CHILD PROTECTION RAPID ASSESSMENT REPORT: MARAWI DISPLACEMENT

October 2017
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This report was edited by Paulene Maria Isabelle Santos and Richard Jacob Dy from Plan International Philippines’ Communications and Advocacy Unit.
# ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Abbreviation and Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>Armed Forces of the Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASG</td>
<td>Abu Sayyaf Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBL</td>
<td>Bangsamoro Basic Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIFF</td>
<td>Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters</td>
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<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-Based Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPRA</td>
<td>Child Protection Rapid Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPRA TF</td>
<td>Child Protection Rapid Assessment Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>CP/GBV WG</td>
<td>Joint Regional Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>Direct Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSWD</td>
<td>The Department of Social Welfare and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs</td>
<td>Internally Displaced People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JI</td>
<td>Jemaah Islamiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KI</td>
<td>Khilafa Islamiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILF</td>
<td>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNLF</td>
<td>Moro National Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>New People’s Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSAGs</td>
<td>Non-State Armed Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>UASC</td>
<td>Unaccompanied and Separated Children</td>
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</table>
**KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Best Interest:** The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. When making decisions, adults should consider how their decisions would affect children. This also applies to all government authorities in charge of making budgets, policies, and laws. (Article 3, UN CRC)

**Child:** Refers to a person below 18 years of age or someone over 18 but unable to fully take care of himself/herself due to abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination based on a physical or mental disability or condition. (Republic Act No. 7610, otherwise known as the Special Protection of Children against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act)

**Child Labor:** Refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. It is described often as work that deprives children of their childhood, potential, and dignity. (Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, page 223)

**Child Protection:** Refers to the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. (Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action)

**Confidentiality:** It is crucial to protect the identities of children and groups of children who participate in the assessment. Due to the sensitive nature of the conflict and vulnerability of children in conflict situations, confidentiality must be maintained at all times. However, confidentiality must never replace the need to protect children. Action must be taken if disclosures relating to suffered abuse occur.

**Do No Harm:** It is a principle wherein efforts must be made to minimize possible negative effects and maximize possible benefits. It is the responsibility of those engaged in aid, development, research, or child protection response to protect individuals from harm, as well as ensure that children experience the greatest possible benefits of involvement.

**Early Marriage:** A marriage or union wherein one or two parties are under 18 years old. (Philippine Law and Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action)

**Environmental Risks:** Refers to threats towards the safety of children by their surroundings. Children have little control over their environment. Unlike adults, children may be unaware of environmental risks and unable to make choices to protect themselves.

**Excluded Children:** Refers to children who are at risk of missing out from an environment that protects them from violence, abuse, and exploitation. They may be unable to access essential services and goods in a way that threatens their ability to participate fully in society. (State of the World’s Children, 2006, page 7)

**Foster Care:** Refers to the provision of planned temporary substitute parental care to a child by a foster parent. (Republic Act No. 10165, otherwise known as the Foster Care Act of 2012)

**Gender-Based Violence:** An umbrella term referring to any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between men and women. (IASC GBV Guidelines, 2005, page 7)

**Inclusive:** Participation must be inclusive and non-discriminatory, and encourages opportunities for marginalized children, including girls, boys, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and

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1 Adapted from the Central Mindanao Child Protection Rapid Assessment Report during the Government of the Philippines-Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters armed conflict in North Cotabato and other parts of Mindanao in January 2014.
Intersex (LGBTQI) children. The assessment also needs to be culturally sensitive to children from all communities.

**Informed Consent:** When involving children in the risk assessment, informed consent (depending on factors such as age and development) is necessary both for children’s actual participation and for sharing information that has arisen from the activities. Children must have access to adequate, appropriate, and child-friendly information about the process of their participation, and the outcome in terms of how and with whom their information might be shared. Information should not be shared if children or their guardians refuse to follow the process of obtaining informed consent.

**Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Child Rights Violations (GCRVs):** MRM monitors, reports, and responds to the six grave violations that are committed against children (or persons below 18 years of age), in the context of armed conflict, which are: (1) killing or maiming of children, (2) recruitment or use of children by armed forces or armed groups, (3) attacks on schools or hospitals, (4) rape or other sexual violence against children, (5) abduction of children and denial of humanitarian access to children.

**Respectful:** Children’s views have to be treated with respect by persons or organizations conducting the assessment.

**Safe and Sensitive to Risk:** In certain situations, expression of views may involve risks. Adults have a responsibility towards the children they work with and must take every precaution to minimize the risk of violence, exploitation, or any other negative consequence of their participation. A clear child protection strategy must be developed that recognizes the particular risks faced by some groups of children, as well as the additional barriers they face in obtaining much needed help. Children must be aware of their right to be protected from harm and know where to go for help when needed. Putting work into family and community participation, including the effort to understand the value and implications of participation, is important to minimize the risks of involving children in activities.

**Separated Children:** Refers to children who are separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregivers who are not necessarily their relatives. They may include children accompanied by other adult family members. (Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, page 13)

**Transparent and Informative:** Respondents must be provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive, and age-appropriate information about their right to freely express their views. In the assessment, their views are given due weight and meaningful participation takes place.

**Voluntary:** Respondents should never be coerced into expressing views against their wishes and should be informed that they could cease involvement with the assessment at any age.

**Unaccompanied Children:** Also called unaccompanied minors, unaccompanied children refer to those who have been separated from both parents and other relatives, and are not being taken care of by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. (Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, page 13)

**Translations of some Tagalog terms used by the assessors:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tagalog</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House-based</td>
<td>Mga taong nagsilikas at nakatira sa mga bahay ng kamag-anak o kaibigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>Pagkupkop sa bata</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual violence</td>
<td>Pang-aabusong sekswal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Severe corporal punishment</strong></td>
<td>Malupit at pisikal na pagparusa</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Militia activities</strong></td>
<td>Gawaing milisya. Halimbawa: CAFGU, CVO, tanod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unexploded device</strong></td>
<td>Bombang hindi sumabog (kasama ang bala)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmful traditional practices</strong></td>
<td>Nakasanayang mga gawaing nakapipinsala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unusual crying and shouting</strong></td>
<td>Hindi pangkaraniwang pag-iyak at pagsigaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violence against children</strong></td>
<td>Karahasan laban sa mga bata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unwilling to go to school</strong></td>
<td>Ayaw pumasok sa klase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disrespectful</strong></td>
<td>Walang paggalang sa pamilya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substance abuse</strong></td>
<td>Paggamit ng ipinagbabawal na gamot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committing crimes</strong></td>
<td>Gumagawa ng krimen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More aggressive behavior</strong></td>
<td>Pagiging mas agresibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Less willingness to help</strong></td>
<td>Kakulangan ng pagkusang tumulong sa mga tagapangalaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sadness</strong></td>
<td>Pagkalungkot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Having nightmares</strong></td>
<td>Binabangungot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bullying</strong></td>
<td>Pang-aasar na maaaring pisikal o emosyonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How they cope</strong></td>
<td>Paano nila hinaharap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude</strong></td>
<td>Pag-uugali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to services and marginalized groups</strong></td>
<td>Akses sa serbisyo at mga grupong hindi napagtutuunan ng pansin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aid workers</strong></td>
<td>Mga taong nagbibigay ng tulong o serbisyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual transaction</strong></td>
<td>Kalakarang sekswal (halimbawa: pagbebenta ng laman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-country trafficking</strong></td>
<td>Trapiking sa loob ng bansa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community justice system</strong></td>
<td>Lupong tagapamayapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Paghikayat na sumapi sa armadong pwersa o armadong grupo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killing and maiming</td>
<td>Pagpatay at pagkakasugat ng mga bata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abduction</td>
<td>Sapilitang pagkuha o pagdampot sa mga bata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape and other grave sexual violence</td>
<td>Panggagahasa at iba pang labis na pang-aabusong sekswal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacks on schools and hospital</td>
<td>Pag-atake sa mga paaralan at pagamutan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of humanitarian assistance</td>
<td>Pagharang sa mga tulong para sa komunidad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAP OF AFFECTED REGIONS

