

The Philippines



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	At least 15,000
Percentage of total population	At least 0.1%
Start of current displacement situation	2008
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	600,000 (2008)
New displacement	At least 70,000
Causes of displacement	Armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations
Human development index	97



Internal armed conflicts have caused internal displacement in the Philippines for at least the past 30 years. In August 2008, renewed fighting between the government and rebels of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the southern region of Mindanao led to the internal displacement of at least 750,000 people, before the parties declared a ceasefire in July 2009. Most were able to return when the hostilities ceased, although often without any assistance. By the end of 2010, between 15,000 and 20,000 people remained in IDP camps in Maguindanao Province, one of the majority-Muslim provinces of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) where most of the fighting had been concentrated.

During 2010, the main cause of new displacement in Mindanao was violence linked to clan wars (*rido*) triggered by land disputes and political and economic rivalries. They displaced at least 70,000 people during the year, with the largest displacement taking place in June when an estimated 20,000 people fled their homes in Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat Provinces.

Displacement was also caused in other regions of the country by armed encounters between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the communist rebel group of the NPA, and by AFP operations against the Abu Sayyaf group in Basilan and Sulu Provinces. Thousands of people were reportedly displaced, albeit only temporarily.

In early 2010 it was estimated that around 130,000 people in Mindanao were still unable to return because armed groups were still active in their home areas, and neither the government nor the MILF had committed to the peace process. Most were staying in official IDP camps in Maguindanao Province where they were receiving assistance from the government and international aid agencies. During the year a campaign by the regional government and the stepping up of early recovery activities in areas of origin led more people to return, and at the end of the year a more comprehensive estimate suggested that the number of IDPs in camps had fallen sharply to between 15,000 and 20,000.

Despite improvements in the overall living conditions in the camps, IDPs' humanitarian needs remained significant; they particularly struggled to access safe water and adequate sanitation facilities. IDPs were more food-secure but continued to face high levels of debt and difficulty in securing sustainable livelihoods. Displaced children, many of whom had had their

education interrupted by their displacement, were still vulnerable to trafficking and recruitment into armed groups, as well as malnutrition and health problems due to their prolonged stay in the overcrowded camps.

There were indications in early 2010 that nearly half of the returned or resettled population had failed to recover from their displacement. The majority of returnees had returned on their own without assistance and struggled to revive their agricultural livelihoods, while education, health care and water and sanitation facilities were often inadequate. Returnees in Maguindanao also had to deal with flooding and clan wars. While the government prioritised the reconstruction of physical infrastructure, it was left to communities themselves to rebuild social links and governance systems.

The government has provided significant emergency assistance since August 2008, but it has not always ensured that returns are safe or offer sustainable livelihood opportunities. It has not put together a clear and coherent return and rehabilitation strategy backed up with sufficient resources and clear allocation of responsibilities. Since 2008, the government has established several successive IDP coordinating bodies. President Arroyo's establishment in May 2010 of the National Focal Group was followed at the end of the year by newly-elected President Aquino passing responsibility to the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process to oversee a broader peace-building and reconstruction programme which also incorporated IDP assistance.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development has been the main agency delivering assistance to IDPs, either directly or through implementing partners. However this has been insufficient and, in Mindanao and elsewhere in the country, local NGOs, volunteers and others including IDP groups have played a critical role in assisting and advocating for the rights of IDPs, while many IDPs have relied on the humanitarian assistance provided by international NGOs and agencies.

The international presence in Mindanao, which had been limited during the conflict, grew significantly after the July 2009 ceasefire. By the end of 2010, the focus of assistance had shifted from emergency to early recovery and development. In July, UNHCR established a presence in Mindanao and took over the leadership of the Protection Working Group from IOM. Efforts were underway by UNHCR to develop a comprehensive protection strategy.