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Migration and Violent Conflict in Mindanao

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Abstract

The contemporary conflict situation embedded in the social fabric of Mindanao in the southern part of the Philippines is rooted in the historical, systematic, and collective marginalisation and minoritisation of the indigenous Filipino Muslims or Moros and native Lumad peoples. This paper argues that the minoritisation of the erstwhile indigenous and majority Moros as well as the non-Christian and non-Muslim Lumads of Mindanao was the result of a series of deliberate programs to voluntarily resettle or repopulate the area with predominantly Christian migrants from Luzon and the Visayas (i.e., the northern and central parts of the country, respectively). This numerical domination of the indigenous Moro (and Lumad) minorities by non-indigenous (and predominantly Christian) settlers was exacerbated by (and may have in fact produced the conditions for) economic deprivation of the indigenous Moro and Lumad peoples.

The paper also argues that the armed and violent conflict in Mindanao has led to large-scale and involuntary out-migration (particularly from the areas of direct and heavy conflict) mainly in the form of human displacements and movements (primarily involving Moros and Lumads who are non-combatants) out of the conflict zones. This paper illustrates the dynamics of how conflict situations interface with human migratory flows. More specifically, it makes the observation that the conflict in Mindanao is rooted in the voluntary in-migration to the area which eventually led to the minoritisation of the indigenous Moro and Lumad peoples. Moreover, as a consequence of the conflict, there has been a large-scale and involuntary movement outward or away from the conflict areas.

Keywords

Philippines, Mindanao, migration, armed conflict, population displacements

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Introduction: Human Migration and Armed Conflict

Migration is not only a means to sustain or establish a better livelihood but also a means to sustaining life itself. During times of violent and armed conflicts, migration can be a survival strategy. Violent conflicts have the potential to (and typically can inevitably) lead to conditions that produce significant collateral damage particularly involving innocent civilians or non-combatants. Under such dire circumstances, migrating away from the areas of conflict becomes the most logical and obvious survival strategy.

Persons or groups are forcibly displaced due to direct threats to their lives (or are collectively persecuted) either by particularistic (i.e., non-state) armed groups or by the authority-holders themselves (e.g., police or military forces). Often, these persecuted persons may be considered (but usually not rightfully so) as active combatants. In almost all instances, the victims or casualties of conflicts are peaceful non-combatants. This unfortunate reality convinces others to leave involuntarily for less deadly areas. Not a few are forced out or dislodged from their areas of residence by the sheer extent of armed conflicts. Many also fear the loss of their lives even as they have already lost their livelihoods due to the conflict. In such displacements, these innocent non-combatants are considered by the direct combatants (e.g., state and non-state or anti-state groups) as part of the natural collateral costs of the conflict. In any case, discriminatory or other offensive acts are likely to have already been committed against the persons or groups concerned and that the threat of more serious physical harm is imminent enough to compel them to flee and to constrain the prospects of immediate return to their areas of origin or birth.

Population displacements can also occur under conditions of serious and growing perceptions of insecurities and/or uncertainties as an indirect consequence of armed or violent conflict situations. These insecurities can range from real or perceived prospects of pauperisation; collective marginalisation and outright neglect and mismanagement on the part of duty-bearers or authority-holders. Increasing landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, and food insecurity due to ongoing (or the prospective occurrence of) conflict situations can also lead to collective population displacements and the search for alternative locations as a source of income, livelihood and collective security.

While migration can result from violent conflict situations, the former can also create the conditions for the eruption of the latter. The systematic placement of humanity in an area that creates the conditions for the marginalisation and minoritisation of the indigenous collective population can also provide the trigger for the onset as well as the continuation of violent conflicts. Potential migrants, fuelled by a desire to find better social and economic opportunities for themselves and their families, can and do willingly move. The movement may even be sustained and encouraged by way of deliberate government policies and programs. In the context of perceived growing uncertainties (not necessarily resulting from conflict situations) over their current state of affairs, large numbers of people may decide to move to areas where better opportunities are perceived to abound. Population pressures, social and political uncertainties, as well as chronic poverty are the motivations to move.

In general, this paper deals with the link between migration and conflict as can be described in Mindanao at the southern part of the Philippines. This paper intends to demonstrate that violent conflicts can result from minoritisation and marginalisation caused by large-scale and deliberate (as well as voluntary) in-migration programs even as such conflicts in turn can cause involuntary out-migration or displacement.[1] The paper illustrates that population movements can be both a cause and effect of violent conflict.

The Armed Conflict in Mindanao

Although the contemporary setting for the armed conflict in Mindanao has been raging for the past 35 years, its roots go back centuries. A World Bank background document describes the conflict in Mindanao as "the second-oldest on earth, after the conflict between North and South Sudan (which can be dated back to the 10th century, or much earlier if one includes the continual strife between Egyptians and Nubians in Pharaonic times" (Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005, 1). Mindanao island as well as the surrounding areas of Sulu were inhabited by distinct ethno-linguistic tribes or sultanates during the pre-colonial period. These sultanates were already established and largely Islamised long before the Spaniards colonized the islands in 1565. "The Sulu sultanate was established in 1451 … [while] the Maguindanao sultanate was established in the second decade of the 17th Century" (Santos 2005, 1). It was during the arrival of the colonizers that the conflict can be said to have taken root and is now embedded into the fabric of contemporary Philippine society.

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[1] Conflict can be a function of deep ideological and religious divides as well as socio-economic cleavages. Examples in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe are not lacking.

At present the principal armed groups involve the Philippine Government or more specifically the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and its adjunct, the Philippine National Police (PNP) on one side, and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and its splinter groups, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) on the other. The MNLF was established in 1969 as an armed organized response of Muslims against the injustices of the Luzon-based (and predominantly Christian) national leadership. The MNLF can be said to represent the struggle of the Moro people (i.e., the Bangsamoro) to build their distinct identity and territory for Muslim Mindanao.

The term Moros collectively refers to the Muslims of Mindanao. Originally, it was used as a pejorative label by the Spaniards against the Moors in reference to the people who were indigenous to North Africa who for several centuries occupied the Iberian peninsula beginning in the early 700s. Later, the Americans and the predominantly Christian Filipinos themselves adopted the term to discriminate against the Muslims in Mindanao. Eventually, however, the label became widely and proudly used by the Filipino Muslims themselves to further underscore their struggle against discrimination by Spanish, American, and later the Philippine government itself. Aside from the Moros, there are also the native non-Muslim and non-Christian people called Lumads.

The ASG is seen more as a criminal bandit group engaged mainly in kidnap-for-ransom activities and disguised as freedom fighters struggling to secure a distinct Moro identity and homeland. In addition to the MNLF, MILF, and ASG, there are also a number of other independent break-away groups and factions operating independently of (but sometimes in coordination with) the major combatant groups. Moreover, the communist New People's Army (NPA) has always been active in southern and central Philippines particularly the northern and western parts of Mindanao as well as eastern Visayas. Aside from the Moro-based groups, there are also Lumad-based as well as Christian-based groupings that received military equipment and training from the AFP. These are also known as "lost commands."

The conflict can be said to have rooted incompatibilities in collective identity-formation strategies between the indigenous population and the newcomers aggravated by persistent neglect and mismanagement on the part of the Manila-based national government. Santos (2005) makes a distinction between the Moro or Bangsamoro problem and the Mindanao problem in general. The former encompasses:

> … the historical and systematic marginalisation and minoritisation of the Islamised ethno-linguistic groups, collectively called Moros, in their own homeland in the Mindanao islands, first by colonial powers Spain from the 16th to the 19th Century, then the U.S. during the first half of the 20th Century, and more recently by successor Philippine governments dominated by an elite with a Christian-Western orientation since formal independence in 1946 (Santos 2005, 1).