Below is a map of affected regions and provinces, with displacement figures (International Organization for Migration, 2017)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents primary data collected during the month of October 2017 and is further enriched by available secondary data on the humanitarian situation in affected areas of Mindanao in southern Philippines following the conflict in Marawi City.

The Child Protection Rapid Assessment Task Force (CPRA TF), which is part of the Joint Regional Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Working Group, carried out the child protection rapid needs assessment that led to this report. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Region X (Northern Mindanao) and Plan International Philippines led the task force. Plan International Philippines provided overall technical support to the preparation and completion of this report.

This report highlights the existing support mechanisms and the critical humanitarian needs in terms of child protection, and contains information on grave child rights violations due to the Marawi displacement. Primary data was collected through purposive sampling in ARMM and Northern Mindanao. The assessment only covered the identification and analysis of needs of affected populations, and does not measure the level of response by humanitarian actors.

Specifically, this assessment sought to:

- Outline and describe the scale of protection needs and risks;
- Present priority areas for further assessment, action and fundraising; and
- Provide recommendations for the development of response strategies.

Country profile

Geography

The Philippines is located in Southeast Asia in the western Pacific Ocean, between the Philippine Sea and the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea). It is comprised of over 7,000 islands, with a total land area of approximately 300,000 square kilometers. As an archipelago, the Philippines has no border countries, but sits north of Indonesia, south of mainland China and east of Vietnam (CIA World Factbook, 2017).

Population and language

Of the more than 100 million Filipinos, youth (between 15 to 24 years old) make up 20%, while children (below 18 years old) represent 42% of the total population (National Statistics Office, 2010). The Philippines has seven major ethnolinguistic groups: Tagalog (28%), Cebuano (13%), Ilocano (9%), Bisaya/Binisaya (7.6%), Hiligaynon Ilonggo (7.5%), Bikol (6%), and Waray (3.4%). Other groups make up 25% of the population (CIA World Factbook, 2017).

Most Filipinos are bilingual or can speak both Filipino and English; but there are eight other major dialects (CIA World Factbook, 2017).

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Religion

Filipinos are primarily Catholic (83% of Filipinos practice some form of Catholicism), while 5% are Muslim. The remaining 12% are Evangelical Christian or part of other religious denominations (CIA World Factbook, 2017).

Government

The Philippines, a former Spanish colony later occupied by the Americans and the Japanese, has three branches of government modeled after the US governance system: Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary.

Presently, the head of state and government is President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and the Vice-President is Maria Leonor “Leni” Robredo. Both were elected in June 2016.

According to the Constitution, presidents are directly elected by the people and can only serve single terms of up to six years. The president appoints the cabinet members who lead government agencies (CIA World Factbook, 2017).

The legislative power resides in Congress, a bicameral body consisting of the Senate (24 seats) and the House of Representatives (297 seats). The Judiciary branch consists of the Supreme Court and the lower courts, including the Islamic Sharia courts in the ARMM.

The Administrative Code of 1987 divides the Philippine archipelago into three major island groups: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Administrative divisions break down the islands further into 17 regions (16 administrative and one autonomous). Meanwhile, there are 81 provinces and 39 municipalities and cities. The barangay (village) is the smallest unit of government.

ARMM, an autonomous region consisting of predominantly Muslim provinces, is the only region in the Philippines that has its own government.

Socioeconomic profile

According to the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), as of 2009 an estimated 40% of Filipino children live in poverty. Poverty is highest among the children of fisher-folk, farmers, migrants, and informal sector workers. Greater inequities have been recorded in the country’s cities (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2009).

In terms of child development in the Philippines, there is increasing inequality and deprivation of basic needs (UNICEF Philippines, 2012). According to UNICEF, among those greatly affecting children are:

- Frequent occurrence of natural disasters;
- Rapid urbanization;
- Continuing armed struggle in Mindanao;
- Traditional culture that has perpetuated social and gender disparities;
- Political system at both national and local levels that is heavily-influenced by feudal, dynastic power dynamics;
- ‘Crony capitalism’ approach to business; and
- The world’s largest diaspora of educated workers, including many parents who have left an estimated nine million boys and girls behind.

Armed conflict

In the early 1970s, armed conflict escalated between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a group advocating for the Bangsamoro (Muslim Nation) people’s secession from the Philippines (Supreme Court, Commission on Elections, 2008). The Bangsamoro people identify themselves under Islamic law and culture, and faced years of suffering, deaths, displacement, and loss of property as a result of continued hostilities in southern Philippines.
The situation caught the attention of the Organization of Islamic Conference, which facilitated a series of negotiations between the Philippine government and MNLF (National Nutrition Council, 2017). It wasn't until 1977 that then President Ferdinand Marcos issued a proclamation forming the ARMM.

While at the time the region voted to remain as part of the Philippine national territory, ARMM was later established in 1989 through the Organic Act for the ARMM (under Republic Act 9054) (Supreme Court, Commission on Elections, 2008). The act states that:

- ARMM shall remain an integral and inseparable part of the national territory of the Philippines;
- The President exercises general supervision over the Regional Governor;
- The Regional Government has the power to create its own sources of revenues and to levy taxes, fees, and charges, subject to constitutional provisions and the provisions of RA 9054; and
- The Sharia law applies only to Muslims and pertinent constitutional provisions, such as the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment, limit its applications.

In July 2008, the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a section in RA 9054 granting the ARMM Regional Assembly the power to create provinces and cities. The court held that creating provinces and cities is a power that only Congress can exercise. (The Commission on Elections says the Supreme Court's ruling has no effect on the ARMM elections, as the decision is not yet final.)

However, even with the establishment of ARMM, armed conflict has not yet ceased. Various disputes over territory, legal authority, and reports of ARMM leadership’s affiliation with Al-Qaeda (an Islamist armed group), have led to massive protests, armed conflict, and a failure to ratify the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), a proposed establishment of an autonomous political entity for the Bangsamoro people. The BBL is an agreement set forth in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, signed through a peace agreement in 2014.

