

28 March 2016

Catholic Mission to the Indigenous Peoples (CMIP)
Passionist Center – Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, Inc. (PC-JPIC)
St. Paul of the Cross Pastoral Center, Novitiate Compound
National Highway, General Santos City

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TAWID-GUTOM SA EL NIÑO
A Factsheet

The TAWID GUTOM SA EL NIÑO is a quick response initiative of the Catholic Mission for Indigenous Peoples (CMIP) and the Passionist Center for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (PC-JPIC) to help alleviate the suffering of the people in the drought-hit areas.

SOCSARGEN is one of the regions of the country that is now in the middle of the cyclical weather event called the “EL NIÑO”, which even if forecast by DOST-PAGASA to weaken by March-April-May 2016, is currently wreaking havoc on the livelihoods and well-being of at least 3, 131 families living in the various *sitios* in the following municipalities in South Cotabato and Sarangani Provinces broken down as follows:

T’boli - 2, 211 families
Banga – 90 families
Tupi - 80 families
Malungon – 300 families
Malapatan – 300 families
Alabel – 150 families

These numbers should for now be considered as the minimum number of affected families in the areas visited; not all sitios were visited by the assessment team and those prioritized are the mission areas of the Passionist religious congregation, which are found in the innermost parts of the municipalities mentioned. These communities are not usually reached by government services like health care, water and education. Even now that a state of calamity has been declared in these municipalities, they haven’t received any help from the government agencies.

The drought-stricken areas last experienced rains in November or December, and their crops have wilted and those that are supposed to grow have become stunted, even the corn cobs are now empty. As they stand helpless with their lost income and farm losses mounting, rats that have become nearly as big as cats, and are in their 2nd or 3rd year of infestation now, compete with them for what remains of their rootcrops and they are getting fiercer. Even the farm animals – horse, carabaos and dogs – have shrunk with their ribs jutting out. Even petty theft of livestock and what has remained of the dried up produce have become commonplace.

This lack of rain has already upset their cropping calendars, and most of their seeds they have already sold to unscrupulous traders who prey on them by buying their meagre produce at very low prices or they are being lent money at usurious rates.

The children are the worst-affected – in some areas they are at a “one day one eat” mode, or they eat only *balanghoy* for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The children no longer go to school as they are starving or they are sick of sore eyes, cough and stomach aches, perhaps from ulcer or indigestion due to eating only one kind of food, mainly rootcrops.

Families are being broken up – the mothers wean their children from breast-feeding so the mother can work as maid or cannery worker in General Santos City. The most disturbing example the team has noted is that mothers even send their daughters to what they call “mag-Malaysia”, as in putting them up for prostitution.

What the affected families urgently need now is the basic subsistence such as rice, canned goods, medicines and other supplements.

Any form of assistance for these affected families is welcome. Please drop your donations at the St. Paul of the Cross Pastoral Center at Novitiate Compound, General Santos City.

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