

Philippines

January 2021

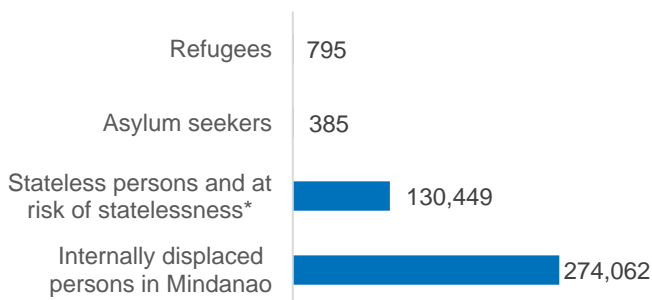
The Philippines is one of a few countries in the Asia-Pacific region to be state party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and the 1954 Stateless Convention.

UNHCR supports the Philippines in providing refugees and asylum seekers access to rights, in the reduction of statelessness, and in the delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance in Mindanao.

The Philippines is working towards enhancing the legal framework for the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons and the continued identification of populations at risk of statelessness.

POPULATION OF CONCERN (SOURCES: PROTECTION CLUSTER PHILIPPINES, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE)

405,691



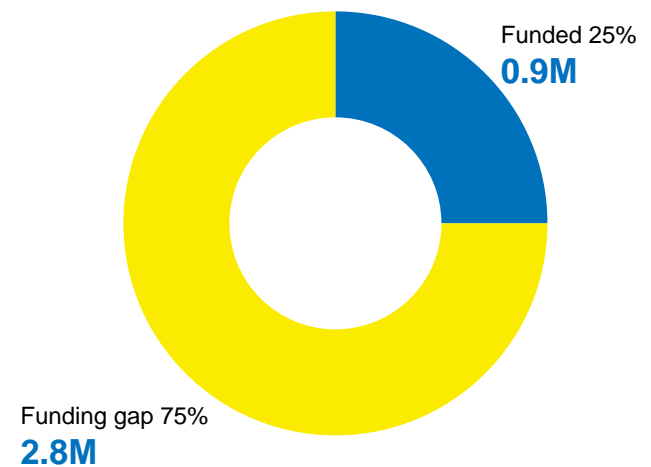
* This figure includes Persons of Indonesian Descent and Sama Bajaus (culled from Philippine Statistics Authority's 2010 national census). Other populations at risk of statelessness (i.e. children of Filipino descent in migration situations, foundlings, and unregistered children) are still to be mapped.

Figures as of 18 January 2021



FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS (FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2021)

USD 3.7M

requested for the Philippine operation's regular programme (figures as of 12 January 2021)



UNHCR PRESENCE

-  **National Office in Manila**
(21 national staff)
-  **Field Office in Cotabato**
(21 national staff)



Working with Partners

- UNHCR sits as the ad-interim Secretariat for the Government of the Philippines' Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) on the Protection of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Stateless Persons and supports the Government in identifying its collective and agency-specific work plans towards the implementation of their commitments.
- UNHCR also acts as ad-interim coordinator of the Philippines' National Action Plan on Statelessness and its Technical Working Groups.
- At the national level, UNHCR also works with the Humanitarian Country Team, the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group, the Information Management Working Group, and the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Task Force. UNHCR also works with various UNCT Thematic Groups.
- In the Mindanao region, UNHCR is also engaged with the Mindanao Humanitarian Team.
- UNHCR functions as the lead and/or co-lead agency, of the following:
 - Protection Cluster (lead agency within the Humanitarian Country Team)
 - Protection Working Group (in Mindanao; co-led by the BARMM-Ministry on Social Services and Development)
 - Protection Forum in Marawi
 - Mindanao Virtual Protection Coordination Platform (MVPCP) established in April to continue the sharing of protection issues and interventions
 - Protection Strategy for Mindanao Technical Working Group (lead agency)

