

HIGHLIGHTS

- Conflict and flooding trigger recurrent displacement in Maguindanao, eroding resources of the poorest and hampering their recovery.
- UN Special Rapporteur on IDP rights calls for enhanced assistance to conflict-induced IDPs including indigenous peoples in Mindanao.
- Intensifying El Niño may cause drought and water shortages in parts of the country and trigger erratic behaviour of tropical storms.
- Philippine government with local communities and humanitarian partners conducts the first Metro Manila earthquake drill.

FIGURES

Zamboanga Crisis

# of IDPs in Grandstand evacuation centre	0
# of IDPs in Lupa-Lupa and Mariki ES	1,200
# of IDPs in all other transitional sites	15,900
# of IDPs hosted by relatives and friends or renting temporary homes	11,300*
# of IDPs received permanent housing	2,900**
# of IDPs received home material assistance	8,300**

Source: CCCM Cluster (as of 31 July 2015), *Protection Cluster (as of December 2014) **National Housing Authority (June 2015)



OCHA/R. Dacsig

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Maguindanao: Recurrent displacement hampers farmers' search for normal life

Conflicts displace over 440,000 people since 2011 in Maguindanao province

“Everyone is armed here and law and order is difficult to come by, and without peace, we will continue to live in fear and frequent displacement from our homes,” says Sumilalau Talambo, a farmer in Maguindanao province of Mindanao. A father of seven, he grows rice and corn in one of the poorest and most crisis-prone communities of the Philippines.

People of central Mindanao like Sumilalau have long suffered recurrent displacement due to armed conflict and flooding. Between 2000 and 2010, four out of five households in Maguindanao province were affected by natural or manmade calamities, according to the authorities of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). This includes about 125,000 people



Credit: OCHA/N. Victorino
Sumilalau Talambo stands between his damaged corn and rice fields. Sultan Sa Barongis, Maguindanao (July 2015).

who were displaced earlier this year by a month-long military operation led by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), which opposes the peace agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the establishment of a new Bangsamoro region in southern Mindanao. The province suffers 54.5 per cent poverty incidence, among the highest in the country. For many who have been exposed to repeated displacement, finding peace and normalcy in life has been a constant struggle.

Sumilalau lives in the municipality of Sultan Sa Barongis, located next to Liguasan Marsh, the drainage basin of the Mindanao river. The marsh is a suspected hideout of the BIFF from where it launches sporadic attacks on government forces. In 2013, Sumilalau's family fled fighting between the AFP and the BIFF. They were displaced for four months, during which his three-hectare land was left fallow. “Every time I return home, I have to start from scratch – it is a repeated struggle of repairing damaged houses, preparing land and finding tools for fishing and seeds for planting”, he says.

Flood worsened by flood-protection dyke built in adjacent municipality

In addition to conflict, the municipality is flooded annually by rain and excess water flow from the Ala and Kapingkong rivers, which meet in the adjacent Lambayong municipality before draining into Liguasan Marsh. Intermittent rains caused flooding on 24 June,

“Every time I return home, I have to start from scratch. Our meager resources get eroded each time we are displaced and our resilience weakens year after year.”

- Sumilalau, Farmer



Click for an infographic on Sumilalau's story

inundating five out of the 12 *barangays* (the lowest administrative units in the Philippines) that comprise Sultan Sa Barongis. The municipality declared a state of calamity on 30 June. Sumilalau lost to the flood three quarters of his corn harvest and all his rice harvest expected for this season, amounting to PhP143,000 (US\$3,100). He is also worried about the effects of worsening floods to his house, as the floodwater this year came up to the highest level beneath his elevated hut.



Credit: OCHA

Lambayong is part of the neighbouring province of Sultan Kudarat where private banana plantations continue to expand. According to the authorities of Sultan Sa Barongis, a flood protection dyke constructed by the banana plantation firm last year to divert flood water to the marsh has in turn channeled more floodwater into Maguindanao, causing greater damage in Sultan Sa Barongis. Including the three-hectare farm of Sumilalau, over 200 hectares of newly-planted rice field have been lost to floods in Sultan Sa Barongis this year, according to the Department of Agriculture. While the weather has been milder for a few weeks after the June flood, the monsoon season has just begun and more heavy rains and floods are expected in the coming month. Sumilalau

raised the supporting pillars of his hut but is not sure if it would be high enough for the next flood. “Our meager resources get eroded each time we are displaced and our resilience weakens year after year,” said an emotional Sumilalau.

