

# TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE MONITOR

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## MARAWI IDPs' CONTINUING SEARCH FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE



## EDITORIAL

**In a little over two months from now is the sixth anniversary of the Marawi siege.**

A greater number of people have this notion that the *bakwits* or the internally displaced persons (IDPs), have already resumed their normal lives: most of them back at work, the youth enrolled in schools, people commuting to and from the market, or the mosque and every now and then visiting the nearest leisure places to bond with their families.

The depiction above is farthest from the current reality in Marawi. Concerned government agencies on Marawi have spent a considerable amount of public funds to paint a rosy picture of the progress of the rehabilitation of the devastated only Islamic City in the country, with giant promotional tarpaulins displayed in public places even in Manila. The promise of 'we will rise again' has however never been realized and felt on the ground particularly by the thousands of IDPs. The tax paying public have been gravely misled.

Reports that there are still about more than 20 thousand families (126,775 individuals) reportedly displaced in various parts of Lanao province and Marawi City in the aftermath of the 2017 siege boggles the mind. This data has been reported by the Mindanao Displacement Dashboard of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

**Continue to next page**



**Editorial... from page 1**

The IDPs are living in various temporary shelter camps in Lanao del Norte and elsewhere, without adequate electricity and water supply, inferior education, health and sanitation services, scarce job opportunities even for graduates and almost no livelihood programs for them to make a living. Meantime, a stadium has been built, roads have been paved, traffic lights installed, barangay centers erected and mosques restored. But where are the people who will pray inside the mosques and to be administered by a barangay?

*The massive economic and social dislocation engineered by the government's military operation six years ago has generated the most appalling and destitute living conditions for tens of thousands of families who have been further pushed beyond the margins of poverty.*

Conditions have considerably been exacerbated by the twin impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic and the recent inflation rate spikes, painting a grimmer image of recovering normalcy in their lives.

Also, despite signing into law the compensation for Marawi victims just weeks before the election last year nothing substantial has been achieved under the eight-month old Marcos Jr. administration. The continued neglect of the IDP situation in Marawi, reflected in the government's snail-paced rehabilitation and rebuilding efforts coupled with our legislators' persistent overlooking of the dire concerns of the IDPs has only led to the evolution and piling up of other social concerns.

The Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID) and its partner communities in Marawi have been advocating and campaigning for a safe and dignified return of IDPs and for a transitional justice framework to guide for the present government to efficiently respond to the immediate needs of the IDPs while at the same time overcoming the legacy of massive and serious human rights violations inflicted on a people that have yearned for peace and prosperity for the past hundreds of years.

The demands for a safe and dignified return to Marawi and just compensation are not only legitimate and humane but also a political must, which must stimulate the objective to rebuild the lives of the peoples of Marawi. Only then will we achieve and realize durable peace and transitional justice in the Bangsamoro.



## MULTIMEDIA TRAINING HELD IN ILIGAN; PARTICIPANTS REITERATE CALL FOR SAFE AND DIGNIFIED RETURN

**M**oro civil society leaders, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and advocates renewed calls for their safe and dignified return to Marawi in a training to develop capacities of community partners on efficiently conducting campaigns and advocacy geared towards realizing durable peace and transitional justice. The multimedia training held in Iligan, was attended mostly by IDPs, civil society activists, women and youth and was conducted by the Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), with support from the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI).

Different types of advocacies and tips on conducting campaigns were enumerated and explained before the participants such as individual advocacy, citizen advocacy, media advocacy, policy, research, legal and support advocacy.

Participants were from IDP communities, including women and youth and members of various groups such as the Marawi Advocacy Accompaniment (MAA) Kalimudan Sa Ranao Foundation Inc. and the Reclaiming Marawi Movement (RMM).

Basic elements or areas of work for advocacy in relation to the identification of issues or challenges were also discussed that include: issue and situational analysis, assessment of current and potential capabilities, building the machineries and logistics, and building of unities. It was also pointed out that the

position of an advocate on a certain issue or agenda must be clearly defined.

Participants were also asked to share their thoughts about the topic. A participant shared that advocacy sharing is different in every place. While advocates may convey their messages freely in some areas, other areas may be different due to concerns for security and safety of advocates.

Another insight shared by one of the participants was the importance of research to support campaigns and advocacy. The rampant spread of misinformation, disinformation and hate speeches can lead one to convey wrong information or message thus causing more harm than good to the advancement of the advocacy.

The multimedia training was divided into 3 topics that include: Fundamentals of Advocacy and Communication, Introduction to Nonviolent Communication and Utilizing Social Media for Campaigns and Advocacy.

Resource speakers for the training were: Gani Abunda II, the Knowledge Management-Communications, Advocacy and Campaign (KM-CAMP) coordinator, Radzini Oledan, IID project manager, and Jai Estocapio, project associate. All are IID staff.



