



Towards A Mindanao Peoples' Peace Agenda

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In May 2003 a watershed undertaking for peace took-off in Mindanao. Around 300 peace advocates from Mindanao representing at least seven peace networks converged in Davao City and established the Mindanao Peace Weavers (MPW).

Founded during the "Peace in MindaNOW Conference", the seven peace networks, namely: Agong Network, Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), Inter-Religious Solidarity Movement for Peace (IRSMP), Mindanao Peace Advocates (MPAC), Mindanao Peoples' Caucus (MPC), Mindanao Peoples Peace Movement (MPPM) and the Mindanao Solidarity Network (MSN), coalesced in the spirit of cooperation, complementation and concerted action towards a common advocacy peace platform.

MPW was conceived at a time when there was a compelling need for civil society in Mindanao to unify on a ceasefire call amidst an escalation of armed conflict between government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Since then, MPW has launched joint coordinated campaigns, peace advocacy, and lobby work, bringing in a host of issues that revolved around conflict prevention, peace-building, culture of peace and conflict resolution/management.

MPW has continued to engage all conflict actors including Non-State Armed Groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), local and national officials, the donor community, religious and faith leaders, the international community and most importantly, Mindanao's citizens and the victims of the conflict itself.

MPW currently represents the broadest network of a peace constituency in Mindanao and the island provinces cutting across NGOs, academe, religious, human rights groups, peoples organizations and grassroots communities in advancing a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Mindanao.

After three years of joint campaigns, missions, sharing of experiences, lobbying, direct actions, and other advocacy work, MPW embarked on a strategic planning in 2006.

It was in this strategic planning session that MPW recognized the need to further develop a common platform and agenda for peace advocacy while embracing the diverse concerns, priorities, issues, focus and methodologies of the member networks.

While unified on the broad agenda for peace, justice and the recognition of the right to self-determination of the peoples of Mindanao, MPW needed to identify areas of complementation, convergence, and consensus on specific issues for policy advocacy and campaigns.

Thus the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Agenda (MPPA) was launched.

The MPPA process was envisioned to develop and strengthen a critical mass of peace constituency who will consciously demand peace and human security as a matter of policy for Mindanao. The goal is the formation of a peace-building movement where the Bangsamoro, Indigenous Peoples or Lumad and Christian Settler communities, civic organizations, academic institutions, women, youth and religious sectors converge towards dialogue, unity and peaceful resolution of the conflict in Mindanao.

The MPPA process sought to achieve the following:

- 1) To develop and institutionalize the participation of civil society in the Mindanao peace process;
- 2) To provide mechanisms and processes for consensus-building, sharing of information and expertise and drawing unified actions among civil society groups on issues concerning peace and conflict in Mindanao;
- 3) To develop a critical mass of a peace constituency that can engage and influence the actors in conflict; and
- 4) To evolve a common agenda for peace.

The MPPA concept was further enfolded and sharpened through 2007-2008 while support for the process was being solicited.

Then in the aftermath of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) debacle during the last quarter of 2008, when the government peace panel was prevented by the Supreme Court to sign the said agreement with the MILF, the need for the MPPA even gained more urgency. And with the generous support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the MPPA process was finally launched in 2009.

A design was developed by the MPW convenors and secretariats with help from a few kindred consultants. Meanwhile, parallel efforts were initiated by other quarters such as the consultations launched by the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC) called Konsult Mindanaw. Their results have also informed the MPPA process.

A series of network consultations of the seven MPW members for the MPPA then ensued. MPW members convened their respective members and constituencies and identified their respective areas where to conduct the consultations. The consultations were mainly to answer the following questions:

How do you perceive the Mindanao situation?
How do you understand the situation in your particular area?
What do you think are the causes of conflict in Mindanao?
What has been done to resolve the conflict?
What are the obstacles in resolving the conflict?

What is your concept of peace and development?

What should be done by the different players (government, religious groups, civil society, non-state actors, communities, and other stakeholders) in order to resolve the conflict?

The responses to these questions were categorized and summarized.

The results of the network consultations were presented in two area consultations covering Central Mindanao (Cotabato) and Western Mindanao (Zamboanga). These were attended by the different network members including those hailing from Northern and Southern Mindanao.


The area consultations were conducted to mainly validate the results of the network consultations as well as identify perceived gaps in order to deepen and sharpen further the analysis of the results.

There were about three hundred MPW network members who participated in both these network and area consultations held over a period of six months from July 2009 to January 2010 .

The results were in turn presented to the MPW convenors and an Ad Hoc Advisory Group composed of representatives from the Bangsamoro, Indigenous Peoples and Settlers who were earlier identified by the Convenors themselves. Two sessions by this joint group were held to tackle the drafts.

A final draft was then presented at the MPW Peoples Peace Assembly last 20-22 April in Davao City for final validation and ratification. The assembly held at the Brokenshire Convention Center was attended by more than sixty representatives of the MPW network members.

The Mindanao Peoples' Peace Agenda (MPPA) is finally crafted.

A photograph of four children in a rural, outdoor setting. In the background, a young girl in a light blue shirt and a white beaded necklace looks directly at the camera. In the foreground, three other children are visible: a girl on the left in a patterned dress, a girl in the center wearing a white school uniform, and a girl on the right in a light green dress. The background shows a dirt path, some vegetation, and a blue tarp. A semi-transparent grey box with text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

1 Recognize, respect and fulfill the right to self-determination aspirations of the peoples of Mindanao, including the right of the BangsaMoro to govern themselves in their territory; the ancestral domain and tribal governance rights of the Lumads; and the proprietary rights of the settlers, and their meaningful participation in democratic governance.

MINDANAO PEOPLES' PEACE AGENDA

PREAMBLE

We, the Mindanao Peace Weavers (MPW), are composed of various peace networks in Mindanao and Manila representing different sectors (peoples) in our society. MPW currently bridges the broadest network, or peace constituency, advancing a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Mindanao and its island provinces. Our ranks include NGOs, the academe, religious groups and institutions, human rights groups, people's organizations and grassroots communities;

We are living witnesses to the misery and the vicious cycle of violence among those affected by continuing armed conflict. We hereby manifest our insatiable desire to transform our situation of violence and poverty into a peaceful and harmonious reality of life that is imbued with dignity, honour, prosperity, mutual respect and co-existence;

As a network of networks, we recognize that our efforts will be magnified and improved by working together under a common framework and understanding of the specific and unique realities of Mindanao;

As peace building groups, we have coalesced in the spirit of cooperation, complementation and concerted action towards a common peace advocacy platform;

Acknowledging each other's existence, fully respecting each other's rights and convinced that we are important stakeholders in the social transformation of Mindanao, we are bound to craft a mutually acceptable roadmap to achieve our cherished collective aspirations for justice, peace, and self-determination. Thus, we present the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Agenda (MPPA).



