

Evaluation of the Protection and Solutions Programme for Internally Displaced Persons in Mindanao from 2014 to 2022

EVALUATION REPORT

September 2025

UNHCR Evaluation Office

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ACRONYMS

BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
CRI	Core relief items
CSO	Civil society organization
DAFAC	Disaster Assistance Family Access Card
DROMIC	Disaster Response Operations Management, Information and Communication
DRRM	Disaster risk reduction and management
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
GE	Gender equality
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion
GIRRL	Girls in Risk Reduction Leadership
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HLP	Housing, land, and property
HRBA	Human rights-based approach
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IM	Information management
iPART	IDP Profiling and Response Tracking
LGU	Local government unit
MHT	Mindanao Humanitarian Team
MSSD	BARMM Ministry of Social Services and Development
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NGA	National government agencies
NGO	Non-government organization
OCD	Office of Civil Defense
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
QIP	Quick impact project
RPOC	Regional Peace and Order Council
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCT	United Nations Country Team

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UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNEG United Nations Evaluation Group

1. BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Forced internal displacement is among the significant human rights issues the Philippines has to contend with. Displacement in Mindanao continues to be reported due to conflict and disasters. From 2008 to 2022, the country recorded an estimated 3.2 million internal displacements by conflict and violence and 59.6 million by disasters. The *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2023* showed that the country has the highest number of displacements in East Asia and the Pacific region in 2022. By the end of the same year, it recorded the second-highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), totaling 102,000 individuals displaced by conflict and 533,000 individuals forcibly displaced mainly due to disasters related to natural hazards. Most forced displacements due to conflict and violence occurred in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) is among the various stakeholders working together to address forced displacement and promote the rights and welfare of IDPs in the Philippines, particularly Mindanao. Against the backdrop of renewed peace talks between the Philippine government and armed groups in Mindanao in 2010, the UNHCR established its Mindanao Field Office and implemented the Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs (hereinafter referred to as the "Programme").

The UNHCR's Mindanao Field Office implemented the Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs, specifically targeting the improvement of the protection conditions for IDPs in Mindanao and focusing on priority areas in BARMM. This Programme was strategically designed to mitigate the risks IDPs and their host communities face. The Programme promoted peaceful co-existence with local communities by implementing 276 quick impact projects (QIPs) in 17 provinces across Mindanao, reaching 650,000 individuals. For capacity-building activities, 120 trainings and workshops were conducted, benefiting 1,896 individuals and empowering four BARMM agencies. Furthermore, the program developed, strengthened, or updated a durable solutions strategy that clearly defined approaches to address protracted cases of displacement in Mindanao and helped IDPs, returnees, and host communities achieve lasting solutions. It has also strengthened civil registration and civil status documentation through birth registration projects and training, advocating the BARMM government to prioritize birth registration and intensify information campaigns in communities on the importance and benefits of birth registration and providing technical support to the BARMM Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) to improve its IDP registration system, tools, and process.

The Programme also involved the implementation of capacity-building activities on information management by reinforcing the mainstreaming of protection into the BARMM government's undertakings. Through the Programme, the MSSD's protection and information management capacity was strengthened, impacting its capability to facilitate evidence-based policymaking and programming decisions. It provided support to the MSSD in the establishment of the IDP Profiling and Response Tracking (iPART), a digital platform that helps monitor the movement of IDPs, the responses and interventions conducted to address their needs, and the remaining gaps that need to be addressed by duty-bearers and other actors while avoiding duplication of efforts. The IDP program developed and strengthened related laws and policies by providing technical assistance in the crafting of a regional and national legal framework for IDP protection as groundwork for an IDP Bill in BARMM and on the national level while also ensuring that the IDP policy advocacy is brought to the attention of policymakers in the Bangsamoro Transition Authority.

Finally, the Programme ensured that the population had sufficient essential and domestic items by distributing, in coordination and partnership with local government units (LGUs) and partner humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 212,000 core relief items (CRIs) to 424,120 of

the most vulnerable IDPs in communities that are affected by armed conflict and disasters related to natural hazards, including areas in Mindanao hit by several typhoons.

Specifically, the Programme comprised the following components:

1. Strengthen the capacity of the BARMM, local government units, and civil society actors on protection response and preparedness. Various efforts were made at different levels of the state structure to improve capacities and address existing gaps, consistent with UNHCR's global commitment to a decisive and predictable engagement in situations of internal displacement;
2. Enhance efforts to build the BARMM government's and local actors' capacity for information management (IM) to enable an evidence-based and protection-centered response to displacement as part of a broader effort to reinforce national responses;
3. Reinforce a more coordinated approach to protection monitoring, documentation, reporting, and response in line with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) protection strategy objectives and with emphasis on reinforcing state responsibility;
4. Strengthen peace-promoting, conflict-sensitive, and community-based protection mechanisms and responses reflective of the needs of all sectors and aligned with national and local development objectives; and
5. Support the government in developing a responsive, durable solutions strategy for persons in protracted displacement and those experiencing recurrent displacement through (a) ensuring continuity of protection monitoring, referral, and advocacy during the recovery phase; (b) providing technical assistance on housing, land, and property (HLP); and (c) protection profiling to gather baseline information on protection risks and vulnerabilities as a result of displacement.

2. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation aims to comprehensively assess the UNHCR's IDP operations in Mindanao from 2014 to 2022. This evaluation is strategically scheduled following the closure of UNHCR's Mindanao Office, marking a significant transition phase in the protection work. The key objectives include analyzing the operation's overall results, its contribution to regional humanitarian and protection efforts, and understanding its contribution to the broader protection landscape in Mindanao. The findings from this evaluation play a critical role in learning and accountability, feeding into the refinement of UNHCR Philippines' strategy for handing over responsibilities beyond 2022. The evaluation engaged rights-holders and duty-bearers to ensure the effective utilization of evaluation results for future planning, decision-making, and scaling of operations. The evaluation's timing is particularly significant as it coincides with a pivotal moment in the Programme's lifecycle, providing insights into the effectiveness and sustainability of the transition of roles to state partners.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

In response to the ongoing challenges and complexities of internal displacement in Mindanao, the UNHCR has actively engaged in protection and humanitarian efforts. With the evolving landscape of these efforts and the impending transition of roles to local authorities, a crucial need arises for a comprehensive evaluation of the UNHCR's interventions. The University of the Philippines Public Administration Research and Extension Services, Inc. (UPPAF) has undertaken this evaluation to critically assess, analyze, and provide strategic guidance for future endeavors. The following objectives have been set forth for this evaluation:

1. Identify the actual outputs and outcomes vis-à-vis the goals and intended results of the Programme;
2. Assess the results of the Programme in enhancing the response capacity of local state authorities and in improving the protection conditions of IDPs in Mindanao;
3. Analyze the factors that contributed to or hindered the achievement of the intended results; and
4. Provide lessons and evidence on successes and challenges of UNHCR's engagement in IDP operation in Mindanao that can support the transition of its protection role to the Philippine government and other protection partners

4. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation coverage from 2014 to 2022 is designed to comprehensively assess the outcome of the UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs across various regions in Mindanao. This primarily focuses on the BARMM provinces and extends to the other five regions, such as Caraga, Northern Mindanao, Central Mindanao, Zamboanga Peninsula, and Davao regions. This broad geographical scope ensures a thorough understanding of the Programme's effectiveness in diverse settings, addressing the unique challenges and needs of IDPs in Mindanao.

The evaluation comprehensively examined the various outcome areas, outputs, and objectives of the UNHCR Mindanao Programme. This approach is designed to ensure a thorough understanding of the Programme's impact, effectiveness, and areas of improvement. The specific components covered in the evaluation align with the identified outcome areas, providing a structured framework for assessing the Programme's overall performance and success in meeting its goals. See Table 1 for the summary of outcome areas, outputs, and objectives for the UNHCR Mindanao Programme.

Table 1. Matrix of Outcome Areas, Outputs, and Objectives for the UNHCR Mindanao Programme Evaluation

Objectives	Output	Outcome areas (OA)
Objective 1: Peaceful co-existence with local communities promoted	Output 1.1. Peaceful co-existence project implemented	Policy/Law: National and regional IDP protection laws are enacted
	Output 1.2. Advocacy and technical support for the crafting and passing of an IDP Protection Bill provided	
	Output 1.3. Comprehensive solutions strategy developed	
	Output 1.4. Capacity development in protection, information management, and emergency preparedness and response supported	

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Objectives	Output	Outcome areas (OA)
Objective 2: Capacity building implemented	<p>Output 2.1. Capacity development carried out</p> <p>Output 2.2. Functional Protection coordination mechanism supported</p> <p>Output 2.3. Protection monitoring documentation, referral, and advocacy activities conducted</p> <p>Output 2.4. Persons with heightened risks are identified and supported to address basic needs.</p>	Well-being: Ensure the centrality of protection in all phases of the humanitarian response
Objective 3: Durable solutions strategy developed, strengthened, or updated.	<p>Output 3.1. Assessment and analysis of protection conditions undertaken</p> <p>Output 3.2. Community empowerment and peaceful co-existence projects implemented</p> <p>Output 3.3. Community-based protection monitoring networks supported</p>	Community: Peace-promoting, conflict-sensitive, and community-based protection mechanisms strengthened
Objective 4: Civil registration and civil status documentation strengthened	<p>Output 4.1. IDP registration and monitoring improved</p> <p>Output 4.2. - National institutions' issuance of civil status documentation supported</p>	Access/Doc: Civil registration and civil status documentation strengthened
Objective 5: Capacity building on information management	Output 5. Advocacy conducted	Policy/Law: National and regional IDP protection laws enacted
Objective 6: Law and policy developed or strengthened	Output 5. Advocacy conducted	Policy/Law: National and regional IDP protection laws are enacted
Objective 7: Population has sufficient essential and domestic items	Output 6. Basic needs and essential services provided	Well-being: Ensure the centrality of protection in all phases of the humanitarian response

5. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The assessment uses an integrated evaluation framework (see *Figure 1*), which combines the evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) and the project results framework. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of the OECD evaluation framework is designed to guide the evaluation process, ensuring it adheres to recognized international standards and integrates gender equality and human rights-based approaches. It typically incorporates relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. The impact criterion is dropped for this evaluation, considering that the Programme has just concluded in 2020. Each component of the project results framework—program design, inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes—was evaluated using the five OECD criteria.

The evaluation framework was enhanced at the methodological level using a human rights-based approach (HRBA) and gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) lens. The evaluation approach integrates critical factors of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact at each stage, keeping GEDSI the central focus. It involved assessing the Programme’s alignment with human rights principles and GEDSI, ensuring that both are systematically addressed and integrated throughout the evaluation process.

The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) has outlined key elements of HRBA, including GE, in the evaluation process, as summarized in Table 2 (UNEG, 2014, as cited in Worm et al., 2022). In terms of indicators, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2012) recommends the identification and development of both qualitative and quantitative indicators, which can be categorized as fact-based (objective) or judgment-based (subjective). This approach could better ensure the extraction of pertinent information for a comprehensive and holistic program evaluation. However, the OHCHR also emphasizes that the focus of the evaluation design should not solely be on establishing an extensive list of quantifiable indicators. Instead, indicators should be viewed as tools that enhance HRBA assessments with solid qualitative dimensions.

Figure 1. Integrated Evaluation Framework

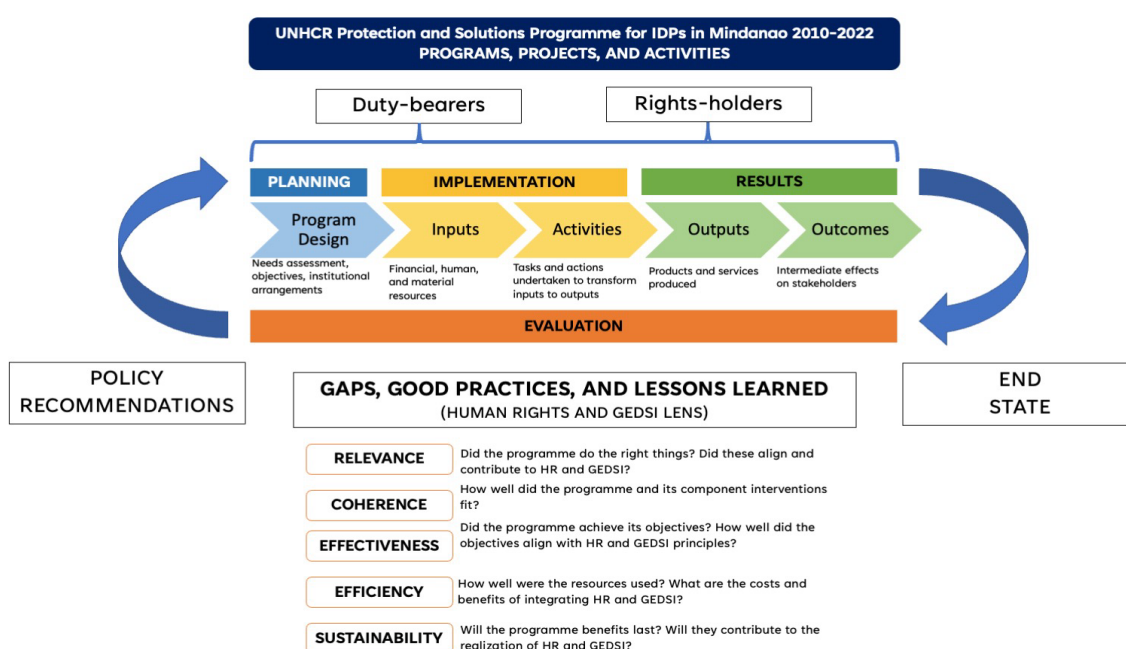


Table 2. UNEG Guidance on HRBA and GEDSI in Evaluation Process

Evaluation Phases	Key elements of the HRBA and GEDSI approach
Design and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope of the evaluation and the fundamental principles that will guide the evaluation • An evaluability assessment of whether, for example, the program can provide human rights (HR)- and gender-sensitive data, disaggregated data is available, HR and gender-sensitive indicators are built into the intervention, and the likely costs of HR and gender equality (GE) data collection and analysis • Stakeholder analysis differentiating between rights-holders and duty-bearers • Assessment of the context, including political and cultural sensitivities and/or possible resistance to HR and GE approach • Inclusive and gender-balanced reference groups • Incorporation of HR and GE in terms of reference, i.e., evaluation criteria and questions, required data collection and analysis methods, and required expertise on HR and GE in the evaluation team • Gender-balanced evaluation teams, including members with knowledge and experience in HR and GE and regional/national/local experts
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to offer different perspectives to the evaluation and to promote the participation of different groups of stakeholders. • Data disaggregation according to the prohibited grounds of discrimination. • Use of data and reports produced by states for the international human rights monitoring system and use of reports produced by civil society organizations or academia • Adequate representation of women and marginalized groups in surveys, focus groups, and interviews • Respect for confidentiality, ensuring that interviewees are not negatively affected by expressing their views, and attention to language and cultural issues • Use of national/local stakeholders as evaluators • Inclusion of HR and GE considerations throughout the report, including a section on the evaluation methodology, findings related to HR and GE, conclusions, and recommendations
Dissemination and use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive set of stakeholders should be actively engaged in the final stages of the evaluation, including rights-holders and duty-bearers. • Alternative ways should be sought to present evaluation findings to women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against. • Key findings and recommendations of an evaluation should be made available to a broad audience that extends beyond the intervention partners and key stakeholders.

