

HIGHLIGHTS

- About 60 per cent of IDPs in Maguindanao province return home, while some 43,900 people remain displaced
- Preparedness efforts champion Typhoon Maysak response
- WASH Cluster steps up assistance to drought-affected IDPs in Zamboanga
- Community consultations in Mamasapano reveal unmet needs of IDP women

FIGURES

Central Mindanao Displacement

# of IDPs in evacuation centres	43,900
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# of evacuation centres	32
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# of IDPs returned home	88,200
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Source: ARMM-HEART/DSWD (as of 24 April 2015)

Zamboanga Crisis

# of IDPs in evacuation centre	3,400
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# of IDPs in transitional sites	14,100
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Estimated # of IDPs hosted by relatives and friends	15,000*
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Source: CCCM Cluster (as of 20 April 2015), *Protection Cluster (as of October 2014)



UNHCR/E. Monato

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Long-term safety and security key to voluntary returns in Maguindanao province

About 60 per cent of the internally displaced people (IDPs) in the province of Maguindanao, who were affected by the government's month-long law and order operations against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), returned to their places of origin. The conflict at its peak displaced over 130,000 people. As of 24 April, 43,900 IDPs remain in 32 evacuation centres in six municipalities of Maguindanao, according to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao-Humanitarian Emergency Action Response Team (ARMM-HEART). The authorities confirmed that all "home-based" IDPs who were hosted by their families and friends also returned home.

To address the changing and diversifying needs of the IDPs, the authorities with support from humanitarian partners continue to provide humanitarian relief to the IDPs in the evacuation centres and support the recovery of those who returned. The government clusters continue to lead the relief efforts, providing family food packs, essential non-food items, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and health services. Tent hospitals are established, psychosocial programmes offered to children and women, IDP camps managed and emergency educational assistance provided to children.

Protection Cluster facilitates safe returns of IDPs

Sporadic fighting between the government forces and BIFF continue one month after the government's declared end of military operations. The Protection Cluster supported the post-conflict assessment of affected municipalities using a colour-coding scheme on 15 and 16 April. The assessment revealed outstanding concerns such as the lack of clear instructions on when IDPs can return to their places of origin, general fear against the presence of armed personnel and for a possible relapse of the security situation, and the cumulative burden of repeated and prolonged displacements that make recovery even more difficult.

The military forces will review the security environment of the IDP return areas on a weekly basis to address these concerns. Updates will be shared with local authorities as a reference for them to determine whether an area is safe for IDP returns.

Planning for rehabilitation and recovery begins

To support the return of IDPs, the authorities are drawing up rehabilitation plans and programmes. The ARMM regional government drafted a PhP3.5 billion (US\$79 million) Humanitarian and Development Action Plan to address the immediate, short- and medium-term needs of the IDPs and the affected communities in 2015 and 2016. The Maguindanao Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council also outlined priority rehabilitation programmes.

Aid agencies will continue to support the government at the national and sub-national levels in addressing the outstanding needs of the remaining IDPs, facilitating their safe return and providing recovery and livelihood assistance in the communities, while carefully monitoring the security situation.

Unusually strong typhoon in April marks another “new normal” for the Philippines

Typhoon Maysak response review

Category-5 Typhoon Maysak (locally known as Chedeng) wreaked havoc in the Federated States of Micronesia while en route to the Philippines at the end of March. It entered the Philippine Area of Responsibility on 1 April with maximum sustained winds of 215 km/h and gusts of up to 250 km/h, threatening millions of Filipinos who were expected to throng beaches and mountain resorts for the four-day Easter holiday. It was unusual for a Category-5 typhoon to develop this early in the year. Typhoon Maysak was the third storm to develop into a Category-3 or stronger typhoon before April since 1945.