The latter refers to:

> … the **broader Mindanao problem** of relationships *among* the three main peoples there (the majority Christian settlers/migrants and their descendants, the Moros or Muslims, and the indigenous highlander tribes or Lumads), and *with* the central Philippine government (Santos 2005, 2). [Emphases not mine]

Both of these problems are strongly related to one another and can be seen to be contributory to the conflict situation in Mindanao. Both these views emanate from different nation-building perspectives – one for the Moro (and Lumad) people of Mindanao and another for the Filipino nation-at-large (including Mindanao). Santos (2005) shows the conflict to be embedded in "a clash between two imagined nations or nationalisms, Filipino and Moro [or Mindanawon], each with their own narratives of the conflict" (Santos 2005, 1). The conflict that has resulted in Mindanao can be described as:

> … [on the one hand,] a conscious struggle to regain the lost centuries-old historical sovereignty of the independent Moro nation-states called sultanates over their old homeland in much of the Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan (Minsupala) islands. For the Philippine government and nation-state of the 20th Century, [on the other hand] this has been a matter of defending the territorial integrity of the country against secession and dismemberment among the three

> main island regions of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao (Luzviminda), enshrined no less as the three stars in the Philippine flag (Santos 2005, 1).

To address the centuries-old problem, previous governments have attempted to engage the local leaders of Mindanao specifically the sultans and local leaders. During the American period, for instance, the governors of (including representatives to the national legislature coming from) Mindanao or the so-called Non-Christian provinces were appointed up to the 1920s. Under succeeding administrations, the local leadership in Mindanao was accommodated as well.

Shortly after the fall of the authoritarian government under Ferdinand Marcos, an organic act was ratified establishing the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in August 1989. Republic Act 6734 or "An Act Providing for an Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao" sought:

> … to establish the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao [or ARMM], to provide its basic structure of government within the framework of the Constitution and national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines, and to ensure the peace and equality before the law of all people in the Autonomous Region (Article 1, Section 2).

The intention of the organic act was to address some of the root causes of the conflict, in particular the political marginalisation and neglect experienced by the Moros in Mindanao under the Manila-centred national leadership. The aim of RA 6734 is to provide a venue for the expression of autonomy of the Muslim provinces within the framework of the Philippine constitution. The idea was to include provinces that were historically affected by the armed conflict. Article 3, Section 2 provides that:

> The Regional Government shall adopt the policy of settlement of conflicts by peaceful means, and renounce any form of lawless violence as an instrument of redress.

In addition, a number of peace agreements were secured by the main parties to the conflict (e.g., the Philippine Government and the AFP as well as the MNLF and the MILF) mitigating to some extent any major armed confrontations. However, such peace agreements continue to be tentative in nature and are marked by violations on all sides leading to frequent resumptions of hostilities. Aggravating the situation is the absence of any peace agreements with the ASG and other marginal but (equally dangerous) break-away groups and lost commands including the NPA. Moreover, there are the internecine conflicts between Muslim clans that complicate the situation in Mindanao and which have been previously hidden or suppressed by the larger ideological and religious rifts that have existed (See Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005).

The ARMM is a special region created as a result of RA 6734. It is composed of the provinces of Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and the city of Marawi. As seen in Figure 1, the ARMM covers about four percent of the country's total land area and has a population of more than two million predominantly Muslim inhabitants (Dayag-Laylo 2004, 1). However, the focus of the research is not confined to the ARMM region but extends throughout the other conflict areas in Mindanao. The ARMM is located within the areas of conflict in Mindanao. The conflict areas are said to be located in the Muslim-majority areas of southern and western Mindanao (See Barandiarán 2002 and Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005). More specifically, these would be Region IX (e.g., the provinces of Basilan, Zamboanga del Norte, and Zamboanga del Sur); Region XI (e.g., Davao del Sur, Sarangani, South Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat); Region XII (e.g., Lanao del Norte and North Cotabato); and the ARMM.[2] These areas are illustrated in the map (See Figure 2).

In addition to tracing the root causes of the Mindanao conflict from in-migration, this paper also attempts to illustrate the extent of the impact of violent conflict on human migration away from the areas of conflict. As such, the situation obtaining in Mindanao is a classic illustration of how migration can trigger as well as be triggered by violent conflict. Population resettlement can create the conditions for the minoritisation and displacement or dislocation of the previously dominant population. Likewise, population displacements are likely to occur due to violent conflict brought about by (a) economic marginalisation, threatened livelihood, and poverty; and (b) social and cultural minoritisation and threatened collective identity (See Santos 2005, 2).

[2] The country is presently divided into 73 provinces clustered into 15 administrative regions including one administrative region in northern Philippines (the Cordillera Administrative Region or CAR) and ARMM as the autonomous region in southern Philippines.

The Resettlement of Mindanao and the Minoritisation of the Moros and Lumads

What historical migratory factors may have caused the eruption of the conflict in Mindanao? Conflict can be induced by the increasing social and political marginalisation of one group relative to another. This has certainly been the case in Mindanao for the Moros and Lumads. A significant trigger to the Mindanao conflict is the resettlement of "Moroland" by predominantly Christian settlers from Luzon and the Visayas (i.e., from the northern and central parts of the Philippines, respectively). Macapado Muslim cites this as one of the 10 major causes of the contemporary Moro conflict obtaining in Mindanao which are as follows:

> … (1) Forcible/illegal annexation of Moroland to the Philippines under the Treaty of Paris in 1898; (2) Military pacification; (3) Imposition of confiscatory land laws; (4) Indioization (or Filipinisation) of public administration in Moroland and the destruction of traditional political institutions; (5) Government-financed/induced land settlement and migration to Moroland; (6) Land grabbing/conflicts; (7) Cultural inroads against the Moros; (8) Jabidah Massacre in 1968 (during the first Marcos administration); (9) Ilaga (Christian vigilante) and military atrocities in 1970-72 (during the second Marcos administration); and (10) Government neglect and inaction to Moro protests and grievances (See Muslim 1994, 52-133 as cited by Santos 2005, 2).

The conflict in Mindanao cannot be described in isolation of the prominent role that migration has played in the creation of minority and majority communities. The systematic resettlement of Mindanao has led to the marginalisation and minoritisation of the indigenous (i.e., both Moro and Lumad) peoples who previously comprised the majority. The creation of this minority grouping was compounded by persistent neglect and exploitation

Voluntary, systematic, and large-scale migration to Mindanao from other parts of the archipelago began in the early part of the 20th century. More specifically, this would have to do with the land ownership and resettlement of Mindanao by migrants from Luzon (specifically the Ilocos region located in northern part of Luzon island) and the Visayas (specifically Cebu). The resettlement occurred at such a large scale that, today, there are now three main clusters of population groups found in Mindanao – the Lumads or indigenous peoples of Mindanao; the Moros; and the succeeding non-Mindanao (and predominantly Christian) settlers from the Visayas and Luzon.

The Moros are further sub-divided into 11 major ethno-linguistic groups – the Iranun (also known as Ilanun or Ilanum), Jama Mapun, Kalagan, Kalibugan, Magindanao, Maranao, Sama, Sangil, Tausug and Yakan. From being the dominant population in Mindanao, they now constitute 20 percent of the total population in southern Philippines (including Sulu).

The Lumads comprise the native communities in Mindanao who continue to practice their indigenous faith and have not converted to either Islam or Christianity. There are around 19 Lumad groups located in 19 provinces across Mindanao. These are the Ata, Bagobo, Banwaon, B'laan, Bukidnon, Dibabawon, Higaunon, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Mangguwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Matigsalug, Subanen, Tagakaolo, Talaandig, T'boli, Teduray, and Ubo.

According to the Lumad Development Centre, the Lumads together now make up from 12 to 13 million or about 18 percent of the total Philippine population. However, the Lumads are now considered the minority group in Mindanao comprising only six percent of the Mindanao and Sulu population as will be discussed further below.

The resettlement of Mindanao began in earnest as early as the 18th century. Moro was the term used by the Spanish and later the Americans to refer to the Muslims of Mindanao and Sulu especially those who resisted the colonizers. The non-Christian tribes and sultanates were misunderstood as uncivilized and treated as the pagan "enemies" of Christianised (and thus presumed to be civilized) communities.