Note. Adapted from UNEG (2014) as cited in Worm et al., 2022, p. 8.

The predominantly qualitative nature of applying HRBA in evaluations can be attributed to human rights, which relate mostly to the qualitative aspects of life (OHCHR, 2012). This is further evidenced by the prevalence of qualitative studies utilizing HRBA as a framework, as noted in the work of Noh (2021). Therefore, a fitting approach to employing HRBA as an evaluation lens could be to initiate the process by formulating qualitative evaluation questions grounded in internationally recognized human rights principles. For instance, Forbes-Genade and Niekerk (2017) employed human rights principles as themes to operationalize HRBA in assessing the Girls in Risk Reduction Leadership (GIRRL) program in Southern Africa. Similarly, Cortel's (2020) master's thesis, which investigated the diversion of children in conflict with the law in the Philippines using HRBA, utilized human rights principles to shape the overarching evaluation questions, serving as references for developing data instruments.

The HRBA can also seamlessly integrate into evaluation frameworks, such as with the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria—effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and coherence. The OECD-DAC's evaluation criteria are widely used as they cover key considerations that are important in evaluating interventions, and they are also relatively easy to understand and apply (ALNAP, 2023). The OECD-DAC (2023) has already crafted a guide on incorporating HR, including GE, into their evaluation criteria, essentially reframing the evaluation questions through a rights-based lens. For instance, when evaluating the relevance of an intervention, a rights-based approach delves beyond the extent to which the beneficiaries' needs are being addressed. Furthermore, the HRBA identifies factors contributing to the marginalization of the beneficiaries or hindrance for them to enjoying specific rights. In terms of coherence, the focus also extends to evaluating the alignment of interventions with international human rights policy commitments. In general, these evaluation questions can be adjusted to align with human rights principles, specifically, in the case of this evaluation project, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

In sum, the operationalization of HRBA within the context of program evaluation for IDPs would generally entail using the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement to frame the evaluation questions. As an entry point, these questions facilitate the incorporation of additional evaluation criteria such as those outlined by the OECD-DAC. Qualitative, quantitative, fact-based, and judgment-based indicators can be devised from the identified evaluation questions for rights-holders and duty-bearers.

6. METHODOLOGY

In this section, the research design is discussed, particularly the qualitative methodology, data-gathering activities, and data analysis techniques used. A critical component of the methodological design is the matrix that aligns the data collection and analysis methods with the evaluation's purpose and objectives, ensuring a cohesive and targeted approach to the evaluation design.

6.1. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

Research Design

The evaluation research design employed a qualitative approach to comprehensively understand the outcomes of the UNHCR IDP Programme in Mindanao. Qualitative methods include key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and observational studies—which delved into personal/lived experiences, opinions, and perspectives of stakeholders—and documents and/or archival research. These approaches ensure a well-rounded evaluation, capturing hard data and nuanced, subjective experiences.

6.2. DATA GATHERING ACTIVITIES

From 21 February to 15 August 2024, the evaluation team conducted a total of 119 primary data-gathering activities including key informant and panel interviews and FGDs with 371 respondents from IDP communities and LGUs in 40 barangays located in 13 cities and municipalities in Mindanao, 11 national government agencies (NGAs), eight NGOs, four BARMM ministries, two experts in the sociopolitical context of Mindanao, one donor agency, and four agencies of UN Country Team (UNCT) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of Primary Data Gathering Activities, 21 February - 15 August 2024

	Target Activity	Completed Activity	Number of Respondents	Variance (Activity)	% Completion
IDP leaders	5	5	5	0	100.00%
IDPs	14	14	200	0	100.00%
IDP host communities	6	6	17	0	100.00%
LGU - Cities/Municipalities	26	24	24	2	92.31%
LGU – Barangays	40	40	93	0	100.00%
BARMM ministries	6	4	6	2	66.67%
NGAs	26	11	11	15	42.31%
NGOs	8	8	8	0	100.00%
Experts	9	2	2	7	22.22%
Donor agencies	3	1	1	2	33.33%
UNCT	9	4	4	5	44.44%
TOTAL	152	119	371	33	78.29%

For the secondary data, the evaluation team conducted content and thematic analysis of 265 documents provided by UNHCR and documents provided by key informants from BARMM and some LGUs (*see Table 4*).

Table 4. Summary of Documents Reviewed, by Type

Document Type/Source	Count
UNHCR reports	20
UNHCR plans	4
UNHCR presentations	4
Donor reports	5
Partner NGO reports	31
Municipal/City profiles	39
Displacement bulletins/dashboards	72
Partner presentations	6
List/Database (activities/areas)	11
Maps	11
Advisories	3
Advocacy paper/briefer	2
Minutes	1
Infographics	12
Profiling	3
Protection assessment reports	11
Other references/documents from KII/FGD respondents	15
TOTAL	250

Data Analysis

In the evaluation process, collected qualitative data (i.e., KII, FGD, document/archival data, observation) were subjected to thematic analysis, narrative analysis, content analysis, contextual analysis, and lessons learned analysis. Table 5 presents a structured approach to evaluating the UNHCR's IDP Programme in Mindanao. It outlines aligning the evaluation's objectives with corresponding data collection methods, data types to be gathered, analysis techniques, and relevant evaluation criteria. This comprehensive framework ensures a systematic and thorough assessment, addressing the Programme's effectiveness, results, sustainability, and alignment with human rights and gender equality standards.

Table 5. Data Collection, Analysis, and Evaluation Purpose and Objectives Matrix

Evaluation Objective	Data Collection Method	Type of Data	Data Analysis Technique	Evaluation Criteria
Identify actual outputs and outcomes vs. intended results of the Programme	Document/ archival data analysis KIIs, FGDs	Program documents, qualitative data, stakeholder feedback	Content analysis	Efficiency, effectiveness (OECD-DAC)
Assess the result on local state authorities and IDPs in Mindanao	KIIs, FGDs	Qualitative data, stakeholder feedback	Qualitative data analysis, i.e., narrative and/or thematic analyses	Relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability (OECD-DAC)
Analyze factors contributing to or hindering the achievement of results	Subject-matter experts (SME) interview, Document/ archival data (e.g., Program reports,	SME opinions, performance reports	Qualitative data analysis	Sustainability, coherence (OECD-DAC)
Provide lessons and evidence on UNHCR's engagement successes and challenges	Case studies - i.e., FGDs, KIIs, field observations	Case examples (note: selection of cases), observational data (note: identify specific activities as an output/outcome of the Programme to be observed)	Contextual analysis, lessons learned analysis	HRBA, GE

7. KEY FINDINGS

This section discusses the key observations on the Programme based on the program development stages (planning, implementation, and results) and the five evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

7.1. RELEVANCE

The thematic analysis of the relevance of the Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao from 2014 to 2022 implemented by UNHCR Philippines, centers on four key dimensions: responding

to needs, policies, and priorities; being sensitive and responsive to context; quality of design; and responsiveness over time.

Responding to Needs, Policies, and Priorities

The Programme demonstrates a *robust and strategic response to the needs, policies, and priorities* of displaced populations and government structures. The evaluation findings highlight how UNHCR effectively addressed various crises and displacement scenarios, aligning its efforts with the specific needs, policies, and priorities of the affected populations and governmental frameworks. The Marawi Siege is a prime example of UNHCR's ability to respond effectively to immediate and critical needs. During and after the siege, UNHCR, in collaboration with other UN agencies, provided essential support to displaced populations, addressing urgent needs and aligning with regional and national development priorities. This intervention included formulating response plans and recovery strategies, demonstrating UNHCR's commitment to the specific needs of IDPs. This effort underscores the program's relevance by directly addressing the immediate needs of displaced communities and supporting long-term recovery efforts.

Similarly, UNHCR's significant contributions during calamities (e.g., Typhoon Washi, local name *Sendong*) included providing immediate relief and essential logistics, such as tents, blankets, kitchenware, and utensils, which the local government could not readily supply. This immediate response was crucial in addressing the urgent needs of IDPs during the disaster. Additionally, UNHCR's assistance in establishing child-friendly spaces within evacuation centers emphasized the importance of providing children with a safe and supportive environment during displacement. For instance, the close collaboration with the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD) Iligan during Typhoon Sendong, which continued for several years as part of rehabilitation efforts, illustrates UNHCR's commitment to long-term support beyond immediate disaster response.

UNHCR's involvement in developing an IDP Manual for the Caraga Region, initiated by the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC), addresses the critical gap in the legal framework for managing IDPs due to armed conflict. This manual provides essential guidelines for local authorities and stakeholders, ensuring that responses to displacement are well-structured and legally grounded. By focusing on this foundational aspect, UNHCR effectively responds to the specific needs of IDPs and strengthens the legal and administrative support mechanisms required to manage displacement effectively. In addition, UNHCR's active advocacy for the inclusion of the IDP bill as a priority legislative agenda in regional development plans, such as those for Region 12, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Region 11, and Caraga, underscores its commitment to addressing legal gaps in protecting IDPs. This advocacy aligns with key policy objectives and represents a concerted effort to secure legal recognition and protection for IDPs. By pushing for legislative recognition and protection, UNHCR ensures that IDPs have the necessary legal backing to secure their rights and access essential services.

Integrating IDP concerns within broader social protection frameworks, such as the Davao Regional Development Plan (DRDP), exemplifies UNHCR's deliberate effort to mainstream displacement issues. By embedding IDP considerations into existing planning frameworks, UNHCR ensures that the needs of IDPs are consistently addressed within the broader context of social protection. This strategic integration helps align IDP support with broader government priorities and ensures that interventions are comprehensive and inclusive.

The UNHCR's strong focus on protecting the rights of IDPs aligns closely with its core mandate. This focus on protection is recognized as a best practice by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), ensuring that IDPs' legal and human rights are upheld and providing them with the security and stability necessary

during displacement. Addressing the often neglected aspect of protection during displacement responses further underscores the relevance of UNHCR's efforts in safeguarding the welfare of IDPs.

UNHCR's strategic alignment with existing government policies, plans, and mechanisms enhances the program's relevance. By complementing and filling gaps in government capabilities, UNHCR supports the effectiveness of national and regional displacement responses. This alignment is crucial for ensuring that UNHCR's interventions are integrated into broader governmental strategies, avoiding duplication of efforts, and optimizing resource utilization. Such collaborative efforts are essential for addressing displacement concerns comprehensively and sustainably.

The UNHCR's role is to craft long-term solutions for IDPs rather than provide immediate relief. This focus on sustainable solutions aligns with the program's objective of addressing the root causes of displacement and supporting the long-term recovery and integration of IDPs. By prioritizing durable solutions, UNHCR ensures that interventions contribute to displaced populations' long-term stability and well-being.

The Programme demonstrates a robust response to displaced populations and government structures' needs, policies, and priorities. Through initiatives such as the response to the Marawi Siege and Typhoon Sendong, the development of the IDP Manual for Caraga, advocacy for the IDP bill, and the integration of IDP issues into broader social protection frameworks, UNHCR has shown a comprehensive approach to managing displacement. These efforts ensure the Programme is relevant and effective in addressing IDPs' immediate and long-term needs while supporting and enhancing governmental capabilities in managing displacement.

Being Sensitive and Responsive to the Context

Evaluating an intervention's sensitivity and responsiveness requires understanding that the needs of beneficiaries and stakeholders are shaped by various contextual factors, including economic, environmental, social, cultural, political, and capacity considerations. Identifying and addressing these factors are essential in the design and implementation stages. The evaluation findings illustrate how UNHCR effectively tailored its interventions to meet different context-specific needs and challenges, enhancing the program's relevance and effectiveness.

During the Marawi Siege, for instance, the need for preparedness and flexibility in responding to conflict-induced displacement was paramount. UNHCR's presence in the national emergency operations center in Iligan City demonstrated its capacity to respond swiftly and effectively to a rapidly evolving crisis. The organization's ability to mobilize resources and coordinate with other agencies in such a volatile environment underscores its sensitivity to the contextual demands of conflict-induced displacement. By maintaining a strong presence and adapting to the immediate needs of IDPs, UNHCR played a crucial role in immediate relief and longer-term recovery efforts, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

In Caraga and Lanao del Norte, the necessity of context-specific interventions became evident. In Caraga, the development of an IDP Manual initiated by the RPOC addressed a critical gap in the legal framework for managing IDPs due to armed conflict. The manual provided essential guidelines for local authorities and stakeholders, ensuring that responses to displacement were well-structured and legally grounded. By focusing on this foundational aspect, UNHCR effectively addressed the specific legal and administrative needs of IDPs, showcasing a proactive approach to strengthening local capacities and legal frameworks.

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In Lanao del Norte, UNHCR emphasized community-based protection strategies, working directly with IDPs and communities to understand their specific needs. This approach, described as "community-based protection," underscores the importance of engaging with displaced populations to capture the nuances of their experiences and requirements. This method reflects a deep appreciation of the sociocultural dynamics that influence displacement and recovery, ensuring that interventions are tailored to each community's unique challenges and opportunities. Such localized engagement is critical in fostering trust and guaranteeing relevant and practical interventions.

Accurate data collection emerged as a cornerstone of UNHCR's strategy, addressing a key challenge in disaster response and planning. During planning workshops in Region 12, for example, UNHCR's emphasis on data collection was viewed as a valuable contribution to the OCD's efforts. This approach recognized different regions' unique needs and priorities, ensuring that interventions were contextually relevant and well-informed. UNHCR's monthly displacement dashboard provided essential data for regional planning. It informed the regional development plan (RDP), highlighting the importance of reliable data for effective decision-making and long-term planning. Such data-driven approaches are indispensable in tailoring responses to the specific conditions and needs of IDPs across various regions.

UNHCR's collaborative efforts with local initiatives and regional partners were pivotal in addressing the specific needs of IDPs. For instance, the durable solutions workshop in Region 10 demonstrated responsiveness to the local context by involving regional agencies and tailoring interventions to regional priorities. This workshop highlighted the necessity of regional specificity in program planning and implementation, ensuring that interventions were well-integrated and responsive to local needs. Regular coordination meetings with implementing agencies, such as those facilitated by NEDA, provided platforms for sharing information and fostering a comprehensive understanding of IDP needs. These meetings ensured ongoing adaptation to the evolving context and promoted a collaborative approach to addressing displacement concerns.