Investing in response preparedness in the Philippines

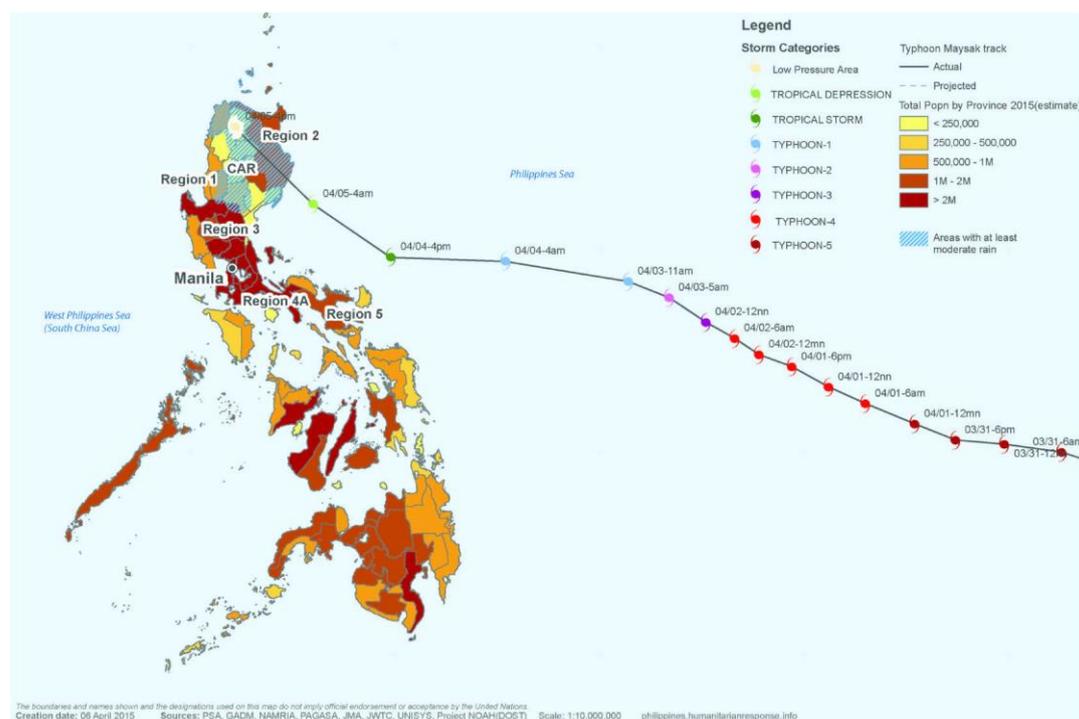
Since Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda), the Government of the Philippines and humanitarian organizations have been striving to adapt to extreme climate events, the “new normal”, gearing efforts towards risk monitoring and analysis, and response preparedness. To this end, the Philippines Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) established the Emergency Response Preparedness Working Group (ERPWG) in August 2014 to develop the Emergency Response Preparedness Plan for Northern Luzon.

The ERPWG continued to convene after the plan was developed in response to the heightened alert for the Mayon Volcano and Typhoon Hagupit (Ruby). It serves as a forum to promote inter-agency and inter-cluster emergency preparedness, and to strengthen the overall coordination mechanisms. Meanwhile, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) institutionalized the Pre-Disaster Risk Analysis (PDRA) mechanism to base the government responses on an analysis of identified risks.

In the days leading up to the typhoon’s landfall, the government met daily for the PDRA, activated its preparedness and response clusters, pre-positioned relief items along the typhoon’s projected path and pre-emptively evacuated the people in high-risk areas. Meanwhile, the HCT and the ERPWG continuously monitored the typhoon’s development and potential impact, and coordinated preparedness actions with the government.

Lessons learned

Fortunately, Typhoon Maysak weakened into a tropical storm before making landfall over the northeastern coast of Luzon island on 5 April. It was further downgraded into a low pressure area as it moved across northern Luzon. According to the NDRRMC, there were no reported deaths, injured and missing persons directly attributed to the typhoon. The established coordination mechanisms within and between the government and the HCT,



Credit: OCHA

which now kick in effortlessly at the onset of an emergency, contributed to the overall improvement in disaster preparedness and response in the country.

The ERPWG noted some areas of improvement for the HCT: better compilation of secondary data to support assessment and response; regular updating of inventory of available relief stocks, technology, and technical experts; and the refinement of a coordinated framework for joint government-HCT rapid needs assessments.

Drought hits IDPs in Zamboanga

Zamboanga City declares a state of calamity

Amid a continuous dry spell, Zamboanga City on 1 April declared a state of calamity to mobilize emergency funds for mitigation measures. The drought is affecting the city of over 800,000 people, including some 30,000 IDPs who lost homes in the conflict between the Philippine government forces and a faction of the Moro National Liberation Front in September 2013. Of these, about 17,500 IDPs are staying in the Joaquin F. Enriquez Memorial Sports Complex (also known as the “Grandstand” evacuation centre) and 10 transitional sites (TSs) located across the city. The rest are hosted by families and friends or returned temporarily to their home communities.

With the city’s 15 out of the 25 irrigation dams below the critical water level, of which 9 had completely dried up, the Zamboanga City Water District (ZCWD) began rationing water throughout the city. The drought and bush fires damaged some 8,900 hectares of agricultural lands.