Peace and recovery assistance essential for durable solutions

While the regional and provincial authorities with support from humanitarian partners responded to immediate humanitarian needs of the displaced families such as food, shelter, water and sanitation, recovery assistance to the communities is limited. Chronic insecurity has hampered effective implementation of development projects in central Mindanao. For Sumilalau, who has no choice but to live on the land inherited from his father, “it is impossible to think of a durable solution when I cannot invest in sustainable means of livelihood.” The recently launched Humanitarian and Development Action Plan of the ARMM government aims to provide basic services and livelihood assistance to communities frequently affected by calamities, as well as attend to their emergency needs.

A successful passage of the Bangsamoro peace agreement into a law before the next national elections in 2016 is hoped to create a more enabling environment in which protection and development needs of communities in central Mindanao can be addressed. It is important that the government and aid agencies converge efforts and strategically invest resources in these areas to help people like Sumilalau achieve the modest prosperity they have pursued for decades.

UN rights expert calls for enhanced assistance to conflict-induced IDPs in Mindanao

Dr. [Chaloka Beyani](#), UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), visited the Philippines from 21 to 31 July on an independent monitoring

UN Special Rapporteur on IDP rights visits the Philippines to look at communities displaced by Typhoon Haiyan in Visayas and by conflicts and development projects in Mindanao.

“It was striking to me that indigenous peoples have been particularly vulnerable to conflict-induced displacement in many regions, particularly in Mindanao.”
- Chaloka Beyani, UN Special Rapporteur

mission to examine different aspects of IDP protection and assistance in the country and to engage national and international stakeholders and advise on their efforts to secure durable solutions for IDPs. To look at displacement situations triggered by multiple causes including natural disasters, conflict and development projects, the Special Rapporteur traveled to Zamboanga, Cotabato, Tampakan, Davao and Tacloban. He met with representatives of the national and local governments, international humanitarian and development partners, civil society organizations and displaced communities.

Zamboanga IDPs face dire conditions upon the closure of the Grandstand

On 22 July, Dr. Beyani visited Zamboanga City to examine and report on the protracted displacement of people affected by the September 2013 conflict between government forces and a faction of the Moro National Liberation Front. The fighting destroyed over 10,000 houses and uprooted 118,000 people at the height of crisis. Two days earlier on 20 July, the Grandstand Sports Complex, which was once the largest IDP evacuation site in the city, was officially closed for rehabilitation by the government. About 400 IDP families were asked to move out of the Grandstand to transitional sites like Kasanyangan and Mampang, but the majority ended up in new sites in Lupa-Lupa and Mariki Elementary School, both along the coast near the city centre where they used to live. Many of these IDPs had expressed preference to stay in the Grandstand until they could settle in permanent housing rather than move to another transitional site.

The Special Rapporteur visited the “Ground Zero” site – where stilt houses of IDPs, mostly indigenous *sama badjao* and *Tausug* people, were burned down by the conflict – in Maririki, Mariki permanent housing site, the Grandstand, new IDP sites in Lupa-Lupa and Mariki Elementary School, and transitional sites in Kasanyangan and Mampang. Throughout the site visits, Dr. Beyani interviewed IDPs who shared with him their concerns over the lack of basic needs such as water, electricity, sanitation facilities, shelter materials and capital for livelihoods. In Lupa-Lupa, he spoke with an IDP family who took refuge under a broken bridge. The Special Rapporteur later raised these concerns at the Local Inter-Agency meeting attended by the representatives the national and city authorities and humanitarian partners. He stressed that the primary responsibility for the protection of IDPs rested in the government and, while acknowledging the recovery efforts undertaken by the local authorities, recommended that the conditions of the IDPs who moved out of the Grandstand be improved immediately.



Credit: OCHA/A. Hashim
Lupa-Lupa, Zamboanga (July 2015).

