

Surigao Displacement of *Lumad* Communities Field Assessment Report



Lumad child in Tandag City evacuation center preparing dinner in a makeshift cooking area.
16 September 2015/ ACCORD Inc.

I. Executive Summary

Quick Facts		
	Total	Remarks
Number of people affected	2,953	From 28 <i>Lumad</i> ¹ communities of <i>Manobo</i> tribal group in the municipalities of San Agustin, Lianga, San Miguel, Marihatag, and Tago, including 913 students and 67 teachers from 11 forcibly closed tribal schools.
Number of dead	6	5 male adults killed in two separate incidents, 1 child died in evacuation site

¹ Lumad is a generic term for the indigenous peoples of Mindanao, who make up the largest number of indigenous peoples in the country. It is a Visayan term meaning native, indigenous, "of the land". There are 18 major Lumad groups namely: Subanen, B'laan, T'boli, Mandaya, Mansaka, Tiruray, Higaonon, Manobo, Bagobo, Bukidnon, Tagkaolo, Ubo, Banwaon, Kalagan, Dibabawon, Talaandig, Mamanwa and Manguangan. They live in the mountainous areas of Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Bukidnon, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao, Zamboanga, Misamis Oriental, Misamis Occidental, Cagayan de Oro, North Cotabato, South Cotabato and Sarangani Province (KAMP 2002, cited in Country Technical Notes on Indigenous People's Issues, J.K. Cariño, 2012)



Assistance and Cooperation for Community Resilience and Development

Quick Facts		
	Total	Remarks
Number of injured, sick		<p>Health workers report high number of acute respiratory cases, some 60-70 cases of sore eyes and around 5 cases of chicken pox</p> <p>Number proved difficult to track due to lack of a single triage system for the evacuation site.</p>

The report summarizes the general humanitarian conditions of internally displaced indigenous peoples in Surigao del Sur due to military and paramilitary activities in the area. The assessment, which covered 28 *Lumad* communities from the 5 municipalities of Lianga, San Agustin, San Miguel, Tago, and Marihatag, was conducted in evacuation center in Tandag City where these communities are temporarily staying. Information was gathered through conduct of several focused group discussions, key informant interviews, and analysis of available secondary data.

The general findings of the assessment were the following:

- Security remains unstable. There is no clear accountability as to ensuring the safety and security of communities. Displaced families cannot go back to their respective communities until they are given assurances of safety and security. Other cases of displacement throughout Mindanao due to activities of military and paramilitary group were also reported.
- Access to food remains a critical concern for affected communities. The provincial government and other humanitarian groups are providing food aid. However, food quality and food diversity have to be improved.
- Farming and other livelihood activities are affected and will result to food insecurity in the next months or possibly next year.
- Camp management system has been effectively established by local leaders, people's organisations and teachers.
- Shelter conditions are extremely difficult. Poor shelter conditions are putting evacuees at risk, especially the children, elderly, women, and persons with disability.
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and health are critical issues. Access to potable water is limited and sanitation remains a challenge. High number of acute respiratory cases and other illnesses such as chicken pox, sore eyes, diarrhea, and chicken pox has been reported.
- Education of some 913 students was interrupted with the forced closure of 11 tribal schools. Some schools have partially resumed classes, however, temporary learning spaces and teaching materials are insufficient.
- Assistance from different actors including the government and several humanitarian organisations were provided, however limited. Water and sanitation facilities, educational materials for school children, and supplies to improve temporary living spaces were among the urgent needs.

The volatile situation of displaced communities is expected to last until six months to a year, or until the safety and security issues of Lumad communities are addressed. Provincial government expressed concern over its capacity to sustain food aid with dwindling resources of the LGU. Alternative means to earn income and access food are being explored by the community, but will need support from external sources.

From the initial assessment, several recommendations were identified:

- Provide support to strengthen and improve the existing camp management systems.
- Provide assistance to supplement existing food aid and ensure that the specific needs of the most vulnerable evacuees (pregnant and lactating women, infants, persons with disabilities) are met.
- Provide assistance to set up alternative livelihoods while at evacuation center.
- Provide assistance to improve living conditions at the evacuation center, i.e. through provision of temporary shelter supplies and other non-food items, provision of health and WASH services.
- Provide adequate support for the resumption of classes of *Lumad* children.
- Increase public awareness on the conditions and struggle of *Lumad* communities.

