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# DREF Final Report

## Philippines: Returnees

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

<b>DREF operation n°</b> MDRPH025	<b>Categorization of crisis<sup>1</sup>:</b> Yellow
<b>Date of Issue:</b> 30 November 2017	
<b>Operation start date:</b> 31 March 2017	<b>Operation end date:</b> 31 August 2017
<b>Host National Society:</b> Philippine Red Cross	<b>Operation budget:</b> CHF 72,088
<b>Number of people affected:</b> 4,658 individuals of the anticipated 7,000 individuals	<b>Number of people assisted:</b> 4,446 individuals
<b>N° of National Societies involved in the operation:</b> Philippine Red Cross (PRC) leads the operation via its four chapters, including in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga City. PRC is working with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in this operation. The National Society has also been supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).	
<b>N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation:</b> The government departments involved include the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE), National Commission on Muslim Mindanao, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Philippine Coast Guard and Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). Community and Family Services International (CFSI) was the NGO participating in coordination efforts.	

## DREF history

- 31 March 2017** - IFRC launched a DREF for CHF 72,088 to support the PRC in assisting the Filipino returnees from Sabah, Malaysia.
- 15 June 2017** - The DREF was extended from 30 June 2017 to 31 August 2017. The extension allowed the chapter to support to the individuals who were not able to return within the initial timeframe of the operation due to issues on documentation and transportation.
- 30 November 2017** - This final report is being issued.

## A. Situation analysis

### Description of the situation

Since 15 February 2017, there was a rapid increase in the number of Filipino returnees from the state of Sabah in Malaysia arriving in Zamboanga City, Mindanao. Most of the returnees were coming from the eastern part of Sabah such as Semporna, Tawau, Lahad Datu, Kunak, Sandakan-Romero and Sandakan-Kumunak. Previously, such repatriations were procedural and common place. However, since September 2016 this process was suspended as the vessel used to transport people from the detention centres in Malaysia back to Philippines sank. This led to a large backlog of approximately 7,000 undocumented Filipino migrants in Sabah who were returned during a short period of time to clear the back log from February onwards. Based on the assessment conducted by PRC at the ground level, aside from undocumented Filipino migrants, there were also stateless people who were part of the returnees.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the IFRC Secretariat's Operational Response Framework. This categorization implies that the response intervention is within the capacity of the National Society of an affected country to manage with resources available in-country. If requested, the IFRC Country Office may provide any necessary technical or management support to the National Society, and if required, the IFRC Regional Office may support the mobilization of regional disaster response tools, with Geneva supporting the allocation of Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF).

Considering the humanitarian impact posed by a surge in repatriations, IFRC launched the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 31 March following Philippines Red Cross' (PRC) request to support the immediate needs of the returnees. The request was made after a dialogue between the PRC national headquarters, PRC chapters in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga City, local government counter parts and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Based on assessments conducted through key informant interviews with returnees, the immediate needs were identified as temporary accommodation, food, sleeping materials, hygiene items, medical support, psychosocial support and restoring family links.

Under this DREF operation, PRC's support was on a one-off basis in view of the large scale of returnees' needs following the backlog of repatriations. Under normal circumstance, the National Society does not engage in providing significant welfare services to returnees in routine regular repatriations. Any operations that do take place are supported by the chapters directly and within the national capacity.

The DREF was extended by two months, from 30 June 2017 to 31 August 2017. The extension allowed the Zamboanga City PRC chapter to support the individuals who were not able to return within the initial timeframe of the operation due to issues of documentation and further problems in transportation. Within the extended operational timeframe, of the 7,000 people expected to be part of the increase in repatriation, 4,658 returnees actually arrived in the country. The majority of the back log is now cleared. The balance of returnees still held in the detention centres in Malaysia will be repatriated under the normal process. The repatriation activities still continue at a normal pace and the Philippine government continues to collaborate on the activity to support and reintegrate the returnees. The chapter is constantly monitoring the arrival of returnees and have provided blood and ambulance services to the returnees even after the operation has ended.

The majority of the Filipino migrant returnees returned to their respective relatives and places of origin except those who are stateless in status. Various Philippine government departments are supporting the gradual reintegration of these Filipino migrant returnees for their livelihood stability, political participation and social protection. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), in coordination with Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), has initially assessed and coordinated with DSWD to provide skills training to the returnees. To date, repatriation is still on-going. The stateless persons are now staying in the DSWD Processing Center for Displaced Persons (PCDP) shelter in which they are provided with humane treatment and with basic commodities. Prior to their deportation, in Malaysia, these people were requested to show legal documentation like national ID or birth certificate. If they cannot show any documents, their citizenship was determined through their ascendants. The Philippine government, through the DFA, will support these people with birth documentation.

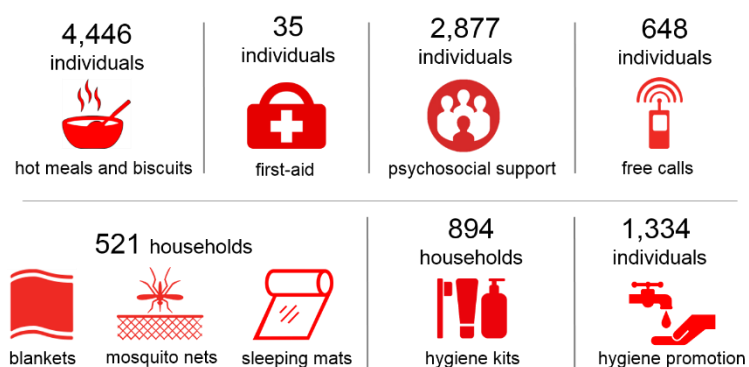
## Summary of response

### Overview of Host National Society

PRC complemented the efforts and assistance provided by the government to the returnees in terms of healthcare, safety, welfare including hot meals, psychosocial support and restoring family links. Within the operation timeframe, and of the 7,000-people expected to be part of the repatriation, 4,658 returnees arrived in the country. In total, the Zamboanga City Chapter responded to 18 separate arrivals of batches of returnees – often in the middle of the night. Zamboanga City Chapter mobilized 21 staff and volunteers to provide welfare services to the returnees at their point of entry to the Philippines. The other chapters of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi Tawi also mobilized staff and volunteers to support the returnees as they returned to their respective places of origin.

