

# NOTE

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This is an excerpt from IDMC's 2019 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID).

## SPOTLIGHT

# PHILIPPINES

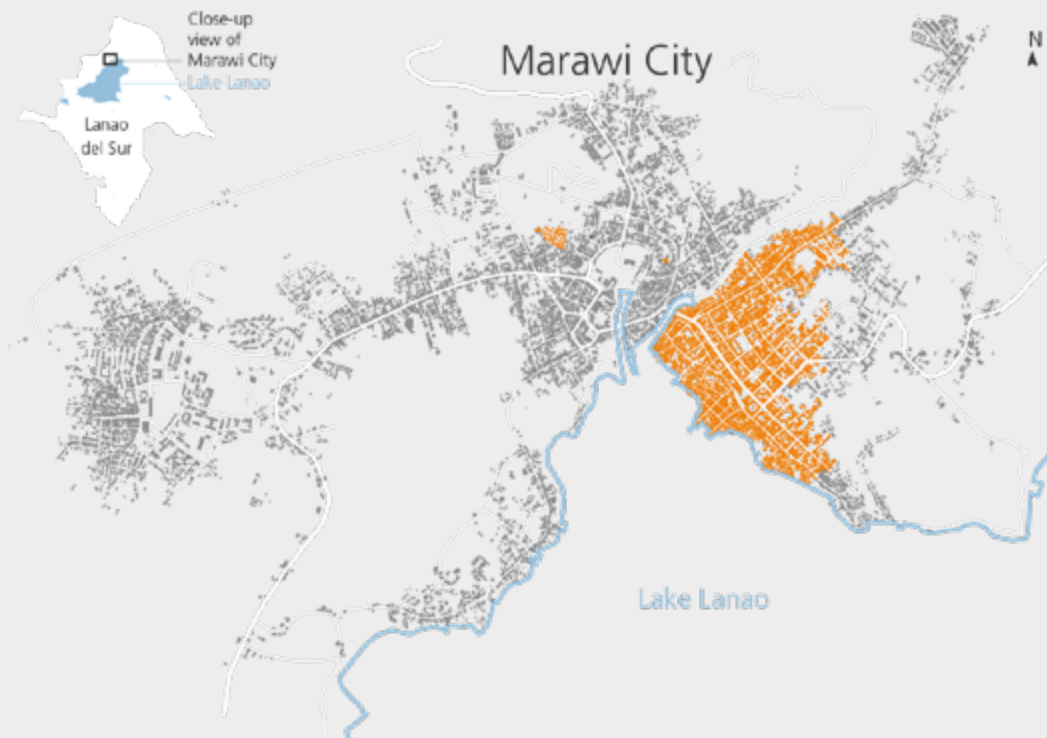
## Solutions still a distant prospect in Marawi, one year on

Marawi, a majority Muslim city of 200,000 people, is the capital of Lanao del Sur province and the economic hub of the southern Philippines. Between May and October 2017, it was also the scene of the country's longest urban conflict, during which more than 1,000 people were killed and 350,000 displaced. A year later, reconstruction of the city has begun and most people have returned. Around 65,000 remain displaced, however, of whom around 14,000 are still living in evacuation and transitional shelters.<sup>146</sup>

The conflict erupted on 23 May 2017 when the Filipino security forces raided the home of the leader of the Abu Sayyaf group, a local affiliate of ISIL. The Maute Group, another local radical Islamist organisation and an Abu Sayyaf ally, was called in to provide reinforcement. The militants waged urban warfare unseen in the region but

similar to that of ISIL in Mosul and other Iraqi and Syrian cities. They created a maze of improvised tunnels in the densely-built city centre to evade airstrikes, engaged the security forces and resisted a siege for five months. The city's roads were choked with traffic during the first three days of the battle as residents attempted to get out. Between 80 and 90 per cent eventually fled, some of them on foot.<sup>147</sup>

By the time the fighting was officially declared over, after the leaders of both Abu Sayyaf and the Maute Group had been killed, the city had suffered extensive damage. The financial and business district, which accounted for 30 per cent of the urban area, was completely destroyed.<sup>148</sup> The military escorted residents