II. Methodology

A team of ACCORD staff conducted an assessment of the humanitarian situation of communities affected by the 1) unwarranted murder of NGO worker, Emerito Samarca and tribal leaders Dionelo Campos and Bello Sinzo as well as the several criminal acts of the paramilitary group Magahat-Bagani. The objectives of the assessment were to:

- Better understand the emergency nature of the displacement,
- Adequately assess the impact of the displacement to the different affected communities, and
- Develop a strategy aimed at addressing emergency needs of the displaced population.

The assessment was conducted in Tandag City, where the communities from the 5 municipalities of Lianga, San Agustin, San Miguel, Tago, and Marihatag are temporarily hosted. Qualitative and quantitative information was gathered through site observation, focus group discussions (FGD), and key informant interviews (KII).

Four FGD sessions were conducted with different groups: 1) women, 2) men, 3) children, and 4) leaders. This was done to better understand the perspective of the different groups regarding their situation, their different roles and responsibilities, and their needs based on their priorities. Furthermore, KIIs were done with members of the camp management team, Provincial Administrator, DRRMO, and DSWD. Coordination was also done with different I/NGOs including Save the Children, ACF, IOM, ALCADDEV, and TRIPFSS.

III. General Findings

A. Humanitarian Context

Entire *Lumad* communities belonging to *Manobo* tribal group in Surigao del Sur fled their homes, fearing for their lives due to the activities of the Bagani / Magahat paramilitary group.

- **August 9, 2015 (San Miguel municipality)** – *Lumad* families were rounded up for interrogation by a group of paramilitary men, triggering their evacuation.



- **August 15, 2015 (San Miguel municipality)** - *Lumad* families flee their communities after being threatened with massacre by alleged members of Bagani / Magahat. These same men also killed brothers Crisanto and Ely Tabogol.
- **August 30-September 1, 2015 (Lianga municipality)** - The 36th Infantry Battalion and Special Forces Regiment arrived and occupied the function hall and grounds of ALCADDEV, an award-winning secondary school catering to the *Lumad*. Magahat-Bagani members burned down the cooperative store of Malahutayong Pakigbisog alang sa Sumusunod (MAPASU). They also ordered the people to move to the KM 16 community. Emerito Samarca, executive director of ALCADDEV, was made to stay behind; this is the last time he was seen alive. He was later found hogtied, his throat slit, and stomach stabbed. Dionel Campos, chairperson of the MAPASU tribal group, and his cousin, Bello Sinzo were summarily executed in front of the people.

Evacuees from **28** *Lumad* communities from 5 municipalities of Surigao del Sur streamed into the Tandag City Sports Complex by batches from September 1, 2015. The number of internally displaced persons in the evacuation site is currently at **2,953 individuals**.

Governor Johnny Pimentel of Surigao del Sur has visited the ALCADDEV grounds and the Han-ayan community in Lianga municipality. He has been quoted in various online news reports, claiming that the Philippine military was behind the creation of the Magahat/Bagani militia. Pimentel is calling for the disbandment of these armed groups in his province. The IDPs are not willing to return to their communities while the paramilitary group still not disbanded. Advocacies of human rights groups also prompted senators to file resolutions calling for investigation on Lumad killings and attacks against Lumad schools in Mindanao.

As of September 17, 2015, the Province of Surigao del Sur declared a state of calamity, thereby enabling the utilization of the Quick Response Fund (QRF) to support the needs of the displaced communities.

Other recent cases of displacement throughout Mindanao:

23 January 2015 (San Luis municipality, Agusan del Sur) - 969 persons belonging to the indigenous people Banwaan have left their homes and farms and are now staying in the premises of an abandoned hospital building in Balit village, San Luis. The immediate cause of the displacement was the killing allegedly by AFP elements of Balit Punong Barangay (Village Chair) Necasio Precioso, who is also a tribal leader of the Banwaan.

28 April 2015 (Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental) - Fighting between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the New People's Army (NPA) followed by mortar bombardment by the AFP of the hinterlands of Banglay village caused 211 persons coming from 43 households to evacuate.

May 2015 (Talaingod and Kapalong, Davao del Norte) - About 700 Manobos have sought refuge in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines – Haran Compound in Davao City following military and paramilitary activities in their communities. Groups have reported militarization, harassment, red-tagging, and forced recruitment into paramilitary groups as reasons behind their evacuation. The Talaningod-Manobos were also forced to evacuate in 2014 due to military bombing of their areas.

Wherein:

- Gender remains to be generally balanced with men comprising 50.3% of the displaced population, while women is some 20 individuals less than the men at 49.7% of the population.
- Children form the largest part of the displaced population at 54.3%, where some 545 individuals are below 5 years old.
- Average household size is 5, but a number of families are noted to have children exceeding 5.
- One out of every five IDP (internally displaced person) is a child under five years old.
- Some 104 women are pregnant or lactating needing supplemental nutrition
- 3% of the IDPs are elderly people.
- 3% of households are with members who are persons with disability.