2 Recognize and strengthen customary laws and indigenous governance & justice practices towards the promotion of peace & development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

There are agendas, and there are agendas. Many have been drafted, concocted or written for Mindanao by politicians, academics, think-tanks, experts, donors, NGOs – a number of whom are not from Mindanao. Of course, there are existing platforms developed by the people of Mindanao themselves. However, despite the number of these mostly glossy, well-researched and well-resourced blueprints crafted by outsiders – and the many that have been painstakingly developed and negotiated by those who for generations have thrived in conflict and want – peace and development remain elusive to the peoples of Mindanao.


Even then, the peoples in Mindanao remain resolute in their common quest for peace and development. They are far from giving up and are determined to pin down, develop and advance an agenda that will help realize their dreams.

While blessed with robust natural resources and populated by a dynamic convergence of peoples and cultures, Mindanao is also bedeviled by incessant conflicts. It is a land replete with complexity and contradiction. For generations, Mindanao was a land of peace and plenty. People lived and worked in harmony as it was a land of abundance and there was more than enough for everyone. Conflicts were addressed, negotiated and settled through indigenous and traditional practices. In the early 20th century, when outsiders started to come and settle in trickles, and eventually coming in droves, Mindanao was still able to accommodate them in harmony. However, conflicts arising from colonial imposition, pacification campaign and systematic land grabbing eventually emerged and became rooted due to what are now known as historical injustices as Mindanao's native inhabitants struggled to embrace the ongoing influx of outsiders to their land.

To this day, these conflicts are exacerbated by the politics and consequences of greed. The insatiable hunger for wealth by a powerful few is being played out in economic and political monopolies reflecting the narrow and self-serving agenda of colonizers and governments, together with a few leaders they have co-opted. This collusion, pitting the rulers and the powerful against the majority population, has especially institutionalized the marginalization and betrayal of Mindanao's now minority native inhabitants, the Lumads and Bangsamoro. The results continue to be manifested as festering conflicts among and between Mindanao's diverse, yet once harmonious, peoples.

The unresolved conflicts resulting from power imbalances break out in many forms: "secession," "ethnic and identity struggles," "territorial assertions," "struggle for self-determination," and even "revolution". Regardless of the label, they are fanned and fueled, reinforced and partly rooted in the state's continuing acquiescence to impunity, corruption, nepotism, warlordism and other forms of debauchery in government at all levels. The labels not only reflect the complex and intertwined issues and problems besetting Mindanao. They highlight the challenges to be hurdled in forging a consensus among Mindanao's peoples.

Still, we need a broad constituency to own any consensus achieved. The Mindanao issue is not only a local issue. It is everybody's concern. It is a national issue with regional and international



3 Engage in a continuing discussion on the narratives of the BangsaMoro and Lumad peoples in an effort to rediscover the historical truth regarding Mindanao.

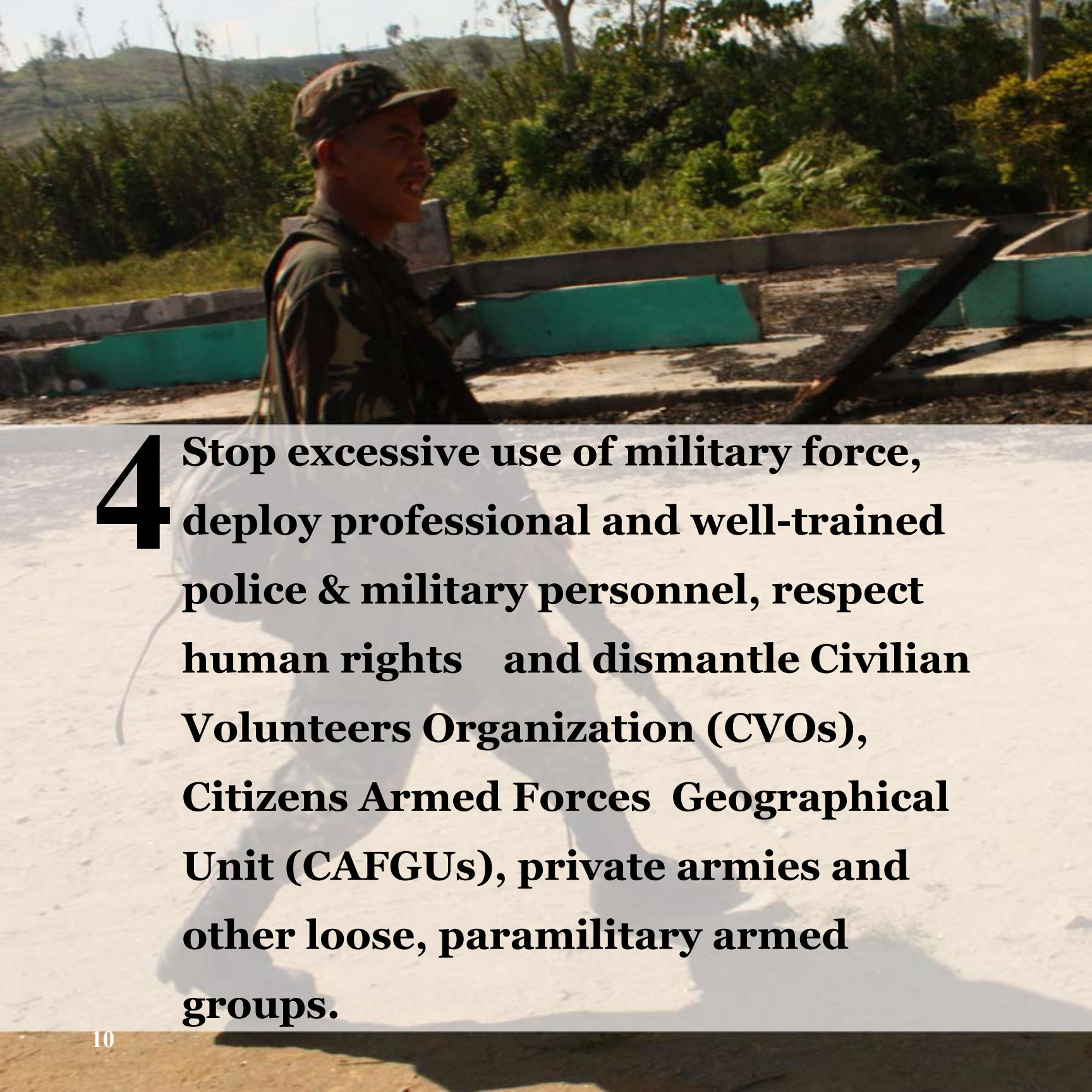
dimensions and repercussions. A peace agreement or agenda in Mindanao cannot be sustained if the rest of the Philippines is not on board. Our neighbours in the region and our friends beyond are inextricably involved and thus have to also sustain their own stake in this process for us to succeed.

