



Gender and Livelihoods among Internally Displaced Persons in Mindanao, Philippines

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**Gender and Livelihoods among Internally Displaced
Persons in Mindanao, Philippines**

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Front Cover Photograph: UNHCR Community Services Assistant Racmah Abdula gives training on their rights to a group of indigenous women displaced by the long-running conflict on Mindanao Island, Philippines, July 2011 (courtesy of R/ Arnold, UNHCR).

Back Cover Photographs:

Left: Engineers work on the construction of a hanging footbridge as part of an ASEAN disaster response exercise. In the life-threatening event of a typhoon or a tsunami, getting residents from one side of the river to the other is critical in order to ensure their safety and reliable access to medical care, Sapang Bato, Philippines, May 8, 2009 (courtesy of Claire McGeechan, AusAID).

Right: IDP community in Cotabato (courtesy of Rufa Guiam).

Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	i
Executive Summary.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Methodology and specific locales of the case study in Mindanao.....	1
Origins, scope and characteristics of internal displacement in Mindanao	3
Characteristics of recent displacement in Mindanao	4
Accessing livelihoods: Gender dimensions, challenges and IDP agency.....	6
Displaced communities’ attempts to regain or access new livelihood options.....	7
Livelihoods and power relations between men and women in displacement.....	10
Internally displaced woman shows community leadership in action.....	12
The role of host communities in livelihood strategies for IDPs.....	12
On issues and challenges related to protracted displacement.....	13
On the links between livelihoods, durable solutions, peacebuilding and agency of internally displaced women.....	15
On sustainable livelihoods and solutions to the conflict and to displacement.....	15
On women’s agency in peacebuilding.....	16
On the role of livelihoods in empowering internally displaced women.....	17
Conclusions.....	18
A. Gender dimensions of conflict situations and the deprivation of livelihoods.....	18
B. Restoring or accessing new livelihoods and helping address gender equity.....	20
C. Internally displaced women as agents for positive change.....	20
D. Livelihood strategies and the rights and well-being of internally displaced women, their families and communities.....	21
E. The potential contributions of innovative livelihood initiatives to peace- building, the reconstruction process and the pursuit of durable solutions to displacement.....	22
Recommendations.....	23
A. Research and analysis.....	23
B. Policies and programs.....	24
Annex.....	25
References.....	26

Acronyms

ACT for Peace	Action for Conflict Transformation – for Peace
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
CoP	Culture of Peace
ERCM	Early Recovery program for Central Mindanao
FPA	Final Peace Agreement
CFSI	Community Family Services International
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
GPH	Government of the Philippines
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MOA – AD	Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain
MTB	<i>Mindanao Tulong Bakwet</i> (Mindanao Help for Evacuees)
NGO	Non-government Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPAPP	Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process
PMO	Programme Management Office
SWS	Social Weather Station
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

Internal displacement has confronted Mindanao populations for more than five decades, dating back to the height of the so-called “Muslim-Christian conflict” in the early to mid-1970s. Displaced communities encounter a range of vulnerabilities as they face a whole new milieu in which their familiar systems of social protection, including livelihoods, are gone or fragmented due to forced evacuation.

This study on gender and livelihoods among IDPs is based on fieldwork conducted from October to December 2012, in three areas in Central and Southern Mindanao (Notre Dame Village, Cotabato City; Datu Piang, Maguindanao Province; and Sitio Pananag, Barangay Lumasal, Maasim, Sarangani Province). Fieldwork data gathering techniques included key informant interviews with government officials and civil society leaders, as well as focus group discussions with “protracted” IDPs in the three areas. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What are the gender dimensions of the deprivations of livelihoods due to internal displacement?
- How can efforts to restore or access new livelihoods help advance gender equity and support internally displaced women as agents of positive change at different levels (from local to the national levels)?
- Are there particular livelihood strategies that advance the rights and well-being of internally displaced women, their families, and communities? In what ways?
- What are the potential contributions of innovative livelihood initiatives to peace building, the reconstruction process and the pursuit of durable solutions to displacement?

Key findings and recommendations

The key findings of this study are presented below, followed by recommendations for research, policies and programs.

A. The gender dimensions of conflict and the deprivation of livelihoods in displacement

War affects men and women differently, and this is perhaps most glaringly felt in the loss of livelihoods. Since men are the primary combatants in war, they are the first to disappear from the public sphere they used to move in as entrepreneurs, skilled workers, and merchants. Conscription into rebel or government groups or as parties to clan war forces men to abandon their economic responsibilities toward their families. In Mindanao, such a scenario has paved the way for women to assume leading economic roles, pushing them to navigate public spaces denied to them before conflict. But, assuming leading economic or even political roles does not automatically make displaced women empowered given that they are still expected to perform traditional nurturing roles. Instead, assuming breadwinning roles left by their husbands can often be a source of strain.

Young women and children in displaced communities are also vulnerable to human trafficking. Conflict-prone areas, such as the provinces in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, are

major sources of trafficked victims. Predatory traffickers, including relatives of the women and children, look at them as a “resource” for capital generation, through recruitment to work abroad as domestic helpers or worse, as sex slaves.

For displaced men, the loss of livelihoods is often equated with their loss of face, as it renders them “powerless” to still be the breadwinners and economic leaders in their families.

B. Restoring or accessing new livelihoods and helping to address gender equity

Displaced men and women alike in the three areas studied tried to find ways and means to survive, either through attempts to restore former livelihoods or by accessing new ones. However, restoring former livelihoods is often not a viable option, as the enabling environment was absent in the place of evacuation. While opportunities to access new livelihoods in the place of displacement were essential to the displaced community’s survival, gender equity, particularly in terms of decision making and control of resources in relation to livelihoods, was still rare among IDPs.

C. Internally displaced women as agents for positive change

Studies have shown that women have played crucial roles in the settlement of petty community conflicts, as well as in working toward more sustainable processes of conflict transformation, especially in the Mindanao context. When women manage cooperatives or lead local committees, such endeavors have greater chances of success than those run by men. In evacuation centers, internally displaced women are also the first to seek out assistance from various outside sources while the men typically “command” the women on what to do. Displaced women are also usually among the first who organize the community into different committees to manage the evacuation camp, especially with regards to the distribution of relief goods.

D. Livelihood strategies and the rights and well-being of internally displaced women

Key informants underlined that access to viable livelihoods enhances the enabling environment for peace. However, this depends on many factors, such as the types of livelihoods supported by donor agencies. Access to livelihoods is not a guarantee that durable solutions to displacement will be achieved and that gender gaps will be reduced, as men may wrest control of the livelihood opportunities and gains associated with them. Providing increased incomes for women may not necessarily mean they have full control of the financial gains because the men may still invoke their proprietary rights over the women. As shown in other conflict contexts, men may resent women’s access to resources and may subject women to domestic violence.

E. The potential contributions of innovative livelihood initiatives to peacebuilding

Skills trainings for displaced women need to include job opportunities in relevant industries. This can be a problem, however, when there are no industries willing or able to absorb the trainees after they finish. Displaced communities are often in areas where there are limited investment opportunities for private sector groups. There is a need, therefore, to create a demand side to this

equation, by encouraging more private sector investments near areas affected by forced migration due to armed conflict.

Creating a demand for trainees among displaced populations could be an innovative approach, as it not only paves the way for gainful employment after training, but it can also set the stage for enhanced confidence building, thus increasing levels of social capital among diverse communities in Mindanao. Investments require high levels of trust among partners. This is not only meaningful but also challenging when investors belong to ethno-linguistic groups that used to have high levels of distrust or prejudice against Muslims or indigenous peoples.

Recommendations

Based on the above key findings, this study makes the following set of recommendations:

A. Research and analysis

- Further in-depth studies are needed on the links between peacebuilding initiatives and poverty reduction, especially in conflict-prone communities. These can inform policy makers and government decision makers alike to enable communities to become more resilient in the face of chronic displacement.
- Feasibility studies on innovative village-level savings and loans programs need to be explored, especially those schemes that follow Islamic guidelines on investments where both clients and investors share profits and losses equally.
- More studies on security measures for displaced women and girls are needed, starting with the investigation of sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence, and human rights violations of displaced women. These studies should include incidences of human trafficking in displaced communities.
- A thorough review should be conducted of policies on the recruitment of female workers, especially those coming from vulnerable, displaced communities, with a view to providing stronger social protection for women recruited for dangerous or potentially exploitative work.
- More thorough gender analyses need to be conducted among displaced communities to accurately determine the varying needs and capacities of displaced men and women.

B. Policies and Programs

- Economic empowerment programs for women should have built-in guidelines for the protection of women, and local legislation or ordinances should be formulated to institutionalize these guidelines.
- Based on gender analyses, assistance programs should be appropriately tailored with a view toward reducing gender inequalities in displacement contexts.
- Donor agencies should insist on the mainstreaming of gender into the entire project cycle as a requirement for accessing funding and project implementation, to ensure that projects address the different needs and capacities of women, men, children and other potentially vulnerable internally displaced persons.

- IDPs living outside of evacuation centers should be included in databases of displaced communities.
- A thorough, gender-sensitive assessment of IDPs' needs and capacities should be conducted in order to enable the design of relevant and sustainable socio-economic programs to help them regain or establish sustainable livelihoods.
- Local ordinances on the status of displaced persons should be revisited in host communities where IDPs have decided to stay more or less permanently. Ordinances on “informal dwellers” need to be revisited as they are incompatible with the rights of IDPs to free movement, and hinder their abilities to establish sustainable livelihoods.

