Armed attacks by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) during Christmas and New Year’s Eve last year in Maguindanao and North Cotabato provinces have led the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to intensify its Law Enforcement Operation (LEO) to central Mindanao. In February, military reinforcement, build-up of troops and sporadic armed clashes caused massive displacement of civilians in and around the areas where the BIFF is believed to maintain force.

An armed encounter between the AFP and BIFF forces in barangay Timbangan in the first days of 2016 has led to the displacement of 3,266 families (estimated 16,330 persons) in Shariff Aguak municipality. In addition, on 08 January, 1,885 families (9,425 persons) from the municipalities of Datu Salibo, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, and Shariff Aguak were also triggered by a land dispute, has left one civilian dead and one wounded. The families remain displaced as of this report.

By the end of January, people displaced by both incidents had returned home. However, by early February, and in the wake of the Congress’ failure to pass the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), the LEO intensified inside the ‘SPMS box’ (Salbu, Pagatin, Mamasapano, and Shariff Aguak) known to be a BIFF stronghold area. Families who had recently returned from the January displacement incidents were displaced once more as a result.

Four (4) incidents of armed encounter between the AFP and the BIFF reported in February also triggered the displacement of civilians from the municipalities of Datu Salibo, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, and Shariff Aguak.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) authorities reported the displacement of around 2,390 families (estimated 11,950 persons) when AFP forces advanced their offensives and engaged the BIFF in a firefight triggered by a land dispute, has left one civilian dead and one wounded. The families remain displaced as of this report.

The proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which was supposed to create a new autonomous political entity for the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao had not passed when the 16th Congress adjourned on 3 February. The halted passage of the BBL has not only impeded the establishment of the Bangsamoro but has also affected the process of decommissioning of combatants of the MILF’s armed wing, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces1. It can be recalled that in June 2015, an initial number of firearms were turned over by the MILF to the government.

On 18 February, MILF issued an official statement expressing disappointment over the non-passage of the bill while stating its intention to continue upholding the peace process and to preserve all of its present gains2. The MILF stated it would continue to demand the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed on 27 March 2014, which includes the passing of the BBL3. The MILF has been repeatedly stating it would not accept substitute bills or any diluted version of the original BBL.

Datu Blah Sinsuat Clan Feud

On 25 February, a gun battle between two non-state armed actors in Datu Blah Sinsuat municipality forced around 230 families (estimated 1,150 persons) from their homes.

According to a report from local authorities, the IDPs coming from barangay Resa fled to the neighboring villages of Kinimi, Lapaken and sitio Turigan of barangay Resa. The conflict, triggered by a land dispute, has left one civilian dead and one wounded. The families remain displaced as of this report.

1 http://www.mindanews.com/peace-process/2016/01/17/milf-the-bbl-will-pass-if-congress-decides-to-pass-it/
On 21 February, armed clashes, which lasted more than a week, between government troops and a non-state armed group triggered the displacement of about 6,501 families (estimated 32,491 persons) in Poblacion Bayabao and eight (8) other barangays in Butig municipality in the province of Lanao del Sur. The non-state armed group, now identified as led by the Maute brothers, allegedly affiliated with the Islamic State (IS), reportedly harassed and assaulted a military base, which prompted retaliation by the 51st Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

By 29 February, around 90% of the population of Butig had fled their homes seeking refuge among host families in nearby municipalities (as far as Marawi City). There are few designated evacuation centers in Butig, which makes it more difficult for the government and humanitarian actors to effectively respond and address the concerns of the IDPs. Access to affected areas were also restricted by the military for security reasons.

Military offensives, including aerial bombardments, carried out in areas where the rebels were allegedly hiding caused destruction of civilian properties as the armed conflict spread to the nearby municipality of Sultan Dumalondong. Protection actors reported safety and security, food and non-food assistance, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and health as main protection issues facing IDPs. Reports from community volunteers suggest that the armed groups are recruiting minors. Residents also mentioned minors who participated in the actual combat that resulted in the death of one minor (male).

As of this report, the military offensive has ended and tension in the affected areas has waned. Local authorities and the State Security Sector said that IDP returns will be facilitated once the areas are cleared from possible IEDs. However, local non-government organizations report that most of the displaced families are reluctant to return as they are still concerned that a firefight may erupt anytime.

http://cnnphilippines.com/regional/2016/03/02/Butig-Lanao-del-Sur-clashes-Maute-group.html
http://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2016/03/04/now-safe-for-butig-villagers-to-go-home-military/

ZAMBOANGA PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT

The achievement of durable solutions for the displaced population in Zamboanga City continues to be impeded by outstanding protection concerns. Such concerns include housing, land and property issues and access to sustainable livelihoods and basic services, including adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities.

As of the end of February, around 2,849 families (estimated 16,055 persons) continue to live in substandard conditions in transitory sites waiting for relocation or transfer to permanent sites while around 4,000 families (estimated 21,000 persons) are in host communities awaiting inclusion in the government’s rehabilitation programmes.

