



Conflicts and IDPs in Mindanao: A Review

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ABSTRACT

An internally displaced person (IDP) is forced to flee his or her home but who remains within his or her country's borders. They are often referred to as refugees (Webster Encyclopedia Dictionary, 1992). According to Deng (2007), there is no legal definition as there is for a refugee. However, a United Nations report, "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement" uses the definition: people or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Deng, 2007 as cited by Abdulrahman, et.al, 2013). While the above stresses two important elements of internal displacement (coercion and the internal movement) it is important to note that rather than a strict definition, the Guiding Principles offer a descriptive identification of the category of persons whose needs are the concern of the Guiding Principle (Kalin, 2000). In this way, the document intentionally steers toward flexibility rather than legal precision (Vincent, 2000) as the words "in particular" indicate that the list of reasons for displacement is not exhaustive. However, as Erin Mooney pointed out, global statistics on internal displacement generally count only IDPs uprooted by conflict and human rights violations. Moreover, a recent study has recommended that the IDP concept should be defined even more narrowly, to be limited to persons displaced by violence. Thus, despite the non-exhaustive reasons of internal displacement, many consider IDPs as those who would be defined as refugees if they were to cross an international border hence the term refugees in all, but name is often applied to IDPs (Mooney, 2005).

Keywords : internally displaced person (IDP); Siege Recovery; Rehabilitation

1 INTRODUCTION

Frequent conflicts in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao, force residents to seek refuge in evacuation centers. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) reported 348,370 persons of concern in the Philippines by the end of 2016. More than 87,000 of these are internally displaced persons (IDPs) who fled home because of armed clashes, internal wars, and other forms of violence. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), displacement caused by conflict tends to affect the same deprived communities repeatedly, gradually undermining their resilience and pushing them further into poverty.

From an article published online by Rappler.com, there are enumerated several conflicts that triggered mass displacement in the past 7 years: the first in the lists is the armed conflict in Cotabato City last October 2010 which affected 6 barangays affecting 5,726 persons or 1,042 families. It was followed by another armed conflict in Cotabato in February 2012. 105 families were affected when the groups of two Moro Islamic Liberation Front commanders clashed in North Cotabato over a long-running land dispute. In 2013, an encounter between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the New People's Army (NPA) in Barangay Anticala, Butuan City forced 750 persons or 150 families to flee. On the same year on the month of September, Zamboanga siege happened wherein the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) destroyed 10,000 homes, and at least 327,000 people were displaced. 63,000 people were unable to return to their homes because parts of the city were declared "no return areas" while as of December 2014, 209 IDPs were reported to have died due to pneumonia and acute gastroenteritis. Half of them were children under 5 years old.

Last March 2015, at least 8,149 families or 40,745 individuals were displaced following the military's all-out war against rebel group Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). Exactly after a year, Butig clash happened. At least 7,800 people were displaced as government troops clashed with the Maute terror group. Moreover, with the military operations versus Abu Sayyaf that lasted from January 2016 to February 2017, more than 68,400 were displaced in Sulu and Basilan. Most of the IDPs returned home by December 2016.

Furthermore, around 3,000 people were displaced when government troops clashed with the Abu Sayyaf at Bohol last April 2017. Then, on May 23, 2017, the Marawi siege took place. More than 400,000 people have been displaced in the ongoing conflict. 70,380 have been housed in 79 government evacuation centers.

2 Post - Marawi Siege Recovery and Rehabilitation

According to the report from UN High Commissioner for Refugees Protection Cluster, as of October 12, 2018, the latest validated and adjusted figures from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) reported a total of 63,881 families have already returned, while 15,117 families are still displaced. Out of this, 1,958 families are inside evacuation centers and 11,754 families are home-based IDPs. Another 1,405 families are in Transitional Shelters. Twenty-one evacuation centers are still open, of which six (6) are in Lanao del Norte and fifteen (15) are in Lanao del Sur.