The earliest Christian communities in Mindanao were mostly of Visayan origin. They have their beginnings in the Spanish colonial settlements established during the 18th and 19th centuries (See Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005). Rodil (2003) argues that some of these early Christian Visayan and Luzon settlers became indigenised and are now considered inherently part of the rest of the Mindanao population. They could no longer be identified with their previous area of origin. An example of an indigenised people are the Chavacanos in Zamboanga City who were originally the Mardicas or Merdicas or "free people" of Ternate in the Moluccas (present-day Indonesia). Apparently, they were Christian soldiers brought to Luzon (specifically in Cavite near Manila) by the Spaniards in 1663. Some of them may have been assigned to Zamboanga in the early 18th and in

succeeding centuries. Chavacano means "vulgar" and is a dialect that is largely derived from Spanish (See Rodil 2003).

During the 20th century, there have been numerous resettlement programs that brought more Christian settlers to Mindanao. The general impression especially by those living outside of Mindanao was that the area is a frontier zone (the original occupants not withstanding) and hence suitable for (Christian) occupation and settlement. It has been popularly called "the land of promise" that "evokes a land of milk and honey, a land where there is a cornucopia of opportunities for anybody wanting to have a share in God's bounties, for him/her to amass wealth in the process" (See Guiam 1996, 1).

All too often, Mindanao was referred to as a vast uninhabited place with abundant and unexploited resources. According to Rodil (2002), the first known settlers were Christian Cebuanos in the Visayas said to be around "100 families brought in by Gen. John Pershing from Cebu to Cotabato in 1912."[3] Guiam (1996) notes that:

> In 1913, the colonial government began to implement a policy of establishing agricultural colonies in the south allegedly to encourage the landless farmers from both Luzon and the Visayas to immigrate to the less populous areas in Mindanao. From 1913 to 1917, seven agricultural colonies were opened in Mindanao. These were: Pikit, Silik, Paidu Pulangi, Pagalungam, Glan and Talitay in the former empire province of Cotabato, and Momungan in Lanao province (Guiam 1996, 4).

Invariably, such a resettlement effort can be considered a strategy to neutralize the Moro insurgency by way of marginalizing the indigenous inhabitants of Mindanao. Guiam (1996) again notes that:

> In these colonies, the Christian settlers were mixed with the Islamised natives purportedly to promote "good working relations" between the two groups. Actually, the colonial government's aim in doing so was part of its divide and rule policy. First, it wanted to defuse an emerging peasant unrest in Luzon. Secondly, many of the volunteers to become beneficiaries of government-sponsored migrations to Mindanao were the "undesirables" and tough guys in some Luzon and Visayas communities (Guiam 1996, 4).

Indeed, as one Congressman from Mindanao quipped: "Mindanao is the promised land of the undesirables of Luzon and the Visayas" (Guiam 1996, 4).

The pace of resettlement of Mindanao increased after the Second World War. Between 1948 and 1960, approximately 1.2 million people (mostly spontaneous migrants from Cebu and the Ilocos) settled in Mindanao, particularly and notably in the provinces of Cotabato (southern Mindanao) and Davao (western Mindanao) (See Krinks 1970 and Go, et al. 2001). In the period of the 1960s and 1970s, an additional 1.5 million people took part in inter-provincial migrations (i.e., both state-sponsored / -supported and otherwise). Of this total, an estimated 362,000 people (or about 24 percent) migrated to Mindanao – around 318,000 going to the southern portion and another 44,000 to northern part (See Uhlig 1988).

Altogether from the 1950s to the 1970s, a total of 42 government-assisted resettlement projects were initiated covering more than almost 50,000 settler families and about three-fourths of a million hectares. As seen in Table 1 and Figure 3, Mindanao received around four times more settlers than the Visayas and almost twice compared to Luzon settlers. Moreover, the size of land covered by these settlement projects is about five times than that of Luzon or the Visayas.

In a survey done on migrants who have settled in the municipality of Lantapan located in Bukidnon province in northern Mindanao, Paunlagui and Saminguit (2001) observed that:

> … most of the migrant respondents had moved to Lantapan between 1950 and 1989. Most migrants came from the Visayas, Cebu and Bohol in particular, while the rest were from other parts of Bukidnon… Three-quarters were affiliated with the Catholic religion… The majority of the informants were born in the Visayan Islands, particularly Cebu (25%), Bohol (18.8%) and Leyte (6.3%). Twenty-five percent of the informants were born in Luzon and ethnically identified

[3] General Pershing was an American military commander who tasked to neutralize the so-called Moro insurrectionists in the early 1900s. He was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in the face of the Moro hostilities.

> themselves as Igorots (18.8%) from Bontoc Province and Ilocanos (6.3%) from Ilocos Province [north of Luzon]. Some migrants, however, traced their ancestry from outside Mindanao but had settled elsewhere in Mindanao before moving to Lantapan (Paunlagui and Saminguit 2001, 37).

In some instances, the motivation to migrate to Mindanao from Luzon or the Visayas was consistent with the impression that the area was a rich frontier land full of potential and promise for hardworking settlers. Panlagui and Saminguit documented the response of a long-time settler in Lantapan from Cebu who said that he was enticed by a relative to move by saying:

Let us go to Mindanao to own a piece of land. Land there is very cheap; we can buy it from the natives for 25 pesos. We can even exchange it with alcoholic beverages (Panlagui and Saminguit 2001, 37).As a consequence, the goal to integrate the archipelago by resettlement had induced the opposite effect – collective minoritisation of both Moros and Lumads.[4]

In 1948, the Moros made up around 26 percent of the total Mindanao population (including Palawan). Muslim and Guiam (1999) observed that "as a result of the influx of immigrants, the late 1960s had reduced Muslims to around 25% of Mindanao's population, from about 75% at the turn of the 20th century" (Muslim and Guiam 1999, 5). Moreover, they also note that:

> The most productive agricultural lands had been taken over by settlers growing rice, corn and coconuts, or transnational corporations producing rubber, bananas and pineapples. Wealthy loggers grabbed giant concessions and started to deforest the island. While Mindanao contributed substantially to the national treasury, little was sent back in the form of public infrastructure and social services, especially in the Muslim areas. Soon their leaders could no longer mediate and Moro defiance turned into open rebellion (Muslim and Guiam 1999, 5).

The proportion of Moros to the national population even went down further to 14 percent by 1970 (See Rodil 2002). In the case of the Lumads, a 1980 census indicated that they comprised less than six percent of the population of Mindanao and Sulu put together. To date, it is the migrants from Luzon and Visayas that now comprise the majority of the population. These migrant settlements now make up 70 percent of the population of Mindanao with most of the settlers moving during the 20th century (Rodil 2003).

However, as soon as these newly established settlements emerged, conflicts arose due to disruptions and displacements that had taken place which forced many of the Muslims and Lumads into subsistence agriculture (Gutierrez and Saturnino 2004, 8-9 and 17). Migrant settlements had "disrupted or destroyed prior communities whose cohesion derived mostly from non-state sources" (Scott 1998, 191). The twin phenomenon of minoritisation and marginalisation of the Muslims:

> … coincided with the resurgence of armed conflict in the 1970s. It is likely that the Muslim rural poor, having their access to productive resources and livelihood cut or restricted, thought of armed resistance as a way to correct a historical injustice. (Guterrez and Saturnino 2004, 18)

In the period before World War II up to the 1960s, provincial out-migration from Southern Philippines was attributed to numerous factors (e.g., the prevalence of banditry and other criminal elements in southern Philippines especially in Sulu and Zamboanga; the lack of economic opportunities in central Philippines; and the rugged terrain in northern Philippines particularly in the Ilocos region) (See Go, et al. 2001). From the 1930s up to the 1960s, the "land of promise" Mindanao was largely considered a frontier with abundant natural resources and, consequently, a desired area of in-migration (See Guiam 1996 and Muslim and Guiam 1999). This impression also contributed to the resettlement of Mindanao**.**

In general throughout the period of the 1970s, inter-provincial migratory flows are largely toward the metropolitan and more urban areas (e.g., Metropolitan Manila, Cebu City, and Davao City) as seen in Figure 4 . These occurrences are obviously due to the availability of better and brighter opportunities for social and economic advancement found in urban areas.