The issues, problems and injustices that fester to this day starkly affect the Bangsamoro, the indigenous peoples, and settlers alike, but sometimes in differential ways. These multiple issues manifest in different forms, expressions and result in varying consequences. There are issues that bring the peoples together, issues that divide them and those that are perceived differently. Yet again, there are issues that we consider as part of the challenge of working and living together as diverse peoples.

Therefore, we believe that a constructive, inclusive and democratic dialogue that utilizes every available dimension, platform, arena and space for meaningful engagement amongst the diverse peoples of Mindanao will move us forward. This generative and respectful dialogue will positively link us together towards squarely facing our common and disparate challenges. Through this process, we will continually engage one another - improving our agenda, refining our methodologies, sharpening our tactics and working in a more inclusive manner. By listening and learning from one another, we will go beyond mere paper-clad peace agreements to truthful understanding of our commonalities as well as our differences.

The Mindanao Peoples Peace Agenda (MPPA) represents the fruit of this constructive, inclusive and democratic dialogue, a dialogue that we believe is the key to manifesting peace, justice and harmony in our island. Through this dialogue, we have now come to a consensus in crafting a road map or set of guidelines toward the future. Like a map, the MPPA helps clarify and define the big picture. It not only shows where we come from, that is, the historical issues and dynamics that must be transformed, but also the way forward. The construction of this agenda was built on the deepest desires and daily reality of the peoples of Mindanao, particularly those suffering violence, injustice and oppression. Out of this reality emerged a comprehensive and holistic vision of peace, of the people and for the people, which the agenda lays out in concrete terms. As it is oriented towards strengthening the people's right to determine their own destiny and peaceful future, the cornerstone theme is commonly known as the Right to Self Determination (RSD).

Self-determination is a basic human right. The right to self-determination is not merely a legal concept; it is an inherent and inalienable right which constitutes the core essence of human beings, peoples and nations. It is the right of peoples to determine their role, place and identity in society as they freely pursue their socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural development. These three aspects of development - politics, economy and culture - define the overall organization of the MPPA because they form the main arenas in which the RSD struggle plays out. The right to self-determination is indeed about people's freedom of choice and their ability to control their own lives and destiny. However, our diverse perceptions and interests also translate into varying perspectives on this fundamental and powerful right.



4 Stop excessive use of military force, deploy professional and well-trained police & military personnel, respect human rights and dismantle Civilian Volunteers Organization (CVOs), Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGUs), private armies and other loose, paramilitary armed groups.

There are diverse assertions and competing claims, but upholding the right to self-determination of one community should not mean violating the right to self-determination of another.

Thus, the challenge that the Mindanao People's Peace Agenda addresses, as a Peace agenda, is how to work towards a society that upholds and respects people's right to self-determination such that those whose rights to self-determination need not resort to armed means. The other challenge is in ensuring that peace processes decisively address issues of injustice in respect of peoples' right to self-determination.

The Mindanao People's Peace Agenda is a powerful manifestation by Mindanao's own people of their yearning for peace. May it guide us all as we work for justice and peace in Mindanao. Our collective desire is that it will yield a Mindanao that will cease to be synonymous to a problem but will instead be the source of hope for the future.



5 Correct historical and ongoing injustices committed against the peoples in Mindanao.

SOCIO POLITICAL

ON THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Mindanao is an important focal point of the indigenous peoples' struggle for recognition and self determination. Indigenous communities are distinguished from the rest of the population by the following characteristics:

- The special relationship with their ancestral lands, domains, territories and governance which constitute the principal source of livelihood and origin;
- The conservation, to a certain extent, of their vernacular languages, traditional social and economic institutions, and cultural and religious practices which distinguish them from the rest of the population;
- Self-sustaining economies including barter & trading system.

In Mindanao, the original native inhabitants are now classified into two groups: the Muslims and the non-Muslims. Over years of struggle for self determination, they have come to call themselves Bangsamoro and Lumads, respectively.

Indigenous peoples have significant cultural characteristics that communities share in common:

- Strong sense of territoriality
- Deeply rooted respect and reverence for nature
- Spiritual relations with the land
- No concept of absolute individual ownership of lands and its resources
- General adherence to customs and traditions

Historical accounts place the Lumads in Mindanao since earliest memory. With the arrival of Muslim-Arab traders and the subsequent campaign of Islamization in Mindanao in the early 13th century, some of the indigenous communities accepted Islam while others moved or retreated further inland.

From a dominant status these indigenous communities, which claim legitimate control over a vast area of territory, were pushed into marginal status due to an array of laws, political instruments and institutions that denied them their right to their own land.

Prior to Spanish colonization, indigenous communities already had their own customary laws and tribal governance, along with traditional practices of land use and ownership. The indigenous concept of landownership was one of usufruct, where the colonial concept of private ownership by one or a few individuals seemed unfamiliar, if not outright foreign.



6 Effectively address the issue of land grabbing by setting up a distinct community-based mechanism to address land disputes in Mindanao with the participation of the affected peoples.

Land was considered as communally owned by the people who comprise the community. The concept of ownership was one of sharing the land with gods, ancestors, kindred and future descendants.

The strong attachment to their land and resources led to intermittent conflict with kinship or non-kinship groups that violated the territory. Therefore, to varying levels, these communities developed social and political structures to regulate their relations within their communities as well as with outsiders. Traditional boundaries and agreements were formulated between the BangsaMoro and Lumads.

However, the Regalian doctrine that was introduced by the Spaniards reversed the customary concepts of land use and ownership so that all land became part of the king's royal or regal domain (hence, "Regalian doctrine"). This idea was essentially retained by the Americans. Laws, such as the Torrens titling system, were drafted to reinforce the state's control over the public domain, citing the reason, among others, that there was no effective system of land registration. Consequently, traditional governance mechanisms were eroded and superseded.

For the Bangsamoro and Lumads, the law became unresponsive to their demand for an inclusive system of life and governance that necessarily included the exercise of political governance and economic control over their homeland. Indigenous beliefs, knowledge and practices that are integral and interwoven into the very fabric of ancestral domain fell victim to an alienating concept of land ownership.

ON MILITARIZATION, ARMED CONFLICT AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Historical injustices, systematic marginalization, neglect and government policies of dispossession and subjugation were perpetrated on both Lumad and Bangsamoro communities. These resulted in both armed resistance and a variety of unarmed strategies and struggles for self-determination.