Pundits point to the failure to follow-through on the commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro as the cause of the increase in the presence of armed groups and incidence of violence in the region (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

Non-state armed groups are also present in Mindanao, including the New People’s Army (NPA), the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, the Moro Army Committee, and the Khilafa Islamiya (KI). KI’s membership is composed of Al-Qaeda followers of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Islamic State loyalists of armed group Jemaah Islamiya (JI).

The Philippine government insists that JI has very limited operational capacity in the Philippines. However, the group continues to carry out attacks, and in 2012, small-time criminals Abdullah and Omar Maute founded the Maute Group, a faction affiliated with the JI made up of former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) fighters (Banlaoi, 2012). Armed attacks and a bombing in 2016 presented the first evidence that the ASG and Maute Group fighters are linked (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Emergency profile

On May 23, 2017, the AFP launched military operations in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur province, to capture Isnilon Hapilon, one of the leaders of the ASG (ACAPS, 2017). During the operation, the ASG, with the support of the Maute Group combatants, launched a counter-attack resulting in heavy fighting lasting until June 21, 2017.

As a result, massive evacuations took place as locals sought refuge in and outside of Marawi City (UNICEF, 2017). As of August 2017, almost 360,000 people had been displaced into nine neighboring regions – primarily Northern Mindanao, ARMM, and Soccsksargen (Region XII) (International Organization for Migration, 2017).

3 The ARMM government has one regional government, a chief executive, and 10 cabinet members. It also has an active legislative branch. Both executive and legislative bodies hold regular elections.
An estimated 98% of the Marawi City population is believed to have been displaced due to the conflict (International Organization for Migration, 2017). UNICEF reported that over 160,000 of the displaced population are children (UNICEF, 2017). Five months into the fighting, the displacement is likely to continue as the Islamic State-affiliated fighters continue to resist the military operations in Marawi City.

Pre-conflict poverty

Even before the conflict in Marawi City, most of the communities now hosting internally-displaced people (IDPs) were facing poverty and lack access to basic social services. Some host communities have increased their population size by over 50% (UNICEF, 2017).

Lack and poor state of facilities

Due to the conflict, most of the facilities for the IDPs are overwhelmed (UN OCHA, 2017). Majority or 95% of IDPs are staying in their relatives’ homes, in their host community, or in informal settlements or shelters in private properties that are not recognized by the government (UNHCR, 2017).

Evacuations centers are over-crowded and ill-equipped to address the needs of IDPs: 16% of families reside in classrooms, 5% in mosques or madrasah compounds, 39% of families are in halls without privacy partitions (only 17% of halls are with privacy partitions), and 22% of families are in tents (International Organization for Migration, 2017).

Vulnerability

Despite the lack of segregated data and information about People with Specific Needs, including unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), pregnant and lactating mothers, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, and persons with serious medical conditions, international organizations responding to the crisis were able to report the presence of UASC and grave child rights violations, including the use of children as combatants. Air strikes by the AFP have also raised concerns about civilian casualties (ACAPS, 2017), (UNICEF, 2017).

The conflict and displacement have also caused negative psychosocial effects on children and adults. Some of the evacuees are sleeping and taking baths in open spaces, increasing the risk to gender-based violence (UNHCR, 2017). Health, hygiene, and sanitation are huge concerns, especially in congested informal settlements. People lack access to potable water and practice open defecation due to insufficient latrines (UNHCR, 2017). In evacuation centers, there is a reported increase in the incidence of diarrhea and malnutrition (UNICEF, 2017).
Disrupted education

The education of children has also been greatly affected. The conflict has disrupted the learning of more than 86,000 children, while an estimated 22,700 displaced school children are still not back in school (UNICEF, 2017).

Livelihood

The conflict has also affected economic and commercial activities in Lanao del Sur province, triggering further displacement and causing families distress and concern about their income and livelihood (UNHCR, 2017). IDPs report uncertainty at how long they will be accommodated in host communities, as many hosts have already begun to ask IDPs to leave.

Martial law

On May 23, 2017, amid the ongoing clashes between government troops and the Maute group, the Philippine government declared martial law in the island of Mindanao, including Marawi City. Martial law as declared on the grounds of curbing civil unrest and quelling the rebellion (Mckirdy, 2017). (The Constitution limits the declaration of martial law to a period of 60 days – a measure to avoid long periods of martial law declarations following the dictatorship of former President Ferdinand Marcos.)

According to the Constitution, martial law can also be declared when a state of emergency is in effect. However, President Duterte has been reluctant to call the displacement in Marawi an emergency. The government has not formally requested the support of the international humanitarian community, which has impacted the ability for the United Nations to both coordinate the response and launch fundraising activities for life-saving aid.

On July 22, 2017, Congress, upon the request of the Philippine government, voted to allow the extension of martial law in Mindanao until the end of 2017. President Duterte was quoted as saying that he “might declare martial law throughout the country to protect the people [from terrorism].” (Luu, 2017).

Armed group leaders killed

As of writing this report, Isnilon Hapilon and Omar Maute, the leaders behind the conflict in Marawi, were killed in a military assault in Marawi City on October 16, 2017 following a tip from a female hostage who was able to escape captivity (ABS-CBN News, 2017). On the following day, President Duterte released a statement declaring Marawi City “…liberated from the terrorist influence that marks the beginning of rehabilitation of Marawi” (Santos, 2017).

Despite this declaration, the AFP still continues to assess the conflict-affected areas, searching for remaining alleged Islamic State-affiliated leaders who are presumed to be from Myanmar and Indonesia, and ensuring the areas are clear of unexploded bombs and improvised explosive devices.

There is little evidence that martial law will be lifted and IDPs continue to be unable to return to their homes with access to basic essential services. IDPs fear being pushed out of evacuation centers and host communities, and there are reports that the Philippine government will start forcibly returning IDPs around the outskirts of Marawi City. Without a safe place to return, IDPs are at-risk of facing another displacement (UNHCR, 2017). In addition, IDPs have expressed concerns that a lack of a clear plan for reparations to those who experienced financial loss will lead to civilian unrest and anti-government sentiments.

Access to goods and services

Lack of access for humanitarian actors

The military operations of the AFP have been successful in containing the presence of armed groups. However, Marawi still remains to be closed to humanitarian actors. Only the Red Cross has been granted access through a “peace corridor” to rescue trapped civilians (UNICEF, 2017). An unconfirmed number of
civilians remain inside Marawi City. Lack of access has prevented the assessment of needs and provision of much needed response (UNHCR, 2017).

While access is now open to the five municipal centers that have received the largest number of IDPs, it is only restricted to local civil society organizations that are known to host populations and that have high community acceptance and trust (UNICEF, 2017). Often, these organizations are made up of IDPs themselves.