Nevertheless, the resettlement programs combined with the abundant natural and agricultural resources in the Southern areas have led to increased out-migration from the regions of the Ilocos, Bicol, and the Visayas

[4] For additional insights on the phenomenon of minoritisation in Mindanao, see Rodil 1994.

toward central and southern Mindanao up to the 1960s (See Go, et al. 2001). Despite the risks involved, migration to Mindanao became brisk up to this time. The major destination provinces in Mindanao were Cotabato, Agusan, Bukidnon, Zamboanga del Sur, Davao del Norte, and Davao del Sur (See Wernstedt and Simkins 1971 as cited by Go, et al. 2001, 7).[5] By the 1970s, Mindanao migration became even more pronounced especially toward the northern and southern parts.

By the late 1980s, the inter-provincial flows became much more mixed as seen in Figure 5. However, what have now become apparent are the movements across provinces within the Mindanao region.
What has been further observed is that such flows tend to be dominated by women (See Quisumbing and McNiven 2005, ii). As noted by Gultiano, et al. (2003), there is a significant degree of gender selectivity in migration patterns in the Philippines – "female out-migrants outnumber their male counterparts in areas of net out-migration, while men outnumber the women in areas of net in-migration" (Gultiano, et al. 2003, 76).[6] In the Philippines, the need for an immediate but stable income becomes the primary motivating factor for predominantly unmarried female migrants to seek wage-earning jobs. This factor arises because parents usually expects smaller remittances from their daughters once the daughters marry and have their own familial obligations (Quisumbing and McNiven 2005, 5 and See Lauby and Stark 1988).

The Marginalisation of Mindanao

Between two-fifths and two-thirds of the population of Mindanao today living in conflict-affected areas fall below the poverty line (Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005, 7). Poverty is indeed pronounced in Mindanao perhaps much more than in other parts of the country. According to the World Bank, 14 of the 20 poorest provinces in the Philippines are located in Mindanao (Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005, 5). Poverty incidence and poverty depth continue to rate high in ARMM provinces and some areas in Mindanao as can be seen in Table 2.

It has been observed that provinces experiencing violent conflict in Mindanao have exhibited significantly lower human development index (HDI) outcomes compared to provinces that did not experience conflict (Malapit, et al. 2003, 2).

Furthermore, self-ratings of poverty in Mindanao are higher than national self-ratings[7] as seen in Table 3 below. Pessimism also prevails in Mindanao, higher than the national average. In April 1995, the Social Weather Stations (SWS) surveyed respondents nationwide about how their quality of life at present compared with that of 12 months ago. The results nationwide indicated a net of -8 while in Mindanao it was -24.[8] In June 2003, the extent of pessimism nationwide was -22. For Mindanao it had increased to -41.

The extent of chronic poverty in the Mindanao conflict areas is further aggravated by the direct and indirect costs of the conflict itself. According to Schiavo-Campo and Judd (2005), in terms of immediate output losses[9], the direct cost of the conflict situation in Mindanao can be described as although it is largely confined in the actual areas of violent conflict with a relatively limited direct impact both on the rest of Mindanao and the Philippines (Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005, 5). In particular, the substantial costs were incurred during the major conflict periods from 1975 to 1982 and from 1997 to 2002 as well as the period of low-level conflict from 1983 to 1996. The World Bank estimates that:

> On average, the annual economic cost of the war in 1975–82 was around one percent of GDP for central and south-western Mindanao, and one half of one percent for the Philippines—or a total of about $200 million. The absolute cost estimate is about the same for 1997–2001. Assuming a much lower direct economic conflict cost during the "low-intensity" conflict years 1983–96, and using a discount rate of 7.5%, the direct output loss from the Mindanao conflict during 1970–2001 can be roughly estimated at between $2 and $3 billion... [with]

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[5] Indeed, Go, et al. (2001) would argue that migration to southern Mindanao is perhaps second only to migration to Metro Manila.

[6] If this is the case then where have the women gone? One possible explanation for this is that more women migrate outside the country. Another explanation is that women are more likely to migrate over shorter distances than men either for purposes of education and employment (See Gultiano, et al. 2003, 76).

[7] Although the self-ratings for the Visayas tend to be even higher than in Mindanao, the occurrence of conflict situations in the former is not as prevalent as in the latter.

[8] The figure is the difference between those that said their lives were better now compared to 12 months ago minus those who said it was worse. Interestingly, the results for Muslim Mindanao for that survey was +27.

[9] Frequent descriptions of conflict areas include the burning of houses and mosques as well as looting on the part of military and policy authorities (See Busran-Lao 2005, 11-12). Indeed, it is also not uncommon for returning displaced persons to find their homes and properties looted or destroyed (See Norwegian Refugee Council 2005).

> the number of casualties … estimated at about 120,000 over the two decades (Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005, 5).

In terms of its indirect costs, the conflict has resulted in the displacement of more than two million people with about half being displaced in 2000 alone (Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005, 5). Indeed, there is evidence to indicate that the majority of those displaced by the conflict are subsistence farmers and their families (Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005, 7). This large-scale displacement has resulted in the substantial exodus (albeit illegally) of Muslim migrants to the neighbouring area of Sabah. Moreover, there are the additional costs in terms of inhibited or deflected investments and reductions in agricultural output production. Considering the total indirect impact of the conflict on business investments and agricultural productivity, the overall economic cost for Mindanao could reach well over $10 billion during the period from 1975 to 2002 (Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005, 6).

Poverty is certainly considered a significant correlate for violent conflict and migration inasmuch as the overall factors that lead to conflict in Mindanao are numerous and complexly interrelated. Nevertheless, poverty is (or more specifically, deep disparities in income and human development opportunities are) seen as a major underlying cause for the emergence of conflict situations in the area.[10] The anecdotal evidence illustrating poverty as a cause for violent conflict and the inverse relations (i.e., that war worsens poverty) are common in the literature (Malapit, et al. 2003, 2).

Involuntary Displacements in Mindanao Conflict Areas

While it can be said that internal migration can be prompted by the search for better economic and social opportunities, it is also likely that they are motivated or triggered by serious considerations of survival. Provincial out-migration rates are high in areas with equally high rates of population displacements due to the prevalence of violent conflicts.

Most displaced persons in Mindanao are Muslims. Oxfam estimates that about 85 percent of those affected by the conflict in Mindanao in 2000 were Muslims while 17 percent were Christians and 7 percent were from Lumads (See World Bank 2003, 10). The actual extent of population displacement in Mindanao that is directly attributable to armed conflict situations is difficult to ascertain given the complexity of factors involved in the intended decision to move. However, the extent of population displacements in Mindanao due to conflict have been estimated given the direct interventions of international and local aid agencies such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC),the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), and the Ecumenical Commission on Displaced Families (ECDF) as well as government agencies like the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

As far as net out-migration is concerned, during the period from 1990 to 1995 the top five provinces with the highest rate of out-migration are located in Region VIII (Southern Leyte); Region XI (South Cotabato and Surigao del Sur); and ARMM (Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur) (Gultiano, et al. 2003, 86).[12] Not surprisingly, these are also major displacement areas as well as flashpoint areas of armed conflict as seen in Figure 6.

Between 2001 to 2003, the number of displaced persons in Mindanao decreased relative to the level of conflict taking place in the affected areas. In 2001, a total of 10 conflict incidents were observed displacing some 150,000 persons (See Figure 7).

A year later, in 2002, the number of reported armed encountered between the major combatants involved increased to 11 although the total number of displaced families went down to 17,000 (or around 100,000 individuals) as seen in Figure 8. The number of recorded displacements went down further to 55,000 persons by 2003 as seen in Figure 9. However, the number of reported displaced persons increased again as can be seen in Figure 10 with some 158,000 persons being displaced by conflicts occurring from January to September 2005 alone. Not coincidentally, these areas used to be high in-migration provinces as discussed above and continue to be areas of high poverty incidence.

The Impact of Involuntary Displacement

Displacement migration can lead to observable changes in gender and family roles (See Norwegian Refugee

[10] While poverty is evident in violent conflict situations, the direction of causality between the two is not so apparent (See Malapit, et al. 2003, 4).

[12] See Appendix for specific details on inter-provincial migration rates.