UNHCR's adaptability was particularly evident in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where it maintained program delivery despite challenging circumstances. The willingness to adjust project designs based on local expertise and suggestions, such as incorporating peace-building initiatives, further highlights UNHCR's flexibility. This adaptability ensured that interventions remained relevant and practical amidst changing conditions and emerging challenges, demonstrating a commitment to long-term resilience and stability.

The regional focus on displacement caused by armed conflict, clan feuds, and natural disasters in BARMM reflected an acute awareness of the complex challenges faced in this area. UNHCR's efforts to address these varied causes of displacement through tailored interventions demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the local context. Including local knowledge and expertise in planning and implementation processes further enhanced the program's relevance and effectiveness.

UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao exemplifies a sensitive and responsive approach to the region's complex sociopolitical and cultural contexts. By tailoring interventions to the specific needs and challenges of different contexts, such as during the Marawi Siege and Typhoon Sendong, and through initiatives like the IDP Manual for Caraga and data-driven planning, UNHCR ensured the relevance and effectiveness of its efforts. The collaborative and flexible nature of the program, combined with a strong focus on accurate data collection and integration with local initiatives, underscores UNHCR's commitment to contextually responsive and sustainable displacement management. These efforts address the immediate needs of IDPs and support their long-term recovery and integration into stable and supportive communities.

Quality of Design

The quality of an intervention's design is crucial in addressing relevant priorities and needs and in ensuring that goals are specified. A well-designed intervention should articulate stakeholders' priorities and needs within its objectives, underlying theory of change, theory of action, and *modus operandi*. The analysis identified gaps in program design that may undermine the intervention's overall relevance and assessed the intervention's appropriateness, considering technical, organizational, and financial feasibility.

Creating the IDP Manual in Caraga exemplifies a well-designed initiative that addresses the region's unique needs and challenges. This manual reflects a proactive approach to capacity building and provides essential guidance for local disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) offices. By offering a structured framework, the manual ensures local authorities have the tools and protocols to manage displacement effectively, demonstrating a strong alignment with the region's specific requirements.

UNHCR's quarterly strategic meetings, which bring together relevant agencies to discuss solutions and coordinate efforts, indicate a well-designed approach to collaborative planning and action. These meetings foster interagency cooperation and ensure that various stakeholders are aligned in their efforts to address the needs of IDPs. This strategic framework is further supported by the Annual Strategic Moment of Reflection (ASMR), which provides a systematic review and adjustment of strategies to remain responsive to evolving displacement scenarios.

The involvement of UNHCR in area assessments highlights a focus on understanding specific vulnerabilities and needs of different regions, indicating a tailored and context-specific approach. This level of detailed evaluation ensures that interventions are not generic but are designed to address each area's particular circumstances, enhancing their effectiveness and relevance.

The Durable Solutions Action Planning Workshop, hosted by UNHCR, facilitated the development of a regional action plan for IDPs. This workshop demonstrated a participatory approach to planning and implementation, engaging various government agencies and stakeholders in the process. Such involvement ensures that the action plans developed are comprehensive and enjoy broad support, thereby enhancing their feasibility and sustainability.

The Mindanao Virtual Protection Coordination Platform (MVPCP) provides a structured venue for UNHCR to share updates and initiatives and validate information with partner agencies. This platform demonstrates a well-coordinated effort to align various stakeholders and streamline information sharing, critical for effective intervention implementation.

UNHCR's initiative to engage with state universities through a colloquium to promote youth involvement in supporting IDPs illustrates a proactive approach to building future capacity and addressing long-term challenges. By involving academic institutions, UNHCR ensures that the next generation is informed and prepared to contribute to displacement management, fostering a sustainable approach.

Training and advocacy activities related to the IDP bill further underscore UNHCR's commitment to capacity building and awareness raising. These activities ensure that stakeholders know legal frameworks and can effectively advocate for IDP rights, enhancing the overall protective environment for displaced populations.

The Protection Mainstreaming Activity workshop, which focused on developing policy guidelines and advocating for protection mainstreaming in local government plans and policies, highlights a well-designed and participatory approach. By integrating protection principles into local governance frameworks, UNHCR ensures that protective measures are institutionalized and consistently applied.

In the context of Iligan City, the drafting and presentation of project designs to local government and IDPs reflect a structured and inclusive approach to program development. This approach ensures the projects are well-informed by local needs and perspectives, fostering greater acceptance and effectiveness. Providing specific services and accommodations, such as child-friendly spaces, separate facilities for women, and prayer rooms for Muslims, demonstrates UNHCR's sensitivity to diverse cultural and accessibility needs. These tailored services reflect a thoughtful design that respects and addresses the unique requirements of different demographic groups.

UNHCR provides tools and training, particularly those improving data management and incorporating vulnerability indicators like persons with disabilities (PWDs) and 4Ps (conditional cash transfer program) beneficiaries. These tools highlight the project's emphasis on robust and inclusive data systems. They enhance local authorities' capacity to monitor and respond more effectively to the needs of vulnerable populations.

The multi-agency approach emphasized by UNHCR ensures comprehensive planning and implementation, addressing the complex needs of IDPs through coordinated efforts. Including UNHCR's regional expertise and networks further strengthens the intervention by leveraging established relationships and knowledge.

The comprehensive monitoring system praised by stakeholders showcases the project's well-designed mechanisms for gathering information and assessing needs. The iPART tool, described as incorporating a "protection lens," is a prime example of an enhanced monitoring system that addresses the diverse needs of vulnerable groups in a detailed and inclusive manner.

UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao demonstrates a high quality of design. The program has been meticulously crafted to address displaced populations' specific needs and priorities through initiatives like the IDP Manual in Caraga, strategic meetings, area assessments, and various workshops. This well-thought-out design ensures that interventions are relevant, effective, and sustainable, aligning closely with Mindanao's immediate and long-term displacement management goals.

Adapting Overtime

Evaluating how interventions evolve over time is crucial for understanding their continued relevance and effectiveness in dynamic contexts. This analysis focuses on how UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao adapted to changing conditions, ensuring sustained impact and responsiveness to emerging challenges.

Despite the closure of the UNHCR Mindanao Office in 2022, the organization maintained contact with the OCD and other agencies, demonstrating a commitment to continued support and information sharing. This ongoing engagement underscores the program's adaptability and commitment to sustainability, ensuring its initiatives remain practical and relevant even after its formal conclusion. By continuing these relationships, UNHCR helped to ensure that the knowledge and practices developed during the program's operation were institutionalized within local agencies, promoting long-term resilience and self-sufficiency.

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The program's exit strategy emphasizes long-term partnerships and capacity building. Efforts to transfer knowledge and data to national agencies such as NEDA ensured that the program's legacy and efforts could be sustained through government channels. This strategic approach facilitated embedding the program's initiatives within local institutions, empowering LGUs to address the needs of IDPs better. Such measures indicate a well-planned exit strategy that prioritizes the sustainability of outcomes over the mere completion of activities.

UNHCR's ability to maintain program delivery and adapt to new conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies its flexible approach. The pandemic posed significant challenges, yet UNHCR managed to adjust its methodologies to continue supporting IDPs effectively. This adaptability included shifting to remote coordination and enhancing digital tools to ensure continuous communication and data sharing. The program's willingness to incorporate local expertise and suggestions, such as integrating peace-building initiatives, further highlights its adaptive nature, ensuring continued relevance amidst changing circumstances. These adaptations ensured that the program could continue to meet critical needs even under restrictive conditions.

Capacity-building efforts were pivotal in ensuring that local entities could sustain the program's impact. For instance, including child-friendly spaces as a standard requirement in evacuation centers in Iligan City demonstrates how some of UNHCR's initiatives were integrated into long-term disaster management practices. This integration successfully transitions from immediate relief efforts to sustainable, long-term solutions. By institutionalizing such practices, UNHCR ensured that the benefits of its interventions would persist beyond its direct involvement, creating a lasting positive impact on disaster response protocols.

The program's commitment to fostering local ownership and strengthening local capabilities is further exemplified by UNHCR's support for developing the iPART tool for the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) in BARMM. By enhancing local monitoring and data management capabilities, UNHCR promoted sustainable solutions and ensured that local entities were better equipped to address the diverse needs of IDPs. This tool incorporates a protection lens, allowing for more nuanced and effective monitoring of vulnerable groups. This strategic enhancement ensures local agencies have the tools to continue the work independently, promoting an autonomous approach to displacement management.

Despite UNHCR's withdrawal of physical presence, the continued advocacy efforts for the IDP bill and ongoing collaboration with MSSD on durable solutions signify a commitment to ensuring the program's lasting impact. This sustained advocacy and partnership reflect the program's adaptability and focus on promoting systemic changes that support IDPs in the long term. By pushing for legislative changes and fostering strong partnerships, UNHCR ensures that the momentum for protecting and supporting IDPs is maintained, even in its absence.

In conclusion, UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao exhibited high adaptability over time. The program maintained its relevance and effectiveness in a changing context through strategic exit planning, continuous engagement, capacity building, and fostering local ownership. This adaptability ensured that the program met immediate needs and laid the groundwork for sustainable, long-term solutions for displaced populations in Mindanao. By effectively adapting to new challenges and evolving conditions, UNHCR demonstrated a robust and flexible approach to displacement management that can serve as a model for similar interventions worldwide.

Challenges and insights

The relevance of UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao depends on its ability to effectively address stakeholder needs, policies, and priorities. The interview data reveal significant challenges in implementing IDP protection measures, particularly at the barangay level, where local officials often lack the necessary capacity and expertise. This gap underscores the importance of targeted capacity-building initiatives to equip local authorities with the skills and knowledge needed to protect and support IDPs adequately.

While UNHCR's advocacy for policy changes is well-received, more substantial national-level commitment and coordination are necessary for effective policy implementation. A cohesive effort across various levels of government is crucial to provide consistent support and guidance to local counterparts. Increasing focus on capacity building for LGUs, especially in conflict-affected areas, is essential to ensure that IDP protection measures are effectively implemented at the grassroots level. Enhancing collaboration with national-level government agencies to establish clear policies and guidelines would facilitate the development of standardized protocols and frameworks, ensuring a more uniform and effective response to IDP needs across different regions.

Despite UNHCR's efforts to promote durable solutions, these initiatives have not fully achieved their intended impact in the BARMM. Continued technical support and a focused approach to addressing the complex needs of IDPs are essential for realizing long-term, sustainable solutions. Addressing the challenges of program transition and providing ongoing capacity-building efforts are necessary to ensure that institutional knowledge is retained and the quality of IDP protection measures remains high. A centralized, consolidated displacement reporting system is also critical, particularly after UNHCR's departure, to ensure effective data management and information sharing for ongoing IDP support and protection.

Concerns about potential reputational damage due to the perception that UNHCR is leaving and returning highlight the need for better communication and a clear exit strategy. Transparent and consistent messaging about the reasons for program changes and the methods for sustaining impact can help mitigate negative perceptions and ensure continued stakeholder support. The program's adaptability to changing circumstances, such as the ongoing needs following the Marawi siege and other crises, demonstrates its relevance. Continuous support, including financial contributions for rehabilitation, indicates a responsive and flexible approach to program implementation.

While UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao faced several challenges, it also demonstrated significant strengths in adapting to changing contexts and maintaining its relevance. Addressing these challenges through enhanced capacity building, more vital national-level coordination, improved data management, and clear communication strategies will strengthen the program's impact and sustainability. Effective coordination despite challenges posed by transitioning from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to BARMM showcases UNHCR's commitment to maintaining relevance over time. Continued efforts to integrate with government structures and build local capacity will be vital for sustaining and amplifying the program's long-term impact.

7.2. COHERENCE

Overall Coherence

The overall program coherence is strained by periodically changing scope, government partner priorities, external factors, and indeterminate availability/commitment of resources across its implementation timeline.

- **The program design prevented a strategic approach toward internal and external coherence from its inception.**

The biggest challenge to the Programme's coherence is that it was never envisioned as a 12-year intervention from its inception with a definite scope, start, and end that could have allowed UNHCR to craft its theory of change and streamline its choice of interventions at the onset.

UNHCR's engagement in the Philippines was triggered, among others, by a need to fill in response gaps to internal displacement caused by major disasters, particularly the Zamboanga Siege in 2013, Marawi Siege in 2017, and several environmental disasters that hit Mindanao—which in turn caused periodically changing international funding and Philippine government priorities. There is strong buy-in from government partners and grassroots NGOs for UNHCR's IDP protection and solution interventions at the onset of said disasters because the political and funding priorities of affected LGUs are complemented by the outpour of political, technical, and financial resources from NGAs and international organizations. However, the support dissipated over time and priorities changed. Accordingly, UNHCR's role in addressing displacement also vacillated between being a direct and indirect provider of interventions that address different phases of internal displacement solution and protection (prevention, preparation, response, and recovery).

The UNHCR Philippines' IDP Disengagement Strategy 2022-2024 described this situation:

"It can be recalled that the operation has been subjected to various attempts to scale down due to funding constraints and competing regional priorities. In four occasions since 2014, UNHCR has been changing its stance regarding its involvement in IDP operations in Mindanao."(p. 7)

In addition to the complexity of causes, frequency, and duration of displacement, the intricacy of designing interventions for these areas in Mindanao is further compounded by the nuances in the governance systems and processes, as well as the political situation of the relevant LGUs that have jurisdiction over these areas.

Internal Coherence

- **Internal coherence is evident in the interconnected projected outcomes of select interventions.**

The interconnected projected outcomes of select interventions suggest internal coherence in the UNHCR's Mindanao Programme. This internal coherence is further strengthened by UNHCR's technical expertise, regular provision of capacity-building activities, and constant communication with their local implementing partners.

The recall of UNHCR's interventions in its earlier years in the Philippines was scarce. However, it can be surmised from documents and some anecdotes that their activities then were mostly related to

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supplementing displacement response with relief items and providing technical support as members of disaster recovery and rehabilitation committees.

UNHCR's Mindanao programming became more structured later on, especially when they, as an indirect intervenor to build the capacity of both government and non-government actors, received the Australian government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) grant aid from 2017 to 2019 (Phase 1) and 2020 to 2022 (Phase 2). Through this grant, they worked with local CSO partners and implemented various interventions including capacity building, community protection assessment, information management, and law and policy advocacy—all of which are directed toward establishing favorable conditions and systems for IDP durable solutions.

The generated community protection profiles and incident reports from the established network of community monitors provided data inputs to policy making. These reports also helped activate responses to displacement incidents from relevant LGUs and non-government partners who are part of UNHCR's Mindanao humanitarian network and contributed to monitoring the status of displacement in the region. Capacity-building activities in the form of assistance to barangay development plan formulation and training on internal displacement legal frameworks also helped mainstream internal displacement issues in government development plans, disaster response procedures, and political agenda. These interventions as a whole were designed to produce interconnected outcomes to create a better net of protection for IDPs, especially those in frequently displaced communities.