For more than half a century, most Bangsamoro and Lumads in Mindanao considered the Philippine state and its successive governments as a predatory state. Policies and regulations primarily benefitted a few entrenched powerful elites based in Manila and their local allies. These powerful clans and families helped enforce the laws in collaboration with elements of the Philippine armed forces in order to prey upon the island's vast tracts of land and its rich and varied resources. This came at the expense of the welfare, interests, peace and development of Mindanao and its peoples.

A staggering cost was exacted in terms of human lives, properties and resources lost during the MNLF-led struggle resisting Martial law and other forms of violence and oppression (committed by the Ilaga and other groups). Heinous crimes of brutality and inhumanity were committed against the peoples of Mindanao, especially the Lumad and Bangsamoro. In several communities, villages were bombed, strafed and razed to the ground. Schools, Mosques, churches and other sacred places were burned down or desecrated. Women and children were abused, molested and kidnapped. Some were massacred or slaughtered.



7 Ensure civilian protection and assistance during armed conflicts.

The displacement of indigenous communities and the cases of human rights violations constituted some of the terrible abuses, including massacres, suffered by the Bangsamoro and the Lumads.

In subsequent years, sporadic fighting would ensue between the government and the MILF resulting in waves of civilian evacuations and displacements. In August 2008, renewed armed hostilities between the Arroyo government and the MILF displaced more than 600,000 civilians - giving the Philippines the notoriety of having the highest number of internally-displaced people in the world on that year.

For several decades, Lumads and the BangsaMoro had to rely on their own to defend their territories and resources, resist encroachment and occupation of their lands by investors and so-called development projects, and assert their voices and their right to self-determination. Though generally at peace with each other due to their long standing peace treaties, there were times when the Bangsamoro and Lumad communities also became embroiled in conflicts and violence.

Nevertheless, they braved the guns and bullets foisted on them during various counterinsurgency operations and militarization campaigns of death and destruction, especially in areas with strong resistance against militarization and development aggression.

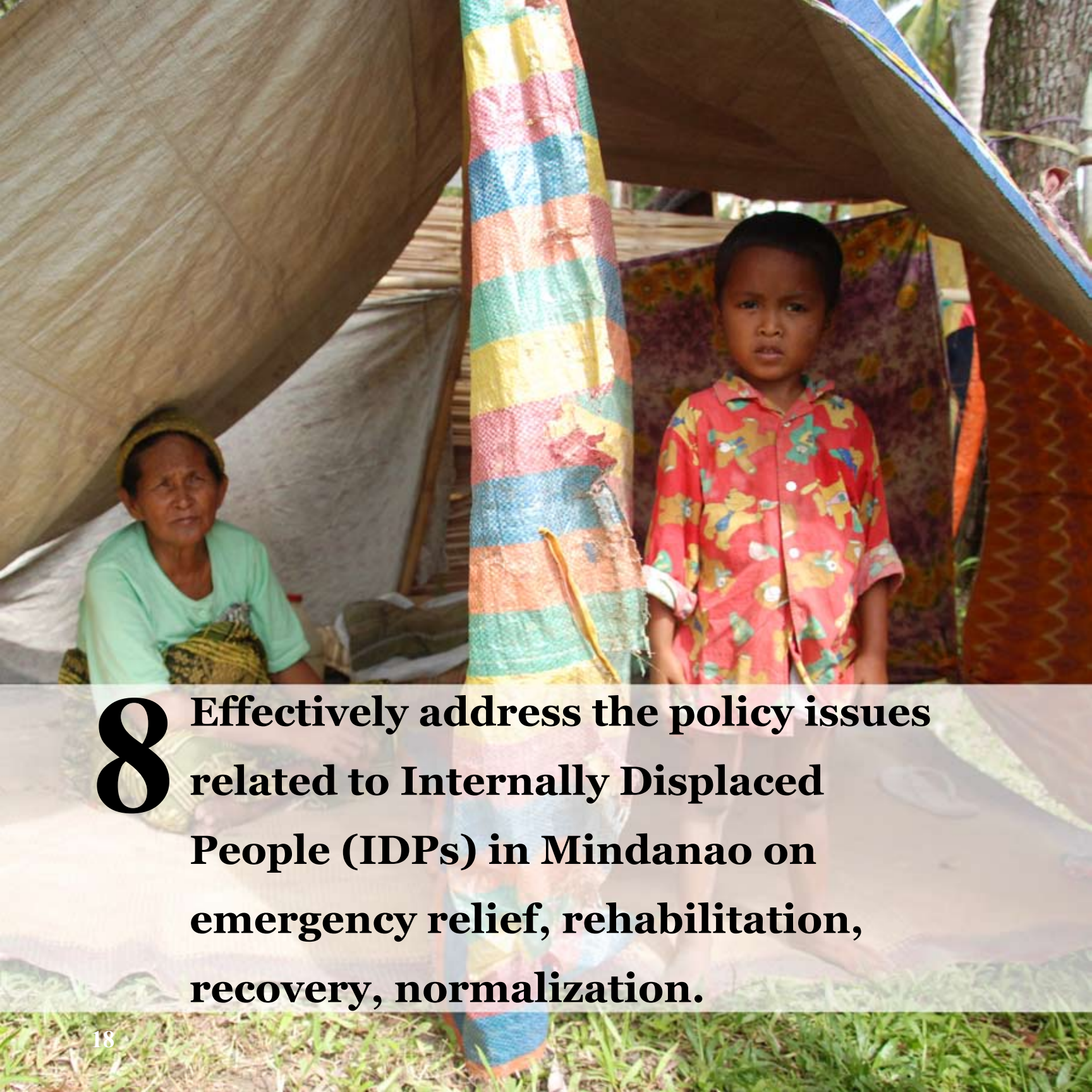
While the government has promulgated policies of peace, it has simultaneously undermined their implementation by relying on these counterinsurgency and military responses to insecurity and people's activism.

A significant factor in these ongoing cycles of violence has been the existence of war economies, of gun-runners and barons of violence that profit from the perpetuation and instigation of conflict and the ensuing culture of violence and insecurity.

In terms of foreign intervention, the most notable expression of such is the US troops' presence in Mindanao through the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). US interest in Mindanao is part of its overall strategic interest in the Philippines and the country's role in America's strategic positioning in the Asia-Pacific region. This is pursued principally to maintain the geopolitical, economic as well as security dominance of the US in the region.

The significance of Mindanao in this overall strategic picture relates to economic investments such as US interests in the reported huge oil and natural gas deposits at the Liguasan marsh, the Sulu Sea and in Palawan.