Continue to next page



from page 3

After the inputs, participants were divided into 3 groups and each group crafted their own advocacy plan enumerating issues and problems within the communities, advocacy strategies and platforms, target audience and key messages.

The discussion on non-violent communication focused on defining and sharing a Story, which according to the resource speaker is an art form. Storytelling as a core strategy of nonviolent communication framework is very important in advocacy as it highlights the narratives of affected communities themselves.

Non-violent communication fosters skill on deep listening according to Oledan as it involves respect between the two parties, to empathize with the people. Oledan enumerated steps for an effective non-violent communication: to observe; to feel the feel (empathize); to ask, “*what do you need?*”; and, to request (ask permission when helping).

The discussion on the second day of the training was facilitated by Jai Estocapio. She emphasized, at the very beginning, the need of utilizing social media in pursuit of various campaigns and advocacy. She also explained about the algorithm that the social media system follows including some concrete tips on digital campaigning and online security.

After an extensive discussion on the strategic use of social media platforms, Estocapio shared some useful information as to the pros and cons of some known social media platforms today, such the Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, Tiktok. She emphasized individually the pros and cons of every platform, the best time to use them, and other online advocacy strategies and best practices.

Estocapio also facilitated a hands-on training on the use of CANVA for creating successful social media advocacy and campaign. Canva is an Australian graphic design platform that is used to create social media graphics and presentations. The app includes ready-made templates for users.

The training program concluded with the awarding of certificates of participation to all participants.



## UNITIES STRENGTHENED TOWARDS TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND DURABLE PEACE

Participants in Marawi to a joint planning and communications strategy session rued the lack of action and continued neglect of the government to address their demand for an immediate, safe and dignified return of IDPs and the issue of just compensation for Marawi siege victims and survivors.

The event also highlighted the lack of basic utilities and services to make life bearable for the IDPs in the temporary shelters. These include the lack of power and water supply, defective settlements in danger zones, health and sanitation issues, high dropout rates in high school and limited scholarships for the youth and lack of job opportunities and seed capital for livelihood programs. They also mentioned that the presence of a military camp within the city has only added fears and insecurity to the IDPs.

The discussion also focused on the development of a communication plan to effectively reach out to policy makers and stakeholders. Key messages were developed to engage other IDPs in different locations, to gain the support of local government officials and to raise awareness among IDPs, BARMM, and the national government on the state of IDPs and the rehabilitation and recovery efforts.

The workshop was conducted last December 5 and 6 in Sapadan Café in Marawi City. The two-day conference brought together key IID staff members and representatives of partner organizations Kalimudan Sa Ranao Foundation Inc. and the Reclaiming Marawi Movement (RMM).

The objectives set for the conference included: to spur discussion and forge unities in addressing the dire need to achieve durable peace and transitional justice in Bangsamoro through advocacy and campaign; initiate policy dialogues with national and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) agencies to support legislation and policies that will improve the conditions of Marawi's internally displaced people (IDPs), conflict affected communities especially women and children and hold capacity building activities and multimedia advocacy on peace and human security for IDPs, communities, women and children with civil society organizations in the BARMM.

A workshop was held to allow participants to freely share their views on the issues and concerns of the IDPs. The participants were asked to identify the most pressing issues of the IDPs and report on the present status of the existing engagements in relation to the priority issues and identify which aspects needed collaboration.

The participants were divided into two groups. After a spirited discussion of the issues particularly on the squalid conditions of the IDP temporary shelters, they presented it to the plenary.

The event ended with participants coming up with a work plan. Among the activities agreed upon were the convening of women and youth IDPs, policy engagement mobilization with LGU officials, a multi-media training and a summit on transitional justice.





## OPTIMISM OF IDPs RESPONSE TO THEIR PLIGHT HIGHLIGHT CONVERSATIONS WITH MARAWI WOMEN AND YOUTH

Optimism on how to respond to their situation was expressed by participants in a first of a series of planned dialogues with internally displaced people (IDPs), women and youth and other civil society groups in Marawi in a recent dialogue held last December 13 and 14 among IID partners.

Many of the insights raised during the conversations were generally positive. The expectations participants have listed revolved around positive outcomes that may be achieved during the dialogue. These included updates on government plans for their return to Marawi and just compensation, building a stronger movement, IDP rights and capacitating partners on peacebuilding work.

Among the action points identified were the continuous campaign and advocacy for a safe and dignified return and reintegration to Marawi. Participants also agreed to be more active in organized activities, inclusion of community and religious leaders in the compensation board, Demand Maqbara or justice for the victims of the siege who remain unnamed and unidentified, demilitarization of Marawi, ending the discrimination of IDPs and transparency and accountability on rehabilitation of Marawi.