Council 2005). Male evacuees or displaced persons would often loose their traditional source of authority in having to be more dependent upon the support networks found in evacuation sites. This can lead to emotional frustration, depression, and loss of self-esteem which can in turn lead to domestic violence as well as increased smoking and alcohol intake. On the other hand, food and welfare agencies are more likely to divert relief resources (e.g., food rations, water, clothing, etc.) toward women making them more occupied not only with daily (i.e., normal) household chores but also with emergency and survival operations.

A significant number of displaced persons refuse to return to their places of origin after leaving the evacuation centres due to the absence or disappearance of their livelihoods. Many eventually decide to move to other communities / provinces instead (See Norwegian Refugee Council 2005). The World Bank noted in late 2001 that around 849,000 displaced persons had already left evacuation centres and have either returned or relocated elsewhere (See Table 4). Around 90 percent of this total is from the ARMM and Region XII – the main conflict areas.

The unfinished nature of the conflict precludes any degree of certainty in the lives of displaced families especially those living in areas in and around former Muslim secessionist camps.[13] Many formerly displaced persons continue to worry about their security and think about the possibility of the recurrence of the armed conflict in their communities of origin. As a consequence, the planning horizons of people in these areas tend to be short and limited (See Norwegian Refugee Council 2005 and World Bank 2003).

Summary and Conclusions

The above discussion has illustrated the dynamic link between migration and violent conflict. In the main, the conflict situation in Mindanao can be said to result from the minoritisation of the erstwhile Moro and Lumad populations by way of the voluntary relocation of predominantly Christian settlers from Luzon and the Visayas. At the same time, the conflict situation has in turn led to involuntary population displacements in Mindanao and beyond in order to escape and survive the armed conflict in the area. Moreover, the prevalence of conflict can be a function of the prevalence of poverty. These flare-ups between the warring parties are in turn aggravated by military counter-operations.

What the case demonstrates is that conflicts are likely to ensue due to deliberate or voluntary population movements that lead to the creation of an erstwhile indigenous minority. Likewise, conflicts are more likely to be accompanied by involuntary or forced displacements especially so when there is a convergence of economic marginalisation and social minoritisation combined with political neglect. Ironically, the twin occurrence of poverty and minoritisation in Mindanao have, in turn, been brought about by significant levels of in-migration coming from the predominantly non-Muslim (i.e., Christian) areas of Luzon and the Visayas. The entry of new settlers and the creation of dissimilar communities and cultures in Mindanao has occasioned the kind of conflict that has obtained in that area since during the colonial period.

Poverty and ethnic minoritisation are the conditions that impel the emergence and continuation of armed conflicts in Mindanao. Economic and social disparities between indigenous communities and newcomers can be significant motivational factors for political conflicts. Population displacements induced by such conflict situations can lead to serious consequences and implications in all major respects. The inability or unwillingness of people to return to their homes can also give rise to conflict situations in resettlement areas as well as create hostile conditions against them.

In the final analysis, it is thus possible to establish a link between the formation of new migrant settlements, the occurrence of violent conflicts, and population displacements. In light of this convergence, the state as an entity that is able to provide the driving forces for the instigation (and perpetuation) of conflict is undeniable. Government-encouraged as well as –sponsored resettlement programs; economic investment policies that attract extractive industries without regard to indigenous and traditional values; and even mismanagement and neglect of minority communities can contribute to the significant rise in disparities that provide the foundation for the emergence of conflict situations in Mindanao.

[13] The more recent literature on inter-provincial migration emphasize the role of migration as a kind of collective or family strategy to address common but serious concerns such as physical and material security. Moreover, the choice of who migrates also becomes a family decision intended to diversify against risk (See Quisumbing and McNiven 2005, 2).

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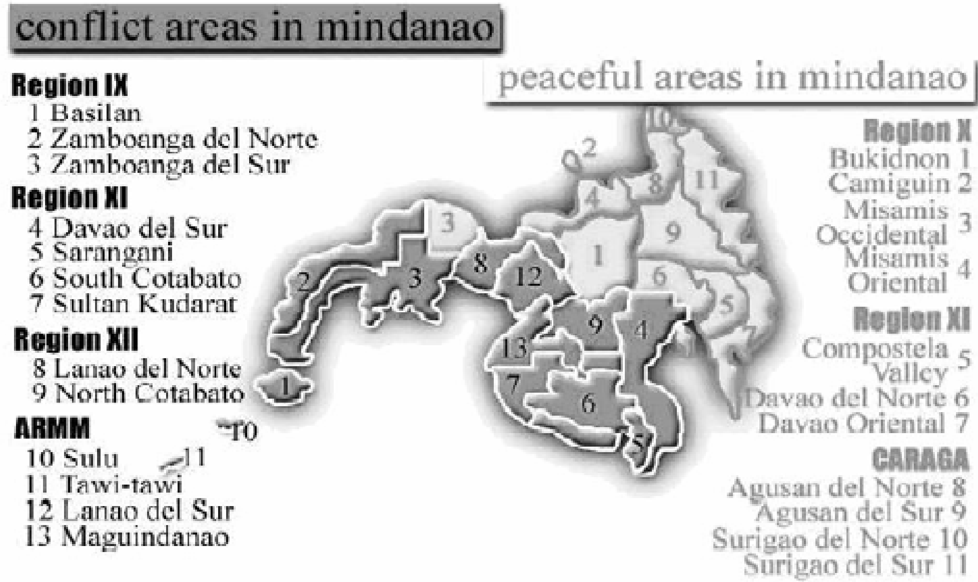
Figures

Figure 1. The ARMM

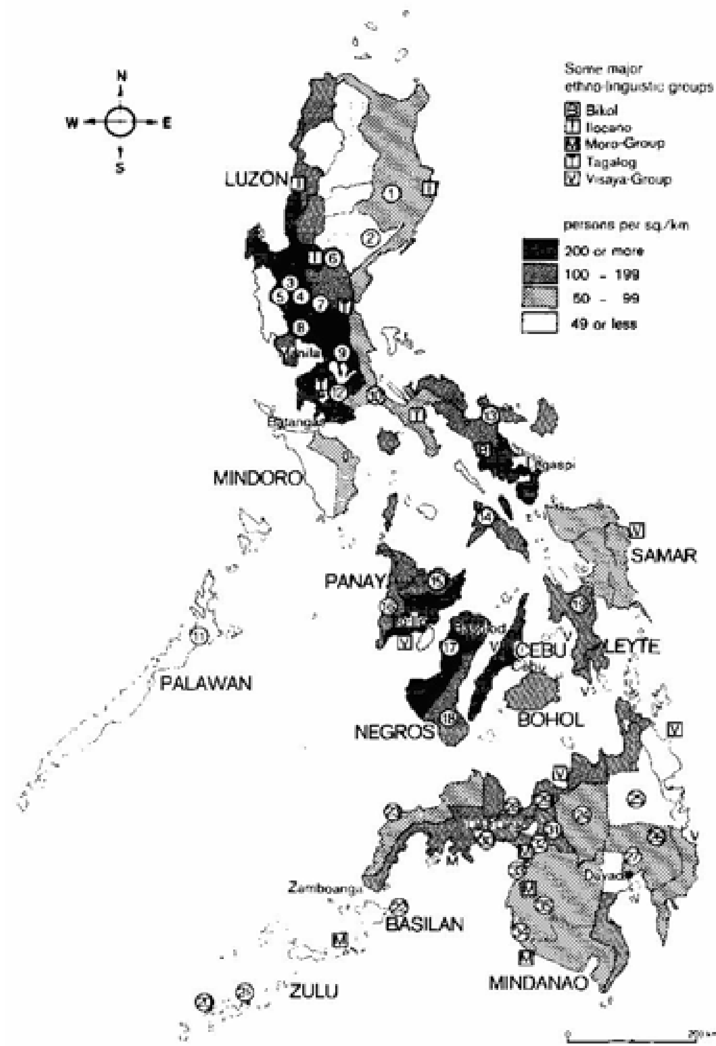
Source: http://www.answers.com/topic/regions-of-the-philippines