The severe water shortage has also taken a toll on the lives of the displaced people. Sanitation facilities in the IDP sites, especially in Mampang TSs, were difficult to maintain from January to March when water supply dropped significantly. With irregular and insufficient water delivery, many IDPs were forced to queue longer at pumping stations. To make it worse, additional IDPs moved from the Grandstand to the newly constructed Mampang-3 TS at the height of water shortage, which at the time lacked basic facilities. As a result, scarce water had to be shared amongst a greater number of people.

Contamination of potable water is another concern. The City Health Office (CHO), with support from humanitarian partners, regularly monitors the quality of water at the collection sources. The latest test results showed alarming levels of coliform in seven out of nine water sources.

Inadequate and contaminated water supply has serious health implications. Since January, 24 IDPs died, half of whom were in Mampang. Acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea and skin diseases were the leading causes of death in Mampang.



Credit: OCHA/S. Taulani
Zamboanga City (April 2015) - Newly transferred IDPs in Mampang-3 transitional site gather to fetch water.

WASH Cluster steps up assistance to IDPs

To alleviate the situation, the WASH Cluster, led by the CHO and supported by the ZCWD and humanitarian partners, collectively distributed water to all the IDP sites via trucks and elevated tanks. As a result, water supply across the IDP sites steadily increased. In Mampang-1 TS, the average water supply per person per day increased from 4 litres at the end of March to 15 litres by mid-April. Concerns remain over the lack of a long-term solution to the water shortage that would replace water trucking.

To ensure proper maintenance of sanitation facilities, ACF constructed six units of improved dug wells for latrine cleaning in Mampang-1 and Mampang-2 TSs. The cluster also conducted extensive campaigns on water conservation and hygiene promotion in all IDP sites for four weeks, which was completed on 20 April. The CHO also led rounds of sludge removal at the IDP sites.

Lack of water makes it difficult for the IDPs to maintain sanitation facilities and to fetch water for drinking and bathing

With increased water delivery, IDPs in Mampang-1 are finally receiving the global humanitarian standard of minimum daily supply for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene (15 litres per person per day)

Securing a long-term solution to their displacement remains a challenge. The timeline of the Zamboanga City Roadmap to Recovery and Reconstruction, which plans to construct 7,000 permanent housing units for the IDPs, was pushed back again this month to August 2015. The struggle of the displaced families in the respective IDP sites continues.

IDP women in Mamasapano voice concerns

Communication is aid

Listening and talking to those who receive aid is an integral part of humanitarian response.

On 20 April, humanitarian organizations based in central Mindanao conducted joint community consultations with women and children in Dabenayan evacuation centre in the municipality of Mamasapano in Maguindanao province. Some 400 IDP families (2,000 people) affected by recent conflicts remain in makeshift shelters in Debenayan.



Credit: OCHA/F.Kasuyo.
Mamasapano, Maguindanao (April 2015) - IDPs gather for community consultations.

“We want to go back to our land and rebuild our own house. We are not comfortable here and not necessarily safe either, but we don’t know how long we should be staying here.”

- Sittie, IDP

Inadequate food rations and the lack of livelihood options are pressing concerns for IDPs. “I keep all the ration coupons in my bag and carry them every day. Unfortunately, since the last distribution in March, we have not received additional food assistance” says Babaikan, a 58-year-old widow and a mother of eight children. The humanitarian partners raised the issue of insufficient beneficiary access cards in Dabenayan at the successive joint cluster meeting with the government, in response to which the authorities confirmed to validate the situation and address the problem immediately.

Another key need is updated information about when the IDPs could return safely to their places of origin. “We want to go back to our land and rebuild our own house. We are not comfortable here and not necessarily safe either, but we don’t know how long we should be staying here,” said 43-year-old Sittie, mother of four children.

In light of considerable information needs in the communities affected by recurrent displacement, the ARMM authorities and humanitarian agencies on 10 April established a Communications Core Group in central Mindanao. The Group will facilitate community engagement of the IDPs and other affected population through the collective use of radio, newsletter and online media to ensure two-way communication and accountability.

In brief

Social Media Forum for Preparedness and Emergencies

On 7 April, communication and information management experts in humanitarian agencies, the government, civil society organizations, the media and other partners gathered in Manila to exchange best practices for using social media in emergency preparedness and response. Crowdsourcing, data visualization (e.g. micro-mapping and infographics), effective messaging and standardization of social media use including unified hashtags were discussed. Participants agreed to build on the shared knowledge and coordinate more closely in the use of social media in future emergencies. A synopsis of the forum is available at: <https://storify.com/OCHAPhilippines/social-media-forum>

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