COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECTS

Mindanao

REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE PROJECT

Cumulative Impact Case Study

The Diverse Terrain of Peacebuilding in Mindanao:

Gains and Challenges in the Peace Process between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

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COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECTS

This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

These documents do not represent a final product of the project. While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences.

Not all the documents written for any project have been made public. When people in the area where a report has been done have asked us to protect their anonymity and security, in deference to them and communities involved, we keep those documents private.

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Map of the Philippines

Acronyms and Terms

AFP – Armed Forces of the Philippines
BDA - Bangsamoro Development Agency
CAFGU – Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit
CBCS – Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (Cotabato City)
CBO – Community Based Organization
CCCH - Coordinating Committees on the Cessation of Hostilities
COP – Culture OF Peace
CSO – Civil Society Organization
CPP – Communist Party of the Philippines
CRS – Catholic Relief Services
DDR - disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
FPA – Final Peace Agreement
G7 – GiNaPaLiDTaKa: seven 'Spaces for Peace' communities
GPLC – Grassroots Peace Learning Center
GRP - Government of the Republic of the Philippines
ICG – International Contact Group
IID - Initiatives for International Dialogue (Davao City)
IMAN - Integrated Mindanaoan Association for Natives
IMT - International Monitoring Team
IP – Indigenous People
IRD – Inter-Religious Dialogue
LGU – Local Government Unit
MILF - Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF – Moro National Liberation Front
MOA-AD – Memorandum of Agreement-Ancestral Domain
MPC - Mindanao Peoples Caucus (Kabacan)
MPI - Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute
MPPA - Mindanao Peoples Peace Agenda (Consultation by MPW)
MPW – Mindanao Peace Weavers
NDF – National Democratic Front
NP – Nonviolent Peaceforce
NPA – New People's Army
NUC - National Unification Commission
OIC – Organization of the Islamic Conference
OPAPP - Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process
PAZ - Peace Advocates of Zamboanga
PDC – Peace and Development Communities
PWL – Peace Writ Large
RSD – Right to Self Determination
SOMA – Suspension of Military Actions (by the MILF)
SOMO – Suspension of Military Operations (by the AFP)
Tri-peoples - Indigenous People (IP), Bangsamoro, and Christian immigrant

I. Rationale for this Case Study

In July 2008, a final peace agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) seemed within grasp. Yet as the Philippine Supreme Court first put a temporary restraining order on the planned August signing and later struck down, with finality, the legality of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) on 14 October 2008, an incremental step on the path to a final peace agreement was again dashed on the rocks of mistrust and cyclical warfare.

On 23 November 2009, fifty-seven people were massacred in the Province of Maguindanao in election-related violence.[1] The complexity of this heinous act cannot be reduced to simple clan warfare or election violence, but has its genesis in the power brokering, attack and counter attacks that have characterized the conflict in Mindanao from the early 1970s and continuing with regularity, flaring up in 1997, 2000, 2003, and 2008. The recurring provocations, resistance and offensives between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and MILF have resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands and, most recently, forced a reflective process among peacebuilders who may ask, "What are the real gains from the fifteen years of peace efforts in Mindanao?"

This case study surveys the specific efforts of many people and organizations from multiple sectors in Mindanao in their search for a sustainable peace in relation to the MILF/GRP conflict. The paper will explore particularities of the Mindanao context that relate to cross-cutting themes in every sector and level of civil society and government.

Mindanao has multiple layers of conflict, including the long-running communist insurgency of the New People's Army and breakaway groups, resource based conflicts and *rido* (clan feuds), and the activities of third party 'spoilers' and 'lost commands' (rogue units that are not controlled by the central command of either the government or the MILF). These all form the context of conflict within which the more prominent Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and MILF conflicts with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines are situated.

While these conflicts provide the context for the MILF/GRP talks, it is beyond the scope of this case study to analyze all of these conflicts in depth. Thus the geographical focus of this paper will be limited to the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) (see highlighted area on Map 1, set up as a semi-autonomous region by the MNLF/GRP agreement in the 1990s). In addition, the national center of power in Manila and regional center of Davao City need to be part of this study, as decisions made there directly relate to the Bangsamoro[2] (MILF) and government conflict.

[1] For a summary of this incident and many references see : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maguindanao_massacre
[2] Meaning the Moro homeland

Map 1: Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ph_ARMM.png

A. Key questions

The evidence gathered by previous Reflecting on Peace Practices case studies suggests that, although many people do conduct good peace programming at many levels, these initiatives do not automatically "add up" to peace! RPP found that peace programs that were effective in contributing to Peace Writ Large (PWL—the broader, societal-level peace) addressed key factors driving the conflict. Many programs, however, did not relate their objectives to the driving forces of conflict, and consequently had little impact on the overall situation. Often, programs that had powerful impacts on participants' attitudes and relationships did not necessarily lead to activity or changes that affected broader social institutions , and programs working at the grassroots level were often not linked with programs at the elite level. Good programs had impact on the local situation, only to see this undermined by national and regional developments. RPP lessons learned through 2003 were published in the book *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners.*[3]

Most of the case studies developed for the initial phase of RPP (1999-2003) examined the effectiveness of single programs, with only a few exceptions. Late in the process, participants in the collaborative learning process pointed out that it would be important to try to understand the effects of *multiple* peace efforts in a single conflict zone—in an attempt to understand the cumulative impacts of such programs and whether and how they "add up" to Peace Writ Large. This case study is one of fifteen that are considering such cumulative impacts.[4]

[3] *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*, Mary B. Anderson & Lara Olson, with assistance from Kristin Doughty, 2003, Collaborative for Development Action. It can be downloaded in PDF version from: http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/publication.php

[4] A list of the cases and full texts are available at www.cdainc.com.

For the Mindanao case study we chose interview questions to uncover what local/community peace initiatives are adding up to support Peace Writ Large during the years of peacebuilding in Mindanao. By probing interviewees' assumptions regarding what peace looks like, we could glean perceived sources of the conflict, as well as gains, key learnings and gaps in peacebuilding. The interviewers narrowed the inquiry down to a few key questions:

- What is your definition of a peaceful Mindanao?
- What is the cause of the conflict, what is the perceived solution?
- What gains in peace have been made at what levels, even with recent outbreak in hostilities, and why they have been sustainable?
- What has been the learning from each cycle in the resumption of hostilities, especially focusing on the MOA-AD failure last year and the resumed fighting in Mindanao?

In the context of Mindanao where violence has been going on for forty years, most individuals, groups and communities have been engaged in peacebuilding initiatives only for the last fifteen years. Mindanao today boasts of peacebuilding efforts that are initiated by grassroots, middle-range and top level actors, including initiatives in peace education, interreligious dialogue, peace advocacy, development interventions integrated with peacebuilding, establishing and sustaining zones of peace, promoting good governance, strengthening local conflict resolution mechanisms, trauma healing, and formal peace negotiations.

The authors of this paper have come to believe that the phenomenal birthing of peace processes in various parts of Mindanao comes from a place of collective creativity. In our view, a number of conditions and events allowed the opening of a wide social space that has enabled groups from various sides of the conflict to harness their capacities to imagine and generate constructive responses rather than use violence to obtain what they want. These efforts are assisted at all levels by outsiders who, directed mostly by local leadership, aim to contribute toward Peace Writ Large

B. Methodology

In order to gather information for this case study, our intention was to interview as many stakeholders as possible in as many sectors as possible. The twelve days we allocated to the field interviews were supplemented by our own extensive history and experience in the region, which helped to triangulate the responses from each actor or group of stakeholders. Myla Leguro, Catholic Relief Services Philippines Peace and Reconciliation Program Manager since the late 1990s, has focused efforts on training, advocacy and supporting community capacities for peace in Mindanao. Jon Rudy became familiar with Mindanao as the Mennonite Central Committee Asia Peace Resource person based in Mindanao. Ultimately, we were able to meet with 81 people through conducting thirty-five interview sessions. We achieved our goal of covering a broad spectrum of sectors and levels. That being said, the bulk of our relationships and work experience has been with the non-governmental sector and the tremendous grassroots mobilization of people and creative resources that has been garnered to build peace in Mindanao.

Given that much of the work in Mindanao is based in Davao City, we spent parts of four days interviewing there. Spending a day and a half in Zamboanga City gave a Western Mindanao perspective. Note that two of our interviews gave a Sulu Archipelago viewpoint as well. Five

days were spent overland in North Cotabato, Maguindanao and Cotabato City, the heart of the MILF/GRP conflict. Four days were devoted to gathering perspectives from people based in Manila. (See Map 2 at the end of this document for these locations.)

We were able to interview representatives of local and international non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, government officials, academics, and one representative of the military. The variety of local peace initiatives that we saw firsthand in field interviews included spaces for peace (peace zones), civilian unarmed peacekeeping, and Islamic values formation/development initiatives.

C. Limitations

Despite the broad range of interviews we were not able to talk with everyone we had hoped. We missed speaking with print media, and a representative of the Bishop/Ulama group, as well as the MILF leadership who, with Ramadan and a reconvened peace panel, were very busy. We sent questions to representatives of these groups, asking for answers via e-mail, but received no responses.

Our own extensive history, while giving us a frame of reference to understand the peace efforts we were seeing, also at times, biased us toward one school of thought, framework or sector. Despite this, the case study process afforded us an opportunity to set our limitations aside and explore, at all levels, the questions listed above. Prior experience with the CDA Collaborative Learning Project's Do No Harm Framework and Listening Project contributed toward objectivity.