Through the backdoor provided by the VFA, the US has essentially been allowed military basing rights and operational staging capacity under the pretext of the global war against terror. In Mindanao, it has been shown that US troops are actually engaged in combat operations, aside from civic action alongside the Philippine armed forces. This relationship has also facilitated the enactment of the Philippines' own Anti-Terror Law.



8 Effectively address the policy issues related to Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Mindanao on emergency relief, rehabilitation, recovery, normalization.

The country's sovereignty is put to test as foreign interventions, such as that of US troops in Mindanao, remain. Communities have called for a review of the VFA considering the cases of human rights violations it has spawned.

Challenges:

1. Respect for peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent and decision-making.
2. Recognition of communal ownership of tribal domain and the right to control and govern these in accordance with indigenous customary laws without outside interference (tribal governance).
3. Displacement of indigenous communities due to military operations in the area to deal with pockets of resistance against "development" projects such as mining, dams, reforestation, etc.
4. Sufficient representation in the peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the National Democratic Front (NDF).
5. Recognition and respect of the traditional territories and boundaries established by elders.
6. Support to local initiatives on conflict resolution and transformation.
7. The lack of unity among various RSD struggles leading to diminished effectiveness in achieving their goals.
8. Real analysis by CSOs of the struggles of the Moro and Lumad communities.
9. Distribution of lands covered by agrarian reform.
10. Smaller plots of land belonging to the Moro and IP are the first to be affected by agrarian reform, while the rich and foreign owners are able to circumvent the law.
11. Harmonize conflicting laws around land ownership and re-distribution.
12. Cessation of forced relocation as this denies the IDPs their ancestral homes.
13. Stop to warlordism
14. End political dynasties and other political arrangements that defy either the spirit or letter of the law in order to unfairly consolidate power.
15. Ensure significant representation of BangsaMoro and Lumad in all organs of



**9 Ensure respect for IDP rights,
as enshrined in international
humanitarian law and national laws.**

government.

16. Formation of a distinct peace process body that addresses the Lumad peoples' issues and concerns as regards peace, human rights and development
17. Strengthening of indigenous system/ways of resolving conflicts
18. Address issues of traditional boundaries between the Bangsamoro and Lumad peoples along with settlers' current boundaries and claims
19. Establishment of a national peace body with oversight function on the peace processes.

Policy Recommendations:

1. Develop a national peace framework and policy, including a clear policy on the peace process which respects the right to self-determination.
2. Establish a separate department that pursues the peace process, peace building and carries out the peace negotiations among conflict actors and the GRP.
3. Pursue the peace process and immediately halt armed hostilities with a meaningful discussion of the substantive as well as root causes of conflicts and towards their just resolutions. The peace negotiations should be transparent, consultative, and participatory.
4. Ensure the participation of the peoples of Mindanao: the Bangsamoro, the Lumads and the settlers in the peace negotiations.
5. Continually monitor and review, with the purpose of full and genuine implementation, the final GRP-MNLF peace agreement.
6. For Lumad and Moro to resolve issues of traditional boundaries through traditional conflict resolution mechanism. (Under IPRA and ARMM Organic Act).
7. For land conflicts involving settlers, utilize collaborative and open process for the resolution of these disputes.
8. End militarization of Lumad, Bangsamoro and other territories suffering due to the presence of armed groups; dismantle paramilitary, vigilante groups, criminal syndicates and private armies.
9. Apply the rule of law to perpetrators of political violence, criminality and human rights violations in order to end the culture of impunity.
10. Implement the Philippine International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and ensure the protection



10 Take effective measures towards ending corruption and impunity; upholding the rule of law to ensure transparent, accountable, and participatory governance.

of civilians and non-combatants in areas and during times of armed conflicts and war.


11. Review, reconcile and revise government policies on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and create a law specifically protecting the rights of IDPs.
12. Organize, recognize and respect communities as zone of peace.
13. Repeal the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).
14. Talks between the GRP and MILF should be aggressively pursued and continued even after transition to a new administration without losing the gains achieved under the current one.
15. The voice of civil society should be respected and honored in the peace talks.
16. Ensure the implementation of Philippine National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

ON THE ECONOMY

From the perspective of the original inhabitants of Southern Philippines, the indigenous peoples of Mindanao and Sulu were not completely subjugated under Spanish control when the archipelago was occupied in the 16th century and therefore should not have been ceded to the Americans when the former sold the archipelago to the latter in the Treaty of Paris in 1898. The republic that ensued simply proceeded along the same path as the colonial masters and exercised governance in the territory in its effort to establish a nation-state. Obviously, the distinct peoples of Mindanao did not share the sense of pride and belonging to the republic as the rest of the Filipinos. This is the bone of contention of the centuries-old conflict which thus far had stifled the socio-economic development of Mindanao.

The collusion of political, military, religious and economic elites (including multinational corporations) for the control of Mindanao's resources has brought about the continuing dispossession of the lands of Mindanao's indigenous peoples. Intrusions into ancestral domains have caused the dislocation of native inhabitants from their territories. This was systematically carried out as migrant settlers and laborers from Luzon and Visayas came to Mindanao in search of greener pastures. It was institutionalized with migration policies and laws such as Commonwealth Act 141, known as the Public Land Act, not to mention the imposition of the Regalian doctrine, reinforcing the concept that all natural wealth and public lands belong to the state. This then accomplished the political oppression and marginalization of the indigenous peoples of Mindanao. Divide and rule tactics by political leaders as a form of subjugation [through laws such as the Land Registration Act 496 (1902), Philippine Commission Act 718 (1903), Public Land Act 926 (1903), Commonwealth Act 141

A photograph of an elderly man with a weathered face, looking slightly to the side. He is shirtless, with a white cloth featuring a colorful geometric pattern draped over his left shoulder. He is sitting on a sandy beach. In the background, the ocean stretches to the horizon under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a green mesh net is spread out on the sand, filled with numerous small, silvery fish. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

11 Ensure a more serious consideration of climate change and comprehensively integrate measures to protect and preserve the environment in the promotion of a sustainable development plan for Mindanao.

(1936)] eventually paved the way for the acquisition of ancestral lands by political elites.

Mindanao, as a rich land of cultures and natural resources, is trapped within an import-oriented and export-dependent economic framework. Policies of the government cater to foreign interests, making the island a target of big business and large development projects, most of which have been detrimental to the peoples of Mindanao.

Development programs and plans have remained Manila-centric, and have favored big business and foreign capital. Extraction industries, for one, have long been favored by the government. Mining, logging and oil companies are often given greater incentives with less regulation and control on the part of government. In a number of instances, projects were implemented without proper consultation with communities (in spite of the provision in the Local Government Code of 1991 regarding Mandatory Consultations). This is also true in areas affecting indigenous peoples despite the requirement imposed by the IPRA for Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC).