Interviews with LGUs, NGAs, and CSOs consistently highlighted the technical expertise of UNHCR as its strongest attribute in mainstreaming IDP protection in Mindanao. They shared that their engagement with UNHCR always started with a briefing on concepts and guiding principles surrounding internal displacement. UNHCR also regularly provides capacity-building activities and responds to requests for technical advisories and IDP data, which become inputs to regional government agencies planning activities and CSOs' project design (both for their UNHCR and non-UNHCR projects that address internal displacement).

As for UNHCR's local implementing partners for the DFAT-supported projects, CSO interviewees reported that they were presented with a 'menu' of projects that they could apply for funding. They stated that these were projects that their organizations already specialize in and have had some experience in implementing, such as community-based monitoring, distribution of CRIs, training for LGUs, and small infrastructure building. This menu of projects already ensured high internal coherence of interventions and high external coherence with the CSOs' specialization and background at the onset. CSO partners also shared that they have regular meetings with UNHCR to check their project progress and make course corrections for encountered challenges. Some Mindanao-based CSOs requested the presence of UNHCR representatives during meetings with new LGU partners to strengthen the perceived legitimacy of the projects and the local CSOs themselves, thus, effectively improving the trust between local CSOs and LGUs. One CSO partner at the national level, however, reported that there was an instance when their organization and UNHCR were independently engaging with the same possible ally who could champion the IDP bill in Congress. The informant remarked that if they knew they were trying to achieve the same thing, they could have strategized with UNHCR to avoid redundancy in their policy advocacy efforts.

From these observations, it can be said that the combination of UNHCR's standing as an international non-government entity, its technical expertise on internal displacement, partner onboarding practices, continuous provision of training, and regular partner dialogues has ensured that IDP-related interventions align with international guiding principles and policies, while maintaining consistency across both government and non-government implementing entities. UNHCR must, however, also

communicate their activities with their partners, especially in areas where UNHCR may be conducting parallel efforts to achieve similar outcomes that their partners are aiming for.

- **The strategic value of quick impact projects increased the favorable conditions for IDPs and their host communities.**

At first look, the QIPs seem to have low internal coherence because they have become a catch-all program component to address various developmental deficiencies in displacement-affected areas. However, their strategic value is in increasing the favorable social conditions for the IDPs and their host communities, as well as increasing these communities' receptiveness to other UNHCR interventions implemented through local partner NGOs.

According to interviews with NGOs, QIPs were determined and designed with input from the community beneficiaries. Such design ensures high relevance but the apparent coherence and expected accumulative contribution of these diverse QIPs within the program context is difficult to determine.

Interviews with recipients suggest that the beneficiaries think of the QIPs as an opportunity to resolve their top developmental priorities at the time of implementation. In other words, the QIPs were treated like a generic developmental project rather than an IDP protection-targeted project.

However, interviews with the NGOs and data from the project design documents pointed out that the QIPs were intended to achieve strategic outcomes including:

1. Address developmental deficiencies that exacerbate living conditions in communities affected by repeated and/or protracted displacement;
2. Simultaneously alleviate the living conditions of IDPs and their host communities to increase the social acceptance of IDPs seeking temporary relocation during short-term displacement or integration as their preferred durable solution; and,
3. Increasing buy-in of the beneficiary LGU in prioritizing the improvement of IDP protection and solution conditions in their area during their term of office.

All of the NGO interviewees remarked that their engagement with UNHCR helped them establish relationships with new partner LGUs and the QIPs helped facilitate the process. One of them argued that, in a way, the QIPs were their point of entry to new communities and it served as a sign of good intentions between them and their target stakeholders. Some LGUs even provided complementary support (e.g., in funding or labor) to these QIPs to address the funding cap for this UNHCR intervention component.

External Coherence

- **The provision of basic needs and essential services in the form of CRIs was seen as a significant complementary effort to fill in resource gaps in displacement-affected communities.**

Informants from NGOs and LGUs have consistently remarked that there was no duplication or redundancy of efforts when it comes to the distribution of relief items to IDPs as part of their disaster response activities. They see it as a complementation of resources where the LGUs may have

deficiencies given their limited local calamity funds and restrictions on what they can purchase based on existing procurement laws. UNHCR-funded non-food CRIs fit well into this context as most LGUs have focused their calamity funds on purchasing food items for their displaced constituents. Although recall of UNHCR-specific relief items was difficult among most of the interviewed IDPs and community members, those who did remember these items said that they were thankful for the durable tarpaulins, pails, and solar lamps, which remained functional for a long time. A community in Tawi-tawi shared that they were even able to repurpose some of the tarpaulins as makeshift community border patrol shelters to help enforce their community quarantine measures at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Harmonizing the iPART system with existing government systems, tools, and processes that deal with internal displacement can better facilitate collaboration between BARMM and non-BARMM areas and sustain Mindanao-wide strategic planning support.**

One of the commonly cited UNHCR interventions that CSOs, regional government units, and international NGOs (INGOs) have been missing was their comprehensive Mindanao Displacement Dashboard. Being able to track the number, location, cause, and status of displaced families helped these actors have a holistic understanding of Mindanao's displacement situation and figure out ways to complement existing efforts needed to help the displaced populations.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) interviewee acknowledged that UNHCR's displacement data strongly complemented many programs, especially OCHA's coordination work in Mindanao. OCHA is now releasing Mindanao Displacement Snapshots but it is limited compared to UNHCR's displacement dashboard. The OCHA interviewee also shared that they heavily rely on government data (e.g., NDRRMC, BARMM READi) that they consolidate monthly, unlike UNHCR's data that comes from its network of CSOs who have teams of community monitors.

The timing in the introduction of the iPART was strategically advantageous, considering that it was introduced while BARMM was still in its transition phase and while priority bills (e.g., Local Governance Code) were still under legislation. The buy-in on the part of the BARMM Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) was easy as they were receptive to learning novel methods that they could adopt as a newly established ministry. However, the adoption of this system and its related procedures on the ground is challenging because BARMM LGUs are still operating under status quo and are yet to smoothen their operational harmonization with the regional ministries. Legally, the MSSD has the mandate to coordinate and support social welfare services among the BARMM LGUs. However, in current practice, the social welfare offices of BARMM LGUs are still operating under status quo and complying with their reporting and coordination mandates with their counterpart provincial, regional, and national government agencies. These systems and practices are likely to stay until the intergovernmental mechanism between the BARMM regional government and the national government is clarified and the new standard operating procedures between the regional government and the LGUs under their jurisdiction are established. An interviewee from BARMM MSSD cited that they are still facing difficulties popularizing the use of iPART in LGUs because the latter still uses Disaster Response Operations Management, Information and Communication (DROMIC) and Disaster Assistance Family Access Card (DAFAC). As of writing, the BARMM MSSD has been conducting several training activities with parasocial workers regarding the use of iPART. However, the actual use of iPART in the field is still largely done by MSSD staff.

Although iPART is still in its finalization phase, data from interviews and online posts suggest that certain components of iPART are congruent with the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) DAFAC and DROMIC. The DAFAC (now known as the Family Assistance Card in Emergencies and Disasters or FACED) collects data at the family level. It takes into account the family's location, the

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head of the family's sociodemographic and socioeconomic profile, and the types of assistance their family has received from different groups (whether government or non-government) in response to specific emergency or disaster incidents (DSWD Memorandum Circular No. 12, s. 2024). On the other hand, The DROMIC reports contain community-level aggregated data about the disaster incident, the location, demographic profile, and number of individuals, families, and communities affected and where they are currently staying (including those outside of evacuation centers), the number of damaged houses, estimated cost of assistance needed, and the availability of funds and/or stockpile goods (DSWD Memorandum Circular No. 5, s. 2024). Ideally, the ability to collect data and generate reports compliant with the DAFAC and DROMIC requirements would be integrated into the final roll-out version of the iPART system, which can increase the receptiveness of LGUs to adopt the iPART System to comply with national reporting requirements and get access to MSSD's IDP assistance programs. This can also aid in sustaining Mindanao-wide programming and monitoring geared towards durable solutions for internal displacement that the UNHCR has been closely supporting.

The UNHCR interventions could have been focused on harmonizing the iPART with the current reporting systems of BARMM LGUs. Conversely, UNHCR could advocate for the improvement of existing nationally harmonized reporting systems to accommodate IDP-relevant components contained in iPART. The iPART, once adopted at scale among BARMM LGUs, has the potential to become a reliable mechanism for tracking the durable solutions timeline for each individual or family across BARMM LGUs. Interviewees from INGOs even remarked that the iPART can perform similarly to UNHCR's Mindanao Displacement Dashboard, perhaps even better as it is still being further improved to include additional indicators of durable solutions. This is suitable with the displacement patterns in Mindanao where families from an affected LGU often disperse across different LGUs wherever they have relatives they can go to. However, this strategic potential will be limited once IDPs from BARMM LGUs move outside of BARMM's jurisdiction.

Considering that the Philippines as a whole is a disaster and displacement-prone country, the inclusion of an IDP lens in its existing disaster management, DRR and social welfare, and human rights reporting systems instead of introducing a new one could have made their intervention more coherent, efficient, and effective across all levels and sectoral units of governance concerned with internal displacement.

- **Regional units of government agencies have limited mobilization/commanding powers that can substantially impact internal displacement.**

Some interviewees from the regional offices of the NEDA, DSWD, OCD, Commission on Human Rights (CHR), and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said that policy mainstreaming of internal displacement is best directed either at the national or local government units. As regional units of NGAs, they are bound mostly by directives coming from the top. These regional units may have data aggregation and analysis capabilities, but they have limited commanding powers to make lower units within their agency or LGUs at the municipal/city and barangay level do anything significant beyond what their national offices have directed them to do.

These regional offices are already under-resourced yet they still have to fulfill their numerous mandates. As such they cannot dedicate substantial efforts to focus on internal displacement. Informants from CHR did mention that UNHCR previously subsidized IDP monitors assigned to their regional offices to implement IDP mainstreaming activities. This intervention worked well at that time. However, internal displacement was no longer prioritized at the end of their term because they had to address other matters.

Among the regional units of NGAs explored, data suggests that regional NEDA offices can have the most impact on effecting changes to policies and plans that involve internal displacement. Regional NEDA interviewees shared that they tried inserting proposals related to IDP in their regional development plans under the chapters that concern insurgency, disaster, social development, and migration. Some also lobbied to include IDP concerns in their development research agenda and legislative agenda, and some even issued resolutions in support of a national IDP bill that UNHCR has been working on.

- **CSO turfing and community consultations helped avoid duplication and ensure alignment with community priorities.**

All interviews with UNHCR's CSO partners suggest that UNHCR utilized mechanisms that ensure internal and external coherence for its DFAT-funded program. As previously discussed, UNHCR's partner onboarding practices and regular dialogues ensured that the projects were aligned with UNHCR's guidelines and goals. Some informants also shared that they were strategically chosen to implement projects in areas where UNHCR had little to no community presence and political influence. They added that their organization's mission and vision, as well as their past programs, that revolve around disaster response, peace advocacy, humanitarian work, and community organizing aligned well with UNHCR's Mindanao programming.

At the project proposal stage, CSOs and UNHCR agreed to a turfing arrangement in which CSOs were assigned specific area coverage to avoid duplication with other CSO partners. These areas are based on their existing place of operations and where they have existing good relationships with the municipal/city or provincial LGUs or desire to create a new connection. CSOs also conducted community consultations before implementing their projects, especially their QIPs, to align with what the community stakeholders wanted to have.

7.3. EFFICIENCY

Broadly, according to the OECD (2021), efficiency measures “the extent to which interventions deliver, or are likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely manner” (p. 58). Given this definition, there are three main elements of efficiency. The first is economic efficiency, which involves assessing the cost-effective conversion of inputs into results. The second is operational efficiency, which deals with how resources are used during implementation. The third is timeliness, which examines whether results were achieved within the intended timeframe. In the context of this evaluation, efficiency focuses on whether UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs reached their intended beneficiaries and the extent to which these beneficiaries benefitted relative to the costs incurred. Additionally, the evaluation generally considers how risks were mitigated and how challenges were addressed by UNHCR and its partners during implementation, whether before, during, or after a displacement event. It also involves assessing whether assistance for relief, evacuation, or recovery, among others, was delivered as planned/scheduled.

Economic Efficiency

- **The cost varied widely per beneficiary.**

The cost per beneficiary varied widely. From 2020 to 2021, based on budgeted amounts in the provided accomplishment reports, the recorded cost per beneficiary for the 15 projects implemented through partner organizations ranged from PHP8.12 to PHP9,051.12 per beneficiary (*see Table 6*). While this is not a conclusive indicator of efficiency, it provides a valuable perspective on how resources were

allocated. It highlights the need to review whether investments correspond to the extent to which different projects contribute to the goals of UNHCR and whether there is a need to adjust some approaches.

Table 6. Cost per Beneficiary of UNHCR Projects Implemented Through Partner Organizations, 2020-2021

Year	Partner Organization	Cost per Beneficiary (PHP)
2021	Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS)	2,754.23
2021	Tiyakap Kalilintad, Incorporated (TKI)	1,567.96
2020	TKI	1,320.98
2020	Kapamagogopa Inc. (KI)	829.63
2020	Integrated Resource Development for Tri-People (IRDT)	816.76
2020	Agency for Technical Cooperation & Development (ACTED)	684.55
2021	ACTED	373.30
2021	Community & Family Services International (CFSI)	323.85
2021	Magungaya Mindanao Inc. (MMI)	202.44
2020	CFSI	121.98
2020	Commission on Human Rights (CHR)	74.00
2021	Assistance & Cooperation for Community Resilience & Development, Inc. (ACCORD)	55.57
2020	ACCORD	16.53
2021	CHR	8.12
2021	Integrated Resource Development for Tri-People (IRDT)	<i>No data</i>

Looking into the costs per beneficiary according to the nature of project components implemented, the same wide variation can be observed, with the lowest average for projects with distribution of CRIs components at PHP389.41 and the highest for projects with capacity development components at PHP828.12 (*see Table 7*). However, it is important to keep in mind that these figures are also only suggestive rather than conclusive due to data limitations. Costs in the reviewed accomplishment reports are not disaggregated by project component, and most projects are composed of multiple components of varying natures. This makes it challenging to precisely compare differences in costs

per beneficiary across components. Additionally, how costs per beneficiary are computed also depends on how project partners identified the number of beneficiaries. For instance, the project with the highest cost per beneficiary for capacity development—"Support to Advocacy Activities Leading to the Passage of BARMM IDP Protection Law"—only identified those who directly participated in capacity-building activities and stakeholder consultations. However, the project aimed to advocate for and pass a BARMM IDP protection policy, which could benefit the entire region. Nonetheless, while the estimated costs per beneficiary are not definitive, they could reflect the need to consider this aspect in future efforts for evaluating programs and projects.