C. Camp Management

The different communities, together with teachers from the Tribal Filipino Program of Surigao del Sur (TRIPFSS) and the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development, Inc. (ALCADEV) were able to establish systems to effectively manage the camp. A two-tiered approach is used in managing the evacuation camp. Their existing community structure is maximized, wherein the Datu and his members collectively work together to ensure their people are able to have sustained access to their basic needs. Committees were set up including 1) Relief, 2) WASH and Health, 3) Safety and Security, 4) Liaison, and 5) Advocacy and Communications. Each community identifies at least 2 persons that will serve as point person per committee. The community leader, point persons of the different committees, and their teachers convene on a daily basis to discuss the needs of their community and immediately resolve issues.

The second level of organization is that of the whole evacuation site. All the Datus of all 28 communities convene regularly in order to discuss ways and means to address the issue of their displacement and ensure that each of the communities have equal access to goods and services. The local People's Organization of MAPASU is responsible for facilitating and spearheading the meetings. TRIPFSS and ALCADEV teachers also form part of the evacuation center management group.

The Provincial Government in Surigao del Sur recognizes the autonomy and capacity of the communities in managing the camp. While the Provincial DSWD Office has identified a point responsible for managing the evacuation site, they rely strongly on the leadership of the Datus and the teachers to manage the needs of the different communities. Moreover, the MSWDOs of the 5 affected municipalities are expected to arrive within the week to extend support to their respective communities.

As of reporting date, relationship between the provincial government and the leaders of the community remains in good terms. Regular updating and consultation meetings are conducted between the local government and the community leaders. Round Table discussion has resumed between the government and the tribal communities in order to resolve the issue Magahat- Bagani and the uncertain displacement of the 28 communities.

D. Food Security and Livelihoods

Displaced communities are dependent on food rations. Food Assistance from the government and different organisations (people's organization, private sector, and NGOs) sustained the evacuees for 2 weeks. According to TRIPFSS/ALCADEV, rice needs amount to 15 sacks per meal or 45 sacks per day. Food assistance provided to families

include: rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, sugar, coffee, sardines, and noodles. Farmer organizations have supported communities by providing vegetables, therefore improving diet diversity amongst evacuees.

While food was sufficient to meet minimum requirement for food intake, communities articulated the need to improve quality of food. Rice provided were of NFA-brand and viands were limited to sardines and noodles. Their current diet is far from their usual food intake which consists of different vegetables, fruits and protein on a daily basis. Relying on less preferred food and reducing food intake to prolong supply is a clear indication of food insecurity amongst families.

Other food items were surfaced as necessary including formula milk for infants. Mothers are unable to lactate attributing the lack of milk to poor nutrition and stress caused by the disaster.

Continued dependence on food assistance will likely occur unless communities are able to 1) find alternative means to earn income or access food or 2) until they are able to return to their places of origin.

The provincial government together with the LGUs of the 5 affected municipalities articulated that there is enough resources to cover food needs of evacuees until end of the month. ICRC has committed to also provide food aid good for at least 10 days. QRF of the province and the DSWD national is also on standby for food assistance.

While basic food needs are met, there is a need to assess in depth the food security and nutritional conditions of the evacuees especially for highly vulnerable groups: children below 5 years old, pregnant and lactating mothers, persons with disability, and the elderly.

Livelihoods

All livelihood activities were put on a halt. Displaced *Lumad* communities are all engaged in farming. Staple crops are corn and upland rice, while primary source of income is from copras and/ or abaca. Families own livestock including chicken and pigs, and some have carabaos. Almost all *Lumad* families are also members of a local cooperative in the area.

The displacement resulted to communities leaving their farms and animals untended. Corn and upland rice (3-4 months gestation) is already at its flowering stage and will be ready for harvest in October and November. Inability to tend the crops will result to low harvest especially for corn. Missing harvest season for both crops, would result to continued food insecurity until the next harvest in May/June. While other perennial crops such as coconuts and abaca are likely to be intact, the uncertainty of displacement still hampers the ability of families to earn income and access food and other basic needs.

The IDPs are planning to start vegetable production with seeds coming from the provincial agriculture office and other peasant organisations. They are also negotiating with the leaders of contingent barangays for spaces where they can resume planting activities.

Additional information will be collected regarding the extent of the impact of the displacement to livelihood activities.