II. Mindanao Panorama: an Introduction[5]

Prior to the 14th century arrival of Islam to what is now called the Philippine Islands, there were already people in the archipelago who had developed settlements called the *barangay* which organized the political, economic and social interactions of the people.[6] Islam was introduced to native inhabitants by Arab traders through a vast international trade network linking the islands to other parts of Southeast Asia, mainland Asia and Arabia.[7] Islam gradually spread through the Southern Philippines, reorganizing the sociopolitical, religious and cultural life of the people through the establishment of sultanates.[8]

The arrival of Spain in the archipelago in 16th century was met with resistance by the native Moro peoples in Mindanao. However, Spain was successful in subjugating the native inhabitants in the north and central part of the Philippine territory. The conquered people in Luzon and Visayas were converted to Christianity and were pitted against the Moro Muslims[9] in Mindanao. Gowing contends, "The Spanish carried to the Philippines a fanatical hatred of Moros which was born of hundreds of years of struggling for independence from Moorish rule in the Iberian Peninsula."[10] According to Larousse, "The Muslim resistance on the other hand is portrayed as a defense of Islam and hostility to conversion to Christianity."[11] The battles between Spain, mostly fought by the Christianized Filipinos, and the Moros lasted for three centuries.[12] These armed campaigns resulted to the emergence of competing religious identities between Christian Filipinos and the Moro Muslims. Neither side claimed victory in these wars; as the Spanish colonial government weakening the sultanates, and Moros managed to prevent the total subjugation of Mindanao under Spanish control.

The American colonial regime, which started in 1898, adopted a combined approach of accommodation, development, and force towards the Muslims in Mindanao, which contributed towards the polarization of Christian Filipinos and Moro Muslims. Primarily, Muslims were opposed to the forced annexation of Mindanao when Spain ceded the Philippine territory to the

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[5] The bulk of this section comes from an unpublished paper entitled: *Reframing the Mindanao Peace Process: Exploring the Convergence of Human Rights and Religious Peacebuilding, Final Paper for Culture, Religion, and Peacebuilding,* by Myla J. Leguro, submitted as part of her course work at the Kroc Institute, Notre Dame University, 2009.

[6] William Larousse, *Walking Together Seeking Peace: The Local Church of Mindanao-Sulu Journeying in Dialogue with the Muslims Community* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, Inc, 2001), 25. It is important to note that there are 18 indigenous tribes in Mindanao coexisting with the Muslims and Christians. Their context was not covered extensively in this paper.

[7] Jubair notes that Islam was introduced in Mindanao and Sulu in the closing years of the 14h century. See Salah Jubair, *Bangsamoro a Nation Under Endless Tyranny* (Kuala Lumpur: IQ Marin SDN BHD, 1999), 9.

[8] Prior to the arrival of Spain, there were already sultanates or principalities in Mindanao, such as the Sultanate of Sulu, the Sultanate of Maguindanao, and the Pat a Pongampong ko Ranao.

[9] The name Moro, as explained by Jubair, is "derived from ancient Mauri, and was later applied to the Berbers of North Africa and those who came and conquered Spain." Jubair, *Bangsamoro a Nation*, 13. The term however has been adopted by the thirteen Islamized tribes in 1968 to connote the political collective identity of the Muslims in Mindanao.

[10] Larousse, *Walking Together*, 53.

[11] Ibid.

[12] There are six phases of the Spanish-Moro wars covering the 16th to 19th centuries. See Larousse, *Walking Together*, 56-65.

control of new (American) colonial power.[13] The Americans adopted a policy of subjugation which softened the stance of the proud Moros by providing short-term concessions to the Muslim leaders and bringing development in education, health and public works in Muslim areas. With the aim of integrating Mindanao into the rest of the territory, the Americans in the early 1900s imposed direct rule through the creation of the Moro Province. This administrative system enabled the Americans to impose taxes and pass relevant land laws allowing the opening of Mindanao as a frontier for agricultural settlements, big plantations and logging operations. According to Muslim and Guiam, "Christian migrants were entitled to larger tracts of land: 16 hectares compared to the native inhabitants' ten (later reduced to eight)."[14] They further explain, "These laws provided for registration of land ownership through land titles and set limits on hectarage that individuals and corporations could acquire. Unregistered land automatically became open for exploration, occupation and purchase by citizens of the Philippines and the United States."[15]

The land and settlement policies during the American colonial period started the process of change in the demographic make-up of Mindanao. In 1903 the Moro population was 76% of the total inhabitants in Mindanao; by 1939 the Moro population had decreased to 34% of the total population in Mindanao.[16]

The Philippines was officially granted independence in 1946, which also institutionalized political power under the Christian majority. Muslim and Guiam explain, "The establishment of a Philippine nation-state inevitably led to the entrenchment of a national identity based on the values of the majority group, the Christian Filipinos."[17] Although there were some Muslim political leaders who were part of the national government, Muslims were, for the most part, relegated to the fringes. The Philippine government adopted the resettlement program started by the Americans to address the agrarian unrest in Luzon and Visayas.[18] Muslim and Guiam report, "As a result of the influx of immigrants, the late 1960s had reduced Muslims to around 25% of the Mindanao population, from about 75% at the turn of the century." [19]

The influx of Christian settlers, big corporations, and loggers not only dispossessed Muslim and indigenous populations of the most fertile and resource-rich areas in Mindanao, it also signaled the heightening of tensions in inter-group relationships. According to Muslim and Guiam, "The creation of private armies by both native and settler elites further increased the tensions in

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[13] Spain was defeated by the US in the Spanish-American war in 1896 -1898. The two countries signed the Treaty of Paris which ceded the Philippine territory including Mindanao to the US. The US paid $20 million to Spain. During this period, the Filipino nationalist movement had overthrown Spanish authorities and already declared independence and set-up a revolutionary government. The newly established Filipino national government faced the might of the new colonial power which eventually defeated them.

[14] Muslim and Guiam further note, "Almost all titles granted under the Land Registration Act of 1902 were for large holdings. By 1912 there were 159 plantations (100 hectares or more) in Mindanao – 66 of them owned by Americans, 39 by Filipinos (mostly Christians), 27 by Europeans, and 27 by Chinese. Macapado Muslim and Rufa Cagoco-Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise" in *Compromising on Autonomy in Transition*, edited by Mara Stankovitch,. Issue 6 Accord Series, (London: Conciliation Resources, 1999), 12.

[15] Muslim and Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," 12.

[16] Larousse, *Walking Together*, 96.

[17] Muslim and Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," 12.

[18] Larousse noted, "Before 1939 most of the settlements were located outside of Muslim areas…beginning 1948, the migration pattern shifted to areas of both Muslims and lumads (indigenous)." Larousse, *Walking Together*, 118.

[19] Muslim and Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise," 13.

Mindanao…. [M]igrants in the province of Cotabato organized a private army called Ilaga (Visayan for "rat")….To counter the terror of Ilaga attacks on Muslim civilians, members of the Moro elite organized their own heavily armed groups – the Blackshirts in Cotabato and the Barracudas in Lanao."[20] The creation of these private armies signaled the escalation of violence between the two groups with atrocities committed on both sides.[21]

The armed conflict in Mindanao however was formally signaled with the establishment of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1968 as standard bearer of the Moro self-determination platform.[22] Mindanao became a battleground in the 1970s on various fronts - the government military troops fighting against the MNLF and the Ilaga against the Blackshirts and the Barracudas. The fighting became more intense when Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in the Philippines in 1972.

The impact of the war was severe, as "…around 120,000 were killed (government estimate), more than a million were made homeless, and over 200,000 Muslim refugees fled to Sabah" in neighboring Malaysia.[23] The costs of the war were staggering. According to former President Ramos, seventy three billion pesos (US$1.6 billion) was spent between 1970 and 1996 on the war in Mindanao.[24] "During the 1970s about 80% of the AFP's [Armed Forces of the Philippines] combat strength was concentrated in Mindanao and Sulu" – which resulted in a heavy militarization of the entire area.[25] Muslim prejudice and animosity against the military increased with "major military offensives directed at Muslim settlements…while the Ilaga continued its attacks on Muslim civilians," as Muslim and Guiam explain.[26] The settlers also suffered violence committed by the Blackshirts and Barracudas, which in turn fanned Christian prejudice against the Muslims.

The cost of the war propelled both sides into peace talks in 1975, which resulted in the signing of the Tripoli Agreement in 1976, temporarily stopping the armed engagement.[27] The Tripoli Agreement was initiated with help of Libya and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and included agreement to create an autonomous region for Muslims of Southern Philippines, an area of thirteen provinces and nine cities. This became the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM—see Map 1, page 3).

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[20] Ibid.

[21] There has never been a thorough accounting of the violence that was committed by both sides. Muslims and Christians encountered by author Leguro in her work for peace speak about their personal tragedies in the 1970s.

[22] The MNLF was founded by Nur Misuari as an "instrument for the liberation of the Moro nation," according to Santos. Furthermore, Santos emphasized that the "MNLF's early and lasting contribution was to make the name "Moro" respectable and the basis for common identity and consciousness as a nation of the 13 disparate ethno-linguistic groups in their historical homeland." Soliman Santos, "Evolution of the Armed Conflict on the Moro Front, A Background paper to the Philippine Human Development Report 2005," 1. http://www.hdn.org.ph/

[23] Muslim and Guiam, "Mindanao Land of Promise", 16

[24] Fidel Ramos, "One dream, one world, and one country," abs-cbnNews.com, 20 August 2008. http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/views-and-analysis/08/20/08/one-dream-one-world-and-one-country%E2%80%94fidel-v-ramos

[25] Muslim and Guiam, Mindanao Land of Promise," 16. They also add that, according to the late President Marcos, 11,000 Philippine soldiers were killed in the first eight years of the war (1972-80).