Introduction

“How can we think of livelihoods when we are always running for our lives?”

– A displaced woman from Midsayap, Cotabato, 2010
(Dwyer and Cagoco-Guiam, 2012)

Internal displacement has confronted Mindanao populations for more than five decades now, dating back to the height of the so-called “Muslim-Christian” conflict¹ in the early to the mid-1970s. Community discussions with former evacuees reveal that an average individual in conflict-affected areas has experienced three or more episodes of forced evacuation, all of which are triggered by open and violent armed confrontation between armed groups.²

Displaced communities encounter a range of vulnerabilities and insecurities as they face a whole new milieu where their old, familiar systems of social protection, like livelihoods, are gone or fragmented due to forced evacuation. Regaining access to traditional livelihoods is often impossible in situations of forced migration. This is the situation among Mindanao communities facing intermittent violent conflicts; many of them have settled more or less “permanently” in areas that are quite far removed from their original sources of livelihoods.

Various studies of refugee livelihoods, and in particular, the gender dimensions of access to sustainable livelihoods have emerged in the last two decades. These have attracted the attention of humanitarian agencies, and raised related questions about the challenges facing internally displaced communities. However, studies on appropriate interventions addressing the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPS) for sustainable livelihoods have been more limited, especially in tackling issues related to how women and girls are affected by the sudden lack or deprivation of livelihoods.

This report is part of a three-country study that aims to increase understanding of livelihoods and the rights and wellbeing of internally displaced communities, with a particular focus on internally displaced women and girls. The three case studies were conducted to help inform governments and concerned humanitarian agencies on supporting appropriate and sustainable livelihoods for internally displaced communities. The two other cases are Côte d’Ivoire and Azerbaijan.

¹ This is a disputed term, although it has been used popularly to refer to the war in Mindanao from the early to mid-1970s. The debate on the term stems from the impression that Christians and Muslims are actively at war with each other in Mindanao, where, in many places, they live and work peacefully together most of the time. The term has been used to refer to the actors in the first series of violent confrontations between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF, a group composed of Muslims in Mindanao) and the Christian-dominated army of the government of the Philippines.

² Older members of “semi-permanently” displaced communities in Cotabato City, for example, narrated that they have experienced evacuation since the time of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines (1945), in the mid-1960s (MNLF-GRP war), during the so-called “all out war” ordered by former President Estrada against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2000, and more recently, in the violent clashes that resulted from the botching of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) in August, 2008.

Methodology and specific locales of the case study in Mindanao

From October to December 2012, a small team of researchers conducted fieldwork to gather data relating to the main research questions for this case study. Fieldwork was done in three locations in central and southern Mindanao: in Notre Dame Village, Cotabato City, Barangay Damabalas; Datu Piang, Maguindanao; and in Sitio Pananag, Barangay Lumasal, Maasim, Sarangani Province.³ Field data gathering techniques included key informant interviews and focus group discussions among evacuee⁴ communities as well as among settlements of protracted IDPs (in Cotabato City and in Sitio Pananag, Lumasal, Maasim, Sarangani Province).⁵ A few follow up phone interviews were also conducted to clarify some of the data gathered by the team.

One hundred two individuals participated as respondents in the case study, either as key informants or focus group discussion participants. 14 key informant interviews were conducted with representatives of UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and advocates. 45 percent of participants in the key informant interviews and focus group discussions were women (46) and 55 percent were men (56).

The 91 participants in the three focus group discussions are all members of internally displaced communities, many of whom have lived for extended periods in the villages where the research team members visited them. Two groups (Cotabato City and Datu Piang, Maguindanao) belong to the Maguindanaon ethno-linguistic group (Muslims), and one group in Sitio Pananag, Lumasal, Maasim, belongs to the T'boli ethno-linguistic group, who are indigenous to South Cotabato province.

The case study team gathered data from the three different internally displaced communities to answer the following main research questions:

- 1) What are the gender dimensions of the deprivations of livelihoods due to internal displacement?
- 2) How can efforts to restore or access new livelihoods help advance gender equity and support internally displaced women as agents of positive change at different levels (from the local to the national levels)?
- 3) Are there particular livelihood strategies that advance the rights and well being of internally displaced women, their families and communities? In what ways?
- 4) What are the potential contributions of innovative livelihood initiatives to peace building, the reconstruction process and the pursuit of durable solutions to displacement?

³ In Philippine government bureaucracy, the *barangay* is the smallest political unit, and is headed by a Barangay Chairperson (formerly called Barangay Captain). The *barangay* government is composed of the *barangay* chair and a council of at least eight members, and they govern a small territory composed of *sitio* or *purok* (small communities that do not have a legal identity as far as Philippine government bureaucracy is concerned).

⁴ In this paper, the term “evacuee” is used interchangeably with “IDP.”

⁵ For a map showing displacement due to armed conflict, generalized violence, clan feuds and disasters in Mindano as of May 2013, see Annex I.

Origins, scope and characteristics of internal displacement in Mindanao

Over the last four decades, violent, intermittent conflicts in Mindanao have caused the death of at least 120,000 people and displaced an estimated one million people.⁶ Such conservative estimates of the extent of damage wrought by Mindanao's conflicts do not include the so-called "collateral damage" and other adverse consequences of war. These include the destruction of systems and mechanisms of social protection, the entrenchment of a "culture of war," extreme pain and suffering, and other unquantifiable emotional and psychological effects among Mindanao's culturally diverse peoples.

The second largest island of the Philippines, Mindanao is home to more than 20 million people of diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds. Of this number, about 5 million are Muslims, who belong to at least 13 ethno-linguistic groups.⁷

Mindanao's history is characterized by spurts of armed conflict that date back to when the Spaniards tried to establish strongholds in the territories of the Muslim sultans in mainland Mindanao and in the island provinces of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-tawi. If these earliest accounts of violent conflicts are to be considered in reckoning Mindanao's experience with armed conflict, then it can rightly be said that the Muslim struggle toward self-determination is centuries old.⁸ One prominent scholar, Aijaz Ahmad, refers to the conflicts in Mindanao as a "400-Year War" (Ahmad, 1982).

The contemporary conflicts that have wrought widespread devastation among Mindanao peoples date back to the rise of the rebel group the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), in the early 1970s. The MNLF was organized as a reaction to the massacre of 28 Muslim Tausug youth off Corregidor Island, in northern Luzon. Philippine military forces killed the young Muslim recruits allegedly upon orders of former President Ferdinand Marcos. The massacre of the young Tausug army recruits exposed to the national media President Marcos' plans, codenamed "Jabidah," to send a group of young guerillas to Sabah as a prelude to a planned military takeover of the island. There were supposed to be 29 young recruits, but one of them – Jibin Arula – reportedly escaped by jumping off the coast of Corregidor. Arula became a "state witness" of the Senate committee that conducted hearings on operation Jabidah. Now known as the "Jabidah Massacre," the killing of the young Tausugs went down in contemporary Philippine history as the trigger

⁶ Lara, Francisco J Jr. and Phil Champain. 2009. *Inclusive Peace in Muslim Mindanao: Revisiting the Dynamics of Conflict and Exclusion*. London: International Alert., and Schiavo-Campo, Salvatore and Mary Judd. 2005. "The Mindanao Conflict in the Philippines: Roots, Causes and Potential Peace Dividend." *Social Development Papers*. Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

⁷ These groups are indigenous to different areas in Mindanao but have become Islamized since the middle of the 12th century, when Islam spread from Malaya to the Sulu archipelago and then to Central Mindanao. Muslim populations in Mindanao include the following: Meranaw "people of the lake" from Lanao provinces; Maguindanaon "people of the flooded plains" of the Cotabato river valley; Tausug "people of the current" from the Sulu archipelago; Yakan of Basilan island; Sama of Tawi-tawi; Sama Dilaut/Badjaw of the Sulu archipelago; Iranun, who live in the boundaries of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao Province; Kalagan of Davao provinces; Kolibugan of the Zamboanga Peninsula; Jama Mapun of Cagayan de Sulu islands; Palawani and Molbog of Palawan island; and Sangil of Sarangani province.

⁸ See Ahmad. Aijaz. The 400-Year War: Moro Struggle in the Philippines. 1982. Vol. 82. *Southeast Asia Chronicle*. California, USA: Southeast Asia Resource Center; Hurley, Victor, *Swish of the Kris, the Story of the Moros*. Authorized and Enhanced edition, 2010. This book was originally published in 1936.

that pushed several young Muslim intellectuals and radicals, led by Nur Misuari, a political science lecturer at the University of the Philippines, to organize the MNLF.⁹

From the early to mid-1970s, the Philippine armed forces engaged the forces of the MNLF in fierce firefights in many parts of Mindanao, notably, the island province of Sulu and in mainland Mindanao provinces like Cotabato, Lanao provinces, Maguindanao, and Sultan Kudarat. Violent confrontations continued to haunt many Mindanao cities and towns from 1975 to 1982, leading to massive destruction of lives and property, but mostly engendering “ghettos” of displaced populations. According to a World Bank study on the costs of the so-called Mindanao conflict, more than two million people have been displaced by the war since the 1970s, in addition to the estimated 120,000 deaths and uncounted numbers of wounded and disabled (Schiavo-Campo and Judd, 2005:5).