Special Rapporteur urges the government to pass the draft IDP law

Upon returning to Manila, the Special Rapporteur held a debriefing for international partners and a press conference on 31 July to share his preliminary findings. In his [exit statement](#), Dr. Beyani commended the government on significant progress in providing transitional and permanent homes to those affected by Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) and restoring their livelihood opportunities, as well as policies such as ‘Build-Back-Better’ aimed at mitigating the effects of future disasters. He also highlighted the challenges faced by conflict-affected IDPs, especially indigenous people in Mindanao, and recommended the government to consult fully the displaced people in the provision of essential assistance including durable solutions which are culturally sensitive and appropriate. He urged the government to pass the national bill on IDP rights and advised that specific provisions on the rights of indigenous peoples be included in the draft law under consideration. Another challenge highlighted during the debriefing was poor coordination over the transition from humanitarian response to recovery and development assistance. The Special Rapporteur will submit a full report of findings and recommendations based on this visit to the Government of the Philippines and the Human Rights Council in June 2016.

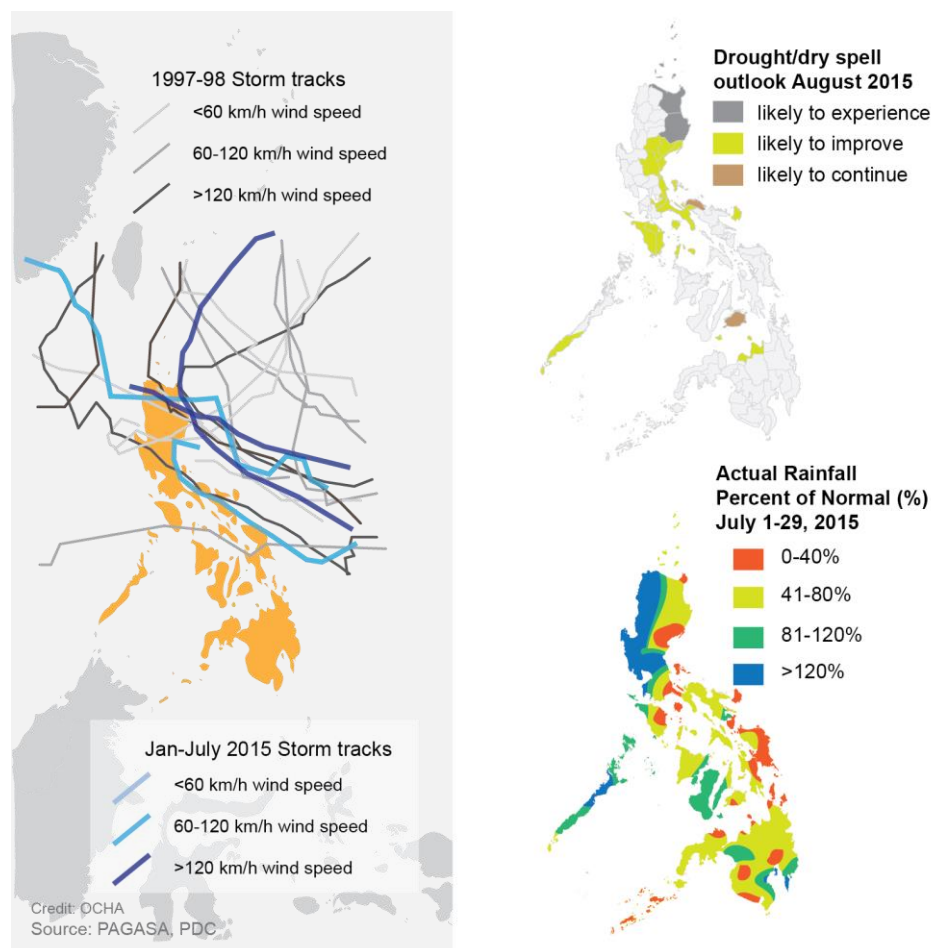
El Niño to intensify and persist

Moderate **El Niño**, which has brought reduced rainfall in parts of the Philippines in the past months, is likely to intensify in the fourth quarter of 2015 and persist into early 2016, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA). While the onset of the rainy season mitigated the effects of the dry spell in many areas, less-than-usual precipitation due to a strengthening El Niño, if this continues, may cause drought and water shortages in parts of the country in the coming months, which may further degrade over the following dry season. The phenomenon could also trigger erratic behaviour of tropical storms, influencing their track and intensity. Tropical cyclones are expected to shift northward and their intensity to increase.