Aggressive utilization of existing natural resources with utter disregard for the social and environmental costs constitutes development aggression. Among the many impacts of development aggression is the displacement of families and communities in areas affected by such projects. Most of those affected are indigenous peoples living in the various resource-rich areas of Mindanao.

Land and crop conversion has affected not only the small farmers, but also the food security of the peoples of Mindanao. Land conversion has been used as a tool by big landowners to circumvent the provisions of agrarian reform laws. Furthermore, the commercialization of agriculture has ushered in the promotion of high-yielding crops even among IP communities, thus killing the traditional farming system. Collusion between the government and large companies has led to policies allowing large companies to acquire and convert agricultural lands to mono-crop commercial plantations such as pineapple, banana, rubber, palm oil, asparagus, etc.

Such economic policies, which largely cater to the global market economy, caused massive migration, widespread poverty and economic uncertainties as these did not benefit the majority poor peoples in Mindanao. These hardships were exacerbated with the building of dams and power plants that also caused massive displacement of communities in Mindanao. In coastal areas, high impact commercial fishing practices have led to the destruction of aquatic habitats and the depletion of fish stocks. At the same time, much of the abundance of the sea is canned or chilled and shipped to feed the wealthy in other countries.

Again, this can be traced to poor governance, both on the part of local leaders and the national government. Despite pronouncements in the 1987 Constitution and various laws in support of decentralization, accountability and greater autonomy, the government has mostly remained centralized and ineffective at meeting the needs of its poorest constituents.

The accompanying militarization of the Bangsamoro territories starting in the 1970s has also resulted in their displacement and the loss of opportunity to work towards socio-economic development.



12 Effectively address the economic issues and concerns, particularly, food security, export-import policy, plantation economy, and commercialization.

Many families were forced to sell or mortgage their lands due to a very unstable peace and order situation in their areas.

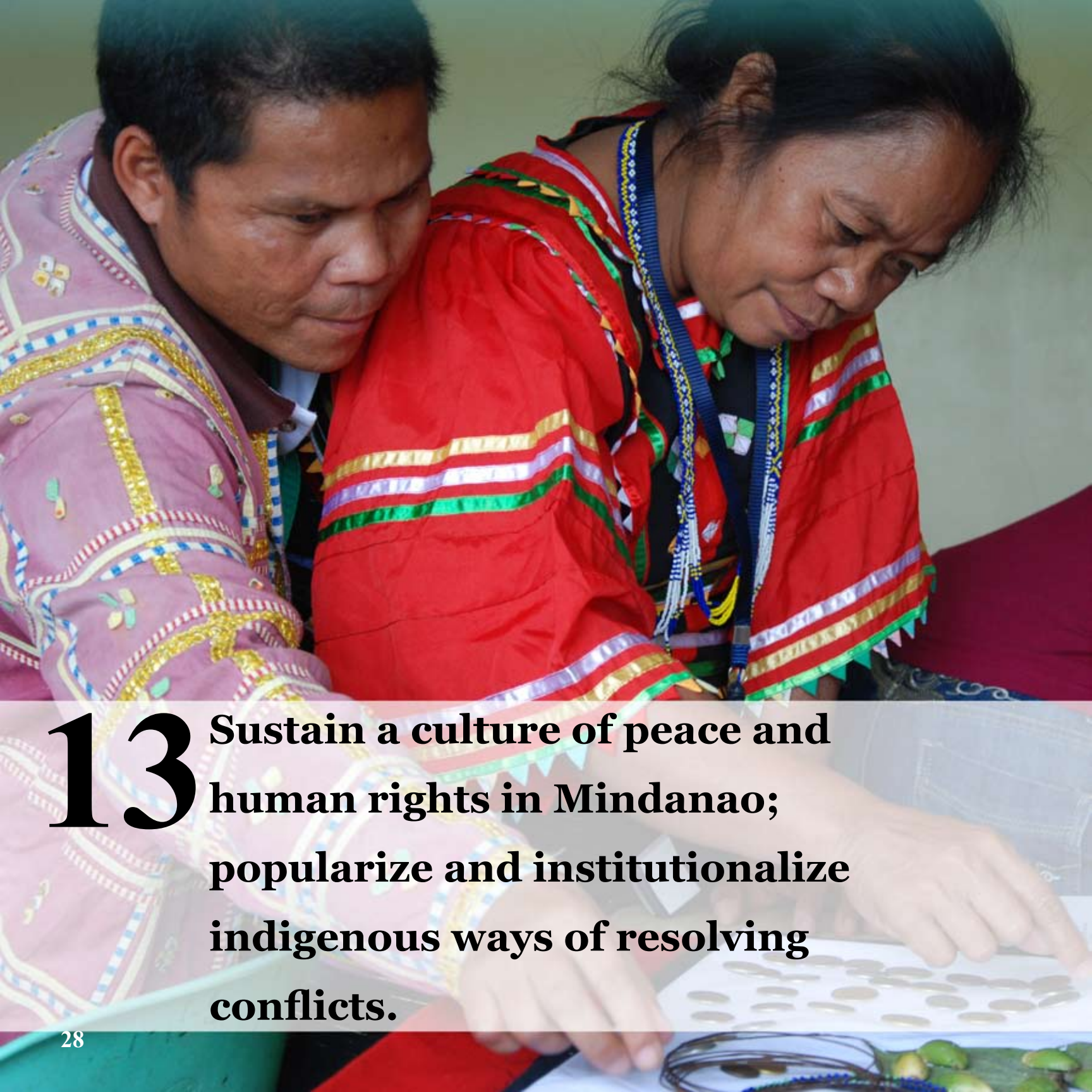
Under this situation, both the Bangsamoro and the Lumads lost control of their economic resources. Specifically, the Lumads were left only exercising their traditional tribal governance practices and customary laws within their territories. The combined effects of the aforementioned aspects of economic marginalization left them with a portion of their traditional ownership of ancestral domains, yet unable to translate that into actual economic benefits.

While a national law, Republic Act 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, was enacted in 1997 to serve the interest of the country's indigenous peoples, it remains to be fully implemented. It has not been widely propagated, much less understood, by government officials themselves and the instrumentalities that are expected to implement it. For the Lumad people, IPRA is the only major national instrument that accords them tenurial security through the recognition and protection of their rights to their ancestral domains.

Despite the passage of IPRA, a law that is in fact still inadequate and limited, the Lumads continue to suffer the non-recognition of the law by public officials. This is manifested in the lack of acknowledgment and support from local government units in the ancestral domain claims of the tribes. They are also confronted with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), an ineffective and toothless government agency which was mandated to uphold, promote and implement IPRA in letter and spirit. The NCIP is amiss in its mandate to the point that some of its officials even connive with mining corporations in their incursions into the ancestral domains. This is just one way in which the FPIC provision as stipulated in IPRA has been subjected to various forms of abuse and circumvention.