The signing of a Final Peace Agreement (FPA) by the MNLF and the Philippine Government, through former President Fidel V. Ramos on September 2, 1996 did not put an end to the war in Mindanao. Nothing was finally settled in this Final Peace Agreement. It only provided a temporary respite – perhaps even a detour – along the long road to peace in Mindanao.¹⁰ As early as a year after the agreement was signed, a breakaway faction of the MNLF – the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) – made its presence felt by declaring its violent opposition to the 1996 peace pact. Since 1998, the MILF has largely dominated Mindanao’s peace and conflict “regime.” On the one hand, it has engaged the Philippine government in violent clashes, but at the same time it has also opened lines of communication which have served to continue peace negotiations. As of this writing, the peace panels of both parties are still “hammering out” the main topics for inclusion in a comprehensive peace pact that is expected to be signed before the end of 2013.

Characteristics of recent displacement in Mindanao

Armed hostilities in Mindanao resumed after the botching of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) in August 2008. The MOA-AD was considered a landmark in the long and tedious peace negotiations between the MILF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GPH), which have been meeting for peace negotiations since 1998. The peace panels of both the Philippine government and the MILF have signed the MOA-AD, and it was only the signature of the president at that time, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, that was needed to

⁹ The Philippines’ claim to Sabah is based on historical accounts of its being part of the Sulu Sultanate, acquired through a grant made by the Sultan of Brunei to the Sulu Sultan. At the time when Marcos mulled on “Oplan Jabidah,” he was also engaged in diplomatic talks with Malaysia and Indonesia to organize a three-country alliance called the Maphilindo (Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia). It is perceived widely that the Malaysian Prime Minister at that time, and the governor of the state of Sabah were both offended by this “snake-in-the-grass” act of Marcos. In retaliation, the Malaysian government, through the Sabah governor, allowed the MNLF to conduct their military training on the west coast of Sabah, with support from Libya. British mercenaries allegedly provided the military training to the first batch of MNLF trainees, often referred to as the “First 90” (referring to the number of trainees). For more details on how this incident triggered the 1970-1975 phase of the so-called Mindanao Conflict, See Cagoco-Guam, Rufa. *Child Soldiers of Central and Western Mindanao: A Rapid Appraisal*. 2002. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

¹⁰ See, for example, Mara Stankovitch and Andy Carl’s introductory article in *Compromising on Autonomy: Mindanao in Transition*, Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives. 1999. London: Conciliation Resources.

pave the way for a final comprehensive peace pact. Negotiators and peace activists from both panels were optimistic that the decades of arduous negotiations would soon end with the signing of the MOA-AD. Unfortunately, however, some “hawks” in the Philippine legislature questioned the constitutionality of the MOA-AD and elevated the case to the Supreme Court. On 8 August 2008, the judges of the Supreme Court of the Philippines declared that the MOA-AD was unconstitutional. Immediately after this announcement, renegade commanders from the MILF launched a series of fiery assaults on various communities in Central Mindanao – from Maguindanao to Lanao del Sur, and even in parts of the island provinces of Sulu and Basilan.

In Maasim, Sarangani province, armed confrontations between the MILF and the Philippine Army’s 73rd Infantry battalion resulted to the displacement of sixty-four T’boli families from four “sitios” of Barangay Pananag, namely Markohan, Lafah, and Sinalap, all of the municipality of Maasim. In addition to the hostilities associated with the botching of the MOA-AD, several political families engaged in pockets of “clan wars,” popularly referred to as “*rido*,” especially among Meranaw families in the Lanao provinces.

Intense fighting between the MILF and GPH forces plus the pocket wars among feuding families in Central Mindanao resulted to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in several provinces of Mindanao, affecting in particular Muslim-majority provinces like Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur. The Philippines’ Department of Social Welfare and Development reported in May 2009 that at least 750,000 were displaced as a consequence of the violent encounters associated with both the botching of the MOA-AD and of clan wars during that time.¹¹ In 2012, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre put the estimated number of internally displaced persons in Mindanao at 178,000. A September 2012 assessment showed that at least 33 municipalities in Mindanao identified more than 500,000 people who were still in need of humanitarian assistance.¹²

From 2010 to 2011, the estimates of displaced populations in Mindanao dropped sharply, with the return of several thousand people to their places of origins or their homes. For instance, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao’s Program Management Office (PMO) of the Early Recovery in Central Mindanao Program (ERCM) funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reported that only about 5,134 families remained in 54 evacuation centers in Maguindanao as of May, 2011.¹³

Although a significant number of displaced persons have returned to their places of origin or to their homes, the process of their reintegration is largely undocumented or not reported at all. According to a report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

¹¹ See the “Philippines: Internal Displacement Profile—IDP Population Figures,” section of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website: www.internal-displacement.org

¹² See the country report on the Philippines in the Global Overview 2012. People Internally displaced by conflict and violence. 2013. Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and the Norwegian Refugee Council, p. 71.

¹³ These figures are corroborated by data from a report made by IRIN, on 16 May 2011. The majority of those who were displaced due to the 2008 hostilities are considered by both the government and IDMC as having returned, although the provinces of North Cotabato, Lanao del Sur and Sultan Kudarat still hosted thousands of persons displaced by clan wars triggered by land disputes and political and economic rivalries (IDMC report, *ibid*: 3). Also from personal communication with Mr. Suharto Abas, ERCM Project Manager, in an interview on November 15, 2012.

in Cotabato City, a total of 350,000 returnees and home-based former IDPs were still in need of humanitarian assistance by 2011.¹⁴ But aside from the populations displaced due to fighting, heavy rains and flooding in 2011 newly displaced 700,000 people in the Philippines. For all these populations, their main source of livelihood, which is farming, has been severely affected. According to OCHA and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), if the number of displaced due to fighting and flooding had been combined, those that needed assistance from humanitarian agencies would have reached the 700,000 mark.¹⁵

Accessing livelihoods: Gender dimensions, challenges and IDP agency

Livelihoods and livelihood opportunities are among the first casualties when communities are forced to escape from violent conflict. For the estimated three million Mindanaoans who have been displaced from their homes over the past decade, violence has pushed already impoverished communities to even more sordid levels of poverty, as much of their meager “portable wealth,” such as draft animals and jewelry items, are also lost during the frantic moments of escaping physical harm.¹⁶ Or, these may be sold cheaply to opportunistic merchants, given that fleeing families often no longer have the time or opportunity to leverage a more rationalized pricing of such valuable items.

For families displaced due to war and other forms of clan violence, the loss of access to their farms is a major deprivation that goes beyond incomes and livelihoods. In discussions among a small community of protracted IDPs in Notre Dame Village, Cotabato City, participants pointed out that the loss of their farms was, more significantly, a loss in their identity as farmers and owners of agricultural lands. Such loss triggered psychosomatic ills that eventually led to depression. In Cotabato City, there are only small patches of rice fields they can farm on, and they needed to pay for the use of the lands for farming. Between 2002 and 2012, five family members in this small community died, which they believe was largely due to illnesses that resulted from having to worry a lot about their failure to recover their farmlands.

The IDPs interviewed in Cotabato City for this study come from one *barangay* in Datu Piang, one of the oldest towns in the province of Maguindanao. Collectively, more than ten households in this *barangay* own more than four hectares of farmlands, planted with a variety of root crops, corn, coconuts and mango trees. The households belong to one “clan” (siblings and cousins with their respective nuclear families) who have lived peacefully together as farmer-owners. After a hotly contested local election in 2003, the local warlord, through his armed goons, harassed the owners of the farmlands. In that election, the son of the local warlord lost to a candidate whose main supporters came from the same *barangay* as the farmer-owners of the four-hectare farmland. The warlord blamed the village chief (or *barangay* chairperson) for his loss in the local elections, as the *barangay* chief allegedly campaigned for another candidate and his team.

¹⁴ OCHA Briefing Pack included in the 2012 Mindanao Contingency Plan for Humanitarian Response to Conflict and Natural Disasters in Mindanao, prepared by the members of the Humanitarian Operations Team in Mindanao 2012. Also from key informant interview with Ms. Millendi Malang, emergency and humanitarian affairs officer, OCHA – Cotabato City Office, December 19, 2013, Cotabato City.

¹⁵ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *Global Estimates 2012: People displaced by disasters*, May 2013, p. 22

¹⁶ Dwyer, Leslie and Rufa Cagoco-Guiam. 2012. *Gender and Conflict in Mindanao*. Makati City: The Asia Foundation, p. 11.

Consequently, the farmers in that *barangay* became the inevitable collateral damage of the political feud between the two powerful local political families in their hometown. The clan members decided they had to move out of their ancestral land en masse sometime in 2003, or face daily harassment from the warlord's armed goons. They decided on the former. Their destination was Cotabato City, specifically the edge of a housing subdivision called Notre Dame Village. The IDPs were drawn to this area because it is the home of their relatives.

Displaced communities' attempts to regain or access new livelihood options

The prevailing discourse in contexts of displacement due to armed conflict points to notions of helplessness or extreme deprivation among internally displaced populations, especially women and children. However, there is now considerable evidence that underscores the resilience of many displaced communities, not only in rebuilding their lives after violent conflict, but also in asserting their agency to cope while in complex emergencies (Morais and Ahmad, 2010). Even without external aid, IDPs especially from agricultural communities "hustle" to survive (Longley, et al 2004: pp. 21 onwards; Machiavello, 2004).