The National Society provided 2,877 people with psychosocial support. To reconnect with families or nearest kin, 648 individuals were supported to make phone calls and send 'safe and well' messages to their families (both local and international calls) upon their arrival in Zamboanga City. Furthermore, 1,214 individuals registered with PRC to be linked with family members who contacted the National Society regarding the status of their loved ones.

PRC provided 4,446 individuals with hot meals. For the non-food items, 521 sleeping kits and 894 hygiene kits<sup>22</sup> were distributed. Alongside the distribution, hygiene promotion activities were conducted where 1,334 individuals were reached with hygiene messages. PRC also provided used clothing to 3,875 people.



PRC provided first aid to 35 individuals. PRC medical technicians undertook triage in the port area before referring cases requiring medical assessment and assistance to DOH. The National Society placed an ambulance on-standby during the arrivals of returnees.

After processing in DSWD regional office, the returnees from Zamboanga voluntarily return to their respective place of origin, assisted by the government. For those individuals who were not from Zamboanga and needed further support, the three different chapters of Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu were mobilized to provide the necessary activities, such as psychosocial support, free calls, hot meals and first-aid. These undocumented returnees were forced to return to the Philippines from Malaysia due to their irregular status.

Based on the PRC response plan, IFRC approved a CHF 72,088 DREF allocation on 31 March 2017 to augment the resources and capacity of the National Society to respond to the immediate needs on the ground. The operation timeframe was five months from March to August 2017.

### Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in country

PRC led this operation, with support from the IFRC. IFRC also supported the National Society to disseminate updates on the response to Movement partners with in-country presence and to the IFRC Asia Pacific regional office (APRO) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The IFRC Philippines country office and APRO, through the regional Migration coordinator, provided technical guidance to PRC. IFRC also coordinated closely with ICRC who also support the Zamboanga chapter.

### Overview of non-RCRC actors in country

PRC complemented the efforts and assistance provided by the government to the returnees. The repatriation was coordinated between the Philippine and Malaysian authorities through their respective immigration offices. Various Philippine government departments also supported the reintegration of the returnees for their livelihood security and social protection. The lead government agency supporting the returnees was the DSWD through its Processing Center for Displaced Persons (PCDP) unit in Zamboanga City. Support provided by the authorities include temporary accommodation, medical assessment and assistance and proper documentation. When the returnees arrived in Zamboanga they were brought to the PCPD office of DSWD. The DOH provided health care during the arrival then provided medical check-ups for individuals who stayed in the temporary shelter. The National Commission on Muslim Filipinos also provided food to returnees upon arrival like bread, water and coffee. Transportation arrangements were facilitated for those heading to onward destinations, with the local government unit of Zamboanga subsidising the fare. Social workers from DSWD conducted psychosocial interventions for the distressed Filipino returnees at the PCDP centre. The DSWD also gave referrals to local government units for those needing the support services of local social welfare offices.

### Coordinating with the authorities

As auxiliary to the public authorities, PRC maintains a strong relationship with government bodies. The government departments involved include the DSWD, DFA, DOH, DOLE, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, OWWA, Philippine Coast Guard and PSA. At the National Headquarters level, PRC closely coordinated and collaborated with the DFA through its Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs. At the ground level, the Zamboanga chapter coordinated closely with DSWD on the provision of immediate relief and with DOH on medical assessment and assistance. The National Society coordinated with relevant public authorities in Manila (through its National Headquarters) and local government units in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga City (through its chapters) to advocate for adequate support by the authorities for returnee reintegration. The administrator from the OWWA was one of the main speakers during the migration lessons learnt workshop conducted by PRC in July 2017. This department is under the DOLE, and takes care of the protection and welfare of overseas workers.

<sup>22</sup> A standard hygiene kit contains 12 pieces of body soap, 5 pieces of laundry soap, 40 pieces of sanitary pads, 5 pieces of bath towels, 6 rolls of toilet paper, 2 tubes of tooth paste, 5 pieces of tooth brush and 4 pieces of disposable razor.