[26] Ibid.

[27] The Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) facilitated the peace negotiations. The OIC, however, espoused a political framework guided by the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines.

However, fighting resumed after a breakdown in the peace process the following year. In 1984, another Moro revolutionary group was established, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which was a breakaway faction from the MNLF.[28] Since the 1970s, low intensity fighting has continued to affect communities in Central and Western Mindanao with armed engagement of government troops and the Moro revolutionary fronts. [29] The MILF also became the standard bearer of the Moro self-determination struggle after 1996, when the MNLF signed a peace agreement with the government.

The MILF seeks more autonomy in self governance, which is understood to mean, in practical terms, the use of *Sharia* law. These issues, in addition to deciding which areas of Mindanao are included in geographical claims of ancestral domain, remain the sticking points in talks with the government. President Ramos pursued negotiations with the MILF from 1997 until the end of his term in 1998. Two succeeding Presidents, Estrada and Arroyo, continued the negotiations, albeit with varying approaches and strategies. President Estrada launched an all-out war against the MILF in 2000 before he was swept from office in a popular uprising now called EDSA II. President Arroyo has supported the peace process, but has also built alliances with warlords in Mindanao to strengthen her political position, thus undermining the process.[30]

The signing of the peace agreement between the government and the MNLF in 1996 is regarded as a historic event in Mindanao. The opening that was created by the peace agreement encouraged civil society and communities affected by war to explore ways to concretize peace processes in their own local settings. Most of the initiatives were grassroots-focused, guided by a belief that the political peace process needed to be supported through peace efforts on the ground. While the government and the MNLF during the early years of the peace agreement were laying out ways to implement the peace agreement, civil society and local communities were undertaking parallel peace efforts that focused on building relationships among Christians, Moro, and the indigenous groups (or Lumads) in Mindanao, through peace education and interreligious dialogue.

The government and MILF parties were scheduled to sign a Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) in August 2008, but this was aborted due to a legal challenge by local government officials in Mindanao who brought the issue to the Supreme Court. The MOA contained key general principles on Bangsamoro identity and rights, the establishment of a genuine self-governance system appropriate for them, the areas to be placed under this self-governance system, and the protection and utilization of resources.

Although the MOA was already scheduled to be signed, few details of the agreements had been shared beyond the peace panels directly involved in their development. Before the signing, copies of the MOA were hastily circulated, and some Mindanao Local Government Units

[28] The MILF headed by Hashim Salamat broke away from the MNLF because of ideological and leadership differences with MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari. The MILF declared that the movement would be Islamic rather than secular, in comparison with the MNLF.

[29] It should be noted that other armed groups are present in Mindanao aside from the MNLF and the MILF. The Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army is operating mainly in Southern, Eastern, and Northern Mindanao. The Revolutionary Party of Workers in Mindanao, a breakaway group of the CPP/NPA, operates in some areas in Western, Central, and Northern Mindanao.

[30] See the International Crisis Group's report: *The Philippines: After the Maguindanao Massacre*, Asia Briefing N°98, 21 December 2009. http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6451&l=1

(LGUs) did not like what they saw. Christian political leaders led the process of a petition to the Supreme Court to stop the parties from signing the MOA and also to declare it null and void. On 4 August 2008 the Philippine Supreme Court issued a Temporary Restraining Order to prevent the signing by the GRP/MILF. After appeals, the Court finally struck down the MOA-AD as unconstitutional on 14 Oct 2008. The reactions to this Court action ranged from total shock and denial to "we had no faith that the [government] would sign it."

With mounting pressure from Christian political leaders, the national government withdrew its support for the MOA, dissolved the government side of the peace panel and reframed the whole approach of the peace negotiations, moving from self-determination to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.

The Supreme Court's decision led to an immediate breakdown in negotiations, precipitating a growing frustration and dissatisfaction among the Moros towards the peace process, questioning the sincerity of the government in addressing the Bangsamoro issue. The dissatisfaction prompted some MILF local commanders to launch attacks on some Christian villages, which reinforced the growing animosity between the two groups.[31] The resurgence of violence in Central Mindanao displaced more than half a million people affecting 354 barangays in 68 municipalities and five cities.[32] Moreover, one of the salient points of the MOA-AD, concerning the expanded territory of six municipalities and 735 villages for the 'Bangsamoro juridical entity,' brought out latent fear and animosity between the Muslims and indigenous people in Central Mindanao.[33]

The fallout for nongovernment organizations (NGOs) was equally destabilizing. NGO networks had not done the work of formulating coherent advocacy voices, and they found themselves on opposing sides of the issue. This precipitated major soul searching.

In July 2009, the GRP and MILF negotiation panels finally held a special meeting in Kuala Lumpur and issued a joint statement outlining ceasefire agreements by both groups, reframing consensus points, including protection of noncombatants in the ongoing armed conflict, and mobilizing international support for the peace process. The formal GRP-MILF peace talks finally reconvened in late January 2010.

[31] After the announcement of the cancellation of the signing, there was an increase in MILF attacks starting in some towns in North Cotabato, Saranggani, and Maguindanao. In an attack on two Christian towns on August 18, 41 people were killed, which triggered intensified military operations.

[32] Data from the Philippine National Disaster Coordinating Council. The areas covered are part of eleven provinces in three regions of Mindanao. PNDCC also reports that there were 83 dead and 101 people injured from the fighting.

[33] "The Bangsamoro juridical entity" refers to the proposed self-governance system contemplated under the GRP-MILF peace negotiations. The MOA stipulated that there would be a plebiscite conducted for the 735 villages to be covered. The following criteria were to be used to identify areas to be covered: (a) ethno-linguistic demographics on the CY2000 census, (b) demographics on religion based on the CY2000 census, and (c) studies and documents concerning the traditional areas of Moros.

III. The Peacebuilding Terrain: a Mindanao Perspective

As outlined in the previous section, counting from earliest Spanish Colonial times, Mindanao has seen conflict spanning five centuries.[34] The conflict is characterized by one Filipino scholar as a "clash between two imagined nations or nationalisms, Filipino and Moro."[35] The evolution of the "imagined nations" was influenced and shaped through the dynamics of the Spanish and American colonization of the Philippines and Mindanao from 16th century until the 20th century and reinforced with the creation of the Philippine state in 1946. The tension reached its peak with the emergence of the Moro armed movement in the early 1970s, which launched the armed campaign to assert Bangsamoro self-determination. The economic costs of war were part of the driving force behind the search for alternative solutions.

What follows are some of the recent highlights and successes that have contributed to the current peacebuilding reality in Mindanao today.

A. Legacy of People Power

The success of the People Power revolution in 1986 in toppling the Marcos regime strengthened the legacy of nonviolence as a social change mechanism in the country. Nicknamed "EDSA" for the Boulevard where people gathered to resist Marcos, this event proved that nonviolence is a potent force for leveraging social change. The courage and genius of those who were part of this social change process are indeed a testament to collective moral imagination. The People Power revolution has built a political, social, and cultural resource for the wider society that can be harnessed as a potent tool to address violence and move towards social change. In the context of peacebuilding in Mindanao, this has reinforced the potential and power of nonviolence as an approach for addressing injustice and repression.

In a review of Philippine peace movements, one academic notes that "the democratic transition brought about by the people power revolution created conditions for building national consensus on the need for social and political reforms that would break down the repressive apparatus of the martial law regime and address the gaping social inequities."[36] She further cited the Philippine peace process as an important agenda in the process of democratization of the country after the fall of Marcos. President Cory Aquino in the early years of her administration launched peace negotiations with the MNLF and the National Democratic Front, although these processes were not successful.[37]

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[34] Salvatore Schiavo- Campo and Mary Judd, "The Mindanao Conflict in the Philippines: Roots, Costs, and Potential Peace Dividend," *The World Bank Social Development Papers Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction* 24 (2005), siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCPR/214578-1111996036679/20482477/WP24_Web.pdf -

[35] Soliman Santos, "Evolution of the Armed Conflict on the Moro Front, A Background paper to the Philippine Human Development Report 2005," 1. http://www.hdn.org.ph/

[36] Miriam Coronel Ferrer, *Framework and Synthesis of Lessons Learned in Civil Society Peacebuilding*. (Manila: University of the Philippines, Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 2005), 7.

[37] The National Democratic Front is the political wing of the communist revolutionary struggle.

B. GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement[38]

After the ouster of Marcos in 1986, President Aquino pursued talks with the MNLF, but, as noted, these efforts were not successful. However, during this time recognition of an autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao was institutionalized through its inclusion in the 1987 Philippine constitution.

From 1992-1993 the National Unification Commission (NUC), established by President Fidel Ramos, served as an *ad hoc* advisory body tasked to formulate a comprehensive peace process for the government. The Commission held consultations in 71 provinces to determine what people saw as just and lasting peace, and proposed a comprehensive peace process agenda anchored on three principles: 1) the peace process must be anchored on the involvement and participation of all sectors of society, not defined by government alone, nor by contending armed groups, but by all Filipinos as one community; 2) the peace process should be community-based, reflecting the sentiments, values and principles important to all Filipinos; and 3) it is the goal of the peace process to establish a just, equitable, humane, and pluralistic society, aimed at peacefully ending the armed conflict, with neither blame nor surrender, but with dignity for all concerned.