Field research findings from the three areas covered in the study resonate with this view. IDPs do have a hard time making ends meet in evacuation centers or in temporary shelters after displacement, but they manage to survive, using a range of coping strategies, even those associated with informal, even with "shadow" economies.¹⁷ For example, young evacuee women who have been recruited for work abroad by unscrupulous local middlemen have ended up in brothels in Singapore and Thailand.¹⁸ Key informants pointed out one young evacuee woman's experiences in Singapore, where she was transferred from one cruise ship to another at the "request" of clients, mostly Singaporean Chinese businessmen. The parents of the young woman explained to the program officers of an international humanitarian NGO what happened. The latter advised the parents to have the case of their daughter documented so they can report it to human rights groups. But to the surprise of the international humanitarian officers, the parents of the trafficked girl said, "It is okay, ma'am, she has already sent us some badly needed money to get on with our lives after having been displaced." This example demonstrates the tensions some displaced families face between being concerned about the welfare of their children who are exposed to the dangers of trafficking, and their dependency on the money their children can earn in the "shadow" economy – a burden that typically falls on young women.

"Conflict-prone areas like the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) are major sources of trafficked victims," claims Maria Elena Clariza, a human rights lawyer based in Davao City, Mindanao, when interviewed for a study on human trafficking in 2007. According to Clariza, some "...parents have done the deplorable act of selling their own children [in]to prostitution, to make ends meet."¹⁹ Several years later, in 2011, the same observation was noted

¹⁷ "Shadow" economies include livelihoods that are transacted beyond the purview or control of state mechanisms, sometimes referred to as "illegal" or "illicit" economies (see Lara and Schoofs, 2013. *Out of the Shadows: Violent Conflict and the Real Economy of Mindanao*. Quezon City: International Alert. See especially the introductory chapters that explain at length the use of the term "shadow" economies.

¹⁸ From the group interview with two program officers and their staff of the Community Family Services International, Cotabato main office, Rosary Heights, Cotabato City, 6 December 2012.

¹⁹ Maria Elena Clariza, "Human Trafficking in Mindanao," Unpublished Master's Thesis presented to the University of Hawaii Faculty of Asian Studies, December 2007, p. 23.

in a study on the Trafficking of Women and Children in Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi, conducted by the Ateneo de Manila Human Rights Center. In this more recent study, one of the primary factors for the proliferation of human trafficking in the ARMM provinces is the push “to stay away from war,” and to avoid having to suffer the consequences of displacement. Unscrupulous traffickers take advantage of the vulnerabilities of IDP families and offer them prospects of huge salaries and promises of generous perks for their daughters or even young children. These “activities” continue, despite the Philippine Congress’ passing of RA 9208, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003. In December 2012, a prominent woman senator in the Philippines warned the public on national television that human traffickers are on the prowl in devastated areas, like those affected by the Tropical Storm Bopha (Pablo) in the Philippines. Typhoon Pablo struck several provinces in Mindanao in early December 2012. Senator Loren Legarda, who chairs the Philippine Senate Committee on anti-human trafficking said, “We are now seeing the intersecting forces of natural hazards and human greed, and how they threaten those who are already marginalized. Human trafficking, and the related problems of the illegal sex trade, forced labor, and other forms of slavery, is a complex web...”²⁰

Whether or not they become involved in trafficking, IDP families sometimes attempt to find means to make both ends meet through selling their portable assets or seeking employment as wage laborers. They may, for example, pawn their gold jewelry or sell their farm animals. In some cases, families agree to pool their precious items either to sell or temporarily pawn them to get a much higher price. Or they can combine this strategy with becoming wage laborers for construction firms in urban areas in Cotabato City. This is the livelihood strategy adopted by the “semi-permanent” community of protracted IDPs from Datu Piang, Maguindanao whose members belong to one “clan” (families of siblings and cousins staying closely with one another) in a small enclave within a subdivision called Notre Dame Village. The siblings and their cousins have relatives outside the city, who have access to non-farm livelihoods, and have become a kind of “social welfare” mechanism for them. The local Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) does not list them as “IDPs” entitled to relief and other forms of emergency assistance.

When IDPs decide as a group or as a blood-related community to act for their own welfare, they sometimes manage to replicate their former livelihood activities in their places of origin, albeit on a much smaller scale. For example, the farmers from Datu Piang who had to leave their farms due to intense harassment from armed groups were able to establish a small common fund to start a collective farm near where they live. The common fund was needed to guarantee rent to the owner of the small, irrigated rice land and to ensure their respective families’ food security during the months prior to harvest. Still, this attempt to recover their livelihoods did not prevent some family members from feeling desperate, and, at times, despondent that they had to give up a substantial source of wealth in their place of origin. In Datu Piang, women members of the family take care of the “light” tasks in farming, e.g. planting and weeding, while the men do the plowing, harvesting and threshing, and transporting of the crops from the farm to their house.

²⁰ Lucia F. Brono, “Human Traffickers on the prowl in Mindanao’s devastated communities,” Philippine Information Agency (PIA) website. Posted on December 21, 2012. From this link: <http://www.pia.gov.ph/news/index.php?article=221356066267>

Becoming wage earners for seasonal construction work became the primary option for clan members who had very limited formal education. Other male members decided to enlist in the military forces, using their parents' and uncles' claims of being former cadres of the MNLF rebel group as a "qualification." A "reintegration" program for former MNLF rebels was part of the negotiated Final Peace Agreement signed between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) on September 2, 1996. Under this program, former MNLF regulars can apply for training to be "absorbed" as "special forces" under the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Many of the MNLF regulars who fought in the 1970s GRP-MNLF war are already beyond the qualified age for entry; it was therefore proposed that old MNLF regulars will recommend their descendants (sons) or relatives (nephews) to enlist as AFP trainees. Three adult males from the IDP families from Datu Piang have become soldiers under this program. Unfortunately, no female members of MNLF families had become soldiers under this program at the time of writing.²¹

Attempting to recover lost sources of livelihoods can be disappointing for IDP communities, as indigenous T'boli IDPs in Sitio Pananag, Barangay Lumasal, Maasim, Sarangani Province have realized. About sixty households from various T'boli communities in South Cotabato settled there after fleeing from a series of violent outbreaks of armed confrontation between the AFP and the Moro Islamic Liberation (MILF) rebels in the latter part of 2008, starting in the month of August. After having fled to different places in September of 2008, sixty T'boli families decided to remain in a two-hectare mountainous area in Sitio Pananag. The property belongs to a local businessman who decided to allow the sixty evacuee displaced families to settle there for free until they return to their places of origin or are relocated elsewhere.

At that time, UNDP's ACT for PEACE program was still in place. One social worker thought of requesting agricultural livelihood support for the sixty households from the program. After a short assessment, the UN program granted the community an agricultural livelihood "package" consisting of some livestock, such as pigs and goats, and corn seeds. In addition, a water pump was provided for the community. Four years later, only the water pump remains operational. During the discussions with the IDP community in Pananag, participants noted that the pigs and the goats distributed to them did not survive in the craggy mountains in the place of their displacement. Corn farming was also a challenge, as the farmers in the IDP community were not provided financial support for food and other needs before harvest. As much as the community wanted to have a semblance of the farm-based livelihoods they used to have, they were unable to sustain it in their place of displacement. Currently, community members have pursued other livelihood options in nearby Maasim *poblacion*,²² for example as drivers of the "*habal-habal*" motorbikes used as commuter vehicles from Pananag to the *Poblacion* (for the men), seasonal unskilled laborers (*stevedores* in the public market in the *poblacion*),²³ or wage earners for

²¹ At present, women are allowed to enroll in the formerly exclusively male Philippine Military Academy as well as in the country's police academies. The current Philippine National Police Law stipulates that at least 10 percent of local PNP recruits should be female. However, female police officers are always assigned to desk jobs. Women have also been drafted as soldiers in the Philippine Armed Forces but they are discouraged from doing combat duty, which prevents them from getting promoted as quickly as their male counterparts. See, for example, *Armed Violence in Mindanao: Militias and Private Armies*, 2011. Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and Institute of Bangsamoro Studies. The author contributed to the gender sections (sections 1 to 3) of this book.

²² In the Philippines, the term '*poblacion*' refers to a town center or capital.

²³ *Poblacion* is the town center in which the municipal hall is usually located.

seasonal construction work in General Santos City. Young, internally displaced women have also sought wage-based work either as domestic help or canning factory workers in General Santos City.

Despite their coping strategies and the agency they manifest in accessing alternative livelihoods, IDP communities are still highly vulnerable, not only from income deprivation, but more importantly from lack of access to basic social services, particularly health and education. IDP parents in Sitio Pananag, for example decry the difficulties they still face especially with their health and the education of their children. Legally, basic education in the Philippines, consisting of elementary and high school (secondary) education, is provided for free to school-aged children. But this law is observed more in the breach than in performance. Poor families, such as IDP families in the three field areas of this study, are not able to send their children to public schools because of the costs of school contributions demanded of them when they enroll their children. Aggravating this problem is the location of the schools, which are usually in the *poblacion* or in areas that are not necessarily easily accessible on foot by displaced children. Internally displaced children need to bring food to school, and have enough money for transportation. This is a burden for displaced families who lack adequate resources and sustainable livelihoods.

Notwithstanding displaced persons' abilities to "hustle" to survive, they are still a vulnerable group, and definitely need assistance. However, they need assistance that enhances their coping skills and mechanisms, to make them more resilient in the face of ongoing conflict. Such assistance can entail capacity building or livelihood skills training, along with seed capital for a small livelihood project relevant to their skills and based on the community resources that are available.