Main Activities

Protection

- **Pillars 1 & 2: Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons**
 - UNHCR provides technical guidance to the Philippine Government in status determination, policy development and governance as the lead agency mandated to provide and coordinate protection for persons of concern. Support is also provided to the Government in the strategic implementation of the National Action Plan to End Statelessness by 2024.
 - UNHCR continues to extend technical support to the Government in terms of policy and legislative development and enhancements, particularly on its accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the approval of the Executive Order on institutionalizing access to protection services for persons of concern.
 - UNHCR continues to work with the national and local government for the inclusion of persons of concern in development programming, emergency response and recovery frameworks.
 - Through UNHCR's advocacy efforts, 13 cities and municipalities in the Philippines have signed the Cities #WithRefugees solidarity statement.
 - To date, UNHCR has provided solutions to the citizenship issues to 8,371 (96%) out of 8,745 Persons of Indonesian Descent (PID) registered in the Philippines.
 - UNHCR continues to monitor the arrival of Returning Filipinos (REFS) from Sabah and coordinates with partners on the ground to advocate for the birth registration of REFS who have yet to acquire birth documents.
 - Technical and administrative support has also been extended by UNHCR to ensure the continued access of persons of concern to asylum mechanisms amid the pandemic.

■ **Pillar 4: Internally displaced persons**

- UNHCR sits as the Secretariat to technical working groups on the implementation of the Protection Strategy for Mindanao of the Humanitarian Country Team. UNHCR leads the revitalization of the Protection Strategy to ensure the implementation of the eight key protection objectives in the document, in coordination with UNICEF and UNFPA.
- UNHCR's field staff and protection partners carry out protection monitoring for the displaced population in Mindanao
 - **Marawi City:** communities displaced following the Marawi conflict, including those who are hosted in transitory sites or temporary settlements and those who remain displaced in Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, and other areas
 - **Central Mindanao:** conflict-affected communities experiencing heightened vulnerability due to a pattern of recurring short-term displacements and restricted access to livelihood sources
 - **Eastern Mindanao:** indigenous communities struggling with the impact of conflict-induced displacement from their ancestral land and underreported rights violations
 - **Zamboanga City:** IDPs seeking to recover from the effects of protracted displacement following the 2013 conflict
- UNHCR publishes data on displacement and IDP needs in Mindanao through its Information Management products (such as IDP Protection Assessment Reports, Monthly Displacement Dashboards, Core Relief Item reports, and other publications) to enhance protection interventions.
- Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR has mainstreamed its response to COVID-19 for IDPs within its regular programming, to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Education

■ **Pillars 1 & 2: Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons**

- UNHCR coordinates with government agencies to ensure continued access to education by persons of concern amid the pandemic, including supporting the enrolment of children in public schools. Online programmes are also being advocated as an option to persons of concern to continue their studies amid the pandemic.

Health

■ **Pillars 1 & 2: Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons**

- In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR has been coordinating with government agencies to ensure that persons of concern continue to have access to healthcare services, including COVID-19 testing and treatment, amid the pandemic. UNHCR continues to advocate with government agencies as well on the inclusion of persons of concern in vaccination programmes.

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

■ **Pillars 1 & 2: Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons**

- UNHCR continues to provide support to persons of concern in coordinating with various agencies on possible accommodation assistance, including temporary shelter, that may be made available to persons of concern amid the pandemic.

■ **Pillar 4: Internally displaced persons**

- UNHCR continues to provide core relief items (CRI) for new displacement as well as for those in protracted displacement who continue to face protection risks. Where required as a means of last resort, UNHCR leverages with other partners some operational resources to reach IDPs who are considered highly at risk.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

■ **Pillars 1 & 2: Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons**

- To ensure the sustainability of solutions, UNHCR facilitates learning sessions on the importance of documents for Persons of Indonesian Descent (PID). These are meant to raise the level of awareness of PID, particularly registered Indonesian Nationals (RIN), on the importance of their documents as well as their rights and obligations under the relevant immigration issuances pertaining to their status in the Philippines.
- UNHCR continues to advocate with agencies on the inclusion of persons of concern in livelihood support programmes to ensure their economic re-integration during and post-pandemic. Several referrals have also been facilitated by UNHCR for the inclusion of persons of concern in social amelioration programmes and employment support amid the pandemic.
- UNHCR also works with local government in order to strengthen support for and protection of persons of concern at the community level. Through UNHCR's continued engagement with the Department of the Interior and Local Government, a Memorandum Circular was also issued in 2020 enjoining local governments to assist persons of concern in aspects relating to their legal protection and security, education and self-reliance, and local integration.