The NUC issued a report from their consultations in July 1993 that identified the five major causes of conflict including: massive poverty and economic inequity, poor governance (local justice not implemented, lack of response in terms of basic services), injustice and abuse of power, control by few of political power, and exploitation of cultural communities and lack of recognition of their ancestral domains.

The report also identified "Six Paths to Peace,"[39] which are still seen by government as the way forward in Track 1 negotiation efforts. These six are:

1. The pursuit of social, economic and political reforms that address the root causes of the armed conflicts.
2. Building consensus and empowerment for peace.
3. Pursuit of peaceful, negotiated settlements with the different armed rebel groups.
4. Establishment of programs for honorable reconciliation and reintegration into mainstream society.
5. Addressing concerns that arise out of the continuing armed hostilities.
6. Nurturing a positive climate for peace (creating a culture of peace).

In 1996 the GRP and the MNLF signed the Final Peace Agreement (FPA) in Jakarta, Indonesia, implementing the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, which was brokered by the OIC Committee of Eight, led by Indonesia. This agreement formalized the mechanism for creation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, created the Special Zone of Peace and Development, and integrated 7,500 MNLF combatants into the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

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[38] Adapted from the *Panagtagbo sa Kalinaw Manual: A Basic Orientation Manual towards a Culture of Peace for Mindanao Communities*, Catholic Relieve Services, Kalinaw Mindanaw-Mindanao Support and Communication Center for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and United nations Children's Fund, Published by UNICEF, 1998 Module 1

[39] Found at: http://opapp.gov.ph/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=156&Itemid=148

C. Peace process with the MILF[40]

The GRP-MILF peace negotiations have been characterized by periods of peace and intermittent wars. Since 1997, many exploratory talks and formal negotiations have been undertaken by the two parties. The talks have focused on three substantive agendas: security, rehabilitation and development, and ancestral domains. The parties reached settlement on the security aspect with the signing of a Ceasefire Agreement and the establishment of ceasefire monitoring mechanisms. The rehabilitation and development aspects of the negotiations were also successfully concluded with the establishment of the Bangsamoro Development Agency, managed by the MILF and tasked to implement development programs in conflict-affected areas. A multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank was also set up to support the reconstruction of conflict-affected areas.

Negotiations on the first two topics resulted in Memoranda of Agreement signed by the two parties, while the ancestral domains and associated issues remain unresolved, as noted above.

The first MOA between the MILF and the GRP was the **security (ceasefire)** mechanism signed in 1997, which both implemented a ceasefire agreement and established the ceasefire mechanisms, including an umbrella group called the Coordinating Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH). This was a Track 1 joint GRP/MILF committee that was to hear complaints about ceasefire breaches and keep the ceasefire on Track with both sides at the peace panel level. It included seven representatives each from the GRP and the MILF who were to meet monthly to coordinate ceasefire implementation. The MOA also provided for an International Monitoring Team (IMT), mandated to help both sides implement the ceasefire, originally comprised of sixty members from Malaysia, Brunei, Libya and Japan. The third body provided for Track 3 support of the ceasefire through Local Monitoring Teams (LMTs), the eyes and ears of the ceasefire at the grassroots level. The LMTs were to undertake fact finding and inquiry work on any breaches of the ceasefire operating in thirteen provinces in teams of five members each. A final ceasefire mechanism, the Ad-Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG), came as a result of accidental fighting between government and MILF. This mechanism allows for military coordination, so the military can pursue criminal elements in areas that are under MILF or MNLF control.

The second MOA, initialed in 2002, dealt with **rehabilitation and development**. This document made a commitment to respect human rights, provide assistance and development to conflict-affected communities. This document also set up the Bangsamoro Development Authority (BDA) which promotes development, good governance and capacity building in ARMM areas. This document also set up the Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) for the Mindanao Trust Fund (MTF), completed in September 2004.

The third part of the GRP/MILF talks dealt with the issue of **ancestral domains**. This is the touchiest issue being dealt with in the talks, as it involves Bangsamoro identity, culture, traditional lands, and long-term solutions for Bangsamoro people. The discussions on ancestral

[40] *Reframing the Mindanao Peace Process: Exploring the Convergence of Human Rights and Religious Peacebuilding*, Myla Leguro, M.A. Candidate in Peace Studies, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, USA, Final Paper for Culture, Religion, and Peacebuilding, Professors Atalia Omer and Jason Springs, 2009

domains were divided into four areas: concept, resources, governance, and territory and have culminated in 29 consensus points.

Despite the peace processes, enormous challenges have been encountered by Mindanaons, both in the implementation of the GRP-MNLF peace agreement and in the ongoing peace negotiations with the MILF. Cycles of all-out-war have occurred since 1997, pointing to the reality that the root causes of the conflict remain unresolved, mainly ancestral domains and right to self determination.[41]

While a degree of autonomy has been established on paper through the ARMM, in some designated Muslim-dominated provinces full devolution of power and power sharing have not taken place as envisioned in the MNLF agreements. Further, the autonomous region has not implemented a representative style of governance, but is controlled by old political dynasties and power elites. Despite these realities, the sentiment for self-determination continues to be strong among the Mindanao Muslim population.

D. Other conflict realities

While the Mindanao conflict is often characterized by the Moro armed struggle, other conflict realities plague the region. The communist revolutionary struggle has continued since the late 1960s in Luzon, the Visayas, and parts of Mindanao. The Philippine Human Development report states that the causes of the communist insurgency include: widespread poverty and inequitable distribution of wealth and control over the resource base; poor governance; injustice and abuse by those in authority, human rights violations, corruption and inefficiency in government bureaucracy; structural inequities in the political system; and exploitation and marginalization of indigenous cultural communities, including lack of respect and recognition of ancestral domains.[42]

In 1998, a Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law was signed between the Philippine government and the National Democratic Front (NDF). This agreement was the first of four main agenda items in the GRP-NDF peace talks. The other three are: (1) social and economic reform, (2) political and constitutional reform, and (3) disposition of forces.[43] Peace talks between the Philippine government and the NDF reached an impasse in 2004. A year later the Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantee, providing a "safe conduct pass" to panel members to the talks, was suspended. Although the talks have not yet formally resumed, positive movements occur, such as the NDF Chairman Sison being taken off the European terrorist list.[44]

The indigenous people of Mindanao (Lumad) are also waging their own unarmed struggle for the right to their ancestral domains and their survival as a people. Development aggression[45] in

[41] Mindanaons referred to the 1997, 2000, 2003 armed clashes between government and MILF troops as all-out-wars. These clashes occurred in three-year cycles.
[42] Philippine Human Development Report, 2005. http://www.hdn.org.ph/files/2005_PHDR.pdf
[43] Thanks to Susan Granada for her summary of the CPP/NDF/NPA conflict and peace talks.
[44] See http://www.op.gov.ph/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27150&Itemid=2
[45] "Development is development aggression when the people become the victims, not the beneficiaries; when the people are set aside in development planning, not partners in development; and when people are considered mere resources for profit-oriented development, not the center of development. . . . Development aggression violates the human rights of our people in all their dimensions—economic, social, cultural, civil and political." The Philippine

indigenous communities, where multi-national corporations seek to exploit the resources in indigenous areas of Mindanao, has been increasing and has resulted in human rights violations against the Lumads. Moreover, some indigenous communities have become battlegrounds between government armed forces and the various rebel groups.

Other layers of the conflicts that plague Mindanao include corrupt local political dynasties supported by national government officials. Local politicians have their own paramilitaries for protection and assertion of their will. In some cases, these local politicians run their jurisdictions with near feudal authority. When Manila power and wealth is layered on local political rivalries in the mode of favoritism and election rigging, the result is widespread destabilization and fear, causing massive civilian displacement when violent clashes happen. All of these conflict dynamics are heightened during "election season" in the Philippines, as illustrated by the Maguindanao Massacre in November of 2009, in which 57 people were killed.

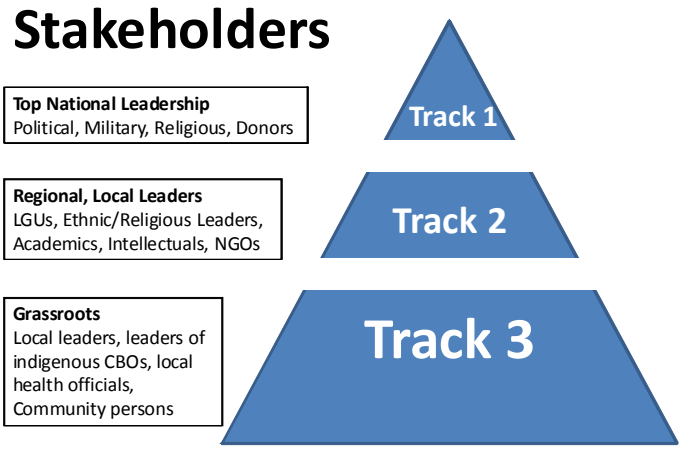
Kidnapping and *rido* clan feuds are other perceived sources of conflict which can start small but drag militaries into them. Often one side in the *rido* will know the military and the other the MILF. When a vendetta is carried out, each side drags the biggest armed force it can muster into the firefight. Gains have been made in this area due to awareness raising, tracing genealogy to document family relationships of disputants and culture of peace training of government military commanders.