Figure 2: Conflict and Peaceful Areas in Mindanao



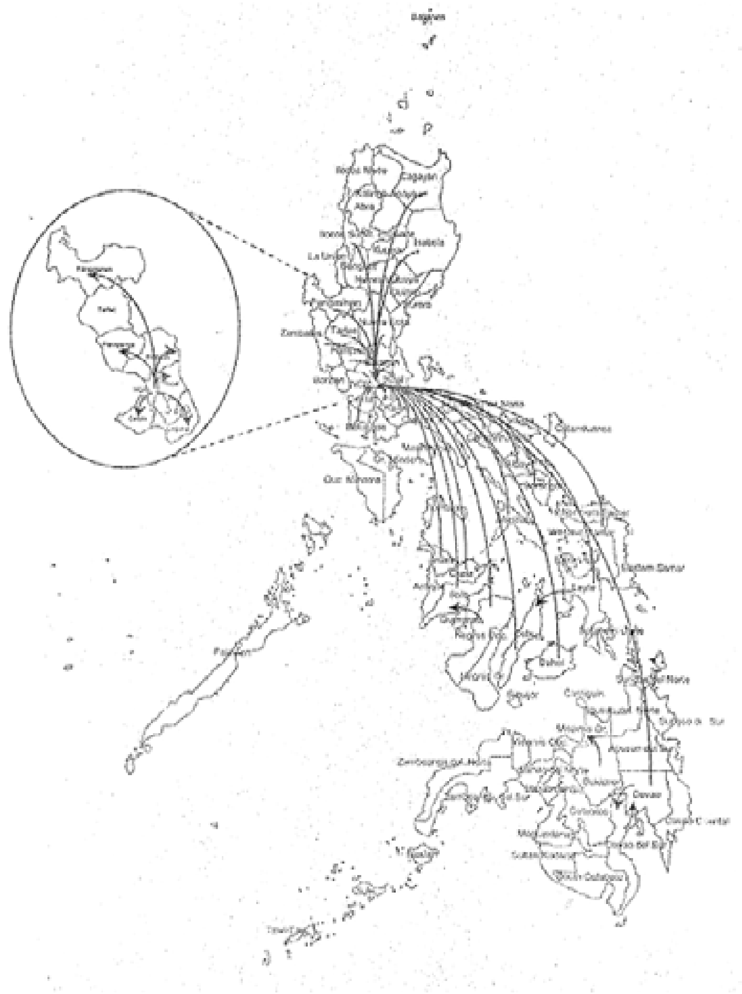
Source: Barandiarán, Edgardo (2002). "The Economic Cost of the Mindanao Conflict," Working draft prepared for the World Bank as cited in Figure 2 in Malapit, et al. 2003, 21.

Figure 3: Settlement Projects Administered by the Ministry of Agrarian Reform



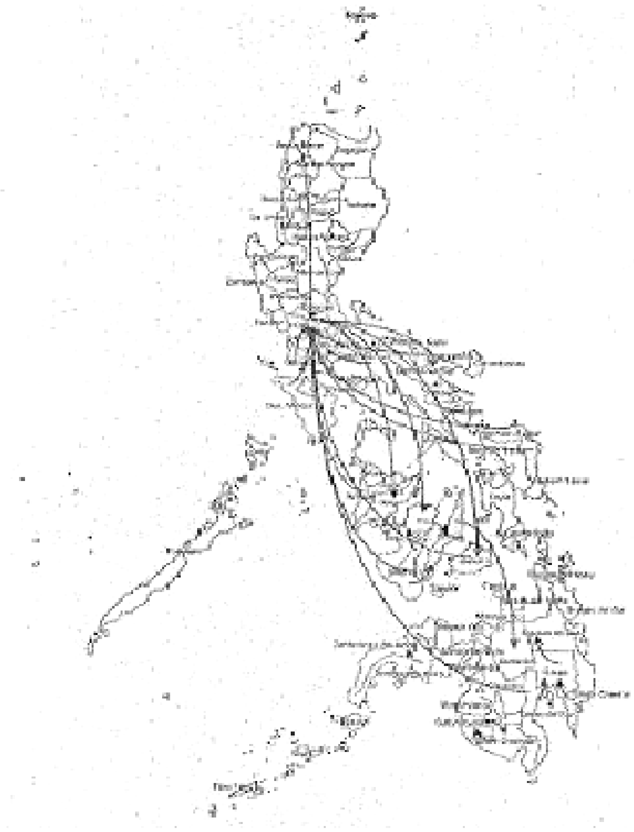
Source: Figure 3 in Uhlig 1988.

Figure 4: Major Migration Streams, 1975-1980



Source: Figure 3, Go, et al. 2001, 32.

Figure 5: Major Migration Streams, 1985-1990

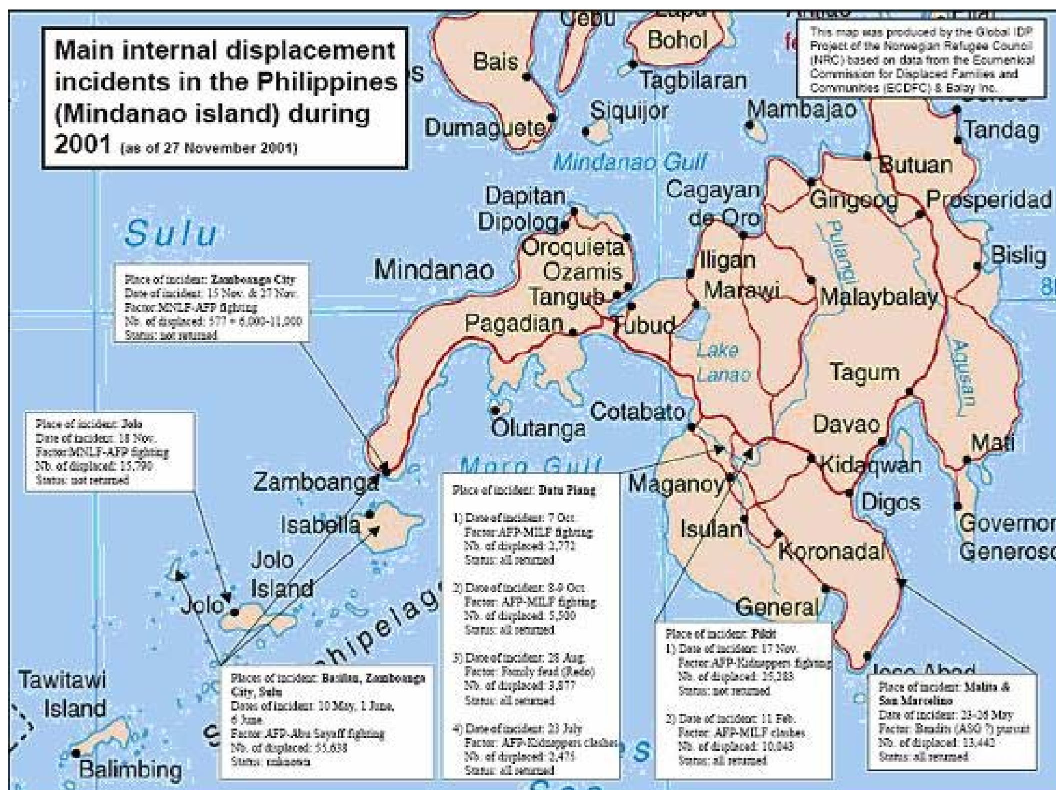


Source: Figure 4, Go, et al., 201, 37.

