

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES: FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BASILAN, SULU, AND TAWI-TAWI (BaSuLTa) PROVINCES

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the factors influencing socio-economic development in the BaSuLTa provinces, with a particular focus on internal displacement and livelihood challenges. The findings reveal the intricate linkages between internal displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment in the region, emphasizing the need for comprehensive and sustainable solutions. Addressing the root causes of displacement and economic instability requires a deep understanding of the region's unique cultural, social, and economic dynamics. The study underscores the importance of supporting both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities. Strengthening the capacity of host communities to provide essential services—such as healthcare, education, and sanitation—can enhance resilience and foster more inclusive development. Moreover, targeted policies and programs that promote sustainable livelihoods are crucial in mitigating the adverse effects of displacement and fostering economic growth. The findings advocate for policies that prioritize the needs of IDPs and host communities while acknowledging the complexities of displacement and poverty. By integrating these insights, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can develop more effective strategies to promote long-term socio-economic stability and peace in the BaSuLTa provinces. This study contributes to the broader discourse on displacement and development, offering practical recommendations for addressing the challenges faced by vulnerable communities in the region.

KEYWORDS : *BaSuLTa, Internal Displacement, Socio-Economic Development, Sustainable Livelihoods, Underdevelopment*

I. INTRODUCTION

The provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi (BaSuLTa), located in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Philippines, have long been plagued by internal displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment (UNHCR, 2020). Decades of conflict, terrorism, and clan feuds have resulted in the displacement of thousands of individuals and families, disrupting their livelihoods and socio-economic development (International Crisis Group, 2019).

Internal displacement not only deprives individuals and communities of their basic human rights (UNHCR, 2018) but also perpetuates a cycle of poverty, inequality, and social injustice (World Bank, 2018). The BaSuLTa provinces, with their rich natural resources and strategic location, have the potential to drive economic growth and development in the region (National Economic and Development Authority, 2020). However, the persistent challenges of internal displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment continue to hinder socio-economic progress (Asian Development Bank, 2019).

This study investigates the factors affecting socio-economic development in the BaSuLTa provinces, focusing on internal displacement and livelihood challenges. By examining the complex relationships between internal displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the development challenges facing the BaSuLTa provinces and to inform evidence-based policies and interventions that promote sustainable socio-economic development and peace in the region.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What are the causes and consequences of internal displacement in the BaSulTa provinces?
2. How do livelihood challenges affect the socio-economic well-being of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the BaSulTa provinces?
3. What are the key factors that influence socio-economic development in the BaSulTa provinces?
4. How can development policies and programs be designed to address the needs of IDPs and promote sustainable socio-economic development in the BaSulTa provinces?

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Internal displacement is a significant global issue characterized by individuals who have been forced or obliged to flee their places of habitual residence due to conflict, violence, natural or human-made disaster or human rights, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 1998). Unlike refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain within the country's border, and often faces challenges in accessing the basic services, protection, and sustainable livelihoods. According to the 2024 Global Report on Internal Displacement, figures are continuously rising as more people flee each year, adding to the growing number of those who have been living in displacement for years or even decades without achieving a durable solution (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2024). The consequences of displacement are not only immediate but also long-term, affecting individuals' well-being and socio-economic stability of affected regions. This persistent displacement often results to prolonged humanitarian needs and places significant strain on host communities and governments.

The Philippines is widely recognized as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world due to its geographical location. Exposure to this situation with significant ecological degradation and socio-economic vulnerability, leaves a large portion of the population and economic assets at risk from frequent hazards such as cyclones, floods, earthquakes, and landslides (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023). In addition to natural disasters, armed conflicts have also evidently contributed to internal displacement. The Marawi conflict of 2017 stands as one of the notable examples of large-scale internal displacement. The conflict involved government forces and non-state armed group, particularly Abu Sayyaf and the Maute Group, which resulted in extensive destruction and severe socio-economic repercussions. The siege of Marawi City led to the displacement of approximately 350,000 individuals and the loss of around 1,000 lives (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024). The aftermath of the conflict left a lasting impact on the city's infrastructure, economy, and social fabric. Displaced families faced challenges in accessing basic services including healthcare, education, and housing. Relocation exposed these IDPs to inadequate living conditions and limited livelihood opportunities. In response, various government agencies, humanitarian organizations, and international bodies have implemented rehabilitations and recovery programs to support affected communities and promote sustainable development in the region.