During years of low intensity wars, with occasional flare-ups of all-out fighting, lawlessness and banditry have became an unwelcome byproduct. An abundance of arms, combat experience and the hint of easy money have spawned groups like the Abu Sayyaf, an ethnically-based group that engages in kidnap for ransom, including several high-profile kidnappings.

Alliance of Human Rights Advocates, as quoted in Ramon C. Casiple, "Human Rights vs. Development Aggression: Can Development Violate Human Rights?" Human Rights Forum: Focus on Development Aggression, Quezon City: Philippine Human Rights Information Center, 1996.

IV. A Peacebuilding Atlas: Who is Doing What, Where?

Peacebuilding in Mindanao today consists of efforts undertaken at the top, middle, and grassroots levels. The political and social space for peace that was created in the 1990s provided the grounding for these efforts to blossom and grow. While the cycles of violence and war continue to plague the region, the presence of a large vertical and horizontal network of peacebuilders is slowly strengthening the constituency for peace in Mindanao. The root causes of the conflict may continue to persist, but there have been creative efforts to engage local issues, relationships, and subsystems nurturing the ground for larger systemic changes to occur. The presence of these networks and the increased capacities of civil society and communities to deal with changes can be regarded as concrete gains against the continuing threats of violence and war in some parts of Mindanao.



The pyramid[46] model to the right is a very simple represents the vertical understanding of stakeholders and where they influence the various levels from the community/ grassroots level to the national/policy making level. The following overview of peacebuilding efforts attempts to locate who is doing what, at each of these levels.

A. Track 1 actors in the GRP/MILF peace process

The upper part of the pyramid is called Track 1, which includes formal and "official" contributions to the peace negotiations between government and various opposition groups, as well as processes supported in terms of policy and infrastructure through the government peace program. Support for peace efforts by international governments or donors would also be included in Track 1.

1. Foreign governments. The United States casts one of the biggest international shadows cast on the Mindanao conflict. The US role is tainted, based on its colonial history of sometimes brutal subjugation of Mindanaoan and Sulu Archipelago tribes. The US pumped millions of dollars into Mindanao assisting IDPs and reconstruction and rehabilitation following the MNLF/GRP agreement. Currently the so-called War on Terror has put US troops in Mindanao on training exercises with the Philippine Armed Forces. This gives a dual message to the MNLF and MILF regarding the real US interests in the region, as credible reports indicate that US armed forces, contravening the Philippine Constitution, engage in active combat alongside their Filipino military counterparts.

[46] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997.)

Malaysia has functioned as the convener of the MILF/government talks. This role is particularly important as Malaysia and Philippines are both part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional grouping, and it is a Muslim state and part of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which is important to the MILF.

The governments of Malaysia, Libya, Brunei, and Japan all have contributed to the International Monitoring Team, which oversees the ceasefire.

The EU has provided long term relief and rehabilitation assistance to IDPs, as well as development assistance (agriculture, environment, agrarian reform and agriculture education). The EU has also given substantial assistance to the Mindanao Trust Fund, which was established in 2005 by the World Bank in support of the Bangsamoro Development Agency. In 2008 seven EU ambassadors visited the evacuation camps that the EU monies were funding. EU member states are encouraged to make contacts with the MILF and GRP to support the peace talks.

2. Other international bodies. The involvement of the OIC in the conflict in Mindanao was instrumental in changing the approach of the Philippine government for dealing with the Moro revolutionary movements. While sympathetic to the cause of the Moros in Mindanao, the OIC was pushing for a solution "within the framework of national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines."[47] The OIC passed resolutions which helped change the parameters of the negotiations between the GRP and the MNLF from demands for independence to discussion of autonomy.[48] The Tripoli Agreement that OIC helped to broker in 1976 provided autonomy for the Muslims covering thirteen provinces. However, the agreement was not implemented, because of disagreements between the MNLF and Marcos. Currently the OIC role is significantly diminished, due to its allegiance to one faction of the MNLF.

The Philippines was a charter United Nations signatory in 1945. Currently eighteen UN bodies operate in the country.[49] Specifically in Mindanao, the UN Multi-donor Program has supported Peace and Development Communities (PDCs) through the Action for Conflict Transformation (ACT) for Peace Program run by the government. The UNDP manages the rules and guidelines of project implementation that work with former MNLF members and their families to rehabilitate former combatants to become Peace and Development Advocates (PDAs) in their communities. Project partnership with government and accountable to the Mindanao Economic Development Council uses a community-oriented peace and development approach based on the following pillars (or stages in the process): 1) confidence building/community organizing approach, community's capacity building (culture of peace, conflict analysis, Peace and Conflict Impact Analysis, learning by doing); 2) participatory implementation, 3) adaptation and 4) replication (sharing knowledge with other communities). The program strives to "teach communities to be resilient and to resist provocations of violence." Capacity building is the cornerstone approach as ACT enables PDC community members to be "prepared for life beyond carrying fire arms" as one interviewee explained it.

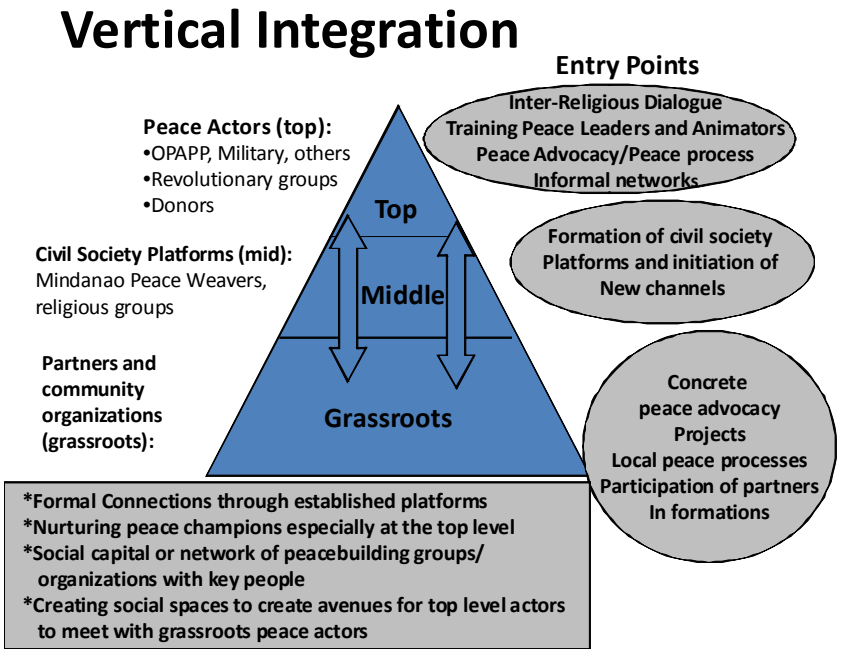
[47] Soliman Santos, "Evolution of the Armed Conflict on the Moro Front," a background paper to the Philippine Human Development Report 2005, 1. See website http://www.hdn.org.ph/, 7.
[48] Ibid.
[49] http://www.un.org.ph/uncountryteam.html

3. Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP). The Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process was set up under the Ramos administration under Executive Order 125 in September 1993, resulting from the National Unification Commission (NUC), set up the year before. OPAPP represents the government side on the peace panel and uses the Six Paths to Peace as its guiding principles.[50] OPAPP is tasked with overseeing all peace efforts in the Philippines.[51]

4. The International Contact Group (ICG). The International Contact Group (ICG) came about through reflection, after the failure of the MOA-AD, as to how international support could help push the process forward. Recognized and accepted by both the MILF and Government, it is currently composed of UK, Turkey and Japan, plus the INGOs Swiss-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, US-based The Asia Foundation, London-based Conciliation Resources and Indonesia-based Muhammadiyah. The purpose of the ICG is to be a presence at the peace talks in Malaysia, engage both parties to bolster the peace process, as well as provide and/or find technical resources for specific points in the talks.[52] A creative accommodation to the hobbled role of the OIC is Turkey's inclusion in the ICG. As a European Union associate member and OIC member, Turkey can function as a bridge to both bodies.

B. Track 2/middle-out cross-cutting efforts

Many peacebuilding efforts in Mindanao fall into the category of vertically integrating efforts, usually associated with the middle level of the pyramid—and often called "middle-out" initiatives.



Stakeholders in the Mindanao conflict need to be connected vertically, so as to coordinate efforts and ensure that each Track informs the others. These connections are now taking place when civil society interacts with the local military or Local

[50] The vision and mission of OPAPP are found at: http://opapp.gov.ph/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=154&Itemid=146

[51] OPAPP currently has five different initiatives with revolutionary/rebel groups. See http://opapp.gov.ph/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=153&Itemid=151 for more information.

[52] http://positivenewsmedia.net/am2/publish/Main_News_1/Agreement_for_International_Contact_Group_on_Mindanao_peace_process_signed.shtml and http://www.luwaran.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1179:icg-has-sterling-performance-in-recent-kl-talks-milf-says&catid=81:moro-news&Itemid=372

Government Units (LGUs), donors liaise with peace panels and/or a donor interacts with the grass roots programs they fund. NGOs and civil society have functioned as connecters, as in the case of the Mindanao Commission on Women. A key person in MCW, the director, Inday Santiago, can establish connections with Track 1 actors who would otherwise be disconnected from Track 3 actors that she knows.