IPRA has both exacerbated and created divisions within tribes. Sometimes, by aligning sympathetic tribal leaders with corporate or government interests, outsiders have colluded with the NCIP to corrupt the FPIC process to serve their own interests. The situation is worsened because some members of the tribe have been disconnected from their culture following the incursions and influences of outside forces. Hence, lacking the confidence and power rising from an assertive cultural awareness and identity, they are weakened in opposing such methods.

In other cases, with the NCIP powerless and unwilling to intervene, harassment, intimidation and outright killing of tribal leaders who oppose particular projects has undermined the very relevance and existence of IPRA. These methods of divide and conquer have highlighted the need for a revival of authentic leadership among tribal leaders. At present, numerous tribal leaders have emerged, causing confusion and distortions both outside and within neighboring communities and among the indigenous peoples themselves.



13 Sustain a culture of peace and human rights in Mindanao; popularize and institutionalize indigenous ways of resolving conflicts.

ON SOCIAL INJUSTICES

The inability of government to address social justice issues and concerns is one of the harsh realities that the peoples of Mindanao contend with. Almost all of the following points especially affect not only the poor Lumad and Bangsamoro, but poor and working class settlers across sectors, who together make up the majority of the people in Mindanao.

Despite the abundance of natural resources, Mindanao remains marginalized politically, socially and economically. Land and natural resources, as well as capital and business, are owned and controlled by a few (e.g. landed elite, multi-national and transnational corporations). At present, 14 out of 20 of the poorest provinces in the country are found in Mindanao.

The poverty situation is exacerbated by the lack of business and employment opportunities, low productivity and low income, lack of supply and frequent price increase of basic commodities, thus, further widening the gap between the poor majority and the rich elite. Economic programs, rather than being pro-poor, favor big business. In some cases, even access to services that would encourage productivity is denied (e.g. seeds are not made available for the farmers' use). Noticeably, a majority of those affected are the Bangsamoro and Lumad peoples of Mindanao.

The poor peoples of Mindanao are confronted by issues related to land tenure. They are easily taken advantage of by local landholders or wealthy agri-business and multi-national corporations who out rightly expropriate lands or make usurious and unfair rental agreements that leave small farmers landless on their own territory.

As with the rest of the country, problems of lack of employment opportunities, unemployment and underemployment beset the labor sector in Mindanao. In addition, the BangsaMoro and Lumad peoples have to deal with cultural biases and discrimination in seeking employment, further diminishing their already bleak prospects for economic advancement.

Poverty and lack of employment opportunities, coupled with the harsh reality of war, have resulted in the migration of workers to other parts of the country and abroad. Human rights violations in relation to trafficking of women and children are also commonplace (e.g. increased number of underage migrant workers, and increased number of abused women OFWs).

Contributing in a cyclical manner to the worsening poverty situation, the peoples in Mindanao also suffer from the lack of basic government services, such as health, shelter and education. Said neglect can be attributed to a lack of good and responsible governance, where government projects are lacking in most of the affected areas and where NGOs are left to fill the gaps. Women, particularly those in rural areas, suffer from the lack of social services. In some cases, funds for gender development are not properly utilized, especially at the barangay level. This situation is made even worse by the prevailing system of graft and corruption. Almost two decades ago, the National Unification Commission made a similar observation wherein they listed "poor governance, including lack of basic social services, absenteeism of elected local officials, corruption and inefficiency in government bureaucracy, and

14 Adopt and pursue a comprehensive and consistent national peace policy and program.



poor implementation of laws" as some of the major causes of armed conflict.

The lack of basic services from government is all the more magnified in evacuation centers where loss of dignity, lack of protection and limited access to food, among other forms of insecurity, are problems faced daily by the "bakwits" (internally displaced persons).

The problem in the field of education is not confined to the insufficiency of basic education in terms of facilities/infrastructure, teachers, materials, and the like. The problem also lies in the relevance and responsiveness of the educational system to the culture and context of Mindanao and its peoples. This problem is manifested even in the development of the curriculum and educational materials (e.g. inability to develop culturally sensitive materials; inability to integrate a more effective and appropriate values education program in the curriculum).

There is also a gap in the preparation and training of school administrators and teachers to enable them to facilitate a dialogical community in diversity. In some areas, the situation is further aggravated by military operations, which affect the normal course of activity in several communities, including the education of children. When classes are suspended for indefinite periods and classrooms are used as evacuation centers, not only is the educational process disrupted, but some students lose hope and drop out, further perpetuating the cycle of poverty and violence, especially if they are recruited into an armed group.

ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The reality of climate change can no longer be denied in Mindanao. Last year alone saw the onslaught of natural and man-made calamities/disasters, such as landslides and flooding. Environmental degradation (e.g. mining, pollution, siltation, acidic soil) is also evident in various places in Mindanao and threaten Mindanao's biodiversity. These (i.e. calamities & environmental degradation), in turn, have led to the destruction of lives, properties and livelihood of the peoples in Mindanao as well as their

economic exploitation. And economic exploitation, as it is based on non-sustainable practices, leads to further degradation, and so on, in a cycle of economic and ecological violence.

Thus there is a need for climate justice, so that those, such as the Bangsamoro and Lumad, who feel the brunt of climate change receive compensation for bearing this burden and assistance for mitigating and preventing further damage. In fact, the interdependent nature of these man-made and natural disasters tell us that it will take much greater political will, regulation and enforcement to prevent this negative spiral from continuing.

Challenges:

1. Economic programs do not address poverty which reflected the skewed policy of government that deviates from the structural issues that causes poverty in the first place.
2. Conversion of agricultural lands for plantation economy and mono-crop commercial



15 Continue to enhance the MPPA as a living document by reaching out to other groups and sectors.

production catering to the global market and the export-oriented and import dependent economic policy of government.