## Needs analysis and scenario planning

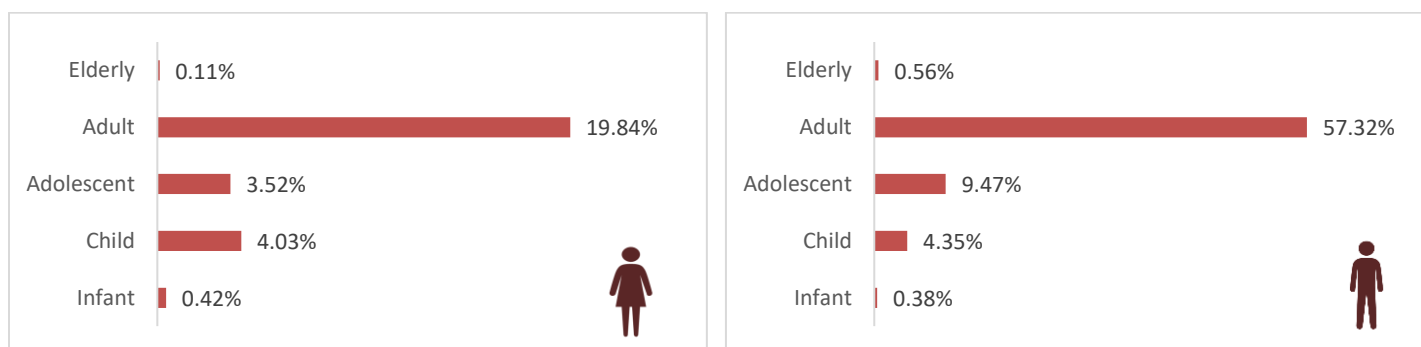
### Needs assessment

Based on the key informant interviews by the chapter, some individuals reported staying in detention centres in Sabah since September 2016. The backlog of returnees made the detention centres congested and stretched the provision of basic services. Some returnees have also been away from their families who remained in Sabah for long periods of time. The congested detention centres also exposed the individuals to infection and diseases. Based on the records from DOH, migraine, respiratory tract infection and skin disease were the top three common medical conditions of the returnees. The returnees usually arrived often in the middle of the night; tired and disorientated.

Based on key informant interviews with the returnees, the identified immediate needs included temporary accommodation, hot meals, sleeping materials, hygiene items, medical support and psychosocial support. Staying connected with family members was also essential for returnees and in this regard, domestic and international phone calls were crucial to restoring family links or sending “safe and well” messages. Some returnees needed support to meet their transportation costs when heading to their places of origin, mainly the islands of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

Those returnees who have family in the Philippines were assisted to go back to their place of origin once done with all the administrative processing. However, there are also few returnees who are still staying in the processing centre of DSWD after their arrival in Zamboanga since they no longer have any family in the Philippines. These returnees are either stateless in status or whose family members are in Sabah. The government is still considering ways to support them.

Based on the lists of manifests obtained from the DSWD, most of the returnees were adults. Most of these undocumented returnees went to Sabah, Malaysia for job opportunities. Based on the gender aggregation reflected in the manifesto a total of 1,253 female and 3,234 male returnees arrived. Noting a challenge on the consistency and accuracy of data based on the manifests and the actual arrival log; the age<sup>3</sup> and sex profile of returnees are reflected in the chart below.



Zamboanga Chapter also made follow-up tracing of the returnees who went back to their respective homes. Based on key informant interviews, all returnees still wish to go back to Sabah to look for job opportunities while 53 per cent are willing to stay if job opportunities are available. But if there will be livelihoods opportunity available, they would prefer to stay with their families in the Philippines. The government has initiated support on proper documentation by processing of passports if they wish to work legally abroad. For the stateless people, they will be assisted for birth registration as Filipino citizens. There are also some government initiatives to support the reintegration of these returnees to their respective communities. For example, TESDA can support livelihood interventions through skills training to diversify livelihood activities for the returnees to find a job in the country.

### Beneficiary selection

PRC ensured that the programme was aligned with its own as well as IFRC's commitment to consider gender and diversity, by targeting the specific needs of women-headed households, elderlies, pregnant or lactating women, and men and boys made vulnerable by the process of returning to Zamboanga. As well as following the 'do no harm' approach in programming, they were considered and consulted on the whole programme cycle from the design, planning and implementation.

<sup>3</sup> 0-12 months – infant, 2-12 years old – child, 13-17 adolescent, 18-59 adult and 60 above – elderly

PRC provided assistance to returnees who arrived in Zamboanga port from Sabah. For the distribution of non-food items, each returnee household or individual were provided with a PRC beneficiary card containing the names of individual returnees or/and the members of the households. The card formed the basis for the recognition of bearers as beneficiaries of PRC. During distributions, PRC volunteers counterchecked if the names on the card were listed in distribution sheets. Upon receipt of any items or assistance, each household head signed the award sheets or lists.

At first, priority was given to returning returnee households. But based on the actual situation on the ground and as a result of the interview from the different groups of people, PRC employed a new strategy and catered for individuals' needs as well. The non-food items were given both to returning household and individuals. For the food assistance through hot meals, all returnees were reached. A modified PSS was provided to the returnees: play and art therapy was provided to the children and counselling for the adults.

## B. Operational strategy and plan

### Overall Objective

The DREF allocation supported the immediate food, non-food and welfare needs of 4,446 returnees.

### The strategy adopted

This CHF 72,088 DREF allocation contributed to the PRC plan of action. The operation was implemented over five months – inclusive of replenishments – and was completed on 31 August 2017.

Provision of assistance and post-assistance monitoring was carried out by PRC staff and volunteers at the chapter levels – in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga City. Interventions of the chapters included specific activities such as:

1. Setting up of welfare desk.
2. Providing psychosocial support.
3. Providing hot meals to all returnees.
4. Supporting returnees to make free calls to their relatives.
5. Providing essential household items (two blankets, plastic sleeping mats, mosquito nets and one hygiene kit).
6. Disseminating basic hygiene messages to the returnees.

### Gender and diversity

PRC ensured that its intervention was aligned with its own as well as the [IFRC Minimum standard commitments to gender and diversity](#) in emergency programming. The PRC operation provided support to all returnees, including children, pregnant women and nursing mothers, women and girls and men and boys. Most, if not all, belong to the socially vulnerable households, and lack relevant resources to cope with basic humanitarian needs on their own. In every arrival, wheelchairs were provided to elderly who needed it, hot meals were provided first to children, elderly and nursing mothers. For children on the move, PRC provided a tailored PSS support through art and play therapy while counseling for the adults.

### Beneficiary communications and accountability

Returnees were consulted on their needs and the type of appropriate assistance they wanted. At every arrival of the returnees, PRC established welfare desks in the port area. Staff and volunteers at the welfare desks provided services and information for: Restoring Family Links, tracing, psychosocial support, referrals, and support for communicating with family members.