Table 7. Cost per Beneficiary of UNHCR Projects Implemented Through Partner Organizations by Nature of Project Components, 2020-2021: Ranges and Averages

Nature of Project Components	Cost per Beneficiary (PHP)	
	Range	Average
Distribution of CRIs	16.53 - 1,320.98	389.41
Protection monitoring and reporting activities	8.12 - 1,567.96	491.97
Information, education, and communication (IEC) activities	8.12 - P1,320.98	580.88
Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) system/services	16.53 - 1,567.96	643.03
Capacity development	8.12 - P2,754.23	828.12

The same can be observed with the reported QIPs from 2010 to 2020, particularly for livelihood and social infrastructure QIPs, with recorded costs per beneficiary ranging between PHP25.14 to PHP5,883.45 and PHP26.67 to PHP2,487.15, respectively. For livelihood QIPs, the highest annual cost per beneficiary was recorded in 2010 at PHP5,883.45. This figure represents a single item in the database for that year, which involved providing multiple pieces of equipment and facilities, such as motorized boats, fishing boats, fishnets, a women's center with sewing machines, and a concrete market shed. For social infrastructure QIPs, the highest annual cost per beneficiary was recorded in 2018 at PHP2,487.15, which involved the repair of a Madrasah and Masjid.

Table 8 presents the annual average cost per beneficiary for QIPs. Given the data limitations, it is important to note that the figures reflect planned, not actual, costs. Only QIPs with properly recorded data on the number of direct beneficiaries and planned budget costs were included in the data processing. Additionally, the quality of the processed data depended on how the database provided by UNHCR was organized.

Table 8. Annual Average Cost (Planned) per Beneficiary for QIPs, 2010-2020 (in PHP)

QIP Sectoral Category	2010	2011	2012	2016	2017	2018	2020
Capacity building	-	-	-	-	131.77	-	-
Livelihood	5,883.45	1,221.51	1,184.61	217.81	25.14	650.65	2,033.33
Material assistance	-	-	-	-	-	-	12.70
Social infrastructure	-	-	726.93	1,550.15	239.19	2,487.15	26.67
WASH	-	-	-	-	-	511.03	270.26

- **Budget constraints can affect the achievement of intended outcomes.**

The PHP200,000 budget cap for QIPs can limit their effectiveness in achieving intended outcomes, particularly in accommodating implementing partners. Typically, partners select from a menu of QIP options and submit proposals. Due to these financial restrictions, partner CSOs often need to adjust their project designs based on budget constraints identified during their needs assessments. Unforeseen circumstances not considered during proposal preparation can further complicate matters. While partner organizations are grateful for the funding opportunities from UNHCR, they generally consider the allocated amounts minimal.

According to key informants:

"We successfully achieved the majority of our objectives, but a major shortfall was due to budget constraints. Originally, our project aimed to cover the entire Basilan, but budget limitations restricted our interventions to only a few municipalities. Even our relief assistance efforts were limited to a handful of municipalities."

"There is also a strict budget ceiling and a percentage allocation between program support and implementation costs. For instance, implementing a QIP is capped at PHP200,000. While minor adjustments are allowed, any increase cannot exceed 10%. Balancing these allocations is crucial; for example, transportation costs alone can reach PHP50,000 to reach vulnerable areas."

The rigidity of the budget ceiling may also, at times, lead to inefficiencies, as illustrated by a case where a multipurpose hall was initially constructed with a mix of concrete and wood to fit within the PHP200,000 budget. Subsequently, a second QIP was necessary to fully reinforce the hall with concrete. A larger initial budget allocation could have potentially saved resources compared to the two-phase construction approach.

Project design and implementation are generally inclusive, but can be potentially constrained by institutional, infrastructural, and resource limitations

Data from 12 out of 15 UNHCR projects (limited by data availability) implemented with partner organizations from 2020 to 2021 show an almost equal average percentage distribution of male and female beneficiaries, with 49.96% males and 50.04% females. Key informants also highlighted that working with UNHCR involves numerous consultation meetings with community members from various sectoral groups. These groups include not only different genders but also persons with specific needs (PSNs), persons with disabilities (PWDs), indigenous peoples (IPs), and senior citizens, among others. Such consultations enable UNHCR and its partners to consider the specific needs of these groups during project implementation. However, the success of inclusive project implementation by UNHCR and its partners can be influenced by the institutional maturity of local governments, especially in organizing these sectoral groups. Mobilizing and involving people from these groups is easier when existing sectoral groups are already in place, as noted in some of the KIs and FGDs with LGU officials and community members.

Additionally, even when LGUs are knowledgeable about proper and inclusive IDP management during disasters or crises, they may still struggle to address the specific needs of different sectoral groups due to infrastructural and resource limitations. For example, in one FGD with community members, it was mentioned that evacuation centers lack lactation areas, and limited facilities make it difficult to cater to special needs. FGD participants attributed this to a lack of budget and national government assistance. They also said that immediate attention to special needs during a crisis is challenging, as it requires waiting for the situation to stabilize first.

- **Potential overlap between the needs assessment of UNHCR and the government's conduct of the rapid damage assessment and needs analysis could affect the efficient use of resources.**

During the needs assessment conducted after a disaster, UNHCR members visit evacuation centers or IDP camps to evaluate the situation and determine necessary interventions. However, as one key informant from a regional agency explained, the government also conducts a similar assessment through the rapid damage assessment and needs analysis (RDANA). He mentioned that both UNHCR and RDANA use similar methodologies and gather comparable information. This seems likely considering that both UNHCR's post-disaster assessment and the RDANA examine various aspects of the situation after a disaster, including health, shelter, livelihood, and WASH concerns. Nonetheless, there might still be nuanced differences, particularly in the methodologies used. RDANA guidelines do not necessarily require substantial qualitative data, while UNHCR conducts extensive FGDs and KIs as part of their needs assessment. Despite this, UNHCR and the agencies involved in RDANA could explore areas for collaboration in this process to save time and effort and address potential overlaps.

Operational Efficiency

- **Achievement of target outputs met several challenges.**

The average progress rate of UNHCR projects implemented with partner organizations from 2020 to 2021 was 85.80%. This figure is based on the mean percentages of the reported progress per output of each project, as detailed in the accomplishment reports. Note that this average is based on 14 out of 15 projects from the provided UNHCR accomplishment reports as the project with CBCS did not specify any progress rates. Based on the data, only three out of the 15 projects achieved a 100%

progress rate. Different factors affect the implementation of projects, as reported by the partner organizations, affecting the achievement of target outputs/outcomes, as follows:

1. Unforeseen needs/issues

A major factor that negatively impacted all projects implemented by UNHCR with partner organizations from 2020 to 2021 was the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated risks and mobility restrictions. As a result, there were revisions to key outputs, rescheduling of work plans, realignment of funds, and unused budgets due to uncompleted activities. It is important to note that the reported progress rates are based on these revised key outputs. Many activities were conducted remotely due to the pandemic, leading to operational challenges since many localities in Mindanao have limited internet connectivity. Additionally, it was difficult to implement projects requiring onsite presence due to health protocols and the need to ensure team members' safety.

During project implementation, other issues also arose. For example, in the 2020 implementation of IDP protection by CHR, the non-issuance of IDs to IDP monitors made it difficult for them to conduct protection monitoring, as they could not easily access documents and information related to the status of the IDPs. Furthermore, the lack of explicit delineation between IDP protection monitors and regional IDP focal persons resulted in duplication of functions and challenges in coordination and communication. Many projects also required additional activities and the hiring of more personnel. Adjustments were often necessary due to changing contexts, such as disasters and increases in displacements.

The "Improving Protection and Resilience for IDP Communities in BARMM - Phase 2" project, implemented by ACTED, also encountered a problem when it initially planned to install 15 water tap stands in the municipality of Lumba-Bayabao. This plan became infeasible due to the delayed construction of the locality's water reservoir. These issues reflect the need to carefully consider whether the project design adequately accounts for the various factors that can affect its implementation and whether it is appropriate for the specific contexts of the project sites. It also underscores the necessity of contingency plans and having resources in place for unforeseen circumstances. While it is impossible to fully assess and identify all problems, challenges, and needs, these experiences highlight the importance of thorough project planning and the identification of potential challenges and issues. This careful planning is crucial for ensuring efficient resource allocation and successful project implementation.

2. Security/Safety risks

Due to the nature of the projects, it is inevitable for project team members, particularly those visiting the sites, to be exposed to various security and safety risks regardless of the type of disaster. These risks can significantly impact the efficiency of project implementation if not properly addressed during the planning stage. Resources can be wasted if team members cannot perform their tasks due to these risks. Therefore, it is crucial to thoroughly assess and plan for security and safety risks, which is actually a requirement by UNHCR. However, despite this requirement, many of the submitted accomplishment reports and key informants indicated that security and safety issues still persist as a major problem. In this regard, some organizations or government agencies have the institutional capacity to access high-risk areas more effectively, making them more efficient in addressing these risks. As such, this capacity could also serve as a criterion for UNHCR when selecting implementing partners. One such organization is the Commission of Human Rights (CHR), as noted by one of their key informants:

"There are areas, known as red zones, where they cannot go. This is where we come in; we are usually able to access these areas. When UNHCR cannot enter dangerous areas, especially those with armed conflict, CHR can still gain access."

3. Institutional memory and monitoring and evaluation limitations

There is a notable absence of institutional memory in the form of reports and other documentation on UNHCR projects, particularly by LGUs. During the data collection and fieldwork for this evaluation study, LGUs were unable to provide any reports or documents regarding their engagements with UNHCR. Additionally, there are inconsistencies in how accomplishment reports are prepared by the implementing partner organizations. These inconsistencies include a lack of provided data, unclear performance indicators, as well as misalignment between performance indicators, targets and/or actual progress reported. For instance, some final project reports do not specify targets for their identified performance indicators. Some indicators are difficult to measure such as "extent local communities support continued presence of persons of concern" or "project lobbying and coordination." Regarding misalignment, some reports use the number of activities such as FGDs or KIs as performance indicators but the targets are defined by the number of barangays or communities where these activities are planned. Some reports also include detailed descriptions of progress while others only list the number of activities or outputs completed. These issues reflect major limitations in program monitoring and evaluation (M&E), which can affect program assessment, resource utilization, and the implementation of future programs. As such, addressing these issues may require training project partners on how to properly complete M&E report templates. Alternatively, a platform could also be developed to standardize how reports are filled out, ensuring consistency and simplifying the analysis of M&E results.

Timeliness

- **Community acceptance is a major factor behind the timeliness of project implementation.**

Community acceptance is one of the major factors that can affect the timeliness of programs and projects, as identified in the KIs. Various elements influence community acceptance. One key informant highlighted the gender of community mobilizers, noting that people are generally more hesitant to work with male mobilizers than female ones. Another informant emphasized the importance of the UNHCR's presence on the ground, especially for smaller implementing organizations. She explained that the institutional reputation of the UNHCR lends legitimacy to their efforts, enhancing acceptance by both the community and LGUs:

"UNHCR's monitoring visits are also helpful in terms of institutional support. They elevate our legitimacy. For example, we are a small, local organization implementing a project in partnership with UNHCR. So, when UNHCR visits for monitoring, it raises our legitimacy as a local organization."

Additionally, some accomplishment reports and key informants raised the issue of red or political tagging. Communities and even LGUs sometimes refused to collaborate due to allegations of supporting a terrorist group or political faction. This not only delays the implementation of programs and projects but also poses security risks to project team members on-site. These factors should be considered part of operational risks and require adequate resources and time. According to one key informant, it took them around three to five months to establish rapport and trust with the community.

- **Perceived stringency of protocols could cause implementation delays.**

Some key informants mentioned that UNHCR's stringent protocols and quality control measures often cause delays in the delivery of outputs and the conduct of activities. They noted that UNHCR can be overly technical, requiring multiple layers of clearance before giving approval. One informant even pointed out that UNHCR scrutinizes not just the content but also the color combinations, color schemes, and branding of these outputs. However, they emphasized that waiting for UNHCR's approval is not always feasible as they also need to adhere to their own timelines and schedules. Another informant highlighted that securing clearance for field visits, which are crucial for program implementation, also takes a considerable amount of time. These observations may suggest a need to review and possibly streamline the protocols, or to consider additional human resources or systems to prevent delays in program implementation. However, it is equally important to maintain necessary protocols and quality control measures to ensure the quality of services/outputs, and safety during field visits. An alternative then, rather than reducing the stringency of these measures, could be to ensure that project partners are properly briefed about these protocols during onboarding or initial meetings with UNHCR. It is also important to ensure that partners plan their timelines with enough room to accommodate the time needed for clearances and approvals, minimizing disruptions to schedules.

- **Challenges in local government coordination also impeded timely project implementation.**

Challenges in coordinating with LGUs can affect the timeliness of UNHCR, or of NGOs in general, in implementing their programs/projects. One major issue is the institutional capacity of LGUs. At times, LGUs lack adequate systems to effectively collaborate with UNHCR and its partners. Additionally, there are instances where LGUs lack crucial information about the needs and situations of IDPs, hindering their timely execution of programs/projects. Furthermore, some LGUs may also hesitate to acknowledge the presence of IDPs to protect their reputation. An interesting case was Lingig, Surigao del Sur, during Super Typhoon Pablo in 2012. This incident underscores how the efficiency of LGUs directly influences the timeliness of activities and service delivery. The FGD participants from Barangay Poblacion, Lingig, recounted issues such as spoiled or expired relief packs due to delays in distribution. A government official mentioned delays occurred because relief distribution was centralized in the municipal center of Barangay Poblacion, causing logistical challenges. Moreover, damaged roads further restricted access for barangay officials tasked with collecting relief packs from the municipality. Such issues, regardless of their cause, could have been prevented if the LGU was prepared enough.

As such, UNHCR should consider the institutional capabilities and openness of LGUs when planning and executing their programs/projects. This can mitigate delays and improve the overall efficiency of their humanitarian efforts.

7.4. EFFECTIVENESS

With regard to the effectiveness criterion, the Programme has yielded mixed outcomes. While it successfully addressed immediate needs, especially in disaster response, the evaluation revealed significant challenges. Systemic and contextual barriers hindered the overall success and sustainability. Limited stakeholder involvement and inadequate understanding of local contexts reduced the effectiveness of some initiatives, while resource constraints and data management issues affected timely and equitable delivery.

Despite these challenges, the Programme's support, especially material assistance, provided sustained benefits to IDPs and communities in some areas, extending beyond the period of displacement. Awareness-raising efforts also led to gradual improvements in stakeholder engagement. Longer-term

challenges and deeply rooted vulnerabilities within affected communities, however, continue to obstruct the achievement of durable solutions.

The following findings highlight both the Programme's strengths and areas for improvement, offering insights into what could have been done differently and how future programs can be improved.

- **Local successes demonstrate the potential of sustained stakeholder engagement and interest, yet challenges remain in urging LGUs to prioritize IDP protection beyond DRRM.**

IDPs and host communities often associate UNHCR with practical and high-quality material support, such as tents, WASH facilities, and mosquito nets, which addressed urgent community needs in past displacements. Many respondents linked the UNHCR logo to reliable support and expressed greater willingness to participate in programs carrying its endorsement. For example, in Barangay Tubig Tanah in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, UNHCR-provided tents initially intended for disaster response proved vital during the pandemic lockdowns, serving as shelters and operational bases for barangay officials. Their durability underscored the value of timely, well-designed material support.