Livelihoods and power relations between men and women in displacement

Beyond the physical destruction of properties and other material wealth, armed conflict also wreaks havoc on social relationships in a community, particularly on formal and informal social protection systems. Families are separated after outbreaks of violence, meaning that those who would otherwise provide social protection are unable to play this vital role. War makes everyone equal in terms of experiencing deprivation and impoverishment. In war, women and girls are often equally exposed to "...environments where social services on which they once depended become degraded or disappear altogether..." (Agbalajobi, 2010: 234).

Power relations between men and women in a community may shift in situations of armed conflict, although the shift could either work for or against women's empowerment (Dwyer and Cagoco-Guiam, 2012). In Cotabato City, Pananag and in Datu Piang, women have played major roles in evacuation center management, assisting in the rationalized distribution of relief, and performing other community roles bridging the evacuee or IDP community with external donors and support groups. In Datu Piang, several women have already shown their leadership qualities during relief distribution in the evacuation centers, in seeing to it that relief operations become orderly. Yet, they feel frustrated that their leadership potential is not recognized.

Displaced women may experience additional stress as they often assume the primary role of providing for the food and other economic needs of their families once their families have fled their homes. As they face difficult challenges in looking for opportunities for viable livelihoods, women have to navigate unfamiliar terrain and spaces formerly occupied by men. Among communities experiencing clan conflicts, male relatives of the protagonists typically avoid public spaces in order to escape attacks by the enemies of their clan; consequently, they lose out on important economic opportunities, such as buying and selling dry goods in the public markets (this is a problem, for example, among Meranaw men). In this situation, women assume the economic leadership roles left void by the men, and face undue pressure to be earning enough to provide for everybody, including “demobilized” men.²⁴

In conflict contexts, non-combatant men may also experience a “new” source of stress when they are unable to provide for the economic needs of their families. Traditional gender roles expect them to perform such tasks.²⁵ Thus, if they cannot fulfill this very important role, they feel helpless, and in some instances, desperate. The IDP men in Pananag expressed how greatly affected they were by their forced displacement. “Our roles as male members of the community and as fathers to our children were greatly affected,” said one of the participants in the focus group discussion in Pananag. “There is this great feeling of losing face, as losing our livestock and farming opportunities also meant we are no longer able to fulfill our duties as the breadwinners of our families...it is like losing part of our masculinity...”²⁶

Such expressions of “losing face” due to loss of livelihoods and opportunities for livelihoods contrast starkly with how women in the three areas perceive their situation of displacement. Instead of lamenting the loss of livelihoods and of opportunities related to having sustainable incomes, IDP women have instead turned to accepting and facing head-on the displaced situation as another hurdle in their impoverished lives. While some women expressed how hard it is for them because they have to look after the children at the same time as they serve as the primary breadwinners for their families, they have nevertheless become more community-oriented in the context of their displacement. They not only begin to serve as managers of their own households but they have also become active in evacuation camp management and as leaders in IDP communities. This is true for example of Virgie, the president of the community organization in Sitio Pananag. Before displacement, she described herself as a typical T’boli housewife who was quite subservient to her husband (see Box on next page).

²⁴ Dwyer, Leslie and Rufa Cagoco-Guiam. 2012. *Gender and Conflict in Mindanao*. Manila: The Asia Foundation, p. 21 onwards.

²⁵ See *Gender Approaches in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations: A Manual*, p. 5. 2002: United Nations Development Programme, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR). New York: UNDP. October.

²⁶ Proceedings of the focus group discussion among internally displaced men in Sitio Pananag, November 26, 2012.

Internally displaced woman shows community leadership in action

Virgie is a T'boli woman in her early 30s. She has given birth to six children and has recently become a grandmother (her eldest daughter got married and gave birth a few months before the focus group discussion was conducted). Virgie has assumed the role of the community leader, and has represented her community in many donor meetings, and in articulating the need for more assistance. When asked whether she had to “fight” for this role, she said it was given to her in recognition of her being one of the more “educated” members of the community.

Before she got married, she finished her high school education in a public secondary school in Marbel (the capital city of South Cotabato), courtesy of the family that engaged her as domestic help. She would have gone to college but her parents brought her back to Maasim so she could be married. At that time she was only 16 years old. She was promised to a man from the family of the bride of her brother, as part of the agreed “dowry.” She was not given the option to refuse, as all young T'boli women are expected to submit willingly to their parents' and to their older brothers' will. In marriage, a T'boli woman is also expected to be subservient to her husband.

While this female, internally displaced leader enjoys a special privilege in a way as the “de facto” community leader in Pananag, as far as emergency response or relief distribution operations are concerned, she still needs her husband's permission to continue serving this role and when she needs to travel outside Pananag to attend trainings. Virgie's experiences demonstrate how displacement can challenge typical gender roles, and lead to women taking on new livelihoods and leadership roles.

In Cotabato City, female members of an extended IDP family who have shown leadership and entrepreneurial potential enjoy a privileged status within their small community. This is reflected in the fact that they are allowed by their much younger male relatives to lead prayers. Traditionally in Muslim communities, as long as there are men in a congregation, women are never allowed to lead prayers of any kind. It is possible that this practice is more about showing respect to the older members of the family, rather than recognizing their older women relatives as legitimate prayer leaders within their community. This particular situation presents a possible theoretical “blinker”: the practice could be viewed as reflecting a liberal or progressive attitude toward women, although it is possible that potentially insidious patriarchal views could be concealed underneath a seemingly progressive stance on allowing women to lead prayers.

The role of host communities in livelihood strategies for IDPs

Host communities play a crucial role in making the lives of displaced persons less difficult. But some communities become “hosts” to IDPs not because they want to, but because they live in safe areas to which the warring parties do not have easy access. Hence, some communities are forced to accept the presence of displaced persons, which can trigger uneasy and strained relationships with the newcomers. This is especially true when the displaced populations are Muslim and the host communities are predominantly Christian.

The long history of enmity between the Christianized and Islamized populations in Mindanao dates back to colonial policies of divide and rule, i.e. in highlighting depictions of Muslims as among “the dregs of the earth,” (Cagoco-Guiam, 2000) as “savages,” or even as “blood hungry.” Such perceptions have become the bases for widespread prejudice of Christians against Muslims. These have become the underlying frames upon which the actions and decisions of local government officials are based. In a 2007/2008 national survey on Muslim-Christian relations, the Social Weather Stations (SWS), a Manila-based opinion poll group, found that there were a substantial number of Christians who held quite negative attitudes toward Muslims (32 percent).²⁷ Aside from the pressures of hosting evacuees,²⁸ some Christian host communities in Aleosan and Kidapawan, in North Cotabato have an “uneasy peace” with Muslim evacuees.²⁹

On the other hand, some host communities are known to have extended support to evacuees, in the form of allowing the latter to use lands temporarily, until such time as they are able to return to their home communities. In 2003, during the assault on Buliok complex by the Philippine military forces, several Maguindanaon Muslim families had to evacuate to nearby areas, one of which was the town center of a small town, Gen. Salipada K. Pendatun. The mayor at that time, Bai Sakina Pendatun-Bernan, offered to “lend” her land for the temporary shelter of the evacuees. According to former Mayor Pendatun-Bernan, she had to do this for her fellow Muslims who had to leave the comforts of their home to seek a safe refuge, if only temporarily.³⁰

The latter example demonstrates the potential for host and displaced communities to work together to come up with viable livelihoods, even if only for a limited time. This can be possible because there is a level of trust between members of the same faith-based groups (traditionally, Muslims have the obligation to care for their fellow Muslims. In the same vein, Christians also feel they need to be more welcoming to their fellow Christians, as they are enjoined to “love their neighbors as they love themselves.”) A shared religious faith seems to increase the support of host communities toward those who have been displaced in their area.

On issues and challenges related to protracted displacement

One of the most difficult challenges facing populations that have experienced intermittent and protracted displacement is their exposure to higher levels of violence and their increasing levels of vulnerabilities in different aspects of their lives. These are among the key findings of a random cluster survey conducted between November and December 2010 in 231 *barangays*

²⁷ Mangahas, Mahar. 2012. “Decent Attitudes toward Muslims,” in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. October 19.

²⁸ According to Ed Bell “displacement...places pressure on host families, reporting added financial costs to help provide food and support to displaced communities.” Page 5, *Violent Conflicts and Displacement in Central Mindanao. Challenges for Recovery and Development, Key Findings*. 2011. The World Food Program Philippines, and The World Bank Group. See the full report at: www.wfp.org/content/conflict-and-displacement or www.worldbank.org/philippines.

²⁹ From 2011 to 2012, the writer was the lead researcher on the project *Aid to Subnational Conflict*, supported by the Asia Foundation and the World Bank, and part of the areas she visited included Kidapawan and Aleosan. This view came from some key informants who were also beneficiaries of some poverty alleviation projects.

³⁰ See Cagoco-Guiam, Rufa. 2004. “Internally Displaced Persons as Forced Migrants: Lessons from Two Provinces in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM),” paper presented at the International Symposium toward new perspectives on forced migration in Southeast Asia, held in Jakarta, Indonesia, 25-26 November, 2004. The symposium was sponsored by the Indonesian Institute for Sciences (LIPI) in collaboration with the Refugees Studies Centre, Oxford University.; see p. 15.

across five provinces in Central Mindanao. The five provinces straddle three regions in Central and Northern Mindanao, namely mainland Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) provinces of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao; and North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat of Region XII; and Lanao del Norte of Region 10 (Bell, 2011: pp. 2-3).