■ **Pillar 4: Internally displaced persons**

- Through implementation of low-cost, quick-impact projects, UNHCR strives to enhance the participation of IDPs and vulnerable communities in initiatives to facilitate recovery, durable solutions, and prevention of further displacement. The projects place emphasis on community-based processes — including awareness-raising on basic protection principles; consultations and orientation with local governments and residents; organization of project committees, mobilization, and capacity-building of protection monitors; and inclusion of particularly vulnerable individuals with special needs in all of these processes – to support empowerment and peacebuilding at the grassroots level.

Capacity Building

■ **Pillars 1 & 2: Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons**

- UNHCR conducts learning sessions to enhance the knowledge and skills of partners from the Philippine House of Representatives and the Senate on concepts, frameworks and existing mechanisms for persons of concern. These sessions also serve as a forum during which issues and challenges may be identified and strategies to address these can be developed through the pursuit of inclusive legislation.
- UNHCR acts as resource agency for trainings conducted for new Immigration personnel.
- Online training modules on Refugee Status Determination and case management at ports of entry were also made available to partner agencies involved in the RSD process amid the pandemic.
- UNHCR also continues to provide support to the DOJ on the development of Data Sharing Agreements with other member agencies of the IASC.

■ **Pillar 4: Internally displaced persons**

- To help ensure the sustainability of protection responses and integration of protection principles in humanitarian and development planning, UNHCR conducts capacity-building activities for duty-

bearers at the national and local levels, national and international NGOs engaged in addressing IDPs' protection and assistance needs, and local civil society actors advocating for IDP rights, community empowerment, and durable solutions. These activities seek to strengthen their knowledge of key protection principles; the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement; protection mainstreaming; housing, land, and property issues in internal displacement contexts; and information management.

- To support the BARMM Government in its transition, UNHCR provides technical assistance on data and information management and capacity development for duty-bearers in preparation for the eventual full takeover of the protection leadership role for IDPs in Mindanao.

Durable Solutions

■ Pillars 1 & 2: Refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons

- UNHCR monitors and advocates for refugees' and stateless persons' access to facilitated naturalization. The Government has taken the lead role in pushing for a facilitated naturalization bill that will address the concerns being faced by refugees and stateless persons under the current framework. Free legal representation and counselling are made accessible to refugees and stateless persons who opt to take the path towards acquiring Philippine citizenship through UNHCR's partnership with the Public Attorney's Office and university-based legal aid clinics.
- UNHCR facilitates the implementation of a transit mechanism as a protection tool that allows those who are in imminent danger in their first country of asylum, to find refuge while waiting for the final steps of their resettlement process.
- Through the Bureau of Immigration's interim mechanism, UNHCR is currently facilitating the confirmation of citizenship to select foundlings.
- UNHCR also closely monitors the implementation of the State pledges made during the Global Refugee Forum and High-Level Segment on Statelessness, particularly in strengthening the protection framework for persons of concern in the Philippines and in the attainment of durable solutions for persons of concern.

■ Pillar 4: Internally displaced persons

- In line with longer-term efforts to build a stronger protection environment for IDPs, UNHCR continues to advocate for the passage of a national IDP Protection Law, in cooperation with the Commission on Human Rights and other concerned agencies. In Mindanao, UNHCR has formed a technical working group under the Protection Strategy on IDP Policy Advocacy within BARMM. The working group will formulate an overall strategy to push for the passage of the IDP Bill, being cultivated as a possible model for a national IDP law.
- To help ensure the Centrality of Protection in all aspects of humanitarian response, UNHCR will support the BARMM authorities in developing a Durable Solutions strategy, including by conducting protection profiling activities and ensuring that housing, land, and property issues form part of its overall protection monitoring and analysis.

External / Donors Relations

UNHCR is very grateful to donors who have provided contributions directly to the Philippines operation and to donors who have provided softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions to the organization: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America.

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