**Unregistered IDPs**

While conditions in home- or community-based settings are generally more favorable, IDPs in these settings are typically excluded from access to services and information, as many do not understand the registration process (International Organization for Migration, 2017). Local social welfare offices face challenges in identifying home- and community-based IDPs, and therefore the government has not been able to register many of the IDPs. As a result, many home- and community-based IDPs are moving to evacuation centers to access services (UNHCR, 2017).

The Philippine government has established the National Emergency Operations Center as the central coordination hub for government and humanitarian responders. As of June, all government-led clusters have designated Inter-Agency Standing Committee co-leads and have activated sector-specific working groups at the sub-national level under this structure (UNHCR, 2017). The Humanitarian Country Team in Manila and the Mindanao Humanitarian Team meet regularly to discuss the conflict and humanitarian response. Last May 29, the ARMM government made an official request for increased humanitarian assistance to international and non-government actors through the Mindanao Humanitarian Team (UNICEF, 2017).

**Excluded groups**

**Children are at-risk**

Due to the absence of a comprehensive vulnerability screening and protection assessment, little is understood about the gaps in children’s access to services in the Marawi displacement. This is unfortunate as displaced children face specific vulnerabilities due to armed conflict and are vulnerable to harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage and “rido” (family feud) (Silverio, 2014).

**Children from indigenous communities**

In addition, roughly 9 million “Lumads,” or non-Muslim indigenous communities, live in Mindanao. Land disputes often put “Lumads” into conflict with the demands of the Bangsamoro people (International Crisis Group, 2011). Indigenous communities also face certain challenges, including high infant, child, and maternal mortality rates. The number of underweight babies is also high among indigenous communities due to lack of quality prenatal care, early marriage, multiple and frequent pregnancies among the women, and hard labor during pregnancy (Mansourian, 2012).

The exclusion of indigenous peoples in the response narrative can lead to tensions as the displacement continues.

**Unregistered children**

Around 2.6 million children are unregistered in the Philippines, with the majority of unregistered children being Muslim or coming from indigenous communities (Silverio, 2014). Without their legal identities, children find it hard to gain access to services. In cases of separation due to displacement, it will also be difficult to reunite them back to their families. In the Marawi displacement, many IDPs lack proper
documentation with the social welfare department, which facilitates the distribution of Disaster Assistance Family Access Cards (DAFAC). Without the DAFAC, children and their families will not be eligible to receive humanitarian assistance. Lack of DAFAC is common in home- or community-based IDPs.

**Marginalized children**

Marginalized children are also often excluded in humanitarian settings. Examples of marginalized children are children with disabilities, children who are from poor households, street children, children born as a result of rape, children from cultural or religious minorities, children living with HIV, adolescent girls, children who are victims of the worst forms of child labor (including trafficking), children living in residential care or detention, illegitimate children, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) children (Child Protection Working Group, 2012).

Based on the baseline information prior to the crisis in Marawi, Lanao del Sur province in ARMM had some of the most socio-economically marginalized communities in the Philippines. According to the 2006 Regional Child Development Index of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), the two regions with the highest incidence of poverty are Eastern Visayas and ARMM (Silverio, 2014). Additionally, this rapid assessment also showed that, in more than half of the sites assessed, children from the poorest households are reported to be among the most excluded from accessing services.

Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities are among the most stigmatized and excluded groups. In the Philippines, almost 200,000 children are reported to have disabilities. This 20% of the total population of people living with disabilities in the Philippines (Mansourian, 2012). According to the Special Committee on Child Protection of the Department of Justice, more than 50% of disabilities among children are acquired and, therefore, could have been prevented. Many families are often unequipped or unable to deal with children with disabilities due to shame and lack of resources and support systems.

The task force conducted an analysis workshop of data collected for this report. During the workshop, members of the technical groups on child protection and gender-based violence used an inclusive approach in providing recommendations. In the recommendations, child protection actors are encouraged to adjust prevention and response interventions to target marginalized and vulnerable children. Actors are also encouraged to ensure inclusiveness and child participation in the recovery and documentation process and that marginalized and vulnerable children have access to services.

This needs assessment hopes to lead to the further identification of children excluded from access to services, in order to take into account their special needs in future humanitarian assistance.
METHODOLOGY

Since May 2017, members of the joint regional Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Working Group (CP/GBV WG) have been responding to the needs of affected children, youth, and families affected by the crisis.

Five months into the Marawi displacement response, no sector-specific assessment analysing the needs of affected children has been made. Members of the working group wanted to better understand the needs of affected children and their families to ensure humanitarian aid is responsive to their needs. This pushed the working group to form a task force to undertake the rapid needs assessment last October 2017.

Instruments

- **Desk Review.** Before the actual assessment, a comprehensive desk review was done; covering 33 needs assessments from government and humanitarian actors, research reports, evaluations, and documentations of lessons, security reports, and news articles published since May 2017.

- **Tool Adaptation.** The tools from the global child protection rapid assessment toolkit and the Central Mindanao Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA) report on the government and the BIFF conflict in January 2014 were adapted and modified to suit the context of the conflict in Marawi. The CP/GBV WG task force reviewed and modified the questionnaires and other tools, including the terms used and the Tagalog translations.

- **Key Informant Interviews (KII).** The assessors used KII as the main tool for the assessment. The tool covered the following thematic areas: child protection, gender-based violence, and grave child rights violations. KIIs or interviews with the following were conducted as part of the assessment:
  - Barangay Official or Camp Manager
  - Religious Leader (Christian and Muslim)
  - Youth Leader (18-24)
  - Kalipi Women’s Group Leader or Woman Representative
  - Madrasa/School Teacher

- **Direct Observation (DO).** DO was used to validate the data that was collected from the KII. One DO was conducted per site to understand the behaviours and patterns in affected communities, including the dangers and hazards faced by children and the physical conditions of facilities (Child Protection Working Group, 2012).

- **Site Reports.** The evidence collected during the DOs and the results of the KIIs were then compiled as a summary of information called a Site Report. All Site Reports were then analyzed for this report’s key findings.

Training of assessors

The CP/GBV WG task force held two batches of a two-day training for the assessors on October 2017 in Iligan City. The assessors came from the member organizations of the task force: local government units of Marawi City and Iligan City, DSWD field office in Northern Mindanao, CFSI, MARADECA, and Balay Rehabilitation. They were recommended based on their background in child protection and experience in conducting field surveys and focus group discussions. Some of the assessors were involved in the Return Intent Survey organized by UNHCR.
Data collection

The data was obtained from the KII and DOs conducted in 45 sites (14 in Northern Mindanao and 31 in ARMM). The assessment teams selected the key informants using the criteria defined in the rapid assessment guide. A key informant was any adult who could provide information or opinion about child protection issues that were specified in the adapted tools. Key informants were identified based on their roles in the community and if the assessment teams were confident of their capacity to represent the views or situation of children in selected sites.