Figure 6: Internal Displacements in the Philippines and Conflict Flash Points (2000-2005)

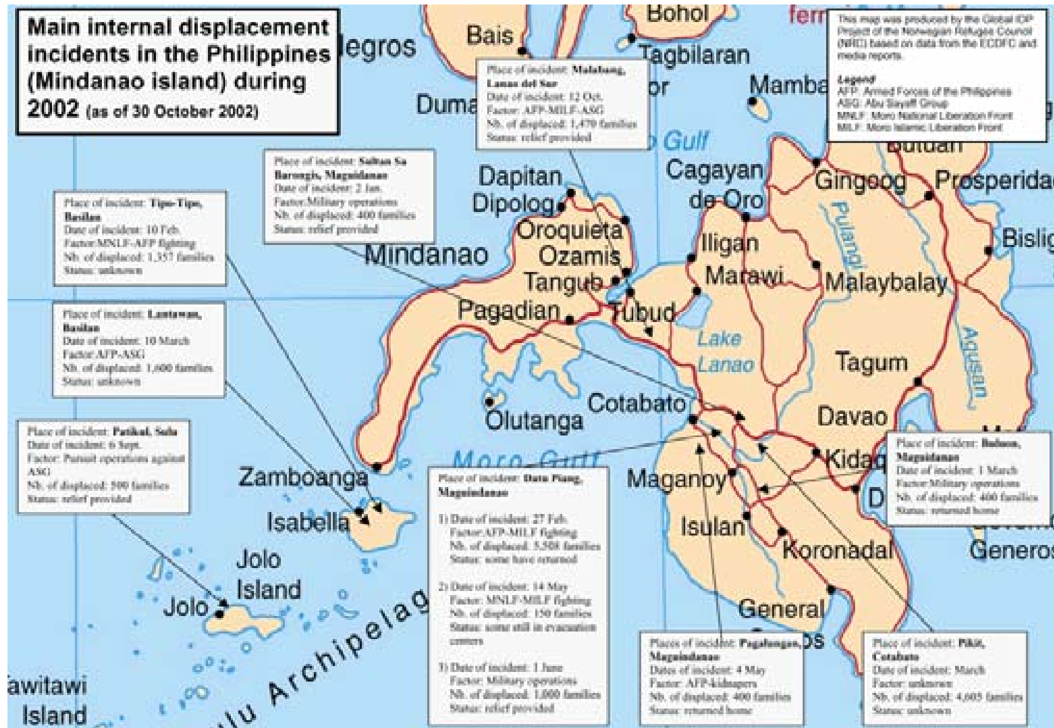
Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) accessed at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/606113DE7B8CDE7BC12570C9003B3F87/$file/IDP_Philippines_full.jpg in February 2006.

Figure 7: Internal Displacements and Conflict Incidents in Mindanao 2001



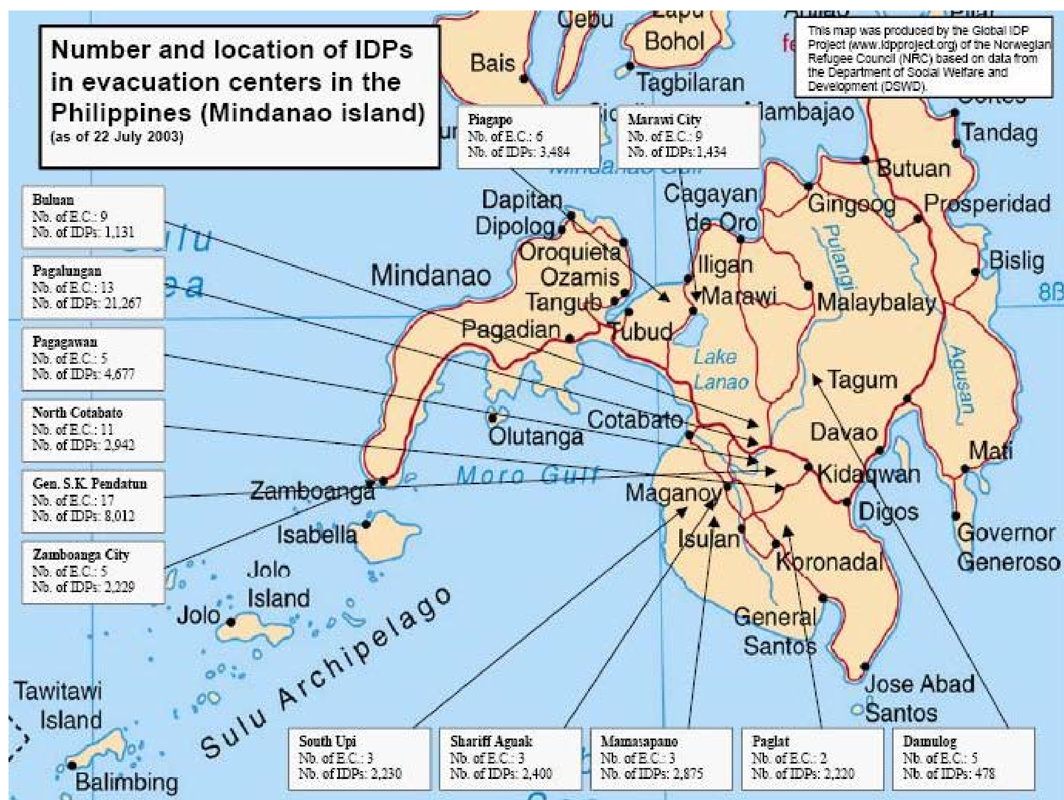
Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) accessed at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/7A2A6289769BCD288025709F004A259B/$file/IDP_in_Mindanao_27nov01.pdf in February 2006.

Figure 8:Internal Displacements and Conflict Incidents in Mindanao, 2002



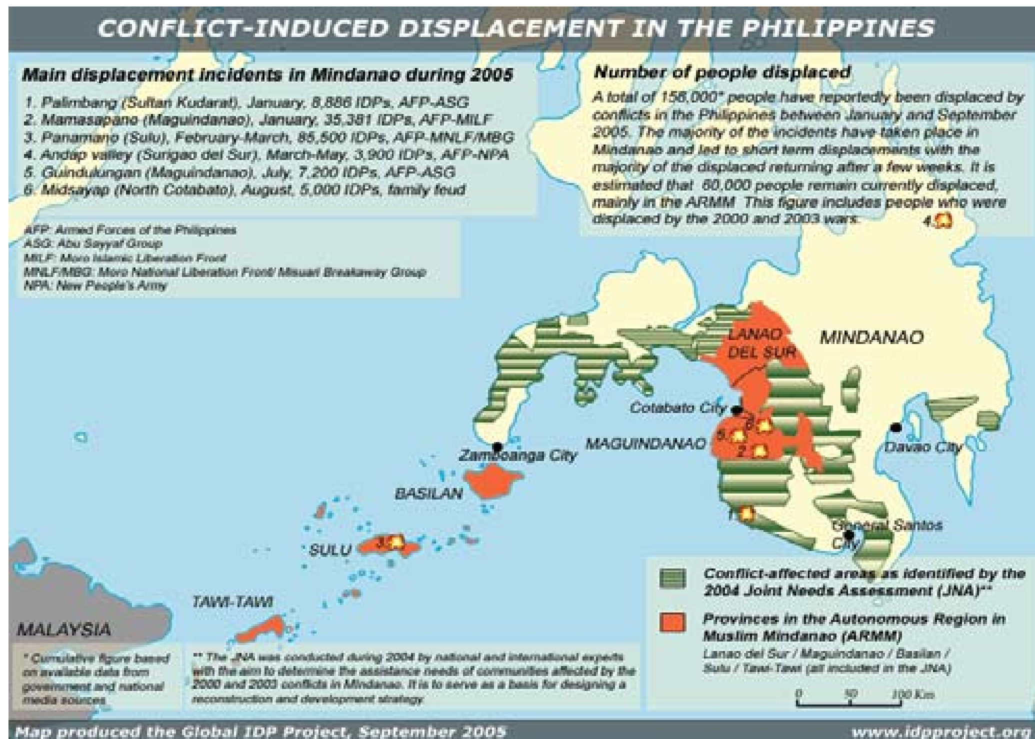
Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) accessed at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/B382500A671C32D08025709F004A000B/$file/Mindanao_IDPs_31_Oct02.gif in February 2006.

Figure 9: Internal Displacements and Conflict Incidents in Mindanao, 2003



Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) accessed at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/53932478994D80878025709F0049EA3D/$file/IDP_in_Mindanao_aug03.pdf in February 2006.

Figure 10: Conflict-Induced Displacements in Mindanao



Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) accessed at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/E7E49104D860A0698025709F0049BC31/$file/IDPs_Mindanao_final_23Sept0.gif in February 2006.