3. Ownership and control of resources are in the hands of local and national elites conniving with multinational corporations (through the use of local dummies) in the exploitation of resources in the ancestral domains of the indigenous peoples.
4. Reclaim/revive indigenous knowledge system and practices and full access to indigenous seed varieties.
5. Lack of an effective information system as regards programs and services provided by the Government.
6. Accessibility, affordability of quality education that is, at the same time, culturally relevant and can help facilitate and develop critical thinking and to enhance strong values.
7. Existence of CSO support mechanisms for decision-making in relation to peace and development policies and the allocation of resources especially for deprived communities.
8. There is need to strengthen livelihood programs and institutionalize social enterprises (such as, cooperatives).
9. There is a need to address the effects of climate change, especially in relation to resources, and to conduct awareness and education programs in relation to climate change, including enhancement of disaster preparedness and risk reduction programs. Due to the large scale nature of climate change problems, it is imperative that communities network and link their agenda as a way of mutually supporting each other's RSD.
10. Encourage CSOs, POs, NGOs to be accredited in the local development councils, and other special bodies in the LGUs.
11. Ensure resource tenure (e.g. land ownership, sustainability of land and resources, just and equitable sharing of profit)
12. Improve infrastructure (e.g. farm-to-market road, appropriate technology and market, support capital), thus ensuring a profitable market and production
13. Respect workers rights (e.g. employment, security of tenure, just compensation).
14. Maximize the upcoming elections in promoting said agenda.
15. Continue engaging the government and its various agencies and the non-state actors.

Policy Recommendations:

1. There should be a stop to land conversion and ensure the distribution of remaining lands covered by agrarian reform to rightful beneficiaries.
2. Expand the scope and implementation of livelihood programs and development projects (includes identification and prioritization of project area, i.e. conflict affected areas; development of mechanism for the effective implementation of projects and programs).
3. Extend the scope and coverage of EO 570 (Institutionalizing Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education) [e.g. include higher education].
4. Reach and coverage of peace education should include local government agencies [LGUs] and the department / line agencies of government.
- 5.. Institutionalize culture of peace and justice as part of the curriculum of the military.
6. There is a need for CSOs to further engage LGUS's to develop their peace and development agenda/plans for Mindanao and the Peoples of/in Mindanao.
7. Lobby for the passage of bills that would promote the protection of the health of women.
8. IPRA should be fully implemented while fully recognizing the prior traditional resource use rights of Lumads. Other laws should be harmonized to align with this.

SOCIO CULTURAL

ON CULTURE OF PEACE

The long history of war, armed conflict, political violence, militarization, land grabbing, social injustice and poor governance has deeply affected the social and moral fabric of Mindanao. As such, a culture of violence, corruption and impunity pervades. With the decreasing access to employment, education and basic social services also comes a host of other social problems: disempowerment and exploitation of women and children, drug trafficking and substance abuse, weakening values system and continuing alienation and demoralization among the economically marginalized. These pressures bear down on us, threatening to tear apart our social fabric and fanning the flames of distrust, discrimination, prejudice and 'fear of the other.' This phenomenon, in turn, breeds the conditions on which the cycle of violence, conflict and prejudice feeds and festers.

Just as we continue to contend with historical and unresolved issues of social injustice, we face new issues and challenges. Information technology is rapidly changing our lives and our ways of life in both positive as well as negative ways. The compression of time and space, a feature of today's era of globalization, has been made possible largely by information

technology access to news and information about what is happening in other parts of the country, even across the globe, has become easier. Advanced telecommunication systems and facilities have ushered in many comforts and conveniences. However, the commercialization of information and information technology and the rapid rate by which IT is being adopted in the country has resulted in uneven access and exacerbated deep divides between the urban and the rural, and the "haves" and the "have nots." It has also promoted and reinforced in a most dramatic way the values of consumerism and the commercialization of cultures.

In this context, women and the youth face multiple burdens and challenges. Women from marginalized communities and cultures, such as Bangsamoro and indigenous women, face layers of discrimination: they are often discriminated against by virtue of their gender, their ethnic identity as well as their socio-economic status. The challenges are multiplied even further when they find themselves suffering as civilians caught in the crossfire of armed conflict or as part of internally displaced communities. It is no coincidence that cases of sexual exploitation and violence against women increase in crisis situations due to armed conflict, militarization or natural disasters. Where cultural norms dictate that women are subordinate to men and that women's bodies are to be controlled and dominated rather than respected, rape and the sexual abuse of women are used as part of warfare in armed conflict or even in political conflicts and clan wars. Women from marginalized communities and discriminated cultures are rendered most vulnerable to such abuse.

The underlying causes of structural violence, armed conflict and militarization in Mindanao include historical and ongoing issues: social injustice, structural imbalances of power, social exclusion, cultural discrimination and the gross lack of fulfilment of the rights to self-determination of the Bangsamoro and indigenous peoples. Efforts to address this situation should include addressing these issues through the peace process, ensuring the rule of law and genuine democracy, recognizing and respecting the diversity of cultures, empowering civil society groups and promoting a culture of peace. Even as alternative forms of media and civil society peace actions are encouraged and strengthened, the mainstream media as well as educational and religious institutions should be challenged and encouraged to play a more visible role in promoting a culture of peace and building bridges of understanding across all cultures and communities. If the seeds of peace are to be nurtured and protected against destructive forces, the divisive flames of prejudice and 'fear of the other' must be overcome, never to be fueled again.

Challenges:

1. Discrimination against the Bangsamoro and indigenous peoples is not only a lingering legacy of our colonial past -- it is very much part of our contemporary reality.
2. The systemic imposition of the dominant culture and the culture of the majority that was part of our colonial past continues in new and complex forms. This poses a threat to the cultures, identities, life-worlds and even the very existence of the Bangsamoro and indigenous peoples.

3. Mindanao has often been portrayed by the mainstream media as a dark and exotic land of violence, crime, conflict and war. By focusing only on negative images, such media representations, wittingly or unwittingly, reinforce prejudices, biases and cultural stereotypes.
4. Continue the search for a just political solution that addresses both the root causes and factors that further escalate or perpetuate the conflict; and ensures respect for the right to self determination of the Bangsamoro and Lumad peoples.
5. Integrate their history, struggle and aspirations in educational curricula
6. Continuing inter-cultural dialogue for mutual understanding

Policy Recommendations:

As we seek social justice and support the peace process, we must also work towards:

1. Massive education and awareness raising about the situation of Mindanao and its history as seen through the eyes of the diverse peoples and grass-roots communities of Mindanao, and particularly about the right to self-determination of the Bangsamoro and indigenous peoples;
2. Building trust and promoting a genuine culture of peace and commitment to social justice;
3. Beginning with ourselves, respect for plurality of cultures and peoples in Mindanao, and the recognition of such cultural diversity as a source of strength and hope for the future.
4. Strengthen intercultural and interfaith dialogue for peace.
5. Promotion of meaningful participation of women in decision-making.

MINDANAO PEACEWEAVERS



AGONG PEACE NETWORK



CONSORTIUM OF BANGSAMORO CIVIL SOCIETY



INTER-RELIGIOUS SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT FOR PEACE



MINDANAO PEOPLES PEACE MOVEMENT



MINDANAO SOLIDARITY NETWORK



MINDANAO PEACE ADVOCATES CONFERENCE



CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES



INITIATIVES FOR INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE



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