Another requirement for selection was the key informant's personal experience and if it represents the experience of the community. In addition, at least two key informants should directly work with children in some capacity on a daily basis, and at least one should hold a position that makes him or her responsible over a population. Gender balance was also considered in the selection of key informants.

Data processing

The data collected from the field was reviewed and encoded by an information manager in Iligan City, under the technical guidance of the Child Protection in Emergencies Specialist of Plan International.

Sampling and geographic scope

The assessment was conducted in Northern Mindanao and ARMM – two regions with the highest number of IDPs. The task force used purposive sampling methods in selecting the locations. The following steps were taken:

- **Step 1**: The CP/GBV WG task force listed all regions, provinces, municipalities, and barangays affected by the Marawi displacement and mapped the density of IDPs they were hosting.

- **Step 2**: The task force developed a set of criteria to differentiate the various characteristics of the affected areas. This informed the creation of different scenarios. The following criteria was used:
  - **Access to Services**: Communities that have access to food/water, health, and shelter. All needs to be in place to be qualified in the assessment.
  - **Evacuation Center**: Government-provided settlements (temporary shelters)
  - **Home-Based**: Living with relatives/friends/community members
  - **Community-Based**: Living in non-formal camps or settlements (unregistered with government)

- **Step 3**: Based on this set of criteria, various scenarios were developed. The task force used purposive sampling to select 45 communities from these scenarios, ensuring a 95% confidence level. The following sites were chosen for assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Barangay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Balindong</td>
<td>Lilod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Marantao</td>
<td>Cawayan Bacolod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Marantao</td>
<td>Lumbac Kialdan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Maguing</td>
<td>Madanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Maguing</td>
<td>Sabala Dilausan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Maguing</td>
<td>Balagunun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Bubong</td>
<td>Bagoaingud Evac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Bubong</td>
<td>Roger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Bubong</td>
<td>Montiyaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Butig</td>
<td>Tiowi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Ganassi</td>
<td>Camponga Raya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Lanao Del Sur</td>
<td>Piagapo</td>
<td>Tawaan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment teams

Assessment teams were made up of three individual assessors: one (1) team leader and two (2) assessors. Assessors were required to speak English, Tagalog, and local dialects Maranao or Bisaya. All tools were provided in English and Tagalog to aid in translation during the enumeration of findings. Assessors conducted 210 KIIs and 42 DOs.

Below is a table showing the profile of key informants:
Aside from assistance from assessors, each location received technical support from the CP/GBV WG task force members familiar with the context and needs of the affected populations. The task force was responsible for providing introductions to key informants and stakeholders in the chosen communities and were tasked to liaise with coordination mechanisms and partner international non-governmental agencies (NGO).

The task force was also responsible for providing support for assessment concerns that need urgent action. This ensures that any disclosures of protection concerns by children or families participating in the assessment will be reported directly to the relevant municipal social worker. This also ensures that trained case management professionals are able to provide swift response to protection concerns during the conduct of the assessment.

**Analysis**

Technical experts from the Child Protection Rapid Assessment Task Force and the team leaders from the assessment teams conducted the analysis of key findings. All Site Reports were also entered into an electronic database for data consolidation and analysis.

The key findings were presented to select community members from the assessment sites, to have the community verify the accuracy of the findings and to gather recommendations on what should be done at the community level. The recommendations have also gone through validation exercises with the Humanitarian Country Team, experts from government and NGOs, and the CP/GBV WG task force.

**Limitations**

The assessment, however, has the following limitations:

- Key informants were mobilized by the DSWD in ARMM, local social welfare officials, and NGO partners working with the task force. It is likely that the participants were selected with a certain level of partiality or have already participated in humanitarian services or activities. This means that they may not represent the most vulnerable groups or individuals in the conflict. To counteract the partiality, DOs and the desk review were conducted.
- Due to time constraints, the assessment was not able to cover Region XII (Soccsksargen), which received the third highest number of IDPs after Northern Mindanao and ARMM. It is therefore recommended that any future child protection situation assessments attempt to include the region.
- The KII tool was translated into the national language, Tagalog. However, many locations required the use of local dialects, Maranao or Bisaya. The task force relied on the assessors to directly translate the questionnaire to the informants. There is a possibility that certain protection terms were not translated properly or clearly in every interview conducted.
- Heavy rain, limited access to certain remote sites, and the nationwide transport strike limited the time spent in the assessment. To compensate, extra time was given to ensure most KII and DOs were completed. However, the assessment had a casualty of three Site Reports, which were not submitted prior to the period for analysis. In the case of the remote municipality of Maguindang.

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4 Representatives from the CP/GBV WG
Lanao del Sur province, heavy rains rendered the site inaccessible and lack of power cut off communication. In total, 42 out of the originally intended 45 Site Reports have been completed.

- Due to cultural reasons, women in certain sites refused to be interviewed. Therefore, in these places, only the perspectives of males were recorded.
- Due to security issues, Barangay Mipaga in Saguiaran, Lanao del Sure province replaced Barangay Maitobasak.

The findings in this report do not claim to provide a whole picture of the child protection situation in the island of Mindanao. While this report is limited to the situation in Northern Mindanao and ARMM, it provides valuable insights into the needs and capacities of children, young people, and families affected by the crisis in Marawi.
KEY FINDINGS

Introduction: Child Protection

The Philippines has localized the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child through various human rights laws and frameworks, including the Philippine Constitution. However, the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) cited that while the Philippines has a fairly strong legal basis for child protection, there is a lack of consistent and effective enforcement of laws and more than legal frameworks are needed to effectively address the underlying and root causes of child abuse, exploitation, violence, and neglect (Mansourian, 2012).

Philippine law (Republic Act 7610) defines children as individuals who are either under the age of 18 years or over 18 years old but unable to fully take care of themselves or protect themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of physical or mental disability or condition (Silverio, 2014). Certain groups such as indigenous peoples and Muslim communities, including the Maranao, who value physiological processes of puberty rather than age, contest this definition.

The Child and Youth Welfare Code of 1963 is the Philippines’ fundamental legislative instrument that provides comprehensive measures to be taken with respect to children’s welfare. The Code obligates the Philippine state and non-state actors to provide children with basic necessities, such as a balanced diet and adequate clothing, right to education, recreation, access to health services, protection from exploitation, an efficient and honest government, and the right to mature as a free individual (Silverio, 2014). Where applicable, relevant national legislature is included in the key findings.

The following presents key findings from the child protection rapid needs assessment. While it was expected that needs and risks would be different based on the type of living arrangement (i.e., evacuation center, home-based or community-based), primary data collected did not reveal this to be true. Therefore, the following findings are reported to apply to all types of living arrangements.

Photo taken from the Maria Cristina Evacuation Center in Iligan, City.

5 This brief summary of Child Protection situation in the Philippines is taken from Plan International Philippines’ Child Rights Situation Analysis.
Traditional practices of separation have been exacerbated by relocation and crisis.