### Operational support services

#### Human resources (HR)

A social welfare assistant from Social Services Department from PRC and officer from Disaster Management Services (DMS) Department went to Zamboanga chapter to augment the chapter capacity. The Zamboanga Chapter mobilized 21 volunteers to support the operation with support from different chapter services. Three different chapters of Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu also mobilized staff and volunteers. IFRC supported the PRC operation with technical capacity, logistics, PMER and communications.

## Logistics and supply chain

Logistics support for this operation was provided through the strong capacity of the PRC logistics built over the last years and an experienced IFRC in-country logistics team, supported by a logistics delegate working in the IFRC country office. Logistics activities aimed to effectively manage the supply chain, including procurement, customs clearance, fleet, storage and transport to distribution sites in accordance with the operation's requirements and aligned to IFRC's logistics standards, processes and procedures.

The in-country logistics team dispatched the non-food items prepositioned from Cebu warehouse to Zamboanga Chapter using rented trucks. Relief items were received and distributed by the Zamboanga Chapter. Procurement for replenishment was done as per IFRC standard procurement procedures: 1,004 hygiene kits and 2,100 pieces mosquito nets were sourced internationally via the IFRC Regional Logistics Unit (RLU) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Blankets and sleeping mats were not replenished for this DREF as there were sufficient excess stocks and they were removed from the budget. IFRC RLU in Kuala Lumpur extended its technical support to PRC and IFRC CO to ensure efficient logistics support for this operation.

## Information technologies (IT)

The DREF allocation covered mobile phone credit and Internet cards for the four chapters involved. PRC ensured that staff and volunteers involved in the operation were reachable via mobile phones. The chapters have computers for keying in data, preparing reports and sending official communication.

## Communications

Representatives from the PRC and IFRC's communication teams documented one of the arrivals of the returnees. Quality photos were gathered as well as stories – see [annex](#) below for the story. All communications were being coordinated and shared with PRC and ICRC communications teams before publication. Only one public information - [Information Bulletin](#) – was issued on 17 March.

With support from IFRC Communications, PRC produced a case study about [Supporting Returning Migrant Workers](#). This is one of many case studies collected from Asia Pacific National Societies which aims to highlight the diversity and strength of Red Cross Red Crescent action to provide health and care for migrants, for displaced persons and others affected in the context of migration and displacement.

## Security

Parts of Mindanao are security-sensitive due to the presence of weapons. Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi are areas of highest security concern. Given the context, and in accordance with security protocols, no national headquarters and/or expatriate personnel were deployed to the three provinces. All activities were implemented by the respective PRC chapters whose staff and volunteers come from the target communities.

Following the clash between the non-state armed group and government forces in Marawi on 23 May 2017, the Philippine government declared Martial Law in the whole region of Mindanao, and is still effective as of reporting. As a result, movement in and out in the region is limited. Considering the situation on the ground, all staff from the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in-country followed strict compliance of the security guidelines.

## Planning, monitoring, evaluation, & reporting (PMER)

Reporting on the operation was done in accordance with the IFRC minimum reporting standards. One operations update was issued and this final report issued within three months of the end of the operation. Regular monitoring of activities was carried out by the operation team in the field, supported by technical staff from PRC NHQ and IFRC.

A lessons learned workshop was held in July 2017 to inform future similar interventions with a particular focus on migration.

## Administration and Finance

The IFRC provided the necessary operational support for review, validation of budgets, bank transfers and technical assistance to the National Society on procedures for justification of expenditures, including the review and validation of invoices. PRC – which is on working advance system – has been supported for many years by the IFRC and is accustomed to these financial procedures

## C. DETAILED OPERATIONAL PLAN

### Quality Programming / Areas Common to all Sectors

<b>Needs assessment</b>	
<b>Outcome 1: Adequate assessment, monitoring and internal review measures contribute to an effective and relevant response</b>	
<b>Output 1.1:</b> Continuous analysis and monitoring guide implementation of the operation and an end-line internal review informs future similar interventions	<b>Activities:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mobilize PRC staff and volunteers for assessments, ongoing situation analysis and post-assistance monitoring</li> <li>2. Deploy one RDRT member to provide technical support to the National Society</li> <li>3. Undertake assessments, ongoing situation analysis and post-assistance monitoring</li> <li>4. Ensure that any adjustments to this plan are informed by continuous assessment of needs and feedback from affected people</li> <li>5. Undertake an internal review of the response and organize a 'lessons learned' workshop to inform future similar interventions</li> </ol>
<b>Achievements</b>	
<p>Assessment on the needs of the returnees happened on their every arrival. With the arrival of every batch of returnees, PRC Zamboanga chapter set-up welfare desks that served as a one-stop shop. Based on key informant interviews with the returnees, the identified immediate needs included temporary accommodation, hot meals, sleeping materials, hygiene items, medical support and psychosocial support. Also, the National Headquarters, through the DMS, conducted an assessment in Zamboanga where relevant regional government agencies were interviewed: DSWD and DFA. Based on this assessment, aside from their immediate needs, the most pressing needs were identified as temporary shelter and livelihoods. For integration, returnees would need livelihood support for them not to leave the country again and to reinstate their purchasing capacity to meet their needs.</p> <p>The Zamboanga chapter carried out a tracing activity on the whereabouts of the returnees who left the center and were sent to their respective place of origin. Based on the key informant interviews conducted, all those interviewed expressed their interest to go back to look for a better job opportunities and/or be with the family they left behind in Sabah.</p> <p>There was no RDRT deployed for this operation; however, the IFRC regional migration coordinator in Asia Pacific regional office provided remote technical support and guidance. The coordinator was also the main facilitator during the lessons learnt workshop held in July 2017.</p> <p>There was a decrease in frequency and number of returnees coming back from Sabah, hence the Plan of Action was extended from June to August. The main factor in the decrease of arrival related to strict documentation policy of the Malaysian government and transportation capacity.</p> <p>With regards the non-food items PRC revised their strategy on how to best accommodate the needs of arriving returnees in terms of the distribution of relief items. At first, priority was given to returnee households. But based on the actual situation on the ground, PRC employed a new strategy and catered for individuals needs as well. The non-food items were given both to returning household and individuals, with priority to those who do not have family members in the Philippines.</p> <p>A migration lessons learnt workshop was conducted on 19 - 20 July 2017. It was participated by four chapters involved in the operation: Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga. The workshop served as an avenue to capture the gaps and needs in implementing the operation. Each chapter presented their respective challenges on how they implemented the operation. For peer learning exchange, Myanmar Red Cross Society was also invited to share their experience on how to implement an operation with the same nature. The full report can be access <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	
<b>Challenges and Lessons Learned</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The irregular arrival and number of returnees coming back to Zamboanga caused some operational constraint. The overall progress was low as the flow of returnees reduced and became unpredictable due to congested shipping lines transporting the returnees from Sabah to Zamboanga and the expected number of 7,000 is yet to be reached.</li> </ul>	