UNHCR has also championed long-term IDP protection, advocating for the passage of the IDP Bill while strengthening local legislation and practices. The municipality of South Upi in Maguindanao del Sur exemplifies this success, having enacted an IDP protection ordinance. The municipality's commitment was driven by the buy-in for UNHCR programs, the local chief executive's experience in planning and DRRM before becoming mayor, and the municipal DRRM officer's expertise. South Upi LGU recognized the unique challenges faced by home-based IDPs and incorporated them into its programs, setting a precedent for inclusive IDP support.

In Ampatuan, Maguindanao del Sur, the MSSD acknowledged UNHCR's focus on extending IDP protection beyond providing temporary shelters. This influence led to revisions in DAFAC forms to include gender, age, and disability data, enabling more targeted responses to diverse IDP needs.

Birth registration projects also stood out in certain areas, earning positive feedback from IDPs and local officials. In Hadji Mohammad Ajul, Basilan, initial resistance from older community members without birth certificates was overcome through awareness-raising efforts. These activities, led by local officials, government staff, and CSO monitors, highlighted the importance of an official identification document for accessing government services and fostering a sense of belonging. Similarly, in Barangay Tubig Tanah, UNHCR partnered with the municipal registrar of Bongao to facilitate birth registration for Badjao tribe members and other residents, with coordination meetings ensuring a smooth implementation.

Despite these achievements, challenges persist in convincing LGUs to extend IDP protection beyond DRRM frameworks. Most LGUs focus on immediate disaster-induced displacement responses, such as camp management, but place less emphasis on supporting IDPs through recovery phases, whether returning to their original homes, integrating into host communities, or relocating elsewhere. These gaps highlight the need for a more comprehensive and sustained approach to IDP protection.

- **The limited involvement and participation of key stakeholders, particularly IDPs and partners, in certain areas and stages of the Programme hindered its overall effectiveness and long-term success.**

During the implementation of the Programme, UNHCR provided critical support to IDPs, local communities, and governments, which was generally appreciated. While there were localized

successes, IDPs and local governments expressed concerns about their insufficient involvement in the design of interventions, limiting their alignment with specific needs.

For example, in Talitay, Maguindanao del Norte, initial success with livelihood programs was short-lived due to local conditions and market challenges, which could have been addressed through better consultations during planning. Similarly, in Barangay Saniag and Barangay Salman in Ampatuan, organic farming initiatives struggled due to a lack of local input. In Zamboanga City, IDPs voiced frustration with donor meetings that often failed to address their priorities, highlighting the need for more meaningful engagement.

Conversely, Barangay Salman in Ampatuan showcased the benefits of collaboration, such as a sewing training initiative that led to a sustainable tailoring shop, providing income and practical skills during the COVID-19 lockdown. Moving forward, communities like Salman advocate for targeted support, including mental health services, climate-adapted seedling distribution, and other sustainable livelihood measures. Other recurring recommendations across sites include housing, farm animal distribution, toilets in evacuation sites, and health consultations with medications for chronic conditions.

The Programme's effectiveness hinges on engaging IDPs meaningfully in planning and implementation. Successes in Salman and Saniag demonstrate the potential of proactive stakeholder involvement, but consistent consultations and comprehensive needs assessments across all sites remain a challenge. Strengthening IDP participation and fostering local partnerships are crucial to enhancing program outcomes and supporting resilient recovery and sustainable livelihoods for displaced communities.

- **The effectiveness of the Programme was undermined by mismatched initiatives and local contexts.**

The program faced significant challenges in aligning interventions with local socioeconomic realities, cultural practices, and displacement patterns, which undermined its overall effectiveness.

In some areas, livelihood initiatives were inadequately matched to local conditions. For instance, in Talitay, gardening, duck raising, and sewing programs struggled due to extreme heat and unreliable electricity. Similarly, organic farming in Ampatuan was unsustainable due to unsuitable soil and climate conditions, impacting crop yields and the longevity of these efforts.

In contrast, a successful example, though implemented by different government agencies and NGOs, is the relocation program for IDPs in Zamboanga, where careful site selection has improved living conditions. These sites were strategically chosen to minimize disaster risks, provide access to livelihood opportunities, and ensure essential services like electricity. Housing provided by the National Housing Authority (NHA) and governmental land procurement further support sustainable resettlement, demonstrating effective integration of contextual factors into relocation planning.

Cultural and social affinities also played a crucial role in shaping displacement decisions. IDPs often sought refuge within their ethnic or tribal communities, highlighting the need for culturally-sensitive support. For example, Barangay Romangaob officials in South Upi profiled home-based IDPs who moved in with relatives, ensuring proper reporting and assistance. Similarly, Barangay Saniag in Ampatuan coordinated with neighboring Barangay Salman to support IDPs who chose to remain with their tribal group. These efforts demonstrate the importance of respecting cultural ties while ensuring that displaced populations receive the necessary support. However, tracing self-relocated IDPs

remains a challenge, underscoring the need for joint profiling activities to track movements and ensure equitable assistance.

Cultural practices also led to health and sanitation challenges in evacuation sites. In Barangay Tubig Tanah, children from the Badjao community continued open defecation practices despite the presence of functional comfort rooms, reflecting deeply ingrained habits. Such behaviors exacerbate strained sanitation systems in temporary shelters. Addressing these issues requires culturally sensitive approaches that balance respect for local practices with the promotion of improved hygiene standards through education and infrastructure adaptations.

Learning from these experiences, future programs can benefit from tailored interventions, cultural understanding, and coordinated profiling efforts. These learnings are essential to improving the Programme's impact and sustainability, ensuring that displaced populations receive relevant and effective support.

- **Unmet urgent needs and resource constraints of LGUs limited program outcomes.**

Several IDP needs and UNHCR standards were not met by LGUs, primarily due to resource constraints and fiscal limitations of local governments.

Housing, identified by IDPs as their most urgent need, remains largely unaddressed. While housing is outside UNHCR's direct mandate, the organization can advocate for IDPs, urging local governments to prioritize housing as part of broader advocacy efforts. Many IDPs stressed that housing needs outweigh other forms of support. Displacement from armed conflicts and natural disasters has left many without secure homes, with many residing in disaster-prone areas where their homes lack resilience to recurring calamities.

Barangay officials in Saniag recalled a housing program that built 25 homes for disaster-affected households. While the program aimed to assist the poorest residents impacted by disasters such as typhoons and armed conflicts, it was insufficient. According to IDPs who were interviewed, the program catered more to the broader impoverished community rather than specifically to IDPs. These observations underscore the need for targeted interventions that prioritize the most vulnerable.

In addition to housing, the LGUs' management of IDP camps often falls short of UNHCR's standards. Inadequate school infrastructure and unpartitioned evacuation centers hinder effective evacuation management. While LGUs acknowledge the importance of UNHCR guidelines, they face resource limitations in meeting them. For instance, Zamboanga City's DRRM Office noted that UNHCR-prescribed standards for floor area, toilets, clean water, and healthcare facilities often exceed local capacities, despite their importance for IDP well-being.

Despite these challenges, LGUs allocate funds for immediate relief, ensuring timely support for IDPs before national or international aid arrives. However, local efforts remain insufficient to meet the comprehensive standards needed for effective IDP care, underscoring the need for increased funding and collaboration from national and international agencies.

- **Aid distribution and IDP management practices in LGUs did not consistently consider differences in gender and household composition, due to inadequate IDP profiling.**

Aid distribution has been based on a per-family model, which often overlooks household size and gender composition, leading to inequitable support. Larger families, in particular, receive inadequate

aid compared to smaller ones. To address this, aid allocation should consider household size and other specific needs, ensuring equitable distribution.

Planning and DRRM officers interviewed described that during disaster responses, the immediate focus is on essentials like food, water, and shelter. However, the specific needs of men, women, children, and PWDs are often only addressed after the initial response phase. Relief packages coming from donor organizations, with contents for women and children such as hygiene kits, are typically provided later, highlighting the gap in inclusive disaster planning.

As a practice in LGUs, evacuation centers generally organize families together, but this approach may neglect individual safety and privacy needs, particularly for women and children. While security measures such as military or barangay presence help, they cannot replace the need for gender-sensitive arrangements. In Ampatuan, for example, inadequate facilities forced IDPs to bathe in the river, compromising women's privacy and safety, despite the absence of reported violence. In addition, although most evacuation centers provide separate male and female toilets, they lack child-friendly spaces and breastfeeding corners, which exacerbates vulnerability, particularly for women and children.

Inconsistent data gathering has affected the fairness of aid distribution. Variations in data quality between barangay and municipal offices sometimes lead to misallocation of support, as broader data fails to reflect the specific needs of individual households. For example, during a storm surge in Barangay Tubig Tanah, the barangay initially reported 200 damaged houses, detailing the extent of damage, whether partial or complete. A subsequent verification reduced this number to 173, while the MSSD reported over 400 damaged houses. The barangay's more detailed data, which accounted for the extent of the damage, would have ensured a fairer distribution of aid.

- **In some cases, IDPs perceive unequal treatment while host communities resent the support provided to IDPs.**

Following the Zamboanga Siege in Zamboanga City, concerns about preferential treatment in resource allocation and support were widespread. Initially, aid distribution disparities favored original residents over newly resettled IDPs. It was only under new barangay leadership that efforts toward equitable treatment began to mitigate biases and ensure fair access to resources for all IDPs.

In Barangay Saniag, the host community occasionally expresses resentment toward relief goods provided to IDPs, since the barangay hosts not only its own displaced residents but also those from neighboring Barangay Salman. To resolve this, barangay officials clarify to residents that relief goods allocated for IDPs are specifically intended for Barangay Salman residents, facilitated either through their own barangay government or higher-level LGU and government agencies. They ensure that relief goods for Barangay Saniag have a separate distribution schedule. When Barangay Salman provides relief goods or financial assistance to their displaced residents in Barangay Saniag, they coordinate closely with Barangay Saniag officials to ensure effective distribution and prevent misunderstandings within the host community.

- **The Zamboanga Siege showed inadequate preparedness for large-scale and prolonged displacement events.**

The Zamboanga Siege revealed significant shortcomings in the protection and management of IDPs. Despite years of experience in DRRM, both LGUs and supporting organizations, including UNHCR, struggled to effectively manage the displacement caused by the siege. Issues such as the occurrence

of prostitution in evacuation tents and prolonged housing problems underscore the lack of preparedness and effective implementation of safety and protection guidelines and measures.

The lack of close monitoring led to the prevalence of prostitution, including exploitation of minors. The subsequent transfer of IDPs to schools improved the situation, but the initial oversight underscores the critical need for stringent protection measures and supervision in evacuation sites to prevent exploitation.

- **Persistent vulnerabilities and systemic issues have prevented durable solutions.**

Displacement for victims of calamities often becomes a recurring cycle due to persistent vulnerabilities. In localities and communities that are vulnerable to disaster-induced displacement, residents often return to their homes after each disaster only to be displaced again when the next calamity strikes. The same is true for communities with a long history of conflicts and retaliatory violence between clans, where displacement becomes a recurring cycle fueled by unresolved tensions. In addition, in some barangays, essential structures like the barangay hall and covered court, which serve as evacuation centers, are located perilously close to shorelines making them unsafe during storm surges.

Deeply rooted issues lead to a cycle of displacement. Upon returning to their original residences, IDPs often face deeply entrenched socioeconomic issues such as poverty, lack of livelihood opportunities, and high unemployment rates, which remain unresolved and hinder meaningful improvements in their lives. Recurring events like disasters, clan conflicts, and armed hostilities perpetuate this cycle, pushing IDPs repeatedly into inadequate living conditions. While the UNHCR and other organizations provide essential programs, the government must focus on sustainable livelihood interventions, economic empowerment, and addressing root causes of displacement to effectively break this cycle.

7.5. SUSTAINABILITY

Before the intervention of the UNHCR and its Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao was implemented, the problem of internal displacement and forcibly displaced individuals as part of the vulnerable groups was generally not visible in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of government programs. The main question on sustainability is whether the focus on IDP protection and solutions was sustained by the duty-bearers, particularly the government agencies, after the UNHCR Programme in Mindanao concluded. This section discusses key observations, factors, and recommendations on the sustainability of the Mindanao Programme in terms of its design, implementation, and results.

- **The IDP Protection and Solutions Programme was designed in a way that promotes the sustainability of the program outcomes.**

First, it must be highlighted that the UNHCR's results framework integrates sustainability as a key element in its design (*see Table 9*). The alignment of the IDP Programme to three of four impact areas—namely (a) attaining favorable protection environments, (b) empowering communities and achieving gender equality, and (c) securing solutions, and their corresponding outcomes and outputs—ensures that, at least by design, with or without the UNHCR's presence, protection strategies and durable solutions will be institutionalized and sustained in Mindanao.

Table 9. UNHCR Results-Based Framework, Highlighting the IDP-Relevant Outcomes and Outputs

	Impact Area	IDP-Relevant Outcomes	Outputs
1	Attaining favorable protection environments (IA1: <i>Protect</i>)	National and regional IDP protection laws are enacted (OA3: <i>Policy/Law</i>)	Advocacy and technical support for the crafting and passage of an IDP Protection Bill provided
2	Realizing rights in safe environments (IA2: <i>Assist</i>)	Ensure the centrality of protection in all phases of humanitarian response (OA8: <i>Well-being</i>)	Functional protection coordination mechanism supported Protection monitoring documentation, referral, and advocacy activities conducted Persons with heightened risks are identified and provided with support to address basic needs
3	Empowering communities and achieving Gender equality (IA3: <i>Empower</i>)	Peace-promoting, conflict-sensitive, and community-based protection mechanisms strengthened (OA7: <i>Community</i>)	Community empowerment and peaceful co-existence projects implemented Community-based protection monitoring networks supported
4	Securing solutions (IA4: <i>Solve</i>)	Civil registration and civil status documentation strengthened (OA1: <i>Access/Doc</i>) National capacity for IDP protection, assistance, and solutions strengthened (OA3: <i>Policy/Law</i>)	Issuance of civil status documentation by national institutions supported Ensure the implementation of the Protection Strategy for Mindanao of the Humanitarian Country Team Comprehensive solutions strategy developed Capacity development in the areas of protection, information management, and emergency preparedness and response supported

In addition, by design, the UNHCR's strategy of providing direct support to IDPs only when needed and as a means of last resort shows the priority given to longer-term and more sustainable solutions without neglecting the needed short-term humanitarian interventions in its role as a partner of the government.