E. Water Sanitation and Hygiene

WASH is a critical issue in the evacuation center. Potable water supply is limited. The provincial government through the water district and Bureau of Fire Protection is trucking water to the site thrice a day. Tankers fill in 5000L bladders (provided by the Red Cross) and water storage containers. Water points for safe drinking water were identified by the water district. Communities were provided with two (2) 20L jerry cans (DOH and ICRC) which they use to fill in with drinking water.

Sanitation remains a challenge. The evacuation site has 15 built in latrines, 7 of which are not functional and require desludging. The Department of Health (DOH) put up some 15 collapsible temporary dry- latrines, however “septic tanks” were easily filled. Dislodging is the responsibility of the DOH. The 15 built –in latrines will be closed by next week according to the PDRRMO. This brings the ratio of latrine to person at 1:190, which is almost 950% higher than the standard of 1:20-25 per latrine.

Furthermore, communal bathing and washing facilities are set up. Evacuees including children and women take a bath near their places of dwelling or near the different water points. Privacy is an issue.

Drainage canals were dug, particularly for families staying in their tents to prevent rainwater from stagnating and flooding their temporary homes. However, there is a need to ensure proper design, e.g. direction, elevation, and capacity to improve its effectiveness. Further, a general layout of the drainage system needs to be done for the whole of the evacuation site to include drainages of the different water points. .

Solid Waste Management is effectively carried out by the communities. Each community identified places to dispose their garbage and ensure cleanliness. Dump truck from the province collects the waste daily.

There is a relatively high level of hygiene awareness amongst evacuees. Families take a bath and wash their clothes on daily basis. Soap and other hygiene items were recently provided by ICRC. Communities require sustained supply of hygiene items and awareness raising activities on household water treatment, f-diagram, and environmental sanitation.

The existing community-based health program will tap its volunteers and health workers to produce herbal medicines like SLK (sampalok-luya-kalamansi) for common illnesses like coughs and colds. They will work with local groups who are doing emergency health services at the moment.

F. Shelter

Shelter conditions are extremely difficult. Families are currently staying in cement bleachers with large tents securing them from the rain and the sun. Some families have opted to put up small individual tents on the grass or sidewalk of the sports complex. Privacy is non-existent, especially for families living on the bleachers.

For those living in individual tents, tarpaulin and wood for the structure is limited. Space enclosed is not sufficient for the average family of 5. Flooding due to continuous rain is also an issue, as not all families were able to elevate their temporary homes. Bamboo mats were made by the fathers (bamboo is donated from a peasant organization) to serve as floor/ bed for their family. But this is still limited to a few homes due to difficulty in accessing raw materials.

Households were only able to bring a few items when they fled their communities. All families received sleeping mats (banig), blankets, cooking pots, kitchen utensils, additional blankets and/or malongs from ICRC.

Protection from harsh weather conditions is an issue. Rainy season for Surigao province commences during the last quarter of the year, therefore putting IDPs at risk due to poor shelter conditions.

G. Education

A total of 913 students and 67 teachers are affected by the displacement. A total of 11 tribal schools were forcibly closed. Instructional materials and school supplies were left in the different schools. TRIFFPS and ALCADDEV have partially resumed classes. However, temporary learning spaces (tents) and teaching materials are insufficient to adequately cater to all primary and secondary students.

At least additional 12 tents are necessary to conduct regular classes for children from level 0 until high school. Back to school kits including notebooks, pencils, and crayons are also necessary to motivate children to return and continue schooling while they are in the evacuation site.

IV. Recommendations

The following are some of the recommendations from the initial assessment conducted by ACCORD team on the ground:

1. Provision of technical support to the leadership structure to improve systems to better manage the evacuation center.
 - a. Supplies Management System
 - b. Layout of evacuation grounds and improve temporary shelters/ spaces.
 - c. Coordinate with WASH organisations to improve WATSAN services in the grounds.
 - d. Set-up coordination platforms for government, local, and international NGOs to discuss needs of the affected families.
2. Provision of food assistance to supplement existing food aid provided to communities. While food need are relatively covered by the government and ICRC, possible areas of intervention include
 - a. Set up voucher system and *tabo* (market system) in the evacuation grounds to improve diet diversity and food consumption, and
 - b. Monitor food security situation of families, particularly those with high dependency ratio.
3. Contribute to raising awareness of the public regarding the struggle of the *Lumad*.
4. Coordinate with NGOs, INGOs, government organisations, academe, church organisations, and other potential partners that will support immediate and long-term needs of *Lumad* IDPs.