After several postponements, the groundbreaking ceremony at the Most Affected Area (MAA) in Marawi City pushed through on 30 October 2018, signaling the start of rehabilitation efforts within the former main battleground. Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM) said that debris-clearing is due to begin immediately after the ceremony. According to the National Housing Authority, the total cost of the entire MAA rehabilitation project amounts to around Php 15 billion. Despite what was earlier announced, President Duterte was unable to participate in the event as he was visiting the other identified sites for transitional shelters in Barangay Boganga and within the MAA.

3 Approaches to IDPs

There are two (2) approaches in addressing the needs of IDPs – the collaborative approach and the cluster approach.

Collaborative Approach. The previous system set up internationally to address the needs of IDPs was referred to as the collaborative approach as the responsibility for protecting and assisting IDPs was shared among the UN agencies such as UNCHR, Unicef, WFP, UNDP, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the intergovernmental organization IOM, the ICRC, and International NGOs. Coordination is the responsibility of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Humanitarian Coordinator in the country concerned (IASC, 2004). They are assisted by the Inter-Agency Displacement Division which was created in 2004 and is housed in the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). However, this collaborative approach has come under increasing criticism (Cohen, 2006).

Cluster Approach. The cluster approach operates on two levels: the global and local. At the global level, the approach is meant to build up capacity in eleven key gap areas by developing better surge capacity, ensuring consistent access to appropriately trained technical expertise and enhanced material stockpiles, and securing the increased engagement of all relevant humanitarian partners. At the field level, the cluster approach strengthens the coordination and response capacity by mobilizing clusters of humanitarian agencies to respond in particular sectors or areas of activity, each cluster having a clearly designated and accountable lead, as agreed by the HC and the Country Team.

4 Poverty

Poverty has many dimensions, and it manifests itself in different kinds of deprivation. Measures of poverty can be classified as income-based or outcome-based, depending on whether they measure means or ends. Income-based measures use a poverty line usually defined in terms of having enough income to spend on a specified minimum amount of food and (sometimes) non-food basic items of expenditures. Outcome-based measures focus on the absence or lack of some minimum acceptable level of the basic needs or on the lack of some basic capabilities (or the opportunity to achieve these capabilities) to function (Basilan and Fujisaki, 1999).

Poverty and inequality in the Philippines remain a challenge. In the past four decades, the proportion of households living below the official poverty line has declined slowly and unevenly. According to Scoones (2015), this reflected discussion on the definition of poverty that was broadening to encompass more holistic perspectives on welfare and means of subsistence, which became known, through Frank Ellis's work, as livelihoods.

The main causes of poverty in the country include the following: low to moderate economic growth for the past 40 years; low growth elasticity of poverty reduction; weakness in employment generation and the quality of jobs generated; failure to fully develop the agriculture sector; high inflation during crisis periods; high levels of population growth; high and persistent levels of inequality (incomes and assets), which dampen the positive impacts of economic expansion; and recurrent shocks and exposure to risks such as economic crisis, conflicts, natural disasters, and environmental poverty.

Imam et al (2013) study reveals that the IDPs were denied their basic needs and were not satisfied with the given programs by the government. They considered that their food resources were not enough, that they were affected too badly by the condition of lack of medicine, and that they do not have sufficient clothing.

Given the situation, those IDPs were open to the idea that to survive their marginal existence, most of them engage in alternative economics activities, such as handcraft, selling agricultural product, hawking processed foods, and putting up sari-sari store (varieties of consumer goods) store as their coping strategies to survive in their living condition in evacuation center.

Similarly, the study of Ong (1978) entitled "A Study of the Problem as Perceived by the Settlers of the Regional Rehabilitation Project in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao", asserted that the non-availability of management personnel and the absence of potential leaders makes the settlers' condition even worst because there is no one to administer and coordinate the people's activities and no one to guide them towards their socio-economic development. There is no one to channel their demands and problems.

5 CONCLUSIONS

An internally displaced person (IDP) is often referred to as refugees (Webster Encyclopedia Dictionary, 1992). There is no legal definition as there is for a refugee (Deng, 2007). Nevertheless, report, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* uses the definition: people or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Deng, 2007 as cited by Abdulrahman, et.al, 2013).

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