- **Inherent challenges to sustainability lie on the side of the duty-bearers.**

Despite the clear integration of sustainability in the design of the program and notwithstanding the implementation of the sustainability mechanisms, there are inherent challenges to sustainability that are beyond the control of the UNHCR. First is the very nature of the problem of forced displacement and the sociopolitical environment in the country. Forced displacement in the context of the Philippines, especially in the Mindanao area, can be considered a wicked problem as some of its causes are rooted in deep-seated sociopolitical challenges that the country and the region are facing. There is a glaring gap in the governance capacity of state actors to address the continuing volatility of the security situation in the region despite the ongoing peace process, the persistent poverty and marginalization among many sectors in the region, among other development challenges, as well as cultural, historical, and natural causes of disasters that cause forced displacement.

These challenges further reduce the governance capacity of the state actors, creating a vicious cycle where the root causes of forced displacement remain unaddressed. Such a situation will prevent the achievement of longer-term impacts as envisioned by the UNHCR in its results framework including the attainment of favorable protection environments, community empowerment, and durable solutions.

Second are organizational challenges faced by government agencies at the national and local levels that prevent them from retaining the knowledge and technology transferred by the UNHCR. As mentioned by several agencies interviewed for this evaluation, limited resources prevent them from performing regular functions related to IDP monitoring and protection. Gaps in the knowledge and information management capacity of both national and local government agencies also serve as a hindrance in institutionalizing and utilizing the technical knowledge and skills that UNHCR provided in its capacity development and technical support activities. The gaps in knowledge management are evident when the knowledge and skills are not retained in the agencies when the individuals who received the training leave. The institutional memory is not retained, and this is a major challenge, especially in LGUs where there is a fast turnover of personnel.

The following highlights how the design was implemented in the four areas of sustainability. Good practices and gaps remain in the strategies and actual sustainment of outcomes of the Programme.

Social Sustainability

- **LGUs are educated and empowered to implement IDP protection initiatives at the community level.**

The UNHCR's engagement in Mindanao has contributed significantly to the social sustainability of IDP protection and solutions. By aligning its IDP program with the key impact areas—attaining favorable protection environments, empowering communities, and achieving gender equality—the UNHCR ensures that these goals are embedded in the local context. This integration supports the social empowerment of displaced populations and fosters long-term community resilience.

The enactment of the proposed IDP protection bills at the national and BARMM regional governments would have guaranteed the sustainment of the outcomes of the Programme in Mindanao. It would have mandated relevant government agencies to allocate financial resources for their IDP-related programs

and serve as a basis for the creation of relevant units and/or positions that will fulfill IDP-related functions. Nonetheless, while the legislature's and the BARMM Parliament's support was not sufficient to get the bills passed even until after the closing of the Mindanao Programme, the UNHCR's advocacy and provision of technical support to relevant agencies seem sufficient at the very least to get the duty-bearers from the executive branch on board the need for a rights-based policy framework for the protection of IDPs in the country.

Notwithstanding the absence of the IDP Protection Law, UNHCR's advocacy and technical support helped to at least ensure that duty-bearers will sustain some of their own programs that started because of UNHCR's engagement with the agencies. A strategy that proved to be effective and sustainable was the advocacy towards the IDP protection policy at the LGU level. Through advocacy and partnerships, IDP protection policies have been institutionalized in several municipalities, such as South Upi in Maguindanao Del Sur, which adopted an IDP protection ordinance. This ordinance incorporates a human rights-based approach, establishing committees and mandating consultations with IDPs and stakeholders, further enhancing the social inclusion of displaced communities. While South Upi is the only one that has passed an IDP protection ordinance among the municipalities covered in this evaluation, it shared that this version of the ordinance has served as a model for other LGUs. This bottom-up approach may prove to be more effective and efficient since LGUs need not wait for national or regional legislation. Further, relevant NGAs such as the CHR and NEDA have been contributing to the effort of pushing for more LGUs to pass their own IDP protection ordinance. The respondent from an agency shared:

"We get ideas from UNHCR which the local governments can adopt. We draft a document which we call a policy advisory and then we forward it to our stakeholders."

Additionally, the capacity-building efforts directed at national agencies (NGAs) and LGUs have enabled these actors to engage with IDP protection more sustainably, creating a platform for continued community empowerment. However, social sustainability faces challenges, particularly in ensuring that local governments continue to prioritize IDPs amid limited resources and personnel turnover.

- **Peaceful co-existence projects benefit not only the internally displaced families but also the host communities and their residents.**

The UNHCR's approach targets not only the displaced individuals and families but also of families and communities that host the forcibly displaced. Peaceful co-existence projects were conducted in localities where IDPs were temporarily sheltered and later integrated. The strength of such an approach is that it not only ensures that resources of the host communities will be augmented as they temporarily cater to more individuals who are from other localities but also creates a positive spill-over effect on these communities in the longer term. Basic facilities such as WASH improve the living conditions of both the IDPs and their host communities. This approach should also be mirrored by the government and LGUs. The current system allows for interlocal and intergovernmental coordination in monitoring the location of IDPs and in providing relief goods. However, support to the host communities where IDPs decide to relocate or be integrated can still be further strengthened. Affected LGUs can create operational protocols to coordinate resource sharing and allocation. Support to families who host IDPs outside of evacuation centers should also be provided. This is a major gap that was observed in the IDP programs of LGUs covered in this study. While relief goods and support were provided to the home-based IDPs, no resource augmentation or support was provided to the families hosting them.

Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability in the IDP program is closely linked to the institutionalization of IDP protection strategies and the allocation of government resources. The UNHCR's strategy of providing direct support only when absolutely necessary, as a means of last resort, demonstrates an emphasis on fostering longer-term, sustainable solutions while still addressing urgent humanitarian needs. This approach has helped integrate IDP-related interventions into existing social welfare and DRRM programs, with the DSWD and LGUs including IDP assistance in their budgets as part of the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) program. However, some of the NGAs do not have a specific and earmarked budget for IDP protection monitoring.

Furthermore, the Bangsamoro Regional Government's inclusion of social protection for IDPs in its 2023-2028 Development Plan reflects a commitment to sustaining financial support for displaced populations. Despite these efforts, challenges remain in ensuring dedicated funding for IDP protection monitoring and activities, as the allocation of resources often remains general and not specifically earmarked for IDP issues. The reliance on external support for monitoring has proven unsustainable once external funding is withdrawn.

One strategy employed by UNHCR which proved to be unsustainable is the creation of the IDP monitor within the CHR. Even while they agree on the importance and relevance of IDP monitoring to their mandate, the regional offices considered IDP monitoring as an added burden due to personnel and budgetary constraints. To address this, the UNHCR recommended the creation of an IDP monitor position and provided for the personnel salary of the IDP monitor to augment the human resources of regional CHR offices. After the closure of the UNHCR Mindanao Office, the CHR regional offices were not able to sustain the IDP monitors in the absence of any legal basis for the creation of the position. Hence, the regional offices went back to their previous practice of conducting IDP protection monitoring as a rider activity when they conducted investigations on the ground.

This highlights the need for dedicated financial resources to maintain the long-term economic sustainability of these efforts. Considering the budgeting process of Philippine government agencies, a national policy such as a budget memorandum requiring the inclusion of IDP protection and solutions-related programs in the budget of the agencies is the most efficient way to ensure that financial resources will be regularly allocated for these initiatives.

Institutional Sustainability

Institutional sustainability is a core aspect of the UNHCR's strategy in Mindanao, achieved through the integration of IDP protection practices within government structures and systems.

Some of the key NGAs have institutionalized IDP protection and solutions in their respective agencies through agency plans and documented procedures. The CHR and its regional offices in Mindanao have adopted the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and developed their own Manual on IDP Protection. Further, they are able to utilize and transfer the knowledge gained from the capacity-building efforts of UNHCR. They conduct capacity development among their investigators on durable solutions monitoring. They also developed their protection and solutions report templates, which were also based on the protection assessment report provided by UNHCR.

The OCD and the Regional Peace and Order Council in the Caraga Region have also developed their IDP protection manual. The manual provides the local agencies the proper guidance on how to react

to forced displacement caused by disasters that are not categorically within the mechanisms of the existing DRRM framework.

UNHCR's advocacy through the NEDA also institutionalized the support of regional development councils to the passage of the IDP Protection Bill in Congress through resolutions and inclusion in the executive-legislative agenda in the regional development plans.

Another is the Bangsamoro Regional Government which came out with the Bangsamoro Development Plan 2023-2028 that explicitly mentions the prospect of efficient and adequate provision of social protection to the IDPs.

These practices on institutionalization through plans and resolutions, procedures documentation, and knowledge transfer, while initiated by the agencies themselves, show that UNHCR was able to build champions within the agencies who will sustain the efforts that the program started.

These institutional developments have enhanced the capacity of government agencies to manage IDP issues effectively. Some agencies even utilize the monitoring systems introduced by UNHCR, such as those for durable solutions. However, challenges to institutional sustainability persist. A major issue is the limited capacity of agencies, particularly at the local level, to retain the knowledge and technical expertise transferred through UNHCR's capacity-building efforts. High turnover of personnel, particularly in LGUs, and gaps in knowledge management systems hinder the continuity of these efforts. Additionally, there is a lack of formal legal mandates or executive orders to fully institutionalize some of the practices introduced by UNHCR, such as IDP monitoring. The absence of clear legal frameworks and dedicated institutional support can undermine the long-term impact of these initiatives.

Another gap lies in the harmonization of the UNHCR-introduced monitoring system to existing systems and mechanisms in some agencies, particularly the DSWD, and the LGUs. As they are, many reporting and monitoring systems in the Philippine government bureaucracy are redundant and overlapping. Introducing a new system will further burden the agencies that are already inundated with the volume of information they have to collect, process, analyze, and report. Considering this, without any formal legal mandate from legislation or executive issuance, systems introduced by external organizations may not be fully appreciated and implemented by government agencies.

In addition, the interviews with NGAs and LGUs showed that a certain level of dependence on the UNHCR has been created. The UNHCR Philippines' IDP Disengagement Strategy 2022-2024 stipulates the following regarding the disengagement in the Mindanao operation:

"The corporate decision is in recognition of the principle that IDPs are the responsibility of their own government, and that UNHCR's engagement should be calibrated to encourage authorities to take responsibility. (Region Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific) emphasized that there is still the need to continue capacitating the Government, UNHCR must avoid while continuously extending its physical presence in a way that disincentivizes authorities from taking responsibility." (UNHCR, 2021, p. 7)

But the question was whether the years of UNHCR's and other humanitarian organizations' presence in Mindanao has created the unintended effect of disincentivizing the government from taking responsibility for the IDPs. When asked, almost all the respondents from the NGAs and LGUs shared that they wished for UNHCR to resume its physical office and operations in Mindanao. Further, they expressed that their knowledge and capacity on IDP protection and adoption of durable solutions are still limited.

To strengthen sustainability in its future IDP protection and solutions initiative, one approach that UNHCR can consider is to start looking at the associativeness potential of the IDP-related programs of NGAs. An example is the Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) - National Community Driven Development Program (NCDDP) of the DSWD. One of its goals is the creation of community-driven projects and programs. It has a major potential for creating community-based activities that can be replicated in the IDP areas with a co-production approach or framework. This entails looking at communities as major contributors to development activities, in collaboration with government organizations. It also requires conducting capacity-building programs to strengthen communities for development work. In this case, the partner government agencies will have to be all those involved in IDP work. By strengthening and enabling the growth and development of community associations with their community-driven/identified programs, building the resilience of the communities can be actualized, but always in collaboration with the government. This is the intrinsic meaning of co-production.

Environmental Sustainability

It is important to acknowledge that forced displacement in Mindanao is also largely affected by environmental factors such as disasters caused by natural hazards, which exacerbate vulnerabilities. The sociopolitical challenges that drive displacement—ranging from conflicts to poverty and marginalization—are compounded by environmental factors, creating a complex situation for both the displaced populations and the agencies trying to support them.

In this context, environmental sustainability is indirectly linked to the broader issue of displacement. Effective solutions for IDPs must include resilience to natural hazards and environmental risks, which are a critical part of any long-term strategy. The UNHCR Programme in Mindanao partly addressed this. However, without addressing the root environmental causes of displacement—such as climate change and disaster preparedness—economic, social, and institutional sustainability will be limited in the long run.

8. CONCLUSION

The UNHCR Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao demonstrated relevance and adaptability in addressing IDP challenges in Mindanao. By emphasizing capacity building, data-driven approaches, and community integration, UNHCR significantly contributed to the protection and recovery of IDPs. It delivered impactful short-term results and laid the groundwork for sustainable practices.

However, systemic barriers, resource constraints, and the absence of a national IDP protection framework hindered broader success. Sustaining the Programme's gains will require ongoing support for national and local capacities, legislative advocacy, and alignment of regional and national systems. Continued capacity building, targeted local interventions, and legislative advocacy are essential for the long-term resilience and protection of IDPs in the region.

8.1. ACTUAL OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES VERSUS PROGRAM GOALS

The Programme achieved several key outcomes aligned with its goals:

- **Capacity building:** Conducted 120 trainings for 1,896 individuals and strengthened local systems, including developing the iPART tool, enhancing the MSSD data capabilities.

- **Legislative advocacy:** Advocated for the crafting and passing of IDP protection laws at both national and regional levels. While no national law was passed, local ordinances were adopted in some municipalities.
- **Service delivery:** Distributed 212,000 core relief items (CRIs) to 424,120 vulnerable IDPs affected by conflicts and disasters. Quick impact projects reached 650,000 individuals.
- **Community support:** Promoted peaceful coexistence through projects and advocated for the inclusion of IDPs in social protection frameworks like the Davao Regional Development Plan.

The Programme notably enhanced local authorities' capacities:

- **Institutional strengthening:** Supported BARMM and LGUs through technical assistance, capacity building, and advocacy. For example, the iPART tool enabled evidence-based responses to displacement.
- **Enhanced coordination:** Strengthened protection monitoring, documentation, and coordination mechanisms across stakeholders.
- **Persistent gaps:** Despite these gains, systemic issues like resource constraints, high staff turnover, and limited local expertise continued to hinder the consistent application of the improved systems. Some LGUs lacked readiness or willingness to engage, exacerbating delays.

Advocating for National Regional IDP Protection Laws

The Programme made significant strides in advocating for IDP protection and supporting the groundwork for legal frameworks, yet it fell short of securing the enactment of key laws. Progress toward establishing a favorable protection environment was evident through enhanced institutional capacities and collaborative mechanisms. However, ongoing efforts are required to address legal gaps, build on existing systems, and ensure the sustainability of these initiatives.

1. *Advocacy and technical support for the crafting and passage of an IDP protection bill*

The Programme effectively provided advocacy and technical support for the crafting and promotion of the IDP Protection Bill. This was demonstrated through efforts to integrate IDP issues into regional and national policies, such as the IDP Manual for Caraga and the inclusion of the IDP bill in development plans for various regions, including BARMM. These initiatives aligned with broader policy advocacy efforts and emphasized the importance of creating a dedicated legal framework to support IDPs.