In 2003, a total of 2,732 children were reported to have been deprived of a family environment and to have been separated from their parents (Mansourian, 2012). According to the DSWD, there is an increasing number of children of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) who are at risk of not receiving parental care. There is evidence to show that this increasing OFW phenomenon has resulted in a new type of family setting wherein children are raised by one parent, their grandparents, or other relatives, thereby increasing the risk for exploitation and negative psychological effects (Mansourian, 2012).

During emergencies, the traditional practice of separation is exacerbated as children are separated from their parents and families, making them vulnerable to violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Among the sites assessed, 33% reported that there were separated children in their communities, while 14% reported that there were children unaccompanied and living without adult supervision. Internally displaced families reported cases of family separation and missing family members, saying that their relatives were still stranded in Marawi City – often referred to as ‘ground zero.’ However, there is limited information about the number of UASC, their living conditions, or where they are staying (UNHCR, 2017). 6

The CPRA revealed the main causes of separation in the Marawi Displacement to be the following:

![Chart showing main causes of separation from usual caregivers]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Losing caregivers/children due to medical evacuation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing caregivers/children during relocation</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregivers sending their children to institutional care</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregivers sending their children to extended family/friends</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregivers sending their children to work far from parents/usual caregivers</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregivers sending their children to institutional care</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued disappearance of children/caregivers in the immediate aftermath of the ...</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among these main causes of separation, 26% of sites assessed reported separation occurring during relocation, 22% reported separation occurring in the aftermath of the crisis, and 26% reported deliberate separation done when sending children to live with relatives. This was confirmed in the validation sessions with the communities where it was found that some parents were not able to get back to their houses due to the lockdown of roads; hence, they were unable to get their children out. At times, they were able to rescue other children instead, resulting to spontaneous foster care. In the midst of the chaos and the rush to get away, some parents were rattled and ended up saving their pets but forgetting their children.

6 Reports by the CP/GBV WG have noted efforts to monitor and document UASC including orphaned children. As of 23 August 2017 (UNICEF Situation Report), the CP/GBV referred 12 cases of children unaccompanied (3), separated (5) or orphaned (4) for appropriate social casework management interventions. This increases up to 25 cases in reported and managed by November 2017.
Notably, more separated boys were reported, while more unaccompanied girls were identified. Experts consulted suggested that boys relocated with a parent or relatives in the lead up to the Marawi crisis to avoid being used or recruited by armed groups. This was validated by the communities as they revealed that boys were being forcibly abducted by Islamic State-affiliated armed groups, thus the need for them to be separated from their families. Meanwhile, girls are believed to have been left behind in the lead up to the crisis and separated from their families in the aftermath of the crisis, leaving them with no primary caregivers.

In the child protection rapid assessment in Central Mindanao, similar data was reported as 65% of sites reported more unaccompanied girls than boys (Child Protection Working Group, 2014). While there was no observable age range of children most affected by separation, adolescent girls and boys are often more vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation (trafficking or child labor) and early marriage/pregnancy (Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF Philippines, 2016).

Data gathered suggested that the traditional practice of maintaining strong family ties, caring for children who are not your own such as in spontaneous foster care, and the practice of children staying with relatives has resulted in positive coping mechanisms for unaccompanied children. This practice was confirmed by the communities and members of the CP/GBV working group, citing that the Maranaos have a tradition called “kapamagaluba,” which translates to helping even the most distant of relatives. Thus, there were cases of UASC that were not reported because they were not considered as separated from family. Additionally, parents had often sent their children to stay with extended family due to schooling needs.

Among the sites assessed, 44% reported that they would care for a separated child themselves should they come across one, and 51% of sites reported they would care for the child temporarily while looking for a longer term solution. Sharing from the communities during validation confirms that there were cases of children who were left to the care of their grandparents or relatives because their parents had to work in Manila or outside the city after the crisis. Meanwhile, 21% of the sites reported that there were children living in informal foster care or those institutions not recognized by the government, and 17% reported that children were living in formal or government-approved foster care.

However, 19% of sites reported that children were living on their own in child-headed households and 7% reported that there were children living on the street. The varied care arrangements for UASC indicate that service provision targeting UASC is not consistent across displaced populations, leading to some UASC to remain highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. While the Philippine Red Cross has already established a family tracing and reunification system in some evacuation centers, it was noted that there is a need to expand this initiative so that it reaches IDPs in other areas (UNHCR, 2017).

**Displacement and current living conditions have affected the psychological well-being of children and their caregivers.**

In humanitarian crises, children may experience profound stress and will often exhibit different reactions to it including acquiring sleeping problems, having nightmares, withdrawal, concentration problems, having feelings of guilt, among others (Child Protection Working Group, 2014). In the CPRA, 79% of the 42 sites assessed reported a change in children’s behavior after the Marawi Displacement. These changes in the behavior are seen in the table below.  

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7 All the data below is percentage of the 42 sites reporting.
Changes in Behavior | Percentage to Total Number of Sites (girls) | Percentage to Total Number of Sites (boys)
--- | --- | ---
Unwillingness to go to school | 56% | 53%
Sadness | 56% | 53%
Unusual crying and screaming | 19% | 10%
Nightmares | 11% | 10%
Disrespectful behavior | 11% | 10%
Aggressive behavior | 8% | 13%

When asked what they thought were stress factors for boys and girls since the Marawi Displacement, sites reported the following:

Changes in Behavior | Percentage to Total Number of Sites (girls) | Percentage to Total Number of Sites (boys)
--- | --- | ---
Inability to return home | 66% | 66%
Losing belongings | 66% | 63%
Inability to go back to school | 73% | 61%
Lack of food | 56% | 61%
Lack of shelter | 41% | 44%
Attacks | 44% | 44%

The reasons presented as the causes for the change in behavior among children were confirmed. There were children who stopped their schooling due to financial constraints since their parents had little to no source of income while they were in evacuation camps. The new environment children were placed in also caused behavior change since they needed to adjust to their unfamiliar host communities. Additionally, they were also not used to the climate since it was colder in Marawi.

In general, coping mechanisms for children were positive. 80% of sites reported that boys talked with their friends and family members when they were stressed. 61% reported that boys engaged in recreational activities and 44% reported that boys were attending temporary school. There were similar results for girls. 86% of sites reported that girls talked with their friends and family members when they were stressed. 57% reported that girls engaged in recreational activities, and 48% reported that girls were attending temporary school.

“SOME OF THE MOTHERS IN THIS EVACUATION CENTER ARE TOO TRAUMATIZED BY THE CONFLICT. THEY REFUSE TO LET THEIR CHILDREN OUT OF THEIR SIGHT TO ATTEND CLASSES OR GO TO CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES.”

- CAMP MANAGER, EVACUATION CENTER IN ILIGAN CITY.
However, 24% of sites assessed reported that girls were allegedly joining armed groups as a way to cope with stress brought about by the conflict. There is no secondary data to further explain this, though it may be possible that this phenomenon is linked to early marriage. In particular, early marriage can occur due to the need for 1) economic stability in the wake of the crisis; 2) protection for themselves and their families; and 3) upholding one’s honor, which is the case when girls marry the perpetrator of the sexual violence committed against them.