This study demonstrates that households that have experienced displacement in the last decade have been frequently exposed to violence (Bell, *ibid*: 3). Household heads reported various triggers that drove them to flee their homes, and all these have exposed them to other forms of vulnerability, like economic losses, as reported by 43 percent of the 2,759 respondents. Other forms of vulnerability include loss of their homes (37 percent) and loss of cattle (21 percent).³¹

Lara and Champain (2009: 10) identify two major types of violent conflicts in Central Mindanao and in the ARMM. The first type is referred to as “separatist, ...rebellion-related, top-down,” and involves state actors (the military) versus insurgent or rebel groups, as exemplified by the clashes between the MILF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The second type is “non-separatist, bottom-up, inter- or intra-ethnic, clan, or group violence” that occurs between and among families and clans (*rido*). But whether it is of the first or second type, the fact remains that violent conflicts have become protracted in many parts of Mindanao, and these exposed already impoverished populations to more life-threatening challenges, including protracted displacement.

Displaced households face increased and often imminent danger of food insecurity. They are far from their farms; many of their farm animals have either been part of the collateral damage in the conflict or taken by marauding armed forces. But, as a 2010 World Food Programme and World Bank study shows, food assistance for displaced families may not reach them due to poor targeting by donors or worse, it may be seized by local elites or by predatory local government officials.³² When food aid is distributed, it may not be consumed as specified because of evacuee populations’ tendencies to eat fewer meals so that their food rations will last longer and IDPs can avoid having to sell their portable assets to buy food (see Guarnieri, 2003: 6).

As described earlier, men and women suffer differently in war: amongst those interviewed for this study, the men express the loss of livelihood as akin to the loss of face as the main breadwinner of their families. On the other hand, women tend to find ways to somehow “normalize” an otherwise abnormal war situation; that is, they find ways to make needed adjustments while in displacement, including assuming the breadwinning roles of their husbands.

In terms of access to other basic services, displaced populations also suffer from the lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Evacuees are often cramped in makeshift temporary shelters where there is a high possibility of sharing not only common sleeping areas but also diseases from different groups of people converging in one area. Safe drinking water is a

³¹ Bell, Ed. 2011. Violent Conflicts and Displacement in Central Mindanao. Challenges for recovery and development. – Key Findings. The World Bank Group, Philippines and the World Food Programme.

³² This was shared by the focus group discussion participants in Datu Piang just before the start of the focus group discussions with them. They were referring to reports that circulated among the evacuee community at that time that some food aid from international donors was being “hoarded” at the Mayor’s Office. The participants discussed this information in whispers, since they feared that some of their fellow participants might report this to the Mayor and he and his staff might initiate some malicious acts against them.

problem, as most evacuation centers are placed in “secure areas” that do not necessarily have potable water. These are areas that also do not have sanitary toilets, thus raising the possibilities of diseases related to poor sanitation and the lack of potable water.

On the links between livelihoods, durable solutions, peacebuilding and agency of internally displaced women

Over the years, many Muslim women who saw the horrors of the war in the 1970s have expressed the need for durable solutions to the conflicts in Mindanao, whether they involve state or non-state actors.³³ One key informant narrated that in many conferences where the history of the armed conflict in Mindanao is discussed, she and her fellow Muslim women activists would be so moved as to break down in tears. The old wounds from the war in the 1970s have not yet healed, she said, and the catharsis continues as conflicts recur in the same areas that have seen the ravages of war more than four decades ago. Both key informants and focus group discussion participants agree that there is a need for comprehensive solutions to the conflicts in Mindanao, and they believe that this can only be achieved by addressing the roots of the conflict, which are directly related to the issues of livelihoods and displacement.

Mindanao’s conflicts are rooted in the injustice and exclusion experienced by the Bangsamoro (Moro nation) since the colonial days until the post-colonial Philippine state (Lara and Champain, *ibid*: 7). Narratives on the roots of the conflict suggest that religious differences have partly shaped the conflict (Schiavo-Campo and Judd, 2005: 2), although there is wide agreement that competing interests in Mindanao’s fertile lands and rich natural resources, compounded by the refusal of the Christian-dominated Philippine state bureaucracy to recognize the distinctive identity of the Bangsamoro, also played key roles in fuelling the conflict.³⁴ A durable solution to the conflict and to the displacement situation, according to key informants and focus group discussion participants, should include a comprehensive transitional justice program which considers the historical roots of the conflict.³⁵ Such a program, informants say, should redress historical grievances of the Bangsamoro, in terms of recognizing their identity as a distinctive nationality within the Philippine nation-state and the restoration of their rights over their ancestral domain.

On sustainable livelihoods and solutions to the conflict and to displacement

For chronically displaced populations, which is the reality for many Mindanaons, transitional justice mechanisms are not enough, nor are these realistic in the present complicated bureaucratic set-up. Decades of neglect by the national government with its exclusionary policies have

³³ Excerpts from the key informant interview with ‘Mother’ Lily Mocles, the Deputy Chairperson, Katiyakap Inc., an NGO based in General Santos City whose members used to be MNLF Bangsamoro Women’s Committee officials, November 4, 2012, General Santos City.

³⁴ See for instance, Cagoco-Guiam, 2000; Lara and Champain, 2005; Santos, Soliman, Jr. *The Moro Islamic Challenge: Constitutional Rethinking for the Mindanao Peace Process*, 2001, among others.

³⁵ For a thorough discussion on transitional justice and its role in promoting “justice with dignity,” visit this link: <http://ictj.org/about/transitional-justice> (accessed March 15, 2013).

engendered a situation in which the demographic equation in Mindanao is already tipped in favor of the lowland Christian Filipino migrants of divergent ethnicities who have become the majority population – even in areas that used to be dominated by the Bangsamoro.

Thus, interventions to address historical injustices must also include sustainable livelihood strategies that are pragmatic and realistic, given the current ethnic mix in Mindanao. Another difficult challenge to address the breakdown or absence of social support systems and mechanisms of social protection during displacement and even after peace accords are signed.

Chronically displaced populations face the difficult challenge of maintaining their old forms of livelihoods, given limited access to farm lands, loss of livestock, and most especially, loss of access to their old jobs or businesses. This problem is especially significant for entrepreneurs. These challenges in turn limit displaced communities' abilities to pursue relevant livelihood opportunities (Guarnieri, 2003: 7). As disclosed by the focus group discussion participants in both Cotabato City and Pananag, they need to think of new livelihood options, given the constraints in the evacuation camps or centers that render their situation unsustainable. Such options would definitely be far removed from their previous livelihoods, and recognition of this fact can trigger disappointment and depression among the members of displaced populations. The stakes in identifying sustainable livelihood options are particularly high for women and girls, as they are at particular risk of trafficking and being forced to work in the sex trade, as discussed above.

On women's agency in peacebuilding

Around 90 percent of victims of contemporary armed conflicts are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children.³⁶ Different reports on displacement in Mindanao show similar trends, in that women dominate the IDP populations in evacuation centers. Humanitarian agencies that have provided interventions to Mindanao's IDPs in different areas also attest to this reality. Consequently, their interventions have largely targeted women in the evacuation centers, both for capacity building and for small livelihood projects.

In Pananag, Maasim, in Sarangani Province, one NGO, the SPECTRUM, through funds from the UN ACT for Peace Program, provided a package of assistance ranging from leadership workshops, Culture of Peace (CoP) trainings, and orientations on small livelihood projects. The capacity building programs train women to become more "empowered" as facilitators for community-based conflict resolution trainings. Consequently, women become more assertive and expressive of their situation, and can take on new roles leading their small communities in managing the camps or evacuation centers more effectively.³⁷ Women leaders are also typically the ones who bridge the evacuee community with donor agencies, or with agencies that intend to provide assistance to them, as in the case of Virgie, the woman leader of the Pananag IDP families.

³⁶ See Section 4, and especially p. 211, on Gender, armed conflict and the search for peace, in a report by the UN Research Institute for Social Development. 2005, in *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*.

³⁷ Key Informant interview with Janet Escobar, program officer of Spectrum, 4 November 2012,.

In the Philippines, women have shown leadership potential not only in grassroots peacebuilding,³⁸ but in Track One processes as well, as reflected in the relative presence and influence of women in the current peace talks between the MILF and the GPH. In terms of policy making, the Philippine government is among the first few Asian countries to formulate its National Action Plan for Women (in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1325), which was promulgated during the administration of the second woman president of the country, former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Dwyer and Cagoco-Guiam, *ibid.*). A prominent peace advocate and woman activist, Sec. Teresita Quintos-Deles, sits as the current president's Adviser on the Peace Process (PAPP). In mid-2012, the current president, Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, scored another first in terms of recognizing women's vital role in Track One peacebuilding: Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, a peace advocate and professor at the University of the Philippines, became the first woman to chair the GPH Peace Panel.

On the role of livelihoods in empowering internally displaced women

As the previous sections have shown, IDPs – women and men – employ diverse livelihood strategies in order to survive. But they do so under vulnerable conditions, given that the formal and legal institutions for protection are no longer available or have disappeared altogether. Since IDPs stay in places other than their places of origin, they are thrust into an environment where formal institutions such as their church, mosque or religious groups, or even clan organizations, are no longer there to help them out in times of need. In other words, internally displaced women and men manage to find ways and means to access livelihood opportunities, many of which are in the informal, even shadow, sectors of the economy.