- For the distribution of non-food items, priority was given to returnees who arrived with family members. To accommodate the needs of those returnees who come back individually, PRC also adjusted their strategy to accommodate them.
- In all, there were 18 different batches arriving by ship, mainly in the middle of the night and often with only limited prior notice of arrival. This put a lot of physical and mental stress on the staff and volunteers who were mobilized at short notice and then worked for intense periods of time. To address this, PRC provided two different PSS sessions to the volunteers and staff engaged in the operation.
- There were communication barriers due to different local dialects between PRC staff and volunteers and the returnees. Most of the returnees speak Malay, Tausug and Yakan. In order to address this challenge, Zamboanga Chapter mobilized a couple of volunteers who can speak the returnees' dialect.
- Some of the returnees were hesitant to disclose their personal details due to their irregular migration status. With proper information dissemination, on the importance of the registration, these returnees were encouraged to share their personal details.

## Water, sanitation and hygiene promotion

**Needs analysis:** Returnees reached Zamboanga City with only the very basic, they could carry from Sabah, some had no possessions at all. Returnees required essential non-food items, including hygiene kits and mosquito nets, to meet immediate needs in a dignified manner and reduce the risk of diseases.

**Population to be assisted:** At the closure of this operation, a total of 1,334 people (this includes 197 families and 697 individuals) benefited from hygiene kits along with basic hygiene messages. The balance of hygiene kits was distributed by the chapter after the closing of the DREF with the operational costs covered by the PRC Chapter.

### Water, sanitation and hygiene promotion

#### Outcome 2: Immediate reduction in risk of water and vector borne diseases to returnees

**Output 2.1:** Improved knowledge of hygiene among the returnees

Activities:

1. Provide hygiene kits and mosquito nets to returnee families
2. Mobilize community health volunteers to disseminate basic hygiene messages to returnees
3. Procure hygiene kits and mosquito nets to replenish those distributed to returnee families

#### Achievements

In total, there were 4,658 returnees that arrived. They were provided with mosquito nets and hygiene kits, complemented with dissemination of basic hygiene messages, including on the prevention of malaria which is endemic in the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga. Safe water and sanitation facilities were available at the temporary accommodation in DSWD's PCDDP office, and as such there was no need for PRC to intervene.

PRC distributed 894 hygiene kits and 521 mosquito nets during the period of the DREF. For the hygiene kits, a total of 1,313 people benefited from the items (see table below) while for the mosquito nets, 938 people benefited (see shelter and settlement section for further details). Distribution of items was undertaken at the processing office of DSWD where returnees were brought to be documented after their arrival at the port area. The in-country logistics team facilitated the dispatch of sleeping kits and hygiene kits and the items were handed over to Zamboanga Chapter which took the lead in distributions.



Zamboanga chapter conducts hygiene promotion to the returnees. Among the messages promoted were for proper handwashing, good personal hygiene, and proper garbage disposal and segregation. **Photo: Maryjoy Evalarosa/IFRC**

**Table 1. Sex and age<sup>4</sup> breakdown of household or individual returnees provided with hygiene kits**

	60-69 years old	50-59 years old	18-49 years old	13-17 years old	6-12 years old	0-5 years old
Female	16	138	160	58	85	5
Male	19	304	305	89	128	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>11</b>

The Chapter conducted a simplified hygiene promotion for adults and children, promoting good behavioral change through education to improve hygiene practices among individuals. There was a total of 21 volunteers who were mobilized to support all the activities including hygiene promotion. The activity reach 1,334 individuals (250 children and 1,084 adults).

## Shelter and Settlements

**Needs analysis:** Returnees reached Zamboanga City with only the very basic, they could carry from Sabah, some had no possessions at all. Returnees required essential non-food items, including sleeping items, to meet immediate needs in a dignified manner.

**Population to be assisted:** At the closure of this operation, 521 sleeping kits (two blankets and two sleeping mats) were distributed, benefiting 938 people. This includes 197 returnee families and 324 arrived by themselves. The balance of the non-food relief was distributed by the Chapter after the closing of the DREF with the operational costs covered by the PRC Chapter.

### Shelter and settlements

#### Outcome 3. The immediate non-food needs of the returnees are met.

**Output 3.1** Essential household items are provided to the returnees.

Activities:

1. Register returnee families.
2. Mobilize and transport non-food items from prepositioned stocks to affected areas.
3. Distribute non-food items to returnee families.
4. Procure blankets and sleeping mats to replenish those distributed to returnee families

#### Achievements

The in-country logistics team facilitated the dispatched of sleeping kits and the items were handed over to Zamboanga Chapter which took the lead in distributions. PRC distributed a total of 521 sets of blankets and sleeping mats, benefiting a total of 938 people. Distribution of items was undertaken at the processing office of DSWD where returnees were brought to be documented after their arrival at the port area.

