

IOM Marawi Learning Report

For more than two months, the DSWD reported that a total of 117, 875 families have been displaced by the Armed Conflict in Marawi City. 20% of the IDPs were housed in evacuation centers while 80% were housed by their relatives away from their home. These families spent Ramadhan- the holiest month for the Muslim in a very sad and heart-breaking way.

IOM deployed a 5-men team to conduct a RICAA in Iligan City, Baloi, Pantar, PantaoRagat and Saguwaran on June 15-30 2017. The coordinator ensured that the team composition should include maranao men and women and locals who can communicate and understand the Islam culture-sensitivity and respect. The approach applied was like sharing of experiences and storytelling so they will feel comfortable and not being intrusive, we gave them time to prepare prior to the conduct of the FGD. Some of them have to wear their veil when in a group especially the Muslim women and some have to leave the group when it's time for the "Sambayang".

The team experienced challenges on the accessibility and in locating the families living in the communities and hosted by the relatives and friends. The report of the DSWD DROMIC and other service providers was then the reference in locating the displacement sites. In spite of the challenges the team experienced, a lot of volunteers expressed interest to help in the conduct of the RICAA roll-out and most of them are also maranao.

Highlights:

According to the IDPs they were made aware of the Maute group plans through text blast but they took it for granted. When the lock down happened that very day when Maute group took over the city, many have evacuated but brought nothing in the belief that they will return immediately. Accordingly, many maranaos left their gold, cash money and valuables in their houses. "etona kami ngayon, pantaypantaylahatwalangdala. Wala kamingperasabankodahilpera naming ay nasabahaynamin" said the lady in one of the FGDs. Evacuees used to remember their way of life in Marawi City prior to the siege, some of them expressed how much they wanted to go back to their home, but due to security reason they were left with no choice but to wait for peace and order to be instated because the government said that it is not yet safe to go back home.

The predicament of the IDPs is that they could not get direct access to information on when can they possibly return. They only get information from the social media and friends "chismis" as they call it as they're not sure if these are true and not fake news. They barely see the officials giving statement also so they were like left in the dark.

An immediate need for alternative dwelling spaces to decongest the evacuation centers was also one of the pressing needs. Children of varying age suffering discomfort, fear and uncertainty about their present situation. Even home-based IDPs said that the relatives hosting them had a hard time dealing with their needs but still tried their best to provide them with food and basic necessity.

Furthermore, many evacuees are in need of medical assistance. Colds and respiratory illnesses are common, both in evacuation centers and home/community based evacuees aggravated by the changing weather. Many of the evacuees suffered from diseases caused by the unsanitary dwelling and lack of hygiene such as skin rashes, allergies, and other water borne diseases.

Selling the family food packs to buy other necessities such as fresh food, school supplies and other things was also observed. All of them expressed their hope to receive cash assistance from the government and other service providers more than anything else. The complaints of the IDPs about the family food packs is that they have been eating NFA rice, noodles and sardines for 2 months now and many have been suffering from mild to acute stomachache. There should be equitable amount of family food packs and if possible consider variation of food items.

Finally, the IDPs were thankful because they get to meet people who are generous enough to help them. In the midst of all the pain and difficulties, the trauma and the discrimination, there are still people who reached out to them. They don't want to be called "luoy" but they have no other means for now. "Maratabat"- pride and respect that's what manarano culture is all about and they hold on to that values.

How can RICAA influence the response

multiple issues surfaced as the number of IDPs in the evacuation centers continued to increase. The rich information gathered from the ground during the RICAA activity became an inspiration for IOM to continue the advocacy to share the information to other stakeholders, make use of the CCCM cluster a platform to communicate the needs of the IDPs and that these be used as baseline in the programming and response as well as promoting accountability as service providers.