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## ADVOCACY BRIEF

# PARTICIPATORY DATA PROCESSES TO BENEFIT DISPLACED PEOPLE

## Key Findings and Recommendations from the Independent Evaluation of the Profiling of Internal Displacement in the Island Provinces of BARMM Region, Philippines

This advocacy brief provides insights into how a collaborative data process has contributed to more effective and sustainable outcomes for communities affected by internal displacement. It draws on the independent evaluation of the profiling of the internal displacement situation in the island provinces of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The brief also sheds light on the tangible results from JIPS' work and informs its continuous efforts to improve its approach. It offers key pointers to how the impact of such processes can be further amplified, highlighting the unique opportunity that the multi-stakeholder exercise holds for the newly created BARMM government to address the challenge of internal displacement in alignment with their pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This brief can furthermore inform and inspire stepped-up practice in line with the United Nation's Secretary-General's (UNSG) call for an all-out effort. Specifically, the UNSG highlights the need for an integrated approach across disciplines and collective action for the whole of society because "internal displacement is a human rights issue at the intersection of many of the crises that plague humanity globally".<sup>1</sup> Multi-stakeholder, participatory data processes – such as profiling – play a vital role in brokering the critical partnerships and generating the needed common evidence-base that together enable concerted action and agency in data.

### SNAPSHOT OF KEY FINDINGS:

- One of the most significant findings was the **use of data to inform policymaking at the national and subnational levels**, including the passing of the Patikul Protection of IDPs Ordinance.
- The **implementation of the birth registration program** is widely recognized as one of the most critical actions taken based on the profiling recommendations.
- Profiling efforts have revealed a considerably **larger population of IDPs than previously estimated**. Additionally, this process has aided in identifying the existence of home-based IDPs who were not receiving sufficient care and support.
- The collaborative process that underpinned the profiling exercise has further **strengthened the existing collaborative efforts** among organisations.
- During the evaluation, **IDPs expressed newfound confidence** in effectively communicating their protection needs to those responsible.
- A consensus emerged among the affected communities, highlighting that the most notable change observed since the profiling exercise is the **timely response during disasters**.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Philippines (24 November 2022). "UN Philippines chief bats for law protecting the rights of internally displaced persons", <https://philippines.un.org/en/208656-un-philippines-chief-bats-law-protecting-rights-internally-displaced-persons>.

## Background

BARMM is an autonomous region in the Philippines located in the southwestern portion of the island of Mindanao and consists of the provinces of Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. BARMM comprises a population of 4.4 million, the majority of whom are Muslims, in a country that is mostly Christian.

Created in 2019, the BARMM government is in a period of transition (2019 to 2025) from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to BARMM with the aim that the newly established government will foster positive

change, including sustainable peace and increased development in a region that has suffered from persistent conflict for over five decades. The current political transition is accompanied by the development of bills and resolutions that will provide the basis for assisting Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on a political level. The profiling exercise was implemented at a critical time (between 2019 and 2020, with the final report published in January 2021) as it offered an opportunity to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority to develop critical knowledge and capacities to better respond to internal displacement challenges.