**Table 2. Sex and age breakdown of the household or individual returnees provided with blankets and sleeping mats**

	60-69 years old	50-59 years old	18-49 years old	13-17 years old	6-12 years old	0-5 years old
Female	11	51	158	56	85	5
Male	12	54	305	67	128	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>11</b>

PRC stock of blankets and sleeping mats were not replenished. This is because PRC already had sufficient stock of these items.

## Health

**Needs analysis:** Based on interviews with the returnees the repatriation process caused some level of psychological stress for the returnees. Some returnees have also been separated from their families who remained in Sabah. Hence there was a need for psychosocial support. Some returnees required medical attention and referral for further treatment.

<sup>4</sup> Age disaggregation is based on the [SPHERE](#) breakdown in page 63.

**Population assisted:** At the closure of this operation, 2,877 people were provided with psychosocial support and referred for healthcare services if required.

<b>Health</b>	
<b>Outcome 4: The immediate mental health risks of returnees are reduced through targeted psychosocial support</b>	
<b>Output 4.1:</b> Psychosocial support provided to the returnees	<b>Activities:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide orientation and training of staff and volunteers on provision of psychosocial support.</li> <li>2. Produce information, education and communication materials relevant for psychosocial support.</li> <li>3. Provide psychosocial support to returnees and support referral processes for cases requiring specialist attention</li> <li>4. Organize peer support sessions, 'rest and recreation' and team building activities for staff and volunteers involved in the response</li> </ol>

### **Achievements**

The returnees were often held for long periods of time in Sabah before being transported to Zamboanga, the sea travel took four hours and they often arrived with only the very basic possessions, if any, they could carry. The backlog of returnees made detention centres congested.

Psychosocial support was crucial considering the stressful conditions in over-crowded detention centres with limited the access to basic facilities. Others have been away from their families for some time since they have been held in detention centres.

At the point of arrival, PRC staff provided PSS through psychological first aid to 2,877 (39 per cent were female and 61 per cent were male) children and adults. Some of the returnees also need medical care. PRC provided first aid to 35 individuals and monitored the blood pressure for the elderly which were then referred to DOH for further examination. The congested detention centres exposed returnees to various diseases. Based on the records from DOH, skin disease, respiratory tract infection and migraine were the top three common medical condition of the returnees. The team treated cases of scabies (a skin diseases) and fevers.

PRC gives importance to protecting the psychosocial wellbeing of its own staff and volunteers as well as the returnees. With this, PRC conducted a psychosocial support programme (PSP) for the Zamboanga Chapter staff and volunteers at the Grand Astoria Hotel in Zamboanga City on 22 April 2017, where 22 participants (59 per cent female and 41 per cent male) from Zamboanga chapter joined. Another PSP was conducted after the two-day migration lessons' learnt workshop. Activities during the two PSP sessions included critical incident stress management, catharsis, and session on effective communication.



A PRC Zamboanga chapter staff monitors the blood pressure of a returnee. Blood pressure taking is one of the many activities provided by PRC every time they set-up the welfare desks in the port as support to the returnees. **Photo: Maryjoy Evalarosa/IFRC**

### **Food security and nutrition**

**Needs analysis:** Returnees required food upon arrival and pending onward journey to provinces of origin. This operation provided hot meals in temporary accommodation.

**Population to be assisted:** At the end of the operation, a total of 4,446 were provided with hot meals.

<b>Food security and nutrition</b>	
<b>Outcome 5: The immediate food needs of the returnees are met.</b>	
<b>Output 5.1:</b> Returnees have access to meals.	<b>Activities:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Register returnee families.</li> <li>2. Mobilize volunteers and staff to prepare meals in temporary accommodation centres.</li> <li>3. Serve hot meals to returnees.</li> </ol>
<b>Achievements</b>	
<p>On the date of repatriation, Philippine government alerted the relevant agencies as well the PRC. Then, staff from chapter prepared hot meals for the returnees as they arrived in Zamboanga.</p> <p>At the point of arrival, the Chapter provided returnees with hot meals. A total of 4,658 returnees arrived in which 4,446 were provided with hot meals. Not all returnees received meals, because PRC was not always informed in time, particularly for small groups of less than 10 people.</p> <p>Returnees usually arrived in the middle of the night. There was also no clear coordination regarding the date of their arrival. The late hour and short notice affected volunteer mobilization. This meant that preparation for the hot meals was rushed, over-stretching the capacity of the volunteers. The DREF also supported the purchase of cooking utensils for the chapter to respond immediately to the returnees.</p>	

## Restoring Family Links

**Needs analysis:** Connectivity was essential for the returnees, especially in maintaining or establishing contact with family members.

**Population to be assisted:** At the end of the operation, 1,214 people were assisted to send “safe and well” messages to their family members, while 648 people were assisted for free calls both local and international connectivity.

<b>Restoring family links</b>	
<b>Outcome 6: Family links are re-established and maintained between separated relatives</b>	
<b>Output 6.1:</b> Returnees are supported to access appropriate means of communication to re-establish and maintain contact with their loved ones.	<b>Activities:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set up welfare desks and undertake awareness sessions about RFL services among the returnees.</li> <li>2. Provide phone services as well as collect and process ‘safe and well’ messages.</li> <li>3. Collect and process tracing requests.</li> <li>4. Provide mobile phone charging options to returnees.</li> </ol>
<b>Achievements</b>	
<p>PRC set-up a welfare desk every time they were informed of the returnees’ arrival. The desk served as the one stop shop for client-relations including registration of affected people requiring assistance, determining the immediate needs of registered people and referring them to the relevant PRC department or other agencies for assistance. The various services available included first-aid, PSS, and restoring family links through free calls and ‘I am safe and well’ messaging.</p>	

To reconnect individuals to their immediate kin, PRC provided free calls (both international and local) to 278 people when they arrived in Zamboanga port. The same service was provided as well in the processing centre of DSWD where the returnees took temporary refuge. There were also 747 individuals (42 per cent female and 58 per cent male) who registered themselves in PRC master lists as 'safe and well'. In case a family member would look for them, it would be easy for PRC to trace and reconnect family members. To date, although PRC did not receive any inquiry of a family members looking for kin, it is paying close attention to returnees who are still staying in the processing centre who do not have any family members here in the Philippines.