Tables

Table 1: Settlement projects administered by the Ministry of Agrarian Reform

Settlement project	Location	Area (ha)	Year	No. of settler families
1. Isabela plus Peredo Edcor	Echague-Angadanan-San Guillermo	8,920	1953	1,358
2. Quirino-Nueva Vizcaya	Maddela-Dupax	40,000	1975	674
3. Tarlac No. 1	Concepcion	1,112	1956	196
4. Tarlac No. 2 (Bagong Lipunian)	Capas & Bamban, Tarlac Botolan,	11,039	1969	1,542
5. Tarlac No. 3 (Sacobia)	Bamban, Tarlac Mabalacat, Pamganga	3,500	1975	464
6. Nueva Ecija No. 1	Pantabangan-Bongabon Maria Aurora-	9,019	1972	2,490
7. Nueva Ecija No. 2	Llanera	351	1975	96
8. Pampanga	Magalang	756	1970	116
9. Rizal	Tanay	25,475	1952	1,666
10. Quezon No. 1 (Catanauan	Catanauan	2,569	1968	385
11.Central Palawan	Narra-Aborlan	25,381	1950	4,171
12.Quezon No. 2	Sampaloc	760	1976	96
Total Luzon		**128,882**		**13,254**
Percent Luzon		**17.3**		**26.7**
13.Camarines Sur	Tinambac-Siruma	8,500	1950	1,213
14.Mosbate	Uson-Milagros	8,800	1956	471
15.Capiz	Dumarao-Cuartero-Maayon	25,000	1965	1,725
16. Antique	Anini-y	400	-	352
17. Negros Occidental	Cauayan-Kabankalan	33,000	1956	2,304
18. Negros Oriental	Sta. Catalina 14,117	1958	1,30	
19. Leyte St. Bernard	Hununangan-San Juan	13,000	1975	785
	Sab-a Basin, Kauswagan, Palo	1,300	1976	75
Total Visayas		**91,958**		**6,925**
Percent Visayas		**12.4**		**14.0**
20.Tawi-Tawi	Balimbing-Bongao	15,340	1955	723
21.Sulu	Panamao-Talipao-Patikul	7,146	1976	219
22.Basilan	Lamitan-Sumisip-Maluso	15,000	1976	460
23.Zamboanga del Norte	Liloy-Salug-Sindangan	35,000	1962	2,343
24. Bukidnon	Maramag-Pangantukan Kalilanoan	35,399	1950	4,336
25. Agusan del Sur	Talcogon-Esperanza Sindangan	35,000	1962	2,343
26. Davao del Norte No. 1	Sto. Tomas: Tibal-og La Libertad	7,225	1955	970
	Solis-Logon	2,110	1971	618
	Panabo: Dujali	1,313	1971	464
27.Davao del Norte No. 2	Asuncion	8,221	1970	2,926
28.Lanao del Norte No. 1	Tangkal-Magsaysay	13,943	1960	1,019
29. Lanao del Norte No. 2(Arevalo	Sapad	3,000	1953	139
30. Lanao del Norte No. 3	Nunungan-Karomatan	19,674	1975	337
31. Lanao del Sur No. 1	Wao	18,000	1950	4,002
32. Lanao del Sur No. 2	Lumba-a-Bayabao-Bubong	6,939	1973	246
33. Lanao del Sur No. 3	Bayang-Binidayan Pagayawan-Tuburan	18,197	1975	770
34. North Cotabato No. 1	Carmen	100,000	1956	2,019
35. North Cotabato No. 2 (Genio	Alamada	28,380	1953	899
Not mapped:				
Lanao del Sur No. 4	Kapai	5,500	1978	-

South Cotabato	Sorollah	22,000	1978	-
Maguindanao No. 1 (Callego	Buldon	5,464	1953	241
Maguindanao No. 2(Barira Edcor)	Barira	33,000	1967	375
Maguindanao No. 3	Upi-Dinaig	4,268	1975	130
Sultan Kudarat No. 1	Columbio-Tulunan	52,468	1956	2,378
Sultan Kudarat No. 2	Isulan-Bagumbayan	30,000	1968	1,497
Total Mindanao		**522,587**		**29,454**
Percent Mindanao		**70.3**		**59.3**
National Total		**743,427**		**49,633**

Source: Ministry of Agriculture 1978; Table 4 as cited by Uhlig 1988.

Table 2: Population, Poverty Incidence, and Poverty Depth in Selected Provinces in the Philippines

	Population (Census 2000)	Poverty Incidence		Poverty Depth*	
		1997	2000	1997	2000
Philippines	76,498,735	25.1	27.5	6.4	7.2
Metro Manila	9,932,560	3.5	5.6	0.6	0.9
Lanao del Sur	669,072	40.6	48.1	10.4	9.7
Maguindanao	801,102	24.0	36.2	4.0	9.2
Sulu	619,668	87.5	92.0	33.1	37.3
Tawi-Tawi	322,317	52.1	75.3	13.4	25.8
Basilan	332,828	30.2	63.0	5.9	16.7
North Cotabato	958,643	42.7	34.8	13.4	8.8
Sultan Kudarat	586,505	21.6	35.3	3.2	5.8
Davao del Norte	743,811	26.2	27.3	6.4	7.1

* Poverty depth measures how far below the poverty line the poor are. It measures the poors' average income shortfall (expressed in proportion to the poverty line) relative to the non-poor. Thus, the data shows that the average income of the poor in Lanao del Sur is 10 percent below the poverty line. The poor in Sulu have average incomes that are more than 30 percent short of the poverty line. In other words, the income of the poor in Sulu has to rise by an average of 30 percent in order for them to rise above poverty.
Source: Table 1, World Bank 2003, p. 9

Table 3: Self-Rated Poverty in the Philippines* (in Percent)

Year	National	NCR**	Balance Luzon***	Visayas	Mindanao
Jul-85	74	50	73	84	78
Sep-88	66	37	58	82	81
Apr-93	65	46	57	78	82
Nov-98	59	37	57	66	68
Nov-03	64	36	58	81	77
Mar-05	48	39	42	67	47

Source: Social Weather Stations at http://www.sws.org.ph/pr050415.htm
*Respondents were asked to rate themselves according to whether they are poor, on the line, or not poor.
** NCR stands for the National Capital Region or Metro Manila
*** Balance Luzon means the rest of Luzon outside of Metro Manila

Table 4: Number of Displaced Persons Leaving Evacuation Centers in Mindanao

Region	Province	Evacuees Leaving Evacuation Areas and Returning Home or Relocating Elsewhere		Total
		From Inside ECs	Outside ECs	
Total		**500,276**	**348,737**	**849,013**
ARMM		**199,733**	**156,548**	**356,281**
	Maguindanao	142,966	64,620	207,586
	Sulu	29,094	89,272	118,366
	Lanao del Sur	17,064	2,656	19,720
	Tawi-Tawi	10,609	-	10,609
IX		**5,804**	**16,706**	**22,510**
	Basilan[1]	903	16,432	17,335
	Zamboanga del Norte	4,901	-	4,901
	Zamboanga del Sur	-	257	257
	Zamboanga City	-	17	17
XI		**39,791**	**12,388**	**52,179**
	South Cotabato	17,501	1,669	19,170
	Gen. Santos City	1,055	1,091	2,146
	Compostela Valley	2,640	36	2,676
	Davao Oriental	8,119	5,520	13,369
	Davao del Sur	-	1,023	1,028
	Davao City	125	679	804
	Sarangani	10,351	2,365	12,716
XII		**254,948**	**163,096**	**418,043**
	Lanao del Norte	55,377	58,891	115,268
	North Cotabato	105,727	32,189	137,916
	Marawi City	40,839	52,944	93,783
	Sultan Kudarat	41,640	1,423	43,063
	Cotabato City	10,520	13,659	24,179
	Iligan City	754	2,989	3,743
	Kidapawan City	91	-	91

Source: Disaster Response Operations Monitoring Information Center, DSWD 5 November 2001

Source: Table 3, World Bank 2003, 10.