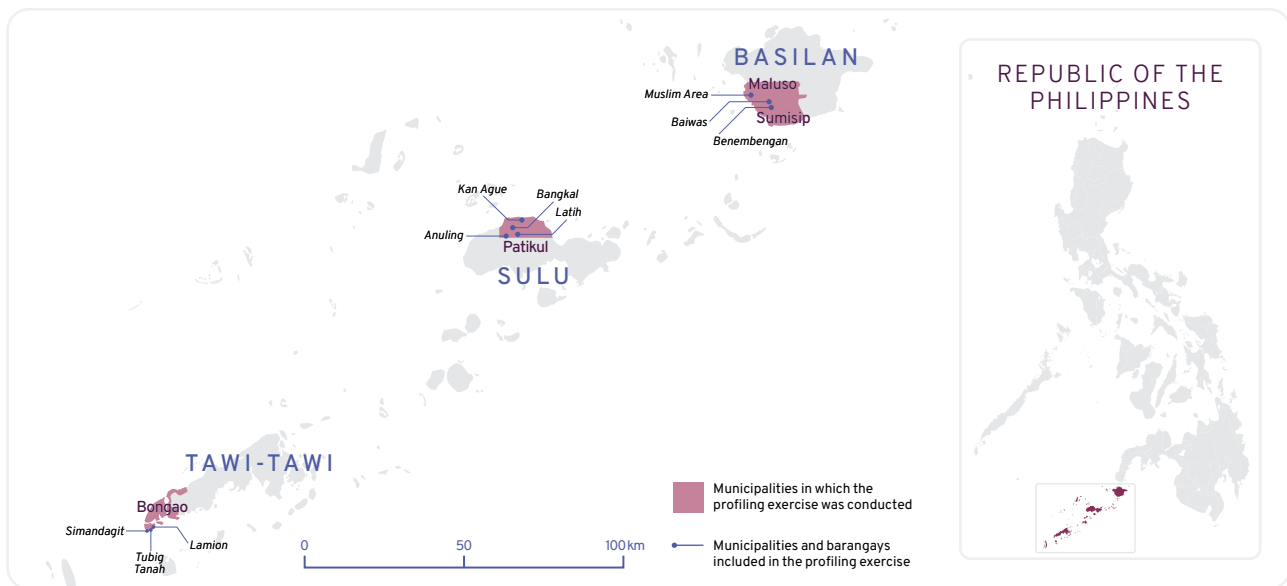


Figure 1: Map of the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi in the southern region of the Philippines, Mindanao.

## The Profiling Exercise

In July 2019, JIPS received a request for technical support to conduct a profiling exercise in the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi (BaSuITa). The exercise aimed to provide a common, evidence-based understanding of the living conditions of IDPs as well as Sama Bajau communities, who are at risk of statelessness.

JIPS defines profiling as a collaborative process for analysing displacement situations, and the emphasis on collaboration is what makes it unique. In the case of the Philippines, the process was led by UNHCR Philippines in coordination with the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD), the Ministry of the Interior Local Government (MILG), and the provincial governments of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. JIPS provided technical support throughout the process. Data collection was carried out by the Integrated Resource Development for Tri-People (IRDT) in November 2019, while data cleaning was conducted by UNHCR with JIPS' technical support between December 2019 and January 2020. JIPS then performed a preliminary analysis of the findings and facilitated virtual workshops to assist in-country

partners in developing a joint analysis approach, as well as a roadmap for community engagement activities and involvement of local actors from the three islands.

The [profiling reports](#) were shared during a series of [virtual events](#) in July and August 2021. The results can inform immediate and longer-term responses, help mitigate protection risks, and raise awareness of the impact of displacement.

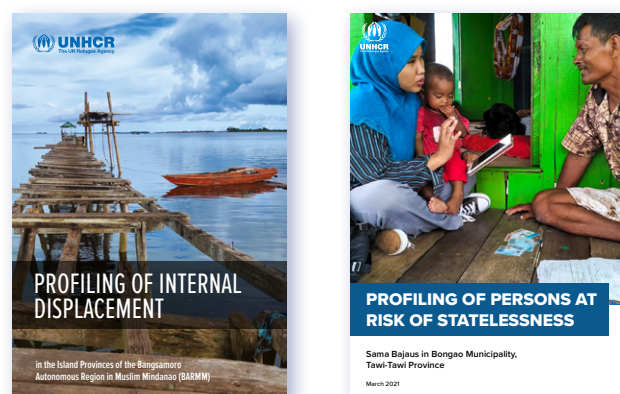


Figure 2: Profiling reports ([online here](#))

Prepared by:

## The Evaluation

The independent evaluation took place between January and May 2023, with the aim of assessing the relevance and effectiveness of the profiling process and collaborative structures. It also looked at the changes generated throughout and subsequent to the process that have informed solutions to displacement.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach that involved a desk review of relevant documents, accessing

data from websites and online portals. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with members of the Profiling Working Group (PWG), Technical Working Group (TWG), community leaders, and representatives from local governments (see figure 3). Additionally, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with the affected population and local government officials to gather their experiences and feedback on the program.