As part of restoring family links PRC collaborated with Globe; a national level telecommunications company. Many of the returnees did not have a Philippine sim-card while others do not own any cellphone at all. Globe provided free sim cards and PHP10 prepaid load to the returnees, providing access



For returnees to reconnect with their families, PRC offered free call (both international and local). **Photo: Maryjoy Evalarosa/IFRC**

to communications to reconnect with family members or relatives.

## D. THE BUDGET

CHF 72,088 Swiss francs was allocated from IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) of which CHF 47,464 was utilized. The balance of CHF 24,625 will be returned to DREF. Click [here](#) for the final financial report.

Budget variances were due to the blankets and sleeping mats budgeted that were not replenished by this DREF operation and they were removed from the budget. Operational costs increased due to the extension of the response and also due to multiple mobilizations of staff and volunteers' due to the nature of the response – this was based on the arrival of the vessel sailing between Sabah and Zamboanga and the numbers of returnees on each trip. The vessel arrival dates, times and number of returnees were unpredictable. Storage costs for non-food items had not been anticipated in the original budget. More volunteers were requested so training costs were higher than anticipated. No RDRT was deployed for this DREF operation and was removed from the budget.

## Reference documents



Click here for:

- Emergency Plan of Action ([EPoA](#))
- [Final Financial Report](#) (below)



- [Return to title page](#)

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**How we work**

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



**Save lives,**  
protect livelihoods,  
and strengthen recovery  
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**  
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**  
and a culture of  
**non-violence** and **peace**.

## Annex



(TOP LEFT) A Philippine Red Cross volunteer from the Zamboanga chapter goes over Michelle's official travel document so she can register her to the free phone calls provided by the PRC to Filipino returnees from Sabah. (TOP RIGHT) PRC volunteers watch the long line of Filipino deportees disembark from one of the passenger ferries carrying the deportees from Sabah, Malaysia. (BOTTOM) PRC Zamboanga Chapter service representative Mary Ann Bernardo and a trained PRC social worker conduct psychosocial support to one of the newly arrived deportees. Photos and story by: Maryjoy Evalarosa/IFRC

46-year-old Michelle (not her real name) thought she hit the jackpot. Carrying two luggage bags and an unbridled hope of a better life for her family as a domestic help in the Middle East, she was confused to find the ticket given to her will not take her from Manila to Dubai, but to Zamboanga City.

*It's a connecting flight*, the recruiter assured her. But when they got to Zamboanga city in Mindanao, Michelle and 20 other Filipinos found out that the connecting flight was not in Zamboanga city airport, but in Sandakan, Malaysia. *The flights are cheaper to the Middle East from there*, the recruiter reasoned.

Just after sundown, she and six other Filipinos were given life vests, crammed into a speedboat, and ferried off to Sandakan, Malaysia. But the Malaysian marine police force got wind of their arrival and were caught just after crossing the maritime border.

"I didn't get a chance to talk much with the others on the boat," says Michelle. "But most of them were like me, seeking greener pastures abroad in skilled labor so they can better support the families they left behind."

Ten months after being detained in Sandakan, Michelle was ferried back to Zamboanga with hundreds other undocumented Filipinos on a passenger ferry, just one of the thousands of returnees coming from Sabah, Malaysia. The returnees appear to be a combination of complete families and sole individuals. Many arrived with only the very basic, if any possessions, they could carry.

Approximately 7,000 undocumented Filipinos have been detained in Sabah since September 2016 after the sinking of a vessel that transported the returnees sank and suspended the exercise, leading to the 7,000 back-log. The exercise resumed in February 2017, where passenger ferries would transport returnees twice a week from the eastern part of Sabah such as Semporna, Tawau, Lahad Datu, Kunak, Sandakan-Romero, and Sandakan-Kumunak to the Mindanao provinces of Zamboanga city, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Sulu.

Many of them left the Philippines to thrive and succeed, driving diversity, innovation and creating important social, cultural and economic benefits to their families.

However, many others face considerable humanitarian challenges, including abuse, violence, discrimination and exclusion. These challenges include restrictions, barriers and concerns related to the wellbeing.

Upon arrival, the returnees are received by officers from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Philippine Red Cross where they are given hot meals, free calls, first aid, and tracing services through the I Am Alive program. Among the returnee's immediate needs were temporary accommodation, food, sleeping materials, hygiene items, medical support, psychosocial support, but most importantly, access to a phone.

"The first thing they do when they arrive at the terminal is ask where the nearest phones are," shares PRC Zamboanga Chapter service representative Mary Ann Bernardo, who leads the weekly processing of returnees arriving every week.

"After they call their loved ones to let them know they are safe, well, and alive, they pull out pieces of paper where some of the returnees are still waiting for their turn in Sabah have scribbled down the numbers to call to assure their loved ones that they will be home eventually," adds Bernardo.

Tired from their journey, Michelle perked up when she heard one of the Red Cross volunteers going around jotting down names of returnees who wished to make personal phone calls back home.