The displacement not only disrupted livelihoods but also heightened the vulnerability of communities leading to long-term socio-economic challenges. The southern provinces of the Philippines, particularly in the Mindanao region, have been hotspot for internal displacement due to ongoing conflicts and natural disasters.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

4.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive-exploratory research design, which aimed to describe the current situation and explore the relationships between variables.

4.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi (BaSulTa), located in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Philippines.

4.3 Population

The study population consisted of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities in the BaSulTa provinces.

4.4 Sampling

A combination of probability and non-probability sampling methods was used to select the study participants. Specifically:

- a. Quantitative data: A stratified random sampling method was used to select 300 IDPs and 300 host community members for the survey.

b. Qualitative data: A purposive sampling method was used to select 20 IDPs and 20 host community members for the focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs).

4.5 Data Collection

- a. Quantitative data: A structured questionnaire was used to collect data on the socio-economic characteristics, livelihood challenges, and access to services among IDPs and host communities.
- b. Qualitative data: FGDs and KIIs were conducted to gather in-depth information on the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by IDPs and host communities.

4.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data: Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the survey data, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

- a. Qualitative data: Thematic analysis was used to analyze the FGD and KII data, including coding, categorizing, and theme identification.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. Participants were fully informed about the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection.

4.8 Timeline

The study was completed within 12 months, with the following milestones:

- 1) Month 1-3: Literature review and study design
- 2) Month 4-6: Data collection (survey, FGDs, and KIIs)
- 3) Month 7-9: Data analysis (quantitative and qualitative)
- 4) Month 10-12: Writing and submission of the research report

4.9 Expected Outcomes

The study aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors affecting socio-economic development in the BaSulTa provinces, with a focus on internal displacement and livelihood challenges. The expected outcomes included:

- a. Identification of the socio-economic characteristics and livelihood challenges faced by IDPs and host communities
- b. Analysis of the relationships between internal displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment
- c. Development of recommendations for policies and programs that promote sustainable socio-economic development and peace in the region.

V. KEY FINDINGS

The study revealed several key findings that highlight the complex relationships between internal displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment in the BaSulTa provinces.

- Socio-economic characteristics of IDPs. The study found that IDPs in the BaSulTa provinces are predominantly female (55%), aged 25-44 (43%), and have a low level of education (63% with elementary education or lower).
- Livelihood challenges faced by IDPs. The study revealed that IDPs in the BaSulTa provinces face significant livelihood challenges, including lack of access to employment (71%), limited access to markets (63%), and inadequate access to social services (57%).
- Relationship between internal displacement and poverty. The study found a significant positive correlation between internal displacement and poverty ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that internal displacement is a significant predictor of poverty.
- Impact of internal displacement on access to services. The study revealed that internal displacement significantly reduces access to essential services, including healthcare (55%), education (46%), and sanitation (42%).
- Role of host communities in supporting IDPs. The study found that host communities play a crucial role in supporting IDPs, providing them with food, shelter, and other forms of assistance (75%).
- Barriers to socio-economic development. The study identified several barriers to socio-economic development in the BaSulTa provinces, including conflict and violence (80%), poverty and lack of access to resources (73%), and limited access to education and skills training (63%).

VI. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the factors affecting socio-economic development in the BaSulTa provinces, with a focus on internal displacement and livelihood challenges. The findings of the study highlight the complex relationships between internal displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment in the region.

The study's results underscore the need for sustainable solutions that address the root causes of internal

displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment in the BaSulTa provinces. These solutions must take into account the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts of the region and its people.

The study's findings also emphasize the importance of supporting host communities in their efforts to provide assistance to IDPs. This can be achieved through targeted interventions that enhance the capacity of host communities to provide essential services, such as healthcare, education, and sanitation.

Furthermore, the study's results highlight the need for policies and programs that promote sustainable livelihoods and socio-economic development in the BaSulTa provinces. These policies and programs must prioritize the needs of IDPs and host communities and must be designed to address the complex relationships between internal displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment.

In conclusion, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors affecting socio-economic development in the BaSulTa provinces. The study's findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers seeking to promote sustainable socio-economic development and peace in the region.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Support host communities in their efforts to assist IDPs.
- Develop policies and programs that promote sustainable livelihoods and socio-economic development in the BaSulTa provinces.
- Prioritize the needs of IDPs and host communities in policy and program design.
- Address the root causes of internal displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment in the BaSulTa provinces.
- Enhance the capacity of local institutions to provide essential services, such as healthcare, education, and sanitation.

By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that the socio-economic development of the BaSulTa provinces can be promoted, and the well-being of IDPs and host communities can be improved.

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