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The Philippines experienced the strongest El Niño ever recorded from 1997 to 1998, during which nearly 74,000 hectares of agricultural lands were affected. The country's rice and corn production in the first half of 1998 dropped by 24 and 44 per cent, respectively. The phenomenon also led to widespread water shortage including in Metro Manila, as well as forest fires in Palawan and food insecurity in Mindanao.

From October 2014 to June 2015, 23 per cent of the country was affected by dry spell or drought. In July, however, the southwest monsoon enhanced by Tropical Storm Linfa (locally known as Egay) and Typhoon Chan-hom (Falcon) brought moderate to heavy rains over Luzon Island, which triggered flooding and landslides in northern Luzon as well as in Metro Manila. The incidents killed 19 people and displaced 35,000.



To mitigate the effects of El Niño, the government stepped up its investment in the agriculture sector, which led to the establishment of small water-impounding facilities and new construction and rehabilitation of irrigation systems to benefit small and poor farmers. Drought-tolerant crop varieties were introduced to farmers affected by the dry spell. Cloud-seeding operations have been intensified to induce rain in major watersheds and drought-affected farming communities. The government also launched a public campaign on water conservation to ensure steady supply of water and electricity.

Philippine government braces for the “big one”

Metro Manila overdue for a large-scale earthquake

As part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Philippines experiences numerous seismic events, ranging between 200 and 250 quakes a day, according to the Philippine Institute for Volcanology and Seismology. While most are small unfelt tremors, the country has not been spared from high-intensity earthquakes, such as the magnitude-7.7 Luzon earthquake in 1990 and the magnitude-7.2 earthquake which struck the province of Bohol in 2013. The latter killed over 200 people and displaced some 344,000.

In light of the magnitude-7.8 quake which hit Nepal in April, the Philippine government with support from local businesses, civil society organizations and international humanitarian partners is stepping up preparedness and response measures in the anticipation of a movement of the West Valley Fault system which traverses Metro Manila. According to the Metro [Manila Earthquake Impact Reduction Study](#) of 2004, a magnitude-7.2 earthquake affecting Metro Manila could leave up to 31,000 dead and 114,000 seriously injured.

The government is finalizing its National Disaster Response Plan (NDRP) for Earthquake and Tsunami to ensure timely, effective and coordinated response at all levels. Complementary to the NDRP, the “Oplan Metro Yakal”, the Metro Manila earthquake contingency plan, tested through regular conduct of drills. Through these measures, the authorities at the national and local levels aim to strengthen institutional capacity for disaster management and inter-institutional coordination, as well as identify mitigation measures and activities necessary to maintain the stability of government functions and ensure continuity of essential services.

Metro-wide “shake drill” caps the National Disaster Consciousness Month

The authorities in conjunction with international humanitarian and military partners in the past several months held a number of exercises to test its contingency plans. On 28 and 29 July, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council invited members of the Humanitarian country Team (HCT) to a table top exercise on earthquake preparedness to discuss the NDRP and Oplan Metro Yakal, and to test the national and regional capacity to respond to a major earthquake in Metro Manila. The exercise was an opportunity to discuss the interoperability of procedures and tools between the government’s Response Cluster system and the humanitarian clusters.

On 30 July, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority spearheaded the first metro-wide earthquake drill in Manila, simulating the magnitude-7.2 earthquake scenario. Government line agencies of the National Capital Region, military and police forces, the private sector, the Philippine Red Cross, schools, civil society organizations, first-aid teams and the media joined the drill to carry out different simulation exercises including air rescue, mass evacuation, debris clearance, building fire response, recovery of the dead and treatment of the injured. HCT members and the diplomatic corps were invited to observe the drill and to participate in the discussion to share their insights.



Credit: OCHA/R. Dacsig
Local authorities and community members participate in the Metro Manila Shake Drill. Manila (July 2015).

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