The shifting of roles of men and women in displacement contexts may pave the way for women to be empowered in a range of ways – especially those left on their own after their husbands and male relatives are conscripted by rebels or government forces. These women have little choice but to take on new roles as primary breadwinners. Equally, displaced women whose husbands are not able to move freely in public due to *rido* violence may also have to take on new livelihoods. As men eventually lose status or “lose face” as household providers, many women move on to become not only leaders of the displaced communities, but also entrepreneurs and merchants.

The empowerment of internally displaced women needs to be understood in its broader social context. In local politics in the ARMM, it has been a tradition for a wife or a sister or any female member of a family to “substitute” for a male relative who is running for office and who is killed before a local election happens. This can be the ticket for women to become local political leaders, at least temporarily. But in many cases, the woman “substitute” stays in the elective political position only for one term (three years), after which a male relative will take the position, and continue with it until the end of three terms. In this sense, the women relatives in a political family act as a “breathing spell” or an “intermission” in the broader pattern of male-dominated political representation. Certainly, this does not necessarily translate into the

³⁸ See *Herstories*. Stories of Peace and Hope among Barangay justice Advocates. 2010. Rufa Cagoco-Guiam, et. al. eds. Manila and Davao: Gerry Roxas Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

sustainable political empowerment of women, but it may be an opening for some women to exert a degree of political leadership.

Despite the growing numbers of female legislators, local political leaders, female justices in the courts, and even for the first time, a female Supreme Court Justice since in 2012, the Philippines still has a long way to go to empower women. For instance, in the domestic sphere, women are still generally expected to play nurturing roles: there is a predominant censure of women who choose to become career-oriented and be totally free from the burdens of motherhood and childrearing. As the experiences of the Cotabato City, Maguindanao and Pananag, Maasim internally displaced women have shown, decision-making and control of resources that the women themselves have helped acquire are still largely the domain of men.

The “macho” orientation of men as needing to be the main providers and not to be involved in domestic chores such as child-rearing and household maintenance still prevail in many communities. In a *rido*-affected community in Lanao del Sur, for example, men who are confined to their *barangay* to avoid armed firefights with their clan enemies refuse to take over the roles left by their wives who are busy selling goods or doing office work in the local municipal hall. Instead, they continue to assert their “macho” superiority, i.e. that as the traditional breadwinners and main decision-makers in the family, they are not required to do domestic chores associated with child rearing and household maintenance.

Because of additional burdens on earning a living and doing all the household maintenance work, displaced women find their circumstances quite stressful, undercutting their so-called economic empowerment. In the case of Virgie, the displaced woman leader in Pananag mentioned above, for example, her leadership role has not been translated into freedom from her domestic or household reproductive roles. Major decisions in her family are still made by her husband, even if he does not have the same leadership position as his wife.

Conclusions

A. Gender dimensions of conflict situations and the deprivation of livelihoods

War affects men and women differently, and this is perhaps most glaringly felt in the loss of livelihoods. Since men are the primary combatants in war, they are the first to disappear from the public sphere they used to move in as entrepreneurs, skilled workers, and merchants. Being conscripted into rebel or government groups or as parties to clan war forces men to abandon their economic responsibilities toward their families. In Mindanao, such a scenario has paved the way for women to assume leading economic roles thus pushing them to navigate in public spaces denied to them before conflict.

But therein lies the rub. As women go up the empowerment ladder, they constantly face additional stress related to the expectations that they will continue to perform traditional nurturing roles. For example, the women members in the Cotabato City IDP community still do the household maintenance chores at the same time that they manage a small variety store selling cigarettes, candies, and slabs of wood used for fuel. Their “unemployed” male counterparts just sit by in front of the store, smoking the hours away, or drinking several cups of coffee, talking

about any topic that strikes their fancy. Displaced women in Binidayan report that a modern gadget – the mobile phone – has become the men’s “best friend” as they while away the hours texting to friends and would-be female friends.

As long as traditional socialization processes – both at home and in school – emphasize the value of men and masculinity over the value of women and femininity, the additional burden on women will remain. In this sense, empowerment is a source of strain rather than a desirable goal that women can look forward to.³⁹

Young women in displacement situations also become vulnerable to human trafficking, and to becoming a source of cheap domestic labor for households in the urban areas (like in Cotabato City or General Santos City). Respondents indicate that young girls have also been recruited to work abroad, under dubious circumstances, such as being documented as a mature woman (e.g. over 18 years old), even if they are still in their mid- teens. One key informant blames this on the predatory attitude among some relatives of young girls. For some older members of an impoverished, displaced family, young girls represent a “resource” that can generate capital, or that can be mobilized to alleviate their family’s poverty. Some maternal uncles push for their young nieces to go abroad, by facilitating the process of recruitment, or by acting as a middleman between unscrupulous recruiters and the parents of the girls.⁴⁰

Furthermore, many women in IDP villages have low levels of education. This is a serious barrier to accessing not only gainful employment, but also to social networks that will link them to other livelihood options provided by charitable institutions or donor agencies. The women in Pananag, as exemplified by Virgie have been married early, thus further limiting their opportunities for higher education, and social networking.

It is widely accepted that women hold their families together, and even are society’s “stabilizing agents.” Moreover, they are the “pivotal points in holding together families and communities in times of crisis” (Agbalajobi, 2010: 233 – 238). Traditional concepts suggest that women are the culturally “designated” nurturers or caregivers, and as such, they “...keep their homes together...” as their husbands or the male members of their communities are fighting.⁴¹ These concepts of women as a unifying force are reflected in the fact that in Mindanao, women are usually the ones who initiate the process of bringing feuding parties together, as in the case of some women negotiators in Sulu and in Lanao del Sur provinces. While traditionally, women are not expected to play this role, of late, women have been actively involved in conflict resolution in some parts of Mindanao, as documented by the study on *rido* conflict by the Asia Foundation in 2007.⁴² In this study, women serve in the following functions: as channels of communication,

³⁹ See also Dwyer, Leslie and Rufa Cagoco-Guiam, 2012. *Gender and Conflict in Mindanao* for similar insight.

⁴⁰ Key informant interview with Ms. ‘Mother’ Lily Mocles, deputy director, Katiyakap, Inc. an NGO based in General Santos City, November 4, 2012.

⁴¹ See Agbalajobi, Damilola Taiye. 2010. “The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peace building,” in *Understanding Africa’s Conflicts: Origins, Challenges, and Peace building*. Monograph 73. Richard Bowd and Annie Barbara Chikwanha, eds. Institute for Security Studies.

⁴² See particularly the chapter written by Ofelia L. Durante, Norma T. Gomez, Ester O. Sevilla, and Howard J. Manego, “Management of Clan Conflict and Rido Among the Tausug, Maguindanao, Maranao, Sama and Yakan Tribes,” in *RIDO: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao*. 2007. Wilfredo Magno Torres III, ed. Makati City: Asia Foundation, pp. 97 onwards.

as “human shields,” as messengers, as paramedical staff, and as consultants on traditions on conflict settlement. For this last function, older women are preferred. (Durante, et. al in Torres, ed.2007: 115).

Yet, despite all these significant roles of women in Mindanao, especially in times of conflicts, they remain on the periphery of political power, especially as far as decision-making and running for elected office are concerned. Another important deprivation is women’s lack of control of resources. Husbands of impoverished and displaced women may be granted access to some significant resource, such as money. But this does not automatically translate into women sharing control of the money, or having the opportunity to make free decisions about using money that is given to them, or even money that they acquired through, for example, small livelihood activities such as selling street food and other commodities.

B. Restoring or accessing new livelihoods and helping address gender equity

In the three displaced communities studied, both men and women tried to find ways and means to survive, either through attempts to restore former livelihoods or through accessing new ones. To their dismay, restoring former livelihoods was no longer viable, as the “enabling environment” to do so was absent in the place of evacuation. For instance, for the members of one clan from Datu Piang who were forced to settle in a small land area in Cotabato City, there was no land to till. As farmers, the members of this clan would have liked to be able to plant a variety of crops, both for cash and for daily sustenance. But in Cotabato, as in any urban areas in Mindanao, there are no wide farmlands to till, as almost every patch of available land is already used for residential purposes. While the clan members were able to look for a small farm area in a neighboring *barangay*, it was too small for every member of the clan to have a separate farm of his or her own. So only four members participated in the “collective farming.” Moreover, the owner of the lot asked the clan members to pay rent for using the land. These factors limited the benefit of this particular livelihood strategy, and the extent to which displaced women could actively participate in it.

Some new livelihood opportunities were provided to them through service jobs, like becoming carpenters or construction workers. But these jobs were seasonal, and there were not too many construction projects that needed their services. One relative provided a modest amount of seed money for one female member of the clan to start a variety store. But for the most part the older male and female members of the clan just stayed in their respective homes, unable to access to socio-economic and psychological benefits of working.

Opportunities for restoration and access to new livelihoods in the place of displacement were windows toward ensuring that the displaced community could get by, or survive while being displaced. But gender equity in terms of decision-making and control of resources still was a rarity for many IDPs.

C. Internally displaced women as agents for positive change

In the *barangay*, women are acknowledged to have played crucial roles in the settlement of petty community conflicts, especially between neighbors and extended family members. Such

grassroots peacebuilding efforts, as described above, have greatly contributed to promoting community harmony and increasing the levels of trust and confidence among diverse groups of people.⁴³ But beyond grassroots peacebuilding, women have also shown that as mediators, they can work toward more durable processes included in conflict transformation in order to address the roots of conflict. A Muslim woman lawyer who has extensive experience in working to promote human rights for Muslims in Mindanao has just been appointed the legal consultant of the MILF peace panel. This is a breakthrough in the history of the MILF panel composition – no woman has ever been appointed in this position throughout the duration of the peace negotiations that started in 1998.

