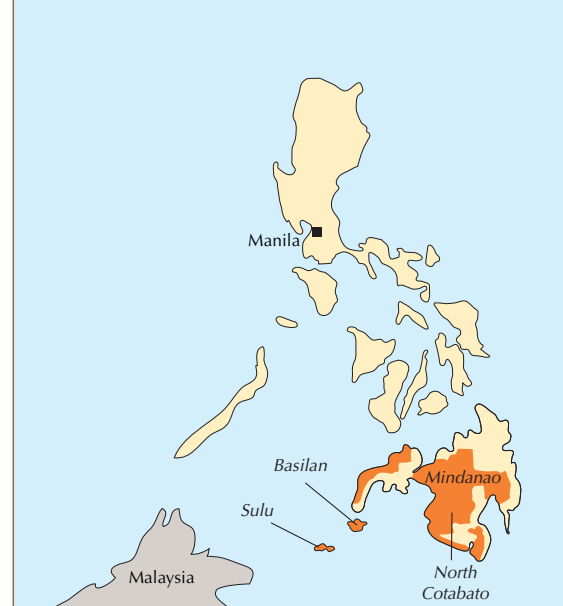


The Philippines

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	At least 308,000
Percentage of total population	At least 0.4%
Start of current displacement situation	1970s
Peak number of IDPs (and year)	1,000,000 (2000)
New displacement in 2008	600,000
Returns in 2008	250,000
Causes of displacement	Internal armed conflict, human rights violations
Human development index	90



Conflict and displacement have continued for many years in the Philippines. The most recent large-scale emergency broke out in August 2008, when intense fighting in the southern region of Mindanao led to the displacement of an estimated 600,000 people.

Before the last upsurge in fighting, it was estimated that conflict had displaced more than two million people since 2000. Most displacements have taken place in the southern region of Mindanao where the government has fought secessionist Moro (Muslim) rebel groups for the past 40 years. Although hopes of a formal peace agreement were raised in July 2008 as the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) reached a consensus on the issue of autonomous Moro territory, strong opposition to the deal by Christian groups and growing Moro frustration led to intense fighting in August in North Cotabato Province, which spread to several other provinces.

By the end of 2008 only low-level fighting persisted, but it continued to cause displacement and more than 300,000 people remained unable or unwilling to return to their homes.

The common agent of displacement nationwide has been the army, operating across the country against communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels, and in Basilan and Sulu provinces against the Abu Sayyaf group and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), as well as against the MILF throughout Mindanao and particularly in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Development projects backed by military support and disproportionately affecting indigenous groups have also caused displacement. Two groups have been particularly vulnerable to displacement: Moro people living in conflict-affected areas of Mindanao, and indigenous groups whose territory is rich in natural resources. Counter-insurgency operations against the NPA have often resulted in human rights violations against civilians suspected of supporting the insurgents and caused regular displacement although on a smaller scale.

While most displacement has been short-term and localised, with people returning to their homes as soon as fighting has subsided, some groups have remained displaced for years where insecurity has continued.

IDPs have faced many threats to their physical security and integrity, while facing barriers to their enjoyment of

the basic necessities of life, education, property, livelihoods and other rights. With no access to their lands, they have been forced to engage in irregular, low-paid jobs to survive. Displaced children, many of whom have had their education interrupted by their displacement, have been vulnerable to trafficking, recruitment into armed groups, malnutrition and health problems due to their prolonged stay in overcrowded emergency centres. Many of those who managed to return still have acute assistance and rehabilitation needs.

The government's response to displacement has been mixed, with frequent discrepancies between policies and their implementation. The quality of assistance has varied according to the centre into which IDPs have been evacuated, due to the inconsistent implementation of guidelines and standards. In October 2008, the government created an IDP Taskforce composed of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), the Department of Health and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The DSWD has been the main agency delivering assistance to IDPs, either directly or through other national or local government agencies, NGOs and other civil society groups.

Despite genuine government efforts to assist the displaced and improve its response, more remains to be done. The NDCC has responded to the recent IDP situation in Mindanao broadly as it would for displacement caused by a natural disaster, without taking into account the specific protection problems and the risks of protracted displacement there. Coordination and response mechanisms could be further decentralised and the government could be more open about the severity of emergencies, allowing international agencies to better fund assistance programmes.

In past years UNDP led the UN response to internal displacement in the Philippines, with UNICEF focusing on the protection needs of vulnerable groups including IDPs. In October 2008, however, coordination between agencies responding to the Mindanao emergency was minimal, and so the UN informally extended the cluster approach to the conflict there, a year after activating it in response to natural disaster. By the end of the year, however, no agency had been formally designated to lead the protection cluster.