Track 1 efforts will be strengthened if they are able to acknowledge these efforts and utilize the gains at a local level to support what they are doing in official peace talks. Likewise, local efforts will be strengthened if they remain informed about the issues, understandings and sticking points that are happening in the peace talks.

This case study uncovered many efforts that cut across the pyramid and touched multiple levels of society, government and even economics, including the efforts described below.

1. Ceasefire support structures. The signing of the ceasefire in 1997 between the GRP/MILF enshrined several loosely defined mechanisms for monitoring the ceasefire. At a middle-out level, the Ad-Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) includes members of the military and the MILF for coordination, to avoid accidental clashes when the military is pursuing criminal elements. The Local Monitoring Teams (LMT) were intended to be the 'on the ground' monitors. These mechanisms did not work very well until two outside groups supported the efforts. The International Monitoring Team (IMT) was composed of Malaysian, Libyan and Bruneian teams that gave ceasefire monitoring international support. The Bantay Ceasefire was an unarmed and impartial civil society monitoring group that placed persons in communities and worked in conjunction with the Coordinating Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) and IMT to investigate breaches of the ceasefire and incidents that warranted follow up with both sides.

These structures resulted in a more stable situation in some areas, with a higher degree confidence when these security mechanisms were in place. In some areas, with prior experience in building capacity in ceasefire mechanisms, they held firm despite localized armed hostilities and incidents of violence. There has also been a decrease in criminality resulting in sustained regional economic growth. These mechanisms have increased international support and grassroots participation in the peace process.

As mentioned above, community efforts at ceasefire mechanisms have succeeded, as persons caught in the crossfire realize that, together and networked to others outside their communities, they can have a positive impact on the violence thrust upon them. A sampling of some of these community efforts are described below.

The Bantay Ceasefire (BC) is a civil society ceasefire monitoring group started in 2002 to investigate specific instances/incidents where the ceasefire was breached. It quickly developed a reputation for impartial fact finding and a positive presence in zones with active conflict. In its maturity, BC has set up monitoring outposts where persons with potential grievances can seek intervention in potentially violent conflicts. BC field representatives know the field commanders on both the AFP and the MILF sides. When tensions rise, they can make cell phone connections with each side in order to defuse a potentially lethal firefight. On numerous occasions BC has functioned in this connector role.

The Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) organized the *Tyakap Kalilintad* as a ceasefire monitoring body that has worked closely with other community ceasefire bodies. The Asia Foundation (TAF) has supported decommissioned MNLF solders to form groups that intervene in *rido* (family feud) cases. Through two local partners, Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities Inc. in Lanao and United Youth for Peace and Development in Maguindanao, these local groups have intervened in many feud cases and brought resolution. The Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP)[53] (an INGO) has been supporting local ceasefire initiatives since May 2007.[54] While not a local organization, it nonetheless supports local initiatives in Maguindanao Province (covering Datu Piang, Midsayap and Shariff Aguak) and Sulu province (covering Jolo and surrounding areas). Supporting local efforts at ceasefire and ceasefire monitoring, NP supports grassroots initiatives like the G7 and Bantay Ceasefire. They also liaise with the IMT, CCCH and Local Monitoring teams.

2. Community peace agreements. In Maguindanao, as a result of ethnic/tribal diversity, communities with very different world views, histories and religions live in close proximity. Many times conflicts such as *rido*, boundary squabbles and competition for resources lead to intercommunal violence. Marcos' divide and conquer strategy of the 1970s led to some vicious violence and displacement.

Peace Covenants, pacts or agreements are a way that traditional conflict intervention mechanisms have been revived in communities that have been plagued by violence. These peace covenants do not necessarily fully address the underlying causes of violence that result in cattle rustling, car theft, *rido* and the like, but they do provide a structure that can quickly mobilize resources to address the surface violence and give time and space to come to agreements, thus preventing further violence. Some of these resources include local law enforcement and military and also draw on national ceasefire mechanisms like the IMT. The reinvention of these traditional structures is crucial in the absence of any effective law enforcement or judicial systems in many local areas.

CBCS (see above) has been working to broker peace pacts among communities and has achieved several successes. In one example, in May 2004 the CBCS oversaw the signing of a peace pact in the Maguindanao area of Carmen between settlers, indigenous peoples and Bangsamoro that enshrined, in a signed document, indigenous ways of resolving conflict. This pact also included the local AFP and Philippines National Police commanders, as well as local MILF and MNLF representatives.[55]

Under the peace pact, a council of elders comprised of five members from each community was tasked to monitor their community's implementation of the agreement and provide a mechanism for responding to future conflicts. The results of this agreement were immediate, as the repatriation of hundreds of IDPs was facilitated. Subsequent violations of the agreement engaged this council to respond in effective ways. One incident in April 2005 involved a Barangay Chairman who was a signatory. When this infraction and subsequent firefight occurred, the International Monitoring Team (IMT) intervened to stop the violence. The local

[53] http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/en/philippinesproject
[54] http://www.mindanews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6815&Itemid=50
[55] From a document entitled "Stories of Peacebuilding: Peacebuilding: Its Contextual Application Base [sic] on Experiences," by Mike G. Kulat, Project Coordinator for the CBCS, no date

AFP commander who brokered the peace had a copy of the signed peace pact document in his possession and invoked it as the terms of reference in the talks that quelled the violence.

3. Peace education. Peace education at all levels has become an integral part of the peace infrastructure in Mindanao. The broad spectrum of peace education creates social space for people to express their hopes and dreams of peace, while building capacity to see those dreams realized. This, in turn, will prepare the ground to make an eventual signed peace agreement sustainable in local communities. Most of these peace education efforts include both Christian and Muslim students, and the classroom interactions among them become a natural part of learning. In some cases, government and MILF soldiers sit next to each other learning alternatives to fighting.

a. National Peace Education. Executive Order 570, issued by President Arroyo in 2006, called for the mainstreaming of peace education in public schools by the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education.[56] Both the basic formal and non-formal education sectors include peace curricula organized by the Department, and the Commission oversees teacher training, including peace education.

b. Academe. The academic community has a special role to play, as they are the training ground for future community, regional and national leadership. They also have infrastructure to house important peace research, advocacy and training efforts. A sampling of the diverse peace efforts of the academic community include the following.

i. ***The Institute for Autonomy and Governance*** (IAG) based in the alumni center of Notre Dame University, Cotabato City has provided scholarly comment on much of the technical working of the GRP/MILF peace panel and made it accessible to the wider public. Through the Journal, *Autonomy and Peace Review*, published quarterly, topics of concern are explained and discussed in depth. This kind of service provides an unbiased critique of both the process and content of the peace talks by raising issues that both sides might have missed. The Institute for Autonomy and Governance also functions as a connector. Through Fr. Jun Mercado's leadership and as a long time peace advocate, IAG connects political figures in ways that lead to breaking of stalemates. By remaining knowledgeable regarding the protocol for negotiations, the details of the issues being discussed and the sticking points of each party, the IAG helps find ways to remove blocks in the talks.

ii. Examples of peace education efforts among academic institutions include making some form of university level ***peace studies mandatory*** for all students, development of elementary peace curricula in the teacher training departments, and peace research conducted by sociology departments. Western Mindanao State University in Zamboanga City is leading the way here.

iii. Several universities have ***peace centers*** which help to sensitize students to the conflict issues in their own communities. Ateneo de Zamboanga has a Peace and Culture Center which helps prepare curricula, participates in research and orients students toward peace initiatives.

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56 http://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/index10.php?doctype=Executive%20Orders&docid=a45475a11ec72b843d74959b60fd7bd645edfb0ca61c6

iv. Academic institutions in Mindanao have provided the structure for the broad based ***consultation process*** sponsored by OPAPP called Konsult Mindanaw consultations, described below, collating data and analyzing the results. These consultations are more academic in nature, collecting statistics, doing social science analysis and providing information to those needing data.

c. Peace Trainings. There are many peace trainings that have been offered in Mindanao in the past fifteen years. The first trainings were one-off events with little thought to how they would impact the longer term. There is an increased awareness among supporting agencies that the peace institutes can do better at tracking their graduates, networking them together and provide ongoing support. There is an acceptance that much more thought is needed regarding the strategic nature of these trainings. Over the years increasing responsiveness to feedback has shaped courses and learning modules to meet the needs of Mindanao people.

The **Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute** (MPI) is an effort by three INGOs (Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development and Mennonite Central Committee), to train middle level leaders in skills of peace through a conflict transformation framework. MPI began in 2000 as an attempt to empower peacebuilders to use the conflict transformation framework and tools to address conflicts in their communities. Since its inception, more than 1500 peacebuilders from Mindanao, the rest of the Philippines and more than forty other countries have been trained in the annual three-week event. Held at the Mindanao Training Resource Center in Davao City every May, it features basics courses the first week, advanced courses the second week and field exposure courses the third week. Among the graduates are people from local NGOs, INGOs, academia, government, military, religious and the media.

The **Culture of Peace**[57] (COP) trainings are aimed at changing the way people think about their own history, culture and patterns of interacting with others. It is life changing, because a person's negative biases are challenged through modules that include everything from historical analysis from various perspectives to relief management, trauma healing, and forums for talking about conflict. COP training have been used from Track 1 to grassroots, but mostly focus on local leaders, community movers and shakers, military and even government units. We heard personal stories from many people about how their outlook and sense of complicity with conflict was transformed through COP. Among youth the gains are particularly noticeable when friendships across ethnic and religious lines are formed. "It's another way to process our baggage, heal trauma, as you identify your own pain that creates bias and prejudice," said one priest who is part of an interfaith group that regularly conducts COP trainings. The COP trainings were first developed in 1996-1997 in a collaboration among Catholic Relief Services, the Mindanao Support and Communications Center for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the United Nations Children's Fund. The first training manual, entitled *Panagtagbo sa Kalinaw*,[58] was launched in 1998.