The validation did not confirm nor deny this occurrence. Some members of the CP/GBV Working Group received reports on recruitment of girls, but it has to be verified further. Reasons given why girls in evacuation centers may opt to join the armed groups were linked to financial needs. It was said that if they were offered a large amount of money, they would accept the offer.

Caregivers were also highly affected by the emergency. 61% of sites reported a change in caregivers’ attitude toward their children. These changes are largely reported to be positive. 51% reported that caregivers showed more love and affection to children while 46% of sites assessed reported that caregivers paid more attention to children’s needs. However, it was noted that cases of profound stress, allegedly linked to prior incidents of maltreatment, had been reported in evacuation centers and caregivers refused to seek medical help for fear of retaliation from the alleged perpetrators (UNHCR, 2017).

**Girls and young women are facing increased risk to gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual abuse, exploitation, and early/forced marriage.**

In regions affected by the Marawi crisis, the protective environment around the child, such as the family and community, are strained and weakened as a result of mass displacements and loss of social cohesion and trust. This has resulted in women and girls being vulnerable to various forms of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse, forced or early marriage, lack of access to resources, and harmful traditional practices.

In the Marawi Displacement, sites assessed reported that children were affected by sexual violence such as sexual abuse, exploitation, and early or forced marriage. However, there has been very limited reporting of sexual violence to government and humanitarian actors. Only 9% of sites reported sexual abuse and exploitation. This is in part due to the fact that Maranao culture does not encourage disclosure of sexual violence. This is especially reflected in the lack of reports in the current caseload of the DWSD and the Gender-Based Violence working group.

Among the sites assessed, 45% reported that girls were the most affected by sexual violence while 21% reported that girls over the age of 14 were the most at-risk. 36% of sites assessed also reported that there were consequences to reporting sexual violence. These are presented in the graph below:
While it was not mentioned directly during the data gathering process of the CPRA, anecdotal evidence provided by assessment teams during the analysis workshop revealed another element that contributed to underreporting of sexual violence. In the Maranao culture, reporting sexual violence can lead to “rido” or a family feud between the family of the survivor and the family of the perpetrator. As many survivors do not want to cause civil warfare that would involve their families, many choose to remain silent about the incident. This finding was confirmed by the communities and members of the CP/GBV Working Group.

Usually, elders would intervene and an agreement between parties involved is made to resolve the sexual assault. This agreement between the parties involved can prevent the occurrence of a “rido,” or family feud. The UNFPA’s field monitoring on GBV cases also mentioned the cultural practice of “kapasadan” which is an agreement that once the case has been settled, no one is permitted to discuss it — hence, no reporting will be done to local authorities. Furthermore, there were reported cases of sexual abuse in evacuation camps but instead of reporting it, the barangay council or “imam” (religious leader) would facilitate resolutions that may involve the perpetrator, usually a boy or man, paying the girl’s family as recompense, or as previously mentioned, the victim marrying the perpetrator.

This anecdotal information indicates that many survivors of sexual violence know the perpetrators. Among the children that reported experiencing sexual violence in the National Baseline Study on Violence against Children in the Philippines, 13.7% experienced sexual abuse in their own homes (Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF Philippines, 2016). The results of the CPRA support this finding as 24% of sites assessed reported that sexual violence against children was happening at home.8

In the Philippines, the minimum age of sexual consent is 12 years old, while the minimum age to marry is 18. In the Maranao context, particularly in Muslim communities, children are considered adults when they show signs of puberty, such as menstruation, lowering of voice, or appearance of body hair. Therefore, they are able to marry at the age of 15. In Maranao tradition, early marriage often happens to secure protection by joining families and to collect dowry.

In the CPRA, 31% of sites reported early or forced marriage as the most common form of sexual violence in the conflict-affected communities. 12% of the sites reported incidents of sexual violence survivors marrying their perpetrators to avoid the risk of family feud, stigmatization, bullying, and rejection. Technical experts familiar with the Maranao context confirmed this. They said many disputes are settled through traditional means and are not reported to duty bearers such as the police or social workers. A Department of Health representative also validated these results, saying that ARMM has the highest number of early marriages resulting from traditional practices or as a result of sexual violence.

Sharing from the community revealed that there are cases of forced marriage where the amount of dowry has been lowered to cover up sexual abuse. There are also some families that still practice arranged marriage for girls and boys as young as 15 or 16, granting that there will be no sexual activity until they reach 18 years old to protect the honor of the families involved and to avoid teenage pregnancy.

Gender-based violence concerns also include congestion in the camps, lack of lighting in comfort rooms, and loitering of young boys. Although seldom reported, there were also cases of domestic violence and trafficking.

**Poverty is a leading driver in the exploitation of children.**

Despite being identified as a grave violation of children’s rights, children continue to be recruited by armed forces and groups, either as combatants or in support roles. In addition, child labor has been increasing, especially in the aftermath of the Marawi crisis.

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8 These refers to the location of home-based or community-based IDPs in evacuation centers or sites.
On June 21, dozens of Islamist armed rebels stormed and occupied a school in Mindanao (Conde, 2017). The military also cited that children are in the enemy frontlines in Marawi City and thus troops had to exercise caution (Tan, 2017).

According to the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting Technical Working Group in Mindanao, 39 GCRVs related to the Marawi crisis were reported from May to October 2017, of which 5 cases have been verified. In sites assessed for this report, indiscriminate recruitment of children to armed groups has been reported. This happens in camps, in schools, and in roads. 40% of sites report poverty as the leading reason that pushes children to join armed groups.

In Mindanao, children are also exploited into hazardous labor. They are found in sugarcane, tobacco, banana, cornflower, coconut, and rice plantations, and fireworks production, deep-sea fishing, mining, and quarrying sites. Children in urbanized areas live on the streets and engage in scavenging and begging in order to survive. Some are victims of the commercial sex industry and being used in the drug trade as packers, cleaners of paraphernalia, lookouts, and runners (US Department of Labor, 2008).

Anecdotal evidence from the assessment teams also report children being victims of in-country trafficking or abandonment. Some move from town to town to beg for money or become street vendors.

Many displaced children do not speak English, which is the medium of instruction in many host communities. This forces children to drop out, making them vulnerable to recruitment into armed groups, early marriage, and child labor.

Validation methods in the assessment also support this. There were reported cases of bullying in schools due to language and cultural barriers. Most Maranaos also do not understand the local dialect Bisaya, which is commonly used in schools in Mindanao. They get called “bakwit” or evacuee and get discriminated because of it.

While there are only a few reports on child labor from the assessment, evidence from site visits and informal conversations with IDPs reveal that children are paid around 200 pesos ($4) to work for up to seven hours a day. These children are also out of school.

Another concern that was raised during the validation was the expected increase of child laborers in the upcoming holiday season in December, where more children are expected to work to take advantage of the festive season.

Environmental risks have been reported to cause significant harm to children.