"I haven't heard from my family for ten months. When I heard the volunteer had free call and tracing services, I immediately asked for their assistance," recalls Michelle. "I cried when I finally heard my son's voice over the phone and told him how sorry I was for leaving him."

Once the returnees' information has been processed by the DSWD, they are transported to the places where they – or their kin – originate from. For those whose roots are Zamboanga, where families are available, processing is reasonably quick.

However, for families whose roots are the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, processing sometimes takes days, so they are temporarily housed at the DSWD Processing Center for Displaced Persons in Zamboanga city for several days where they can rest while the DSWD processes their transportation arrangements back home.

After calling her immediate family, Michelle, who has a sister living in Manila, used her free phone call to ask for additional financial support for a flight ticket home.

"I'll pay her back once I find another work," says Michelle. "it's going to be hard without going abroad for work but I promised I will not go through it again."

## Disaster Response Financial Report

### MDRPH025 - Philippines - Returnees

Timeframe: 31 Mar 17 to 31 Aug 17

Appeal Launch Date: 31 Mar 17

Final Report

#### Selected Parameters

Reporting Timeframe	2017/3-2017/10	Programme	MDRPH025
Budget Timeframe	2017/3-2017/8	Budget	APPROVED
Split by funding source	Y	Project	*
Subsector:	*		

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

## I. Funding

	Raise humanitarian standards	Grow RC/RC services for vulnerable people	Strengthen RC/RC contribution to development	Heighten influence and support for RC/RC work	Joint working and accountability	TOTAL	Deferred Income
<b>A. Budget</b>		72,088				72,088	
<b>B. Opening Balance</b>							
<b>Income</b>							
<u>Other Income</u>							
<i>DREF Allocations</i>		72,088				72,088	
<b>C4. Other Income</b>		72,088				72,088	
<b>C. Total Income = SUM(C1..C4)</b>		72,088				72,088	
<b>D. Total Funding = B +C</b>		72,088				72,088	

\* Funding source data based on information provided by the donor

## II. Movement of Funds

	Raise humanitarian standards	Grow RC/RC services for vulnerable people	Strengthen RC/RC contribution to development	Heighten influence and support for RC/RC work	Joint working and accountability	TOTAL	Deferred Income
<b>B. Opening Balance</b>							
<b>C. Income</b>		72,088				72,088	
<b>E. Expenditure</b>		-47,464				-47,464	
<b>F. Closing Balance = (B + C + E)</b>		24,624				24,624	

## Disaster Response Financial Report

## MDRPH025 - Philippines - Returnees

Timeframe: 31 Mar 17 to 31 Aug 17

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Final Report

## Selected Parameters

Reporting Timeframe	2017/3-2017/10	Programme	MDRPH025
Budget Timeframe	2017/3-2017/8	Budget	APPROVED
Split by funding source	Y	Project	*
Subsector:	*		

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

## III. Expenditure

Account Groups	Budget	Expenditure					TOTAL	Variance
		Raise humanitarian standards	Grow RC/RC services for vulnerable people	Strengthen RC/RC contribution to development	Heighten influence and support for RC/RC work	Joint working and accountability		
	A					B	A - B	
<b>BUDGET (C)</b>			<b>72,088</b>			<b>72,088</b>		
<b>Relief items, Construction, Supplies</b>								
Clothing & Textiles	20,415		4,138			4,138	16,277	
Food	6,022		1,467			1,467	4,555	
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	15,060		13,345			13,345	1,715	
Medical & First Aid	840		48			48	792	
Teaching Materials	100						100	
Utensils & Tools			175			175	-175	
Other Supplies & Services	1,640		186			186	1,454	
<b>Total Relief items, Construction, Sup</b>	<b>44,076</b>		<b>19,359</b>			<b>19,359</b>	<b>24,717</b>	
<b>Logistics, Transport &amp; Storage</b>								
Storage	62		1,505			1,505	-1,443	
Distribution & Monitoring	1,200		766			766	434	
Transport & Vehicles Costs	3,650		3,792			3,792	-142	
Logistics Services	1,600		1,733			1,733	-133	
<b>Total Logistics, Transport &amp; Storage</b>	<b>6,513</b>		<b>7,797</b>			<b>7,797</b>	<b>-1,284</b>	
<b>Personnel</b>								
National Staff			140			140	-140	
National Society Staff	1,788		208			208	1,580	
Volunteers	1,238		3,627			3,627	-2,389	
<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>3,026</b>		<b>3,975</b>			<b>3,975</b>	<b>-949</b>	
<b>Consultants &amp; Professional Fees</b>								
Professional Fees			189			189	-189	
<b>Total Consultants &amp; Professional Fees</b>			<b>189</b>			<b>189</b>	<b>-189</b>	
<b>Workshops &amp; Training</b>								
Workshops & Training	6,000		9,990			9,990	-3,990	
<b>Total Workshops &amp; Training</b>	<b>6,000</b>		<b>9,990</b>			<b>9,990</b>	<b>-3,990</b>	
<b>General Expenditure</b>								
Travel	6,563		2,326			2,326	4,237	
Information & Public Relations	1,000		51			51	949	
Office Costs	210		371			371	-161	
Communications	300		380			380	-80	
Financial Charges			129			129	-129	
<b>Total General Expenditure</b>	<b>8,073</b>		<b>3,257</b>			<b>3,257</b>	<b>4,816</b>	
<b>Indirect Costs</b>								
Programme & Services Support Recover	4,400		2,897			2,897	1,503	
<b>Total Indirect Costs</b>	<b>4,400</b>		<b>2,897</b>			<b>2,897</b>	<b>1,503</b>	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE (D)</b>	<b>72,088</b>		<b>47,464</b>			<b>47,464</b>	<b>24,625</b>	
<b>VARIANCE (C - D)</b>			<b>24,625</b>			<b>24,625</b>		