According to participants, job opportunities for the youth even if they finished their studies was a major problem and cited the increasing number of dropouts due to high costs and lack of scholarship grants available.

Also discussed during the dialogue were incidents of different forms of violence against women and participants cited the lack of

available mechanisms to respond to the basic needs of women.

IDPs who also participated in the dialogue discussed safety at their temporary shelters. The topic of safety includes psychological and physical, the lack of financial resources, and unemployment.

Participants were then asked what they can do and what they should demand from the government. They described their lives in Marawi before the siege as “peaceful”, “families were intact”, “had freedom of movement”, “employed” and “have enough to live” while they described their lives after Marawi siege as “traumatized”, “discriminated”, “jobless”, “miserable”, “depressed” and “uncertain of the future”.

Participants were divided into three groups. Each group reported recurring problems about Marawi since the siege of the city almost six years ago. Also discussed were challenges faced by women and the youth and the general situation of the internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The session concluded after a communication plan was developed to address the most pressing demands of the women, youth and the IDPs including financial assistance for IDPs compensation, engaging the national government and international community for the immediate, safe and dignified return of IDPs, to attain truth, justice and accountability on the Marawi siege, and safe and permanent houses to live in with available potable water and electricity.

Canada  
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives

Initiatives for  
International Dialogue

## Marawi Transitional Justice Summit

Mindanao State University  
Meranaw Cultural Heritage Center | Marawi City

## MARAWI IDPs TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE SUMMIT HELD

To highlight the call for a safe and dignified return within a transitional justice framework as a solution to the IDP's situation in Marawi, the Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), in partnership with various communities and civil society groups held a Transitional Justice Summit on March 14 at the Mindanao State University in Marawi.

Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines David Hartman graced the event and shared their commitment to support transitional justice initiatives in the Bangsamoro. Ambassador Hartman emphasized the relevance of social cohesion, right to justice and ensuring non-recurrence of conflict to realize transitional justice.

MSU Prof. and Marawi Advocacy Accompaniment Convener Thirmizy Abdullah provided an overall situationer for the IDPs and Former UN Rapporteur on IDPs Atty. Cecilia Jimenez shared her knowledge on Transitional Justice and IDP rights in the context of durable solutions and the IDPs demand for a safe and dignified return.

IDP representatives shared their stories of day to day challenges in the temporary shelters communities where they currently live.

Task Force Bangon Marawi Field Officer, Asec. Felix Castro Jr., Marawi Rehabilitation Commission Head MP Anna Tarhata M.



Basman, and representatives from the local government unit, Governors office and Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU) were also present to the event and responded to the queries, stories and concerns of the IDPs, youth and women.

Asec Castro shared initiatives of TFBM including building of community facilities. He said that while they are aware of the current situation particularly of the IDPs, they cannot respond to all their demands as some concerns are not within the mandate of TFBM. MP Basman shared a progress report of the BARMM Marawi Rehabilitation Program (BARMM - MRP) and current programs and advocacies for the IDPs.

Continue to nex page



from page 7

DILG LGU committed to address immediately the concerns of the IDPs on access to water in some shelters while OPAPRU committed to explore how they can be of help and be a link to other government agencies.

The summit provided a platform for the internally displaced persons (IDPs), youth and women and for relevant government agencies to respond and address the recovery needs of individuals displaced by the Marawi conflict six years ago and facilitate their safe and dignified return.

Summit organizers said that while working and pushing for durable solutions, they seek to support and build partnership with the IDPs and the host communities in surfacing their narratives and needs.

IID said that almost six years after the tragic Marawi siege, the city and its people are still striving to get back on its feet and promises of comprehensive rehabilitation of the city including compensation for the damages of livelihood and properties of the affected families and the immediate return of the displaced back to Marawi remain unfulfilled.

Thousands of Marawi IDPs remain in temporary shelter communities while others are forced to live elsewhere in tightly packed communities and squalid conditions.

A Transitional Justice-Dealing with the Past (TJ-DwP) framework has been pushed in the Philippine peace and development community as part of the implementation of the Normalization aspect of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro or CAB.

Healing and reconciliation, among other durable solutions would come from the internally displaced persons being able to articulate their needs and push for government support to address their long term rehabilitation needs, including establishing the conditions for local government and IDP communities to re-stabilize, reintegrate with communities and recover.

Meranaw leaders and various civil society formations have expressed frustration over persistent delays coupled with the neglect of the voices of communities in Marawi's 'ground zero' which contribute further to the pains still being endured by the *bakwits* and other survivors.

The Marawi siege on May 23, 2017, which has resulted in the brutal demise and displacement of thousands of innocent civilians, poses grave implications to the complete realization of the Bangsamoro peace process and to the lives of the peoples of Mindanao who continue to suffer the impact of decades of armed conflict.