Sites that were assessed reported environmental risks in the camp (71%), on the way to school (39%), and at home or in the camp (36%). Many evacuation centers are also located along busy highways. Children have been severely injured or have died from road traffic accidents.

Some evacuation centers and host communities are near dangerous rivers, where children were reported to have died. Children have also reported cases of harassment by strangers on their way to school. Due to lack of proper identification or proof of identity, there were cases when children were harassed, detained, or were not allowed access at military checkpoints. This forces children to take alternate routes that expose them to risks, such as snakebites and attacks from wild animals. Cases such as road accidents have been confirmed during validation.
RECOMMENDATIONS

For four decades, the tensions between government troops and non-state armed groups have led to violence and displacements that undermined the rights and welfare of the affected populations in Mindanao. Commitments as part of the peace process have been delayed, including the failure to pass the Bangsamoro Basic Law. New armed groups have emerged and the continuing armed struggle put vulnerable groups, especially children, at risk of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

This assessment shows the urgent need to take a holistic and integrated approach to providing child protection, education, and economic recovery activities. The most vulnerable children should be identified and provided with holistic services to mitigate risks of exploitation, recruitment into armed groups, engagement in child labor, stigmatization, and exclusion. Their social, educational, and economic reintegration into their communities must be supported.

The key recommendations listed in the following paragraphs have been suggested by technical experts in child protection and gender-based violence responding to the Marawi displacement, and informed by consultations with assessed communities, other key stakeholders, and analysis of primary and secondary data. The recommendations are intended for communities, humanitarian actors, donors, and policymakers seeking to respond to the complex needs of children, youth, and their families affected by the crisis.

Create a safe, conducive teaching and learning environment

Child protection actors should work closely with the education working group to ensure that displaced children get to school safely, that they can learn without fear of bullying and stigmatization, and that teachers are provided with the tools to provide psychosocial first aid to students experiencing stress.

This starts with ensuring the education infrastructure meets minimum safe school standards, and that school safety plans, codes of conduct, school-related child protection and gender-based violence prevention strategies and reporting mechanisms are in place. It will also help to strengthen linkages with community-based child protection services and structures, and provide orientations on child protection, gender-based violence, and grave child rights violations to state security forces deployed inside and nearby schools or in spaces where children are located in.

In the assessment, communities reported significant risks to children while on their way to school and even during activities in schools. Agencies need to work with education working group to strengthen child protection practices and to ensure that children are not placed in risky situations. An example would be to discuss road safety with children and putting up preventive communication materials near schools, such as a “slow down” sign. This will encourage children to move in groups while going to and from their schools. Children can also be provided with identification cards to prevent harassment or detention at checkpoints.

There are three distinct barriers to accessing education that were reported by displaced children and informants. These are:

1) Lack of financial resources to pay for transportation to school and to buy uniforms, books, and other learning materials;
2) Not being able to understand the medium of instruction; and
3) Bullying or discrimination by children and teachers in the host community.

Coordination with the education colleagues will be essential to address the above barriers to education, and child protection actors can support the training and capacity-building of teachers, as well as help
facilitate student and teacher assemblies to promote inclusion and non-discrimination of displaced children.

**Strengthen the protective environment around children in the home and within the community**

The key findings show that children and youth seek support from family and friends when they feel stressed, worried, upset, or have experienced violence or abuse. A key strategy to preventing violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation is to reinforce positive social connections and coping strategies. Examples of possible interventions are:

- Expanded psychosocial support activities within safe spaces. Many humanitarian actors have already provided access to child- and women-friendly spaces. However, gaps remain in building the capacity of duty-bearers on psychological first aid. Social workers should also be deployed regularly to the safe spaces to provide one-on-one counseling to children who have difficulty coping. The safe spaces should also have private partitions where social workers can conduct counseling sessions.
- Parents and caregivers should be provided with psychosocial support and parenting trainings to help them understand how stress affects their ability to take care of and protect their children.
- Support children and youth to cope with the crisis by developing their skills and strengthening peer support groups and networks, and youth-driven local initiatives.
- Support young people to develop life skills so they are able to protect themselves from being abused and exploited. This can take the form of skills trainings and entrepreneurship and livelihood opportunities, especially for out-of-school youth.
- Education campaigns on the risks of early marriage and pregnancy, violence against children, gender-based violence, and age-appropriate decent work that encourages responsibility and sense of self-worth.
- Community dialogue and awareness-raising activities to prevent children from joining armed groups/forces and to support their reintegration into their families and communities when separated or demobilized.

**Provide access to gender and age-appropriate integrated services for at-risk children and youth, with a particular focus for girls and young women**

While the CP/GBV Working Group has been monitoring and supporting UASC in affected communities, the exact number of UASC is not fully known to the humanitarian community. The development of a baseline list of UASC should be prioritized through a house-to-house validation exercise. The validation should aim to identify the total number of UASC and to record the living conditions of the children. Strengthened case management interventions should also be initiative. A follow-up assessment should be conducted to evaluate the protection risks and concerns of UASC and to initiate a coordinated and comprehensive family tracing and reunification system.

The government should formalize alternative care arrangements that are currently informal or spontaneous. In addition, proper monitoring procedures should be in place to ensure children are not exposed to exploitation or abuse.

Case management should not only focus on UASC, but should be responsive to the needs of children who are vulnerable to violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Girls and young women were mentioned as being particularly vulnerable, especially to sexual violence. Innovative approaches to providing safe and confidential reporting mechanisms should be implemented to encourage survivors to disclose information and be supported and provided with services. There should be life-saving response mechanisms for survivors of gender-based violence, including psychosocial support, specialized health care (including clinical management for cases of rape), and support in seeking safety, security, and justice. There should be infant and young child feeding counseling sessions and child- and women-
friendly spaces where children and women can speak freely about issues that affect them and find respite in the presence of peers and experts who can support them in their recovery process.

Child protection actors should also aim to provide integrated and holistic services that respond to the livelihood needs of families, to prevent children from exploitative labor or from early marriage. Whenever possible, education or alternative learning should also be provided to children and young people to increase their chances of having a healthy and successful future.

**Increase awareness about grave child rights violations (GRCVs) and establish safe reporting mechanisms**

Awareness raising, community engagement sessions, confidential reporting and verification of GCRVs must continue. Effective strategies must be developed from prevention and response to rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration of victims. Advocacy should also be done to influence government to fund and implement protective measure that include the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines on the Protection of Children During Armed Conflict by the Department of Education Memorandum Circular 221 series of 2013 and Child Protection During Armed Conflict Situations (CPDACS) by the Department of National Defense.

Humanitarian agencies can also support the monitoring, reporting and referral of GCRVs and ensure that life saving and immediate responses are provided to survivors and their families.
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The tools used in this assessment have been made available online to support all government and humanitarian actors responding to the Marawi displacement. The tools can be accessed through https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B2xLopET0rVTaFiQV0Z3NWpqX2s.

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