The COP trainings in Mindanao began at about the same time that the Final Peace Agreement between the GRP and the MNLF was signed in September 1996. The trainings were intended to introduce and propagate the culture of peace paradigm, as contextualized to the Mindanao

[57] See UN definition at http://www.culture-of-peace.info/copoj/definition.html
[58] Cebuano for "Encounter/Dialogue for Peace."

situation, to the people at the grassroots level. Formulated by various peacebuilding groups and agencies to bring substance to the Sixth of the Six Paths to Peace formulated by the National Unification Commission, the COP training program was intended to nurture a positive climate of peace.

After a gathering of peace educators in Cagayan de Oro City in July of 1996, a follow-up workshop produced tentative modules that could be used by any peace advocate who would like to organize and/or facilitate forums, trainings and the like using the culture of peace paradigm. The initial modules underwent several revisions and improvements. Trainings of trainers were also conducted, in order to develop "peace" trainers. The modules were further improved based on the series of pilot tests made.

Soon thereafter, an agreement between UNICEF, CRS, OPAPP and Mindanao Center for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development made possible the production of the *Panagtagbo sa Kalinaw* training manual. This manual was published in 1998 and has since been used as primary resource material in the conduct of workshops all over Mindanao and even in some parts of Visayas and Luzon. Since its release, many agencies and organizations promoting peace and human rights in Mindanao and in the Philippines have developed and published their own peace modules that have used the *Panagtagbo* manual as a major reference or have incorporated portions of the manual into their own modules.

Within a span of about ten years, the COP process in Mindanao has helped in catalyzing peace in the grassroots communities, especially in conflict-affected areas. The COP is used by many CBOs as a change mechanism that works at perceptions and helps people in communities take more control of their peace and order situations. One of the writers reflected on her years of involvement with the COP workshops.

> *The COP workshops became safe spaces for different groups in the community to gather together to look back at the history of Mindanao and to view and understand current perceptions, attitudes and behavior, especially among different ethnic and religious groupings, by journeying through the different historical events in Mindanao, which were seen as contributing to relationship dynamics. In this part of the workshop, we would encounter and feel the pain when historical markers such as the Moro wars, the 1970s conflict, guilt of Christian participants in learning about the settlement and land grabbing incidents, but would also bask in feelings of pride when we talk about the glorious past of the Muslim sultanates and also longing, when participants talk about periods of history when Muslims and Christians were good friends.*
>
> *The internal journey is pushed when we ask participants to seriously look at their own prejudices and biases and view them in the light of the role of history in this. Coming to terms with personal prejudices and biases is only the first step – the participants are asked to articulate them especially to groups they consider the "other." Working with this reality, the workshop moves towards discussing various creative and nonviolent ways that are present in their communities and their cultures, which can be harnessed as*

alternative mechanisms of resolving conflicts, not just with other groups but conflicts even within their own group and families. The last module invites the participants to collectively articulate a vision of peace for their community. It is imagining a community that they desire for the future, but it also invites them to be an active participant in concretizing that dream and vision.[59]

3. Consultations.[60] Consultations have been used in the Mindanao peace process from early in the 1990s as a way to gain a mandate for negotiating in the best possible interest of the people. It is not clear, however, whether and how all these consultations will actually impact the peace talks or local peacebuilding efforts. However, civil society groups understand that using consultations can help to distill policy points and unify their efforts at pressing for these.

The major corrective precipitated by the Supreme Court action on the MOA-AD was to awaken stakeholders to their responsibility for taking more assertive action, beyond just hoping that the government and MILF would sign an agreement. Many groups are addressing this by holding consultations. One interviewee named as many as ten different consultations that resulted from the MOA-AD events of last year. These consultations engaged stakeholders at all levels, and indicate the broadened understanding of responsibility for the process. While adding more voices to the many voices already speaking to the peace process may make consensus more difficult, in the long run the resulting agreements may be more sustainable. A sampling of the consultation efforts we heard about during interviews follows.

[59] Edited version of Myla Leguro's reflections on her ten years of peacebuilding work with CRS.

[60] Thanks to Susan Granada and her notes to CDA Collaborative Listening Project security briefing 25 July 2009, Davao City, Mindanao, Philippines for part of this section.

a. In late 2008, the Bishops Ulama Conference (BUC), a convergence of high-ranking religious leaders who have resolved to give an interfaith dimension to the continuing search for peace in Mindanao, was tasked by OPAPP to elicit the help of the academic community in Mindanao to conduct a series of community dialogues and consultations. Using government[61] and Asia Foundation monies, the dialogues covered the whole of Mindanao, asking participants how to pursue the peace process after the MOA-AD controversy. Called **"Konsult Mindanaw**,"[62] these dialogues began in February 2009 and presented findings at the end of the year. About three hundred focus group discussions were conducted in eight Mindanao regional groupings. Konsult Mindanaw ensures diverse participation, including Muslims, indigenous peoples, Protestants and Catholics and from among women, youth, rural and urban poor, local government units, nongovernmental organizations, internally displaced persons, traditional leaders, religious groups, academics, business practitioners and professionals. Special group discussions are being conducted among artists, armed groups, and children. Those who initiated these community dialogues hoped that they would put the Mindanao peace process back on track with more vigor and resolve. The consultations focused on four questions:[63]

1. What is your vision for peace in Mindanao?
2. What are your recommendations for the GRP/MILF talks?
3. Outside the peace talks, what else should be done?
4. What can you contribute …your personal commitment to peace?

b. As a result of the tensions among NGOs after the MOA-AD debacle, civil society convened its own consultation process in February 2009. Undertaken by seven major peace networks in Mindanao, under the umbrella of Mindanao Peace Weavers, it is called the "**Mindanao Peoples Peace Agenda**" (MPPA). The objectives include: (1) the development of a common understanding of a Mindanao Peoples Peace Agenda among the MPW member networks and the wider Mindanao peace constituency, and (2) the translation of the Mindanao Peoples Peace Agenda into public policy and lobbying points that would help increase engagement of civil society and grassroots in formal policymaking processes in the country. The consultation process ended in a Peoples Peace Assembly held in early 2010, aimed at supporting a sustained peace process in Mindanao.

c. The MILF has held periodic consultations that have included people from its leadership down to the grassroots level. According the MILF web site, the First Bangsamoro People's Consultative Assembly was in December 1996, in Maguindanao. The Second Bangsamoro People's Consultative Assembly was held in June 2001, which included representatives of non-Muslim indigenous communities. Additional consultations were held in 2005 and 2009.[64] The latter consultation was to inform the constituencies on the suspension of military actions and the status of the peace talks.

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[61] Many Mindanaoans were sensitive about the exclusive use of government monies to do this research, worried, in part, about how skewed the data would be. In the end, the academic community, who had similar concerns, felt that they could be impartial enough to complete this project.

[62] Information on Konsult Mindanaw can be found at http://konsultmindanaw.ph/v2/

[63] Summarized by Fr. Bert Alejo in an interview 1 September 2009, Davao City, Mindanao, Philippines.

[64] Found at: http://www.luwaran.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=898:grp-milf-peace-process-consultation-to-bangsamoro-leaders-&catid=81:moro-news&Itemid=372

4. Development and ODA-supported projects. The role of external funding is important to mention, if only for the sheer amount of aid that has been provided. For example, AusAID's Mindanao commitment was A$ 286 million (US$265 million) during the fifteen year period from 1997-2013. About A$ 40 Million (US$35.3 million) went directly to peace programs, with the rest spent on basic services.

A recent evaluation was conducted of USAID's US$345 million in aid given from 2001-2008 to the ARMM Region of Mindanao. Much of this money was intended for addressing structural issues as the "entry points for conflict reduction—from deep-rooted social and economic sources of conflict, to social and governing mechanisms to promote mitigation of conflict, to addressing flashpoints (or conflict triggers)."[65] The report concluded that too much attention was paid to the socioeconomic factors and not enough to bolstering weak governance and state structures which undermine gains in peace.

Development projects in Mindanao all reference the conflict environment in their implementation processes. These initiatives are numerous. Two examples address the poverty issues related to conflict in Mindanao as a means for dealing with the socioeconomic factors of the conflict.

a. Health, Education, Livelihood, Progress Task force-Central Mindanao (HELP-CM). Recognizing that the conflicted areas on Mindanao are among the country's poorest and most economically marginalized, the President's office initiated, under Executive Order 267, the HELP-CM that "shall be the mechanism for convergence, i.e. enhanced cooperation, coordination, policy consistency, adoption of a common framework, information sharing and problem-solving activities of the different agencies in the MILF-related conflict-affected areas in Central Mindanao.[66] HELP-CM believes the key to sustainability is good governance at an local level; development with a peace perspective; and coordination of all health, education, livelihood efforts. A Central Mindanao task force was set up to oversee this.

b. The Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA). The BDA, created by the GRP/MILF Tripoli Agreement in 2001, has a community-driven approach to working at physical and social issues in the community. Their learning approach includes a component on values transformation, which promotes consistency in the way people respond to events, prepares the social structures for peace and creates hope. The BDA admits this kind of 'tinkering' with previously compliant communities, who just accepted the political status quo, now creates a threat to those corrupt officials who now are held to task: "When people do the right thing corrupt officials are sidelined." For the BDA, values transformation includes understanding and clarifying Islamic values and standards as a means and also an end. The BDA can use Christian and indigenous people as resource persons in values transformation if they are available within the area where they are working. The module they use is flexible, by finding commonalities in each faith but also recognizing the important distinctions.

[65] Michael Lund and Jennifer Ulman, "USAID/Philippines Mindanao Programs Evaluation; Impacts on Conflict and Peace since 2000," Management Systems International, November 2008/Redacted February 18, 2009, p. vi.
[66] Mindanews 15 July, 2009 found at:
http://www.mindanews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6681&Itemid=190

5. Advocacy. Advocacy connects real on-the-ground issues to the decision makers in Manila, who are disconnected from the unintended consequences of their decisions. It is clear that the issues in Mindanao are not just regional concerns but are national in scope. Many NGOs feel that advocacy is an important part of their mission, as it increases the peace constituencies in Manila who can help mainstream the Mindanao conflict as a critical issue affecting *all* people in the Philippines. NGOs are now networked through many advocacy groups.

a. The Mindanao Peace Weavers (MPW) is a network of peace networks that represents thousands of persons who work for a peaceful Mindanao in one way or another. MPW is "a convergence of peace advocates in Mindanao which represents the broadest network of peace constituency in the island cutting across NGOs, academe, religious organizations, human rights groups, people's organizations and grassroots communities advancing a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Mindanao" for the promotion of "unity, information-sharing and coordination among peace advocates in the areas of humanitarian protection, peace & human rights advocacy, peace talks & ceasefire monitoring, and peacebuilding."[67] Seven NGOs were the initial conveners in 2003. Advocacy is part of the focus of the Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), which serves as one of the secretariat organizations of the MPW. The benefits of advocacy, according to IID, include projecting a common and unified voice which gives political muscle.

b. The Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Center, at Ateneo de Manila University, is an example of increasing advocacy for Mindanao in the Metro Manila area. The Center belongs to the Mindanao Solidarity Network which is in turn a member of the larger Mindanao Peace Weavers network. Through these connections, concern for the conflict can be heightened throughout the country. The Center does this through fact finding missions, solidarity actions like *Duyog Ramadan* which participates in fasting in solidarity with Muslims during their holy month of fasting.

6. Celebrations and cultural validation. Mindanaoans love a good party. Celebrations are a natural point where gains for peace can be acclaimed, community good will strengthened and cultural expressions celebrated.

The Mindanao Week of Peace is one such event conducted annually to engage a broad spectrum of persons in celebrating gains in peace. "The Mindanao Week of Peace is a comprehensive promotional activity that involves various Government Organizations, NGOs, and Peoples Organizations' in advocating the culture of peace in the Southern Philippines. It is a celebration of peace which was initiated in Zamboanga City by Peace Advocates Zamboanga Foundation, Inc. (PAZ) and SALAM Foundation in 1997. It has snowballed into a Mindanao-wide event as adopted by the Bishops-Ulama Conference and perpetuated as an annual observance through Presidential Proclamation 127, S. 2001."[68] The Week of Peace, held in November/December each year, includes peace walks and rallies, peace vigils of silence and prayers for peace in our ourselves, our families, or community, sending greetings and blessing to our spiritual neighbors, concerts, poetry, visual arts, sports tournaments, petitions to political leaders, dialogue seminars, environmental action and trainings in conflict resolution. All of this has a heavy media presence

[67] Http://www.mindandaopeaceweavers.org/about-2
[68] http://www.zabida.com.ph/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=12&Itemid=49

to spread the word. This groundswell of peace has generated its own momentum and anticipation among youth. One of the co-founders, PAZ, offered small certificates for youth volunteering and participating in the week of peace activities. In order to keep up with the overwhelming involvement, they came up with a small blue PAZPORTE booklet where youth can now collect stamps for participating.

Cultural restoration and revitalization is happening among many of Mindanao indigenous tribes who are quickly losing their identities in the face of displacement, conflict and violence. Youth are resurrecting their cultural dancing, music and storytelling. By reasserting their identities, they are able to gain a stronger position in negotiations for local peace agreements with neighboring tribes, the Bangsamoro and Christian communities.

7. Structural change. Structural change is transformation of social, political or economic institutions that formerly supported and, in some cases, benefitted from ongoing conflict, into structures that support peace and resolution of conflict. There is a growing awareness that structural change is needed to support peace in the long term. For instance, there is a widespread call for improved governance at all levels of the Philippines. Gains made in Mindanao would also benefit other areas of the country where there is armed conflict. In Mindanao the national government has a significant credibility problem, since it is fragmented in its support/approach to peace. Grassroots perceptions of the national government are very poor. Government leaders first need to address the feelings of betrayal and skepticism by local stakeholders in Mindanao. One potential for communicating vertically and addressing these gaps is OPAPP's idea of peace "diplomats." These people can be used, not only for communicating progress of the peace talks, but also as a feedback mechanism for OPAPP, so that the peace negotiator panels can know what the grassroots and Track 2 are thinking.

a. Good governance. Recognizing that government is lacking in capacity or, in some rural areas, non-existent, many efforts from bilateral aid to grassroots CBOs are aimed at strengthening governance. A special unit within the Department of Interior and Local Governance (DILG) is tasked with strengthening the capacity of local governance.[69] Our interviews confirmed that this unit is increasingly seen as a place to put peacebuilding capacities, in order to strengthen the role of local government in conflict interventions.

b. Transformation of the Military. There is a gradual transformation in the thinking of some AFP officers, and a growing understanding that military solutions for the conflict in Mindanao are not viable. One general in the AFP sought an alternative to the heavy-handed aggressive military response to the same problems of banditry and weak governance he kept seeing as a soldier. Discovering alternatives to violence through engagement with civil society and peace trainings at the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute, the general put these techniques to use. At one point he required that all 4,000 men under his command undergo training, conducted by civil society groups, in a Culture of Peace (COP) program, which trains soldiers to examine ethnic diversity, perspectives on history they bring with them and cultural differences. He also ordered specific officers under his command that he thought would benefit to attend the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute, an intensive program organized annually by a consortium of local and international NGOs (see description above).

[69] http://www.dilg.gov.ph/about_us/vision_mission

His efforts have had a huge impact, as officers who have rubbed shoulders with civil society, tried conflict mediation and have developed a listening ear to the concerns of the grassroots are promoted up the chain of command. While there is a growing acceptance of the use of peacebuilding skills by military officers, the transformation is from the ground up. This is in part thanks to organizations like the Institute of Autonomy and Government, Balay Mindanao and Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute that are intentionally engaging military leadership to think beyond the use of hard power to achieve objectives.

8. Interreligious dialogue. Most persons we talked with stated emphatically that the GRP/MILF conflict is not a religious conflict. However, religion is, unfortunately, a fault line that divides disputants. Since religion plays a key role in both identity and culture of all parties, it is necessary to engage top level religious leadership in both Muslim and Christian communities, in order to dispel any myths about this being a religious war.

In 1996, high level Muslim and Christian religious leaders formed the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC). This interreligious dialogue forum arose as a response of religious leaders to give a moral dimension to the peace process in Mindanao and to provide a symbolic demonstration that dialogue is possible among high level religious leaders. Initially the BUC acted as a neutral body to engage Mindanaons regarding issues and concerns about the GRP-MNLF peace agreement, especially those who strongly opposed the process.

The BUC has met regularly every year since 1996, engaging in dialogue as a body of religious leaders on key peace and conflict concerns in Mindanao. Local dialogue groups and efforts have emerged, inspired by the BUC example, in key areas of Mindanao.

In the Mindanao conflict, religious leaders at all levels engage in inter-faith dialogue. Communities where IMAN takes leadership to the BUC Muslims and Christians have developed forums where they meet their religious neighbors. These efforts create safe social space where differences can be expressed and dealt with. While they are often connected horizontally, they are not, however, connected well vertically, which is a weakness.

C. Track 3 grassroots actors: preparing the ground

Starting in 1997, Mindanao has been experiencing a cycle of war almost every three years, which has displaced tens of thousands of people from their communities. While waiting for the peace talks, in their fits and starts, to bring stability and security, civil society has mobilized efforts to address the local causes of violence, as they are perceived. There are hundreds of efforts at the community and local levels to address “peace writ small.” A clear example of grassroots level peacebuilding includes is the case of IMAN.

1. The Integrated Mindanaoan Association for Natives (IMAN) is a local Islamic community-based organization (CBO) that is making a positive impact through programs of relief, development and peacebuilding that affect hundreds of households since it was formed in 1985. Using the Culture of Peace (COP) workshops and emphasizing holistic, life-affirming Islamic practices, IMAN bases its values system firmly in the Koran, which is also the basis for confidence in initiating interreligious dialogue. IMAN also promotes interreligious dialogue and tolerance when it works in communities with mixed religious populations. A women’s project

includes livelihood promotion and a cooperative to increase income among the women of the communities served.

2. Another example of grass roots initiatives are the Peace Zones (Spaces for Peace). The zones of peace are well known in Mindanao[70]for their ability to resist violent conflicts within their borders. These zones typically include at least one barangay.[71] For instance, GiNaPaLaDTaKa, or G7, comprises seven barangays in the Pikit, North Cotabato area that, in the past, have been severely affected by the cyclical conflicts in central