It is widely believed that when women are the managers of a committee or a cooperative, such endeavors will have greater chance of success. According to a key informant, between men and women beneficiaries, it is the latter who have demonstrated commitment and determination to see to it that their projects last even longer than their terms as officers of a cooperative, which are usually three years: “Women are more conscientious and concerned with maintaining the trust and confidence of their donors...”⁴⁴ In evacuation centers, women are the first to seek out assistance from various sources while the men just “command” the women, according to an executive director of an NGO that focuses its assistance on displaced populations in Mindanao. They are also the ones who initiate organizing the displaced persons into different committees to manage the evacuation camp, especially with regard to the distribution of relief goods.⁴⁵

D. Livelihood strategies and the rights and well-being of internally displaced women, their families and communities

Access to viable livelihoods increases the enabling environment for peace, according to the key informants of this study. However, this depends on many aspects of the management of livelihood projects, starting with the type of livelihood that is being supported by donor agencies. Choosing beneficiaries can be complex and controversial, and as such it can make or break the success of a project. Thorough consultations should be made to validate information gathered through an enumerator. Even with stringent eligibility requirements, some livelihood projects can inadvertently exacerbate conflict, rather than transform it to more peaceful pursuits. The majority of the key informants attest to this reality in many displaced community centers. Informants cite, for example, that people who do not need livelihood projects because they are relatively financially stable are the ones capturing one donor agency’s livelihood grants for some conflict-affected communities.⁴⁶ Access to livelihoods is not a guarantee that durable solutions to displacement will be achieved and gender gaps lessened, since men tend to wrest control of the available livelihood opportunities and the gains associated with them. Providing increased incomes for women may not necessarily mean they have full control of the financial gains from

⁴³ See *Herstories*.

⁴⁴ Key informant interview with Fr. Angel Benavidez, parish priest, Parish of Lagao, General Santos City, 15 November 2012. 1 to 4 pm.

⁴⁵ Key informant interview with Ms. Fairudz Ebus, Executive Director, Mindanao Tulong Bakwet (MTB – Mindanao Help for Evacuees), Cotabato City, October 10, 2012, 9 am to 12 noon.

⁴⁶ Key informant interviews with Ms. Fairudz Ebus, Executive Director, Mindanao Tulong Bakwet (MTB – Mindanao Help for Evacuees), Cotabato City, October 10, 2012, 9 am to 12 noon, with CFSI staff, December 6, 2012, and with Lily Mocles, November 4, 2012.

their viable livelihoods because men may usurp the profits. As has been shown in other conflict contexts, men may resent women's access to resources and thus they will make sure that they control these. If women resist, they may run the risk of being subjected to domestic violence (Ray and Heller, 2009).

The design of livelihood projects needs to factor in a thorough understanding of the gender dimensions in a community, especially in internal displacement situations. Livelihood opportunities in IDP communities can reduce gender inequalities only if a gender approach is employed so that the projects are sensitive to the particular challenges and vulnerabilities facing men and women in particular situations. Indeed, the vulnerabilities and capacities of IDPs and their communities are gendered; indeed, gender is embedded in the economic and political fabric of society (Fernandez-Kelly, 1989: 611). This becomes doubly difficult in conflict and forced migration. This is because in the context of displacement due to conflict, women are thrust into situations in which they need to add to their already multiple roles the leadership and breadwinning roles that were formerly performed by their husbands, who are drafted as soldiers or militia members.

E. The potential contributions of innovative livelihood initiatives to peacebuilding, the reconstruction process and the pursuit of durable solutions to displacement

Key informants claim that projects that go beyond capacity building to include matching skills training with job opportunities in relevant industries within an area could be effective. However, this is the problem in many of the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. There may be a substantial supply of trainers and trainees but there are no industries willing or able to absorb the trainees after they finish. Many of the displaced communities are in areas where there are limited investment opportunities for private sector groups. In this case, there is a need to create a "demand" side to the equation – to encourage more private sector investment near areas affected by forced migration due to conflicts.

Creating a "demand" for trainees among displaced populations could be an innovative approach, in that it not only paves the way for gainful employment after training, but can also set the stage for more confidence building, and eventually increasing levels of social capital among diverse communities in Mindanao. Investments require high levels of trust among partners. This becomes more meaningful – but also more challenging – when the investors belong to ethno-linguistic groups that have substantial levels of distrust or prejudice towards groups such as Muslims and indigenous peoples.

In the early 1990s, a Korean engineering firm won the bid to construct a large dam in the mountainous areas of Carmen, North Cotabato province (the Malitubog-Maridagao dam). In its first few months of operation, the Korean engineering firm wanted to make sure they had "security" from rebel groups or other armed elements attacking their camps or demanding extortion money or "revolutionary" taxes. The management of the construction firm thought of an innovative approach in security management. Instead of engaging traditional security personnel, the Korean firm decided to engage the local Muslim commanders of the MNLF/MILF to be their "security guards." This is perhaps an extreme example of how "innovative" livelihoods strategies can be in areas that are conflict-prone or conflict-affected. But partnerships

such as this certainly create an opportunity to build trust and confidence. At the same time, this “special” relationship also ensured the security of the engineers and other personnel of the Korean construction firm.

All respondents and informants agreed that the only truly durable solution to all the problems faced by agencies providing services to IDPs in Central Mindanao is to stop the war, and to consider sustainable livelihood options. As one woman evacuee asked, quite succinctly, “how can we think of livelihoods when we are always running for our lives?”⁴⁷ In the meantime, skills trainings have been the usual points of entry toward the provision of livelihood programs among the different IDP communities throughout Mindanao.

Many of these efforts have attempted to “mainstream” gender considerations. The goal of mainstreaming gender equality in many projects is to ensure the transformation of unjust social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women,⁴⁸ and to reduce gender inequalities. Nowhere is this goal more relevant than in the world of internally displaced women and men. As noted earlier, women and children compose the majority of IDP populations, including in Mindanao’s conflict-affected communities. Along with the drastic changes that take place in displacement, gender roles also change and members of families are separated. Consequently, a family’s source of social protection breaks down. Despite the difficulties and challenges women face in periods of displacement, they manage to survive, and find means to carry on. Many women find themselves in positions formerly occupied by men, and assume leadership roles in the public domain. As women go up the empowerment ladder, they find that social structures are still the same – that men are more valued than women. Consequently, women have to work under extreme pressures of multiple burdens, making the goal of empowerment an added source of strain on their well-being.

Recommendations

Several protocols, international instruments, as well as universal charters designed to protect women’s welfare, particularly in conflict and displacement contexts, have been enacted and signed by a significant number of countries all over the world. Yet, there remains a major gap between these laws and their implementation. In the context of poor or weak governance in most conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, laws and regulations proliferate, but, unfortunately, implementation is lacking.

Based on the main findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forth:

A. *Research and analysis*

- Further in-depth studies are needed on the links between peace building initiatives and poverty reduction, especially in conflict-prone communities. The results of these studies will be useful for policy makers and government officials alike, especially in crafting

⁴⁷ Dwyer and Cagoco-Guiam, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ See International Labour Organization. 2000. *A Partnership of Equals*. Geneva.

preventive measures to make communities more resilient in the face of chronic displacement.

- Feasibility studies on innovative village level savings and loans programs should be explored. One of these could be an investment-based scheme similar to the Islamic banking system where both clients and investors share profits and losses equally, and there are no interest rates but rather investment and service charges.
- Further studies are needed on the provision of security measures for displaced women and girls, starting with the investigation of sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence experienced by the displaced. This also includes the investigation of other forms of human rights violations among displaced women and girls especially in terms of violations against Republic Act 9208, or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act that was passed in 2003.
- A thorough and comprehensive review should be undertaken of policies on recruitment of women workers, especially those coming from vulnerable, displaced communities. The review should be based on the human rights of women workers, and should aim to provide additional social protection for women being recruited into dangerous or exploitative work.
- More thorough gender analyses should be conducted among IDP communities to determine accurately the varying needs and capacities of displaced men and women.

B. Policies and programs

- Donor agencies should insist on the mainstreaming of gender into the entire project cycle as a requirement for accessing funding and project implementation, to ensure that projects address the different needs and capacities of women, men, children and other potentially vulnerable internally displaced persons.
- Economic empowerment programs for women should be initiated that have built-in guidelines for the protection of women, and local legislation or ordinances should be developed to institutionalize these guidelines.
- Based on gender analyses, assistance should be appropriately tailored with a view toward reducing gender inequalities in displacement contexts.
- IDPs living outside of evacuation centers should be included in the databases of IDPs in conflict-affected areas. In addition, a thorough assessment of their needs and capacities should be conducted, with a view towards designing relevant and sustainable socio-economic programs for them. Local offices of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) register displaced persons staying in temporary evacuation camps or centers, but not those who choose to stay with relatives and friends. This hinders them from accessing assistance from either government or international donors since they are considered “undocumented.” Data on these IDPs need to be disaggregated by sex and age; data collection efforts should address the needs and capacities of these IDPs.
- Local ordinances on the status of displaced persons should be revisited in host communities where IDPs have decided to stay more or less permanently. Some local ordinances treat IDPs as “informal dwellers” and limit the number of years the IDPs can stay in their host communities. Such ordinances need to be revised as they are incompatible with the rights of IDPs to free movement, and hinder the ability of displaced men and women to establish sustainable livelihoods.

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