■ Structures ■ Damaged structures as of October 23, 2017 — Main roads — Roads 1 Km  
 Analysis: IDMC, Source: OSM, Google earth V 6.2.2.6613. (April 04, 2019). Marawi City, Philippines. Eye alt 1.68 Km. DigitalGlobe 2017



*In April and May 2018, the Government of the Philippines allowed residents of Marawi City to visit their homes, which had been left in ruins after the five-month long conflict. Photo © UNHCR/ Aleks Ongcal, April 2018*

in to retrieve what they could from the rubble of their homes before the area was cordoned off. It remains uninhabitable, and reconstruction will not begin until the debris has been cleared and roads rebuilt, which is expected to take at least 18 months.<sup>149</sup>

As many as 70 per cent of those displaced, or more than 270,000 people, were thought to have returned as of the end of 2018.<sup>150</sup> In some areas deemed habitable, however, returnees still have no electricity or running water, nor access to education or livelihood opportunities, which prevents them from rebuilding their lives.<sup>151</sup> Others have had to go back to evacuation centres while they wait for their homes to be repaired. The majority of those still displaced are living with family or friends, but almost 2,000 families live in 21 government-run evacuation centres where they face sanitation and waste management issues.<sup>152</sup>

The government intends to transfer the people still living in evacuation centres to temporary shelters, but those already transferred say that families of six or more members have had to share a single room, which barely constitutes an improvement on their previous conditions.<sup>153</sup> Food security is another major concern, because many IDPs have been unable to find work since they

fled. Lanao del Sur was the country's poorest province even before the fighting, and malnutrition levels were among the highest with half of its young population affected.<sup>154</sup>

Resolving displacement in cities decimated by urban warfare is a long and complex process that governments in many regions are grappling with. The cost of rebuilding Marawi has been put at around \$1.2 billion, of which the international community had pledged around \$670 million as of November 2018.<sup>155</sup> Reconstruction is likely to take years, however, leaving thousands of people displaced in the meantime. Their protracted displacement has the potential to fuel further conflict as the young and working-age, in particular, may grow tired of slow and inadequate progress. A transparent reconstruction process that includes community consultation will be key to quelling residents' fears and frustration.

## | Notes

146. The Straits Times, "Philippines' longest urban war ruins Marawi", October 20, 2017; Disaster Response Assistance and Management Bureau, "Armed Conflict in Marawi City as of 03 April 2018", 2018; UNHCR, Protection Cluster Philippines, "Mindanao Displacement Dashboard", October 2018.
147. South China Morning Post, "Philippine troops using 'maximum force' to drive militants out of Marawi", May 27, 2017; Philstar, "Marawi crisis: What we know -and don't know- so far", May 29, 2017; South China Morning Post, "Life after Islamic State: Marawi faces its next battle – rebuilding", December 8, 2018;
148. Al Jazeera News, Duterte: Marawi "liberated" from ISIL-linked fighters, October 19, 2017; South China Morning Post, "Life after Islamic State: Marawi faces its next battle – rebuilding", December 8, 2018.
149. MindaNews, "Marawi's Ground Zero residents can start rebuilding homes by "middle of 2020"", November 3, 2018; South China Morning Post, "Life after Islamic State: Marawi faces its next battle – rebuilding", December 8, 2018.
150. UNHCR, Protection Cluster Philippines, "Mindanao Displacement Dashboard", October 2018.
151. UNHCR, Protection Cluster Philippines, "IDP Protection Assessment Report, Armed Confrontations and Displacement in Marawi", April 16, 2018.
152. Ibid; ABS-CBN News, "Palace satisfied with Marawi rehab efforts", May 22, 2018; UNHCR, Protection Cluster Philippines, "Mindanao Displacement Dashboard", October 2018.
153. Ibid.
154. ABS-CBN News, "A year after the war, displaced Marawi children still "at risk" - UNICEF", May 22, 2018.
155. The Straits Times, "Philippines' longest urban war ruins Marawi", October 20, 2017; Government of Philippines, "Gov't working on funding mix for P62-B Marawi rehab", July 16, 2018; Government of Philippines, "PHL receives P35.1-B pledges for Bangon Marawi rehab program", November 28, 2018.