As improvements to road access, water and power facilities are ongoing in transitory sites, particularly the biggest transitory site in Mampang, IDPs are requesting information on whether there are plans to make Mampang a permanent site especially for those who are not considered owners, unregistered or “untagged” by the housing department of the city government.

The National Housing Authority (NHA) reported that out of the 6,500 permanent housing units under the Zamboanga City Roadmap to Recovery and Reconstruction (2ZR) Plan, only 40 to 45% have been constructed and only 1,347 housing units were awarded to the IDPs. There is no definite timeline yet as to when IDPs will be transferred. 500 temporary sanitation units have to be installed in the largest permanent housing site in Kasanyangan before IDPs can move there. Resolving the issue on the access road connecting Kasanyangan also remains a concern. In Mariki, people have neglected the local authorities’ standing order on the installation of the sanitation units and have started moving to, and occupying the permanent housing units.

There is confusion and frustration among IDPs over the lack of information on the status and the target completion of the permanent housing units. The non-implementation of the Code of Beneficiaries and the Implementing Rules and Regulations in the beneficiary selection adds to the confusion. Although local authorities are projecting that relocation will be carried out by end of March 2016, there are no indications that this will be realized due to the delay in the construction and installation of basic facilities in the housing units. The Governance and Rule of Law sector, comprised of protection actors such as the City Legal Office and Commission on Human Rights, has been pushing for the reactivation of the Grievance Committee to look into these concerns.

The city of Zamboanga has been experiencing a water shortage brought about by El Niño. This has affected IDPs both in transitory sites and host communities where water rationing has now been put in place. The City Water District and the Philippine Red Cross are delivering water tanker trucks to supply water in the transitory sites. Risks of disease outbreaks may increase should the situation persist.

While the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) agreed that the profiled and verified 1,224 home-based IDP families (estimated 7,638 persons) can now be used as initial and official reference for any government rehabilitation assistance. The remaining 3,248 home-based IDP families who were not covered in the re-profiling exercise last December 2015 need to be re-validated and included in the government master list.

The City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), City Legal Office, Commission on Human Rights, Department of Education and other line agencies under the Basic Services and Education & Governance and Rule of Law sectors launched the Free One-stop Shop Mobile Birth Registration in transitory sites in mid-February. The registration activity focused on the issuance and re-issuance of certified true copy of birth certificates. Another round of the registration exercise will be conducted by end of March 2016.

MIDSAYAP, NORTH COTABATO CLAN FEUD

Two warring clans engaged in a firefight on 18 February that resulted in the displacement of around 400 families (estimated 1,570 persons) in barangay Mudseng in the municipality of Midsayap, North Cotabato province. Another firefight erupted the following day. The clan feud is believed to stem from a land dispute. The displaced families returned home after two days.

Children who comprise the majority of displaced population remain one of the vulnerable sectors needing protection support.

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The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement note that “internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons 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.”

Durable Solutions - UNHCR with Protection Cluster members continue to identify communities that are subjected to protracted displacement over the course of the year to ensure all IDPs are identified and the appropriate attention and resources can be obtained to support finding a durable solution to their displacement.

CURRENT NUMBER OF IDPS IN NEED OF DURABLE SOLUTION

198,182 TOTAL NO. OF PERSONS WHO ARE PRESENTLY DISPLACED IN MINDANAO SINCE 2012 - FEBRUARY 2016

121,363 ARMED CONFLICT

76,819 NATURAL DISASTER

CLARIFICATIONS

Typhoon Pablo displacement - A large number of IDPs remain displaced from Typhoon Pablo in December 2012 in Eastern Mindanao, Region XI who are still in need of a durable solution. Many of these families remain in temporary shelters where local authorities have been slowly obtaining access to land and constructing permanent housing for these IDPs. As of October 2015, there are still an estimated 76,819 IDPs in need of a durable solution in this region.

NUMBER OF INCIDENTS CAUSING DISPLACEMENT IN 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF INCIDENT</th>
<th>TOTAL IN FEBRUARY 2016 INCIDENTS</th>
<th>TOTAL SINCE JAN 2016 INCIDENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>ARMED CONFLICT</td>
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<td>104,253</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATURAL DISASTER</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

DISPLACEMENT MOVEMENT IN FEBRUARY 2016 (see details in boxes)

TOTAL DISPLACEMENT IN FEBRUARY 2016: 69,321

ESTIMATE NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO HAVE RETURNED: 6,960

IDPs IN FEBRUARY IN NEED OF DURABLE SOLUTIONS: 62,361

LEGEND

TOTAL DISPLACEMENT
TOTAL RETURN
TOTAL PRESENTLY DISPLACED
ARMED CONFLICT
NATURAL DISASTER
INCREASE / DECREASE IN IDP MOVEMENT COMPARED TO PREVIOUS MONTH
REGIONAL BOUNDARY

DISCLAIMER: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.