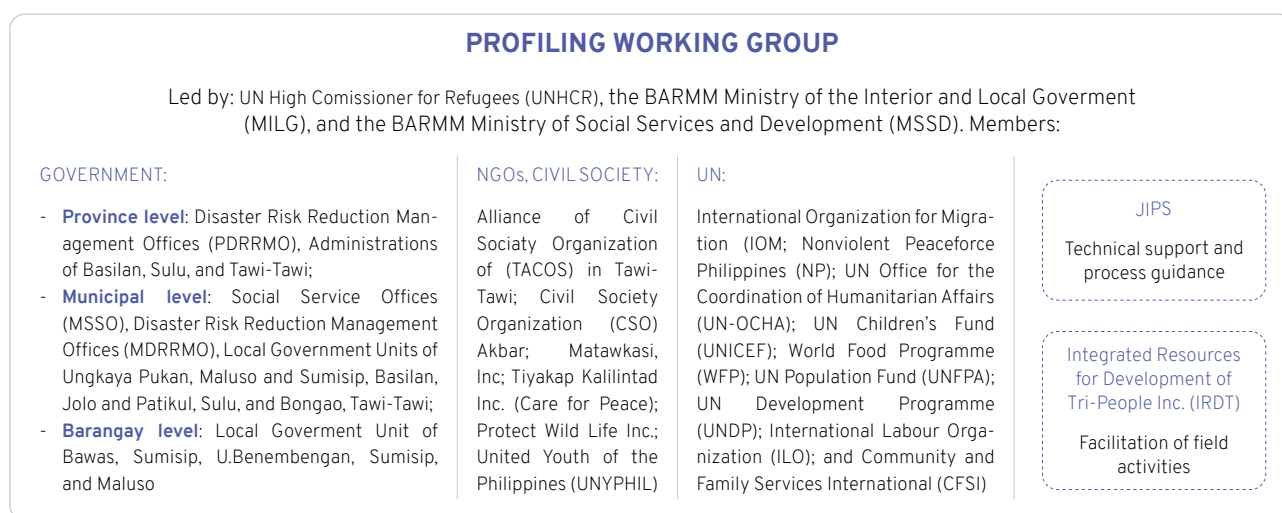


Figure 3: Overview of the Profiling Working Group (PWG) that was established in October 2019 to coordinate the exercise.<sup>2</sup>

The evaluation has two significant and possibly related limitations that influence the validity and reliability of the findings: i) the extended time interval between the profiling exercise and the evaluation may have affected participants' recall accuracy, and ii) this in turn may have contributed to the lack of response from some key stakeholders, depriving the study of valuable additional insights and information.

## Key Findings from the Evaluation of the Profiling Process and Generated Changes

This section examines the profiling process itself, including its collaborative structure, and the notable changes that have occurred during and following the exercise – underscoring the positive impact and outcomes achieved.

### Patikul Protection of IDPs Ordinance

**One of the most significant findings from the evaluation is the use made of the profiling data to inform policymaking at the national and subnational levels.** This resulted in the passing of the Patikul Protection of IDPs Ordinance. The

purpose of the ordinance ‘is to adopt a culture-sensitive and human-rights based approach for the promotion and protection of the rights of the Internally Displaced Person’. This ordinance provides a set of early warning and early response measures on how the municipality can protect IDPs, recognising and respecting the right to be protected against enforced or involuntary displacement, to receive humanitarian assistance, to be protected during displacement, and to return safely to their homes or be given the benefits of settlement elsewhere.

The ordinance was submitted to the provincial legislative body for reference and possible replication in the future. Other barangay LGUs in the Province of Tawi-Tawi have also passed similar policy legislations through barangay resolutions to protect their respective vulnerable constituents.

Additionally, UNHCR is actively engaged in advocating for the passage of the IDP Bill at both the BARMM and national levels, employing profiling data to strengthen their advocacy efforts. Similarly, UNHCR supported the UN Resident Coordinator in crafting a durable solutions strategy for internally displaced populations in Mindanao.

<sup>2</sup> The BARMM government was represented by multiple key entities, including the MSSD, the MILG, the Regional Human Rights Commission (now Bangsamoro Human Rights Commission), and the Municipal Social & Services Department. Additionally, governmental representatives from the provincial, municipal, and Barangay levels were also present during the profiling.

## Uncovering Displacement Needs and Empowering Interventions through Data

In the context of the Philippines' displacement situation, the scarcity of data remains a challenge in providing appropriate interventions to displaced families. However, it was stated that the profiling exercise has provided **data to humanitarian and development actors and state partners**, enabling them to offer specific interventions. Furthermore, it was indicated that the profiling exercise led to the harmonisation of the IDP displacement data in the island provinces, **resulting in the identification of a significantly larger number of IDPs** than previously thought. The data also helped local governments and other stakeholders to **recognise the presence of home-based<sup>3</sup> IDPs who were not receiving adequate care**.

## Strengthening of Collaborative Efforts

In BARMM, the government, UN agencies, and civil society organisations had a strong working relationship that predates the profiling. Among them, UNHCR, the implementing partner, had a significant presence on the ground and possessed knowledge about the organisations and their partnerships. However, the general consensus gained during the evaluation is that **the collaborative process that underpinned the profiling exercise has further strengthened the existing collaborative efforts among organisations**, especially with other members of the PWG. UNHCR highlighted as a positive aspect the fact that there still are a lot of commitments from the field, especially from the project partners, and including the local CSOs, even though UNHCR doesn't have any continuing, ongoing partnership agreements with them.

## A Foundation for Effective, Statistically-driven Joint Responses

The collaborative approach has helped to establish a sustainable platform for shared decision-making, ownership, and responsibility, thereby **providing a foundation for effective, data-driven joint responses**. In the context of the Philippines, the collaborative process proved highly relevant as it not only captured the attention of other UN agencies but also served as a **valuable baseline of statistical information** for the relevant stakeholders.

## Birth Registration as an Outcome of the Recommendations

The profiling report emphasises the importance of providing displaced families with access to documentation, which is crucial for them to access basic services and to protect them from arrest or movement restrictions in conflict areas. **The implementation of the birth registration program is widely recognized as one of the most critical actions taken based on the profiling recommendations**.

## IDPs' Improved Confidence in Effectively Communicating their Protection Needs to Those Responsible.

The profiling exercise has captured the voices of the people on the ground and benefited from a significant contribution of the affected communities. During the evaluation, **IDPs expressed newfound confidence in effectively communicating their protection needs to those responsible**. Furthermore, they expressed appreciation for being recognized by both humanitarian and government agencies in addressing their specific needs.

## Improved Relief and Protection

There was a consensus among the participants of the affected communities that **a timely response during a disaster is the most significant change seen since the profiling**. They emphasised the importance of immediate relief assistance and improved services for the affected communities. Moreover, there is a general agreement among the participants that the protection environment for displaced communities has improved since the profiling exercise.

<sup>3</sup> Home-based IDPs refers to displaced families or individuals who sought temporary shelter with their relatives, friends, and/or by renting a house or apartment. They do not stay in government established community-based centres or informal settlements.

## Key Recommendations to Enhance Joint Data Processes

The recommendations in this section incorporate inputs from stakeholders and the evaluation team. They aim to address challenges and enhance the effectiveness of the collaborative data process by offering comprehensive suggestions for future actions and improvements based on gained knowledge.

### Involve national government entities

The collaborative exercise primarily focused on engaging stakeholders at the regional and local levels, including government entities. However, to enhance the positive outcomes of the collaborative data process, it is critical to **also involve relevant national government entities with decision-making authority, alongside regional and local institutions**. This will not only ensure greater participation and institutional buy-in from relevant ministries at all levels, but also provide access to necessary resources and funding for the profiling process and subsequent response efforts. It would furthermore facilitate raising awareness and advocating for the needs and rights of the displaced population in BARMM and at the national level, which can further strengthen comprehensive and coordinated approaches to addressing displacement in the Philippines.

### Periodically update the profiling results

Given the dynamic and prolonged nature of the displacement context in BaSulTa and other regions, it is crucial to regularly update data to ensure the ongoing relevance of information for delivering targeted, effective, resilient, and sustainable interventions for displaced populations. It is thus recommended to develop, agree on as part of the collaborative data process, and implement a **comprehensive plan on how to periodically update the profiling results**. This would include surveying new displaced populations to gather up-to-date information on numbers, locations, reasons for displacement, and duration. The frequency of data collection depends on the local context and available funding, but a period longer than two years may compromise continuity. The evaluation of the profiling exercise could be linked to the first light data collection exercise to review the relevance of the original data whilst also assessing changes generated, with the possibility of conducting a more comprehensive review of the evolving datasets where displacement is notably prolonged after a suitable interval.

### Handover to local actors after the exercise

This would furthermore involve linking the completion of the exercise with a **handover process to local actors** – ideally a consortium comprising local authorities, civil society organizations, and other relevant in-country stakeholders<sup>4</sup> – to ensure accountability and sustainability. It would also entail strengthening relevant capacities and resources to

support ongoing data efforts and ensure their effectiveness. JIPS could provide light touch technical support.

### Regularly follow-up on data collection

Additionally, following the profiling and agreed during the associated collaborative process, a mechanism should be implemented to **maintain regular follow-up with all actors involved in data collection on IDPs, to document and coordinate their ongoing data outputs**. In alignment with the Grand Bargain's commitment<sup>5</sup>, establishing a centralised data repository involving key stakeholders (such as national, regional, and local governments, humanitarian and development actors, and CSOs) is recommended. The repository should ideally be overseen by the national statistical office together with the government entity responsible for IDPs, and supported by capable local partners and/or regional statistical organisations and international agencies. Such a consolidated data system would offer comprehensive, accurate, reliable, and updated information, thereby enhancing analysis and facilitating informed decision-making. It would not only reduce operational costs associated with data collection but also promote coordinated efforts to effectively respond to the needs of affected communities.

### Implement monitoring and evaluation

**Defining and implementing a monitoring and evaluation system would allow to track progress against the profiling recommendations** at the regional and provincial levels. This system should entail a dedicated commitment from a local implementing partner, a member of the Profiling Working Group, or another appropriate setup comprising various stakeholders with the necessary capacity to monitor and assess the impact of the recommendations over a specified period (at least six to 12 months after the completion of the profiling process). JIPS could provide valuable support to partners during such a monitoring phase, including evaluating how the results are used and contributing to technical discussions around the data.

### Continuously advocate for implementation of recommendations

Additionally, it is suggested to **continuously advocate with ministries that were not part of the PWG but have the capacity to act on the recommendations** in their respective areas of work. This would contribute to the sustainability of responses. It would also help address a key gap identified through the independent evaluation of the exercise in the BaSulTa region, in terms of uncertainty on how local governments proceeded with implementing recommendations and addressing longer-term needs in target location.

<sup>4</sup> In the case of BARMM, UNHCR and IRDT, the implementer's partners, would be well suited to carry out the data collection exercises.

<sup>5</sup> The workstream 5 of the Grand Bargain, Improve Joint and Impartial Needs Assessment. Available in: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/improve-joint-and-impartial-needs-assessments>

## Engage with the security sector

During the profiling exercise in the BaSulTa provinces, the fragile security situation was highlighted as a major challenge. Enumerators encountered difficulties accessing uncleared areas during data collection as security forces did not allow them to enter. Additionally, there were reports that the military and/or the police did not fully

understand the purpose of the profiling exercise. To address these challenges and facilitate smoother fieldwork, it is recommended that **the exercise partners engage with the security sector, particularly the military and police, who had a significant impact on profiling activities by limiting access to uncleared areas.**

## Final considerations

# Integrating Internal Displacement in Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development became the first international framework to explicitly recognize the importance of addressing internal displacement within sustainable development policies and programs. Built upon the principle of "leaving no one behind," it presents a unique opportunity for governments to integrate strategies and actions to tackle internal displacement issues alongside the pursuit of sustainable development goals (SDGs).<sup>6</sup> The 2030 Agenda highlights the vital importance of systematic data collection to measure progress and inform decision-making towards achieving the SDGs. Notably, Target 17.18 acknowledges the necessity of assisting developing countries in enhancing their capacity to gather high-quality, timely, and reliable data that is disaggregated by various characteristics such as income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, and geographic location, as relevant within national contexts.<sup>7</sup>

The Grand Bargain commits to coordinating and streamlining data collection processes to ensure compatibility, quality, and comparability while minimising intrusion into the lives of affected people. It emphasises conducting the overall assessment in a transparent and collaborative process. The profiling exercise effectively embodies this collaborative structure, aligning with the principles set forth in the Grand Bargain. To ensure the long-term sustainability of the process, it is essential to establish a robust mechanism for regularly updating the collected data. This ensures the accuracy and relevance of the information over time, enabling stakeholders to make informed decisions and adapt interventions according to the evolving needs of the affected populations.

The outcome of the profiling exercise holds a unique opportunity for the newly created BARMM government to address the challenge of internal displacement in alignment with their pursuit of the SDGs.

## Added Value of the JIPS Approach

JIPS – the Joint Internal Displacement Profiling Service – works to support Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to progress towards Durable Solutions and live in dignity while doing so. It does so by providing context-specific and neutral support to humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors together with government entities and displacement-affected communities, to jointly generate and use data and analysis in displacement situations.

Experiences and lessons learnt from the exercise in the Philippines and elsewhere have helped JIPS to continuously enhance its approach, including refining its support and strong emphasis on the use of data, which has become a key pillar of JIPS' current strategy 2021-2023. JIPS acknowledges that the real impact of the profiling, particularly regarding how information and data are disseminated, has become evident in the projects carried out after the Philippines.

This commitment to adapt and improve enables JIPS to address the complex and evolving challenges faced by displaced populations, both in the Philippines and worldwide. JIPS' dedication to refining its methodologies and incorporating feedback not only enhances its own performance but also contributes to the broader field of humanitarian and development efforts, enabling better coordination and more impactful interventions for displaced communities.

**About the evaluation:** This evaluation was conducted independently under the leadership of Federico Redin and Tony Lloyd-Jones, while Abdunnasser B. Binasang played a key role in collecting qualitative data in the province islands. JIPS and UNHCR have supported the evaluation by facilitating the process, including granting access to project partners and materials.

6 Rahmaty, M. and Alice Debarre, A. (2019) Connecting National Policies to the SDGs in Tackling Internal Displacement. IPI Global Observatory, Arpil 19. Available in: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/04/connecting-national-policies-sdgs-tackling-internal-displacement/>

7 IDMC (2015) Leaving no one behind: Internal displacement and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. IDMC Briefing Paper. Available in: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201509-global-leaving-no-one-behind-en.pdf>