to advocate for systematic information dissemination among IDPs by local government units, DSWD and the ARMM.
Access to livelihoods		
IDPs from Barangay Tee and Andavit, Datu Salibu who rely on fishing, harvesting reeds and trading along the marsh area are unable to continue earning a living.	Individuals from the most vulnerable sectors in six affected municipalities are targeted to benefit from the livelihood component of the ARMM government's Humanitarian Development Action Plan (HDAP): Datu Salibo, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Guindulungan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Datu Piang, and Datu Unsay. Under this program, livelihood assistance amounting to Php10,000 per beneficiary and capacity-building interventions would be provided to fund income-generating activities identified by the beneficiaries themselves. Distribution of assistance is ongoing to 125 beneficiaries per municipality, identified by the MSWDO and the local government units and consisting of solo parents, out-of-school youth, and pregnant and lactating women.	For Protection Cluster to advocate with ARMM and Provincial LGU to incorporate emergency livelihood assistance packages and/or cash-based interventions to IDPs who have been displaced for longer than one month.

PERSONS OF CONCERN

No. of households	+/-	No. of Persons	+/-	Location (Origin)				Location (Current)					
				Province	Mun	Barangay	Sitio	Province	Mun	Barangay	Sitio	Exact Location	
315		1575	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Andavit		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
310		1550	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Tee		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
515		2575	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Sambulawan		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
390		1950	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Lower Pagatin/ Ganoy		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
280		1400	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Lower Buayan/ Animao		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
345		1725	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Butilen		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
215		1075	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Lower Alanganen/ Bulibo		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
85		425	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Lower Balanaken/ Ebpanar		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
105		525	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Lower Dado/ Sangkoy		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
100		500	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Lower Kalipapa/ Parageda		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
96		480	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Lower Duaminanga / Kabugatan		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
130		650	+/-	Maguindanao	Datu Salibu	Lower Leong/ Talitay		Maguindanao	Datu Salibu				Home-based
743		3715		Maguindanao	Shariff Saydona Mustapha	Pusao		Maguindanao	Shariff Saydona Mustapha	Pusao			Posts 1, 2A, 2B, 3 and 4 ECs
456		2280		Maguindanao	Shariff Saydona Mustapha	Linantangan		Maguindanao	Mamasapano	Libutan		Silongan	
361		1805		Maguindanao	Talitay	Kilalan, Manggay, Pageda		Maguindanao	Talitay				Home-based
165		825		Maguindanao	Shariff Aguak	Kuloy	Sitio Lab	Maguindanao	Shariff Aguak	Kuloy		Sitios - Taligeba, Patra, Mista	Home-based
447		2235		Maguindanao	Shariff Aguak	Bagong Upam	Kulumpang	Maguindanao	Shariff Aguak	Bagong Upam		Sitios - Taligeba, Patra, Mista	Evacuation Centers

200		1000		Maguindanao	Guindulungan	Muslim					
278		1243		North Cotabato	Pigcawayan	Malagakit		North Cotabato	Pigcawayan	Malagakit	
78		540		North Cotabato	Pikit	Buliok					
5,644 ¹	TOTAL	28,073 ¹									

DURABLE SOLUTIONS – *None so far*

No. of Fam	+/-	No. of Persons	+/-	Location (Displaced)			Location (Current)			Type (Please select one)		
				Province	Municipality	Barangay	Province	Municipality	Barangay	Return	Relocation	Local Integration

¹ Current displacements only

ARMED CONFLICT IN CENTRAL MINDANAO

(AFP-MILF vs. BIFF/JMWA)



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Philippines

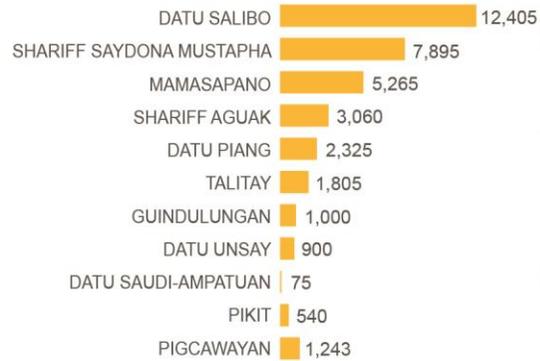
36,513

DISPLACED INDIVIDUALS cumulative since May'17

7,332

DISPLACED FAMILIES cumulative since May'17

DISPLACED PERSONS by area (as of 17 October 2017)



LEGEND

- Conflict
- Roads
- Municipal boundary
- Barangay boundary
- Provincial boundary

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

AFP launched airstrikes and mortar shelling against the JMWA in marshy locations.

BIFF retaliated by attacking the AFP detachment in Datu Saudi Ampatuan, and Brgy. Pagatin in Datu Salibo, temporarily closing the access road.

515 individuals fled their homes due to fear of continuing armed confrontation between AFP and BIFF/JMWA.

BIFF/JMWA harassed an AFP detachment.

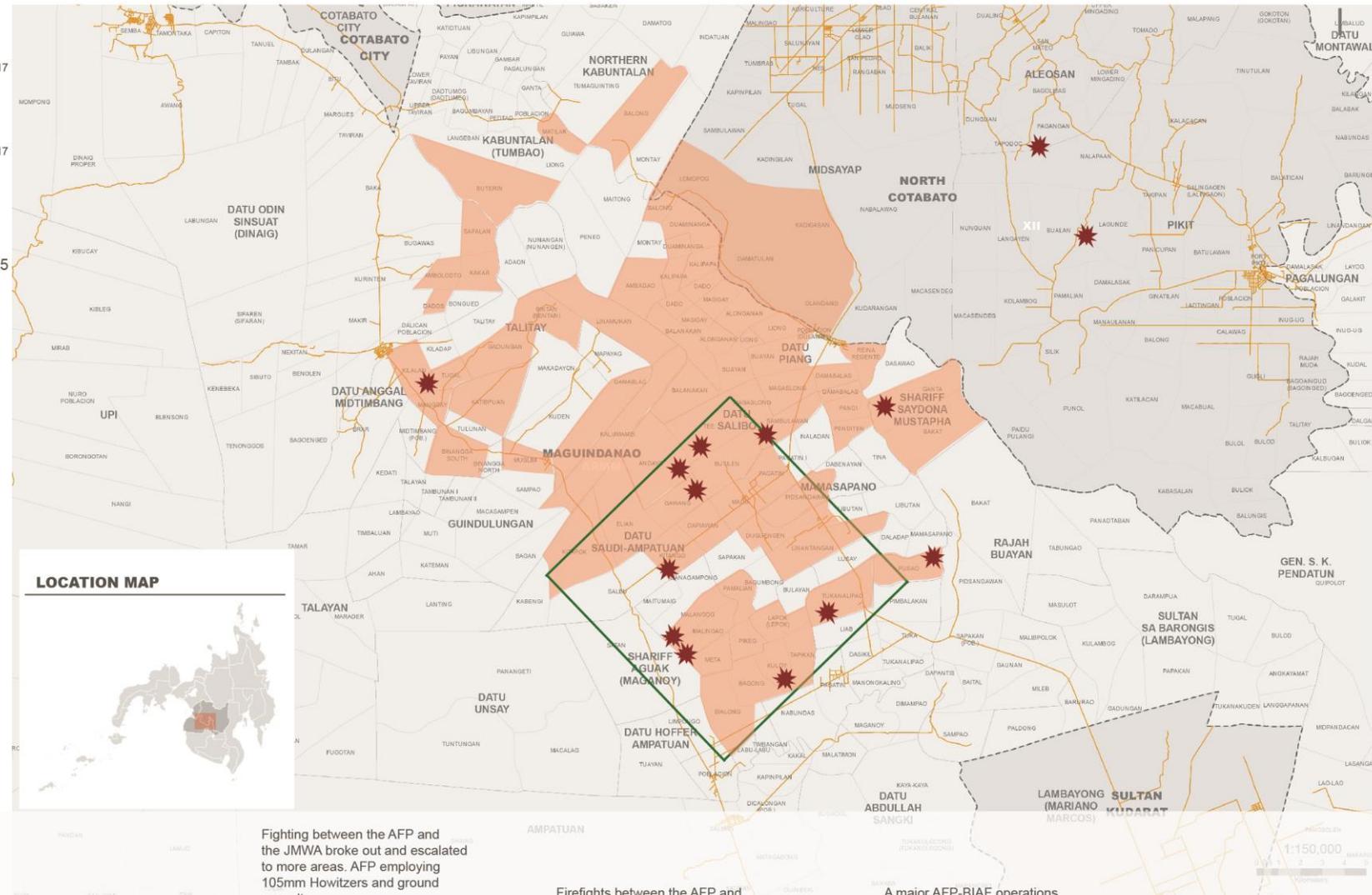
Fighting between the AFP and the JMWA broke out and escalated to more areas. AFP employing 105mm Howitzers and ground assaults.

Individuals were forcibly displaced by these series of firefights.

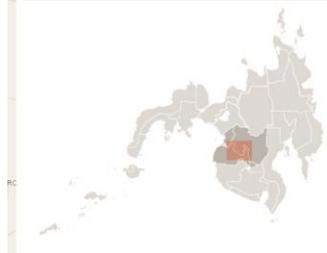
Firefights between the AFP and MILF/BIAF erupted anew and expanded to other villages after JMWA forces harassed AFP and PNP detachments in Datu Unsay.

A major AFP-BIAF operations was launched against the BIFF/JMWA, employing 105 Howitzers, aerial bombardment and mortar shelling.

Joint clearing operations by AFP and BIAF against JMWA.



LOCATION MAP



24 APR

5-6 MAY

7-10 MAY

1-2 JUN

3 JUN

4,7&12 JUN

28 JUL

2&6 AUG

20-21 AUG

29-30 AUG

2-5 SEP

14-18 SEP

AFP launched military operations against BIFF and JMWA Group. 20 fatalities recorded among the militants, 6 of whom were foreigners.

AFP launched simultaneous aerial bombardment and mortar shelling against BIFF/JMWA positions in the Liguasan Marsh.

Residents preemptively evacuated their homes after receiving reports that Abu Turaiif has returned to the area.

AFP versus BIFF/JMWA armed encounter.

A joint AFP-BIAF operations against the JMWA was launched. 7,895 individuals were forcibly displaced due to this incident.

AFP joins forces with MILF-BIAF against JMWA. An estimated 1,807 individuals have been displaced.

SOURCES:

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao – Humanitarian Emergency Action and Response Team (ARMM-HEART)
Community and Family Services International (CFSI)
ACTED
Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) ARMM
Magungaya Mindanao Incorporated (MMI)

The IDP Protection Assessment Form (IDPPAR)

The IDP Protection Assessment Form aims to provide a starting point for information and analysis that can help humanitarian agencies, policy makers and other stakeholders concerning instances of forced displacement or solutions (repatriation, resettlement, integration). The number of people displaced/affected may differ from the number in need of humanitarian assistance. To the extent possible, the terminology used in the Dashboard reflects the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and other sources of international law and practice. The information reported in the IDP Protection Assessment Forms has been received from members of the Protection Cluster across Mindanao. Consequently, unreported cases of forced displacement and solutions are not reflected. Updates will be provided as and when more information is received from members. Although efforts are made to verify the data, the Protection Cluster takes no responsibility for the incompleteness or inaccuracy of the information. At the end of every month, this data is compiled and distributed through the **'Protection Dashboard'**. The information provided in this IDP Assessment Report does not necessarily reflect the views of UNHCR or any individual member of the Protection Cluster.

The Protection Cluster

In the Philippines, the protection cluster has been established by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) Circular No 5 series of 10 May 2007 (Institutionalizing Cluster Approach in Philippine Disaster System). The cluster approach is part of a global response aimed at providing more timely and consistent help to the internally displaced and other affected people in complex emergencies and disasters. The Protection Cluster in Mindanao meets in Cotabato, Iligan, Davao and other cities on a regular basis. Currently there are over 100 participating agencies including from the Government, State, Civil Society, national and international NGOs and agencies, as well as the United Nations. For more information, please visit the Protection Cluster website <http://www.protectioncluster.org/philippines/> or e-mail us at PHICOPRC@unhcr.org