2. *National and regional IDP protection laws*

Although progress was made in developing IDP protection frameworks, national and regional IDP protection laws were not fully enacted by the conclusion of the program. Advocacy for the IDP Protection Bill continued to be a significant focus, with sustained efforts to bring attention to its importance among policymakers and regional bodies.

3. *Favorable IDP protection environments*

The Programme contributed to creating more favorable IDP protection environments by strengthening local capacities, improving data management systems, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. These efforts enhanced the ability of BARMM and other regions to respond to displacement, although challenges in harmonizing practices and systems between regional and local governments persisted. Despite these advancements, achieving a

fully favorable environment requires continued technical support, capacity building, and sustained advocacy efforts.

Making Protection Central in All Phases of Humanitarian Response by Philippine Government Actors

UNHCR made significant progress in embedding protection as a central aspect of humanitarian responses by Philippine government actors. It provided critical support to coordination mechanisms, conducted robust protection monitoring and advocacy, and emphasized the identification and support of vulnerable populations. While the groundwork for a protection-centered approach was laid, challenges in institutionalizing and sustaining these practices within government systems indicate that continued efforts are necessary to ensure long-term success.

1. *Support to functional protection coordination mechanisms by the Philippine government*

UNHCR provided substantial support to establish and enhance functional protection coordination mechanisms within the Philippine government. This included technical assistance to regional entities like BARMM's MSSD and capacity-building initiatives for LGUs. Platforms like the Mindanao Virtual Protection Coordination Platform (MVPCP) and training sessions equipped government actors with tools and frameworks to incorporate protection principles into their planning and response mechanisms. However, the integration of these mechanisms at all levels was hindered by persistent gaps in coordination between regional and local governments, as well as by transitioning structures in BARMM.

2. *Conduct of protection monitoring, documentation, referral, and advocacy activities*

UNHCR conducted extensive protection monitoring, documentation, and advocacy activities that directly supported Philippine government actors. The development of tools such as the iPART platform enabled systematic tracking of IDP needs and protection risks, while advocacy for legal frameworks like the IDP Protection Bill highlighted gaps in national legislation. These activities significantly informed and reinforced government responses to displacement. Despite these efforts, the sustainability and full adoption of monitoring systems by government entities remain areas for improvement.

3. *Identification and support to persons with heightened risks of forced displacement*

UNHCR played a critical role in identifying and supporting individuals and groups at heightened risk of forced displacement, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and indigenous communities. By promoting tailored interventions, including child-friendly spaces, gender-sensitive facilities, and integration of vulnerability indicators into data systems, UNHCR enhanced the government actors' capacity to prioritize the needs of vulnerable groups. Additionally, technical guidance and advocacy ensured that government-led responses included a focus on heightened-risk populations. However, the long-term institutionalization of these practices within government systems requires ongoing commitment and support.

Strengthening Peace-Promoting, Conflict-Sensitive, and Community-Based Protection Mechanisms

UNHCR achieved considerable success in strengthening peace-promoting, conflict-sensitive, and community-based protection mechanisms. Its community empowerment projects had a broad reach and significant impact, while its support for protection monitoring networks empowered local actors to address displacement-related challenges. Despite these achievements, fully integrating these initiatives into local and regional governance frameworks will require ongoing efforts and resources.

1. *Quality and reach of community empowerment and peaceful co-existence projects*

UNHCR implemented numerous community empowerment and peaceful co-existence projects that were widely regarded as effective and contextually relevant. These initiatives, such as the QIPs, targeted developmental deficiencies in displacement-affected areas to avoid tensions between IDPs and host communities. Examples include infrastructure improvements, livelihood programs, and social cohesion initiatives that address immediate community needs while promoting harmony.

These projects were designed in consultation with local communities, ensuring high relevance and alignment with their priorities. The diverse scope of the projects occasionally made it challenging to perceive a unified strategy. Despite this initial perception, the host communities' acceptance of IDPs was fostered through these projects. LGUs were also encouraged to prioritize protection and durable solutions. The projects' reach extended across 17 provinces in Mindanao, benefitting over 650,000 individuals, underscoring their significant impact.

2. *Support for community-based protection monitoring networks*

UNHCR actively supported community-based protection monitoring networks, enhancing local capacities to identify and address protection risks. This included training local actors, including LGU representatives, CSOs, and community leaders, in protection principles and monitoring techniques. The development and use of tools like the iPART platform further enabled communities to document and respond to displacement incidents effectively. These networks played a critical role in collecting data, identifying at-risk individuals, and advocating for appropriate responses. UNHCR's technical expertise and consistent engagement ensured that these networks were equipped to function as integral components of broader protection strategies. Nonetheless, wider adoption of these networks by government and local actors is needed.

Strengthening Civil Registration and Civil Status Documentation

UNHCR succeeded in providing comprehensive support to strengthen civil registration and civil status documentation in the Philippines. Its efforts not only enhanced institutional capacities but also addressed systemic and logistical barriers faced by IDPs and vulnerable groups. While progress was evident in improved documentation processes and advocacy success, sustained efforts by the Philippine government will be necessary to institutionalize these gains and ensure universal civil registration access in the long term.

UNHCR provided substantial support to national and regional institutions to improve civil registration and civil status documentation processes, particularly in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and other displacement-affected areas. Key forms of support included:

- **Capacity building and technical assistance:** UNHCR conducted training sessions and workshops for government personnel, focusing on the importance of civil registration, documentation processes, and data management. These activities improved the capacity of agencies such as BARMM's MSSD and local civil registrars to handle IDP-related documentation.
- **Advocacy campaigns:** UNHCR advocated for the prioritization of birth registration and the broader civil registration agenda within local and regional governance plans. It emphasized the importance of documentation as a protection mechanism for IDPs and vulnerable populations, ensuring their legal identity and access to essential services.
- **Innovative tools and platforms:** The introduction of iPART platform supported better tracking and management of civil registration data for displaced individuals. UNHCR's technical support also extended to improving existing data collection and processing systems.
- **Community-based interventions:** To address gaps in registration, UNHCR facilitated mobile registration drives and outreach campaigns in remote and conflict-affected areas. These initiatives directly assisted IDPs and other vulnerable groups in obtaining necessary civil status documents, such as birth certificates, thereby reducing barriers to accessing legal protections and services.

Strengthening the Philippines' National Capacity for IDP Protection, Assistance, and Solutions

UNHCR provided significant contributions in strengthening the Philippines' national capacity for IDP protection, assistance, and solutions by supporting the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Protection Strategy for Mindanao, developing a comprehensive solutions framework, and implementing robust capacity-building initiatives. These efforts significantly improved the ability of government and local actors to address displacement challenges. However, the sustainability of these improvements depends on continued government commitment and resource allocation to maintain and institutionalize the systems and practices established through UNHCR's support.

1. *Implementation of the HCT Protection Strategy for Mindanao*

UNHCR significantly contributed to the implementation of the HCT Protection Strategy for Mindanao. This was achieved through its leadership and coordination roles within the Mindanao Humanitarian Team and by aligning its programs with the strategic priorities of the HCT. Activities included enhancing protection monitoring and advocacy, as well as ensuring the integration of protection principles into humanitarian responses. These efforts supported the overall goal of addressing displacement-related protection gaps across Mindanao.

2. *Development of a comprehensive solutions strategy*

UNHCR succeeded in developing a comprehensive solutions strategy to address protracted and recurrent displacement in Mindanao. This strategy emphasized durable solutions, including voluntary return, local integration, and resettlement. It involved multistakeholder consultations to ensure that solutions were context-sensitive and tailored to the needs of IDPs, host communities, and local governments. Key components of the strategy included advocating for policies supporting durable solutions, community-based protection mechanisms, and integrating displacement issues into regional development plans.

3. *Support for capacity development in protection, information management, and emergency preparedness and response*

UNHCR provided extensive support for capacity building in several critical areas:

- **Protection:** UNHCR conducted numerous training sessions for government officials, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders on IDP protection principles, legal frameworks, and rights-based approaches. These efforts aimed to institutionalize a culture of protection across agencies.
- **Information management:** The agency introduced and supported tools that improved data collection, tracking, and reporting of displacement-related needs and responses. This system enhanced evidence-based decision-making for IDP protection and solutions.
- **Emergency preparedness and response:** Training and technical support were provided to strengthen local disaster risk reduction and response capacities. These included workshops on contingency planning and emergency response coordination, with a focus on integrating protection considerations into disaster management.

8.2. ENABLING AND HINDERING FACTORS AFFECTING ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

Factors Contributing to the Programme's Success

UNHCR's legitimacy and technical expertise boosted stakeholder engagement. This is evident in the wide acceptance and trust of the national and local stakeholders in the value of UNHCR's recommendations and initiatives on protection work. This, in turn, enhanced local ownership, evident in models like South Upi's IDP Protection Ordinance, which incorporated a human rights-based approach.

The integration of IDPs' needs into broader social protection frameworks also enhanced the Programme's relevance and sustainability. The program aligned well with the needs of displaced populations and the priorities of government frameworks. Initiatives such as advocacy for the IDP bill, integration of IDP concerns into social protection plans, and disaster response coordination ensured the alignment with regional and national priorities.

Collaborative efforts ensured some systems (e.g., iPART) remained functional post-UNHCR exit. Partnerships with LGUs, NGOs, and regional organizations fostered effective coordination. These collaborations also strengthened community-based protection mechanisms, reinforced state responsibilities, and facilitated durable solutions for IDPs.

The Programme demonstrated adaptability to sociopolitical and environmental contexts, such as during the Marawi Siege and Typhoon Sendong. This responsiveness included tailored interventions like the development of the IDP Manual in Caraga and the establishment of child-friendly spaces in evacuation centers.

UNHCR's ability to mobilize and distribute core relief items effectively filled gaps in government resources. Additionally, the program's inclusivity ensured marginalized groups, such as home-based IDPs and cultural communities, were considered in planning and implementation.

Challenges in Program Implementation

The success of the Programme depends on its ability to effectively address stakeholder needs, policies, and priorities. The evaluation revealed significant challenges in implementing IDP protection measures. Among the challenges in the implementation of component projects include establishing community dynamics through trust-building. It took months for implementers to get the trust and confidence of the communities due to political tagging and social stigma. Operational rigor also posed a drawback, with UNHCR's stringent protocols sometimes delaying fieldwork and partner coordination. Finally, institutional limitations, specifically inconsistent reporting and lack of institutional memory

hindered long-term impact assessment and local ownership, particularly at the barangay level, where local officials often lack the necessary capacity and expertise. Sustainability relied heavily on local government capacity and commitment, which varied widely. This gap underscores the importance of targeted capacity-building initiatives to equip local authorities with the skills and knowledge needed to protect and support IDPs adequately.

The Programme's push for legislation highlights the challenges of achieving legislative outcomes in complex sociopolitical environments such as the Philippines. While UNHCR's advocacy for policy changes is well-received, more substantial national-level commitment and coordination are necessary for effective policy implementation. Without national legislation, local measures were inconsistent and lacked a unified framework for IDP protection. Persistent sociopolitical challenges (e.g., poverty, conflict) and environmental factors limited the durability of interventions. Continued technical support and a focused approach to addressing the complex needs of IDPs are essential for realizing long-term, sustainable solutions. Concerns about potential reputational damage due to the perception that UNHCR is leaving and returning highlight the need for better communication and a clear exit strategy. Transparent and consistent messaging about the reasons for program changes and the methods for sustaining impact can help mitigate negative perceptions and ensure continued stakeholder support.

8.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Several key areas require a detailed examination to explore further the success of UNHCR's Protection and Solutions Programme for IDPs in Mindanao. *Reviewing the IDP Manual* would provide insights into its effectiveness in guiding local DRRM offices and incorporating UNHCR's input. Gathering data directly from IDPs would shed light on their experiences and the program's impact on their rights and protection.

Analyzing the program's long-term impact is crucial for assessing sustainability and the contribution to durable solutions beyond its formal closure. This includes *evaluating the effectiveness of advocacy efforts for the IDP bill and the program's role in influencing regional development plans*. Understanding the methods and effectiveness of UNHCR's data collection practices would highlight the program's contribution to data-driven responses to displacement and disaster preparedness.

Examining the *long-term impact of capacity-building initiatives on partner agencies*, like the OCD, is essential to determine the program's lasting effect on strengthening disaster response capabilities. Assessing the integration of UNHCR's initiatives within local government structures, particularly in regional development councils, would provide insights into the program's potential for influencing policy change and sustaining its achievements.

Addressing challenges, such as the *need for a centralized displacement reporting system and the complexities of program transitions*, would offer a comprehensive view of the program's adaptability. Evaluating the effectiveness of UNHCR's training and tools in improving LGUs' capacity to manage IDP needs, especially in conflict-affected areas, would underscore the program's relevance and long-term impact on regional stability and resilience.

Below are some recommendations and insights, highlighting the lessons learned and gaps in the program design and implementation, for UNHCR's consideration for its hand-over strategy while it also sustains some of the component initiatives of the Programme:

1. Clarifying UNHCR's coordination structure in Mindanao, including the location and contact information for the coordinating unit, is essential for enhancing operational transparency and efficiency.
2. Improving communication by issuing meeting notices well in advance and establishing direct

communication channels with agencies like NEDA can foster better collaboration and coordination.

3. Exploring the potential for utilizing government programs and services to address IDP needs should be a priority. This includes collaborating with agencies like DSWD and leveraging existing government resources to enhance support for IDPs, particularly in light of the program's closure.
4. Collaborating with government agencies to improve data collection and make IDPs more statistically visible is critical. Developing a centralized, consolidated displacement reporting system would ensure effective data management and information sharing.
5. Clearly articulating plans and strategies for IDP protection, especially in light of the Mindanao Office's closure, will help maintain stakeholder trust and ensure continuity of support.
6. It is crucial to prioritize advocacy at the national level to secure policy changes that institutionalize IDP protection. This includes pushing for the passage of the IDP bill and ensuring robust legal frameworks are in place.
7. Further collaboration with LGUs through joint training initiatives, technical assistance, and working groups can foster a more sustainable and integrated approach to IDP protection. This includes addressing gaps in services for home-based IDPs and providing necessary resources like hygiene kits and sleeping kits.
8. Expanding capacity-building efforts to include NGAs and LGUs in BARMM will enhance these entities' ability to address IDP needs effectively. Training on camp management, technical support for durable solutions, and data management are essential.
9. Considering cultural nuances when assisting IDPs, particularly engaging with communities like the Badjao, is vital for ensuring culturally-sensitive and effective interventions.
10. Exploring and sharing UNHCR's unique capabilities and networks in inaccessible areas can enhance the effectiveness of IDP support. This involves improving data sharing through joint platforms or agreements.
11. Communicating a clear exit strategy and providing ongoing support mechanisms will prevent reputational damage and ensure a smooth transition. Continued technical support to the BARMM government, particularly regarding durable solutions and data management, is essential.
12. Adopting a co-production framework by strengthening the “associativeness” with grassroots or community-based projects and alignment with existing governance frameworks of future protection and solutions initiatives will boost replicability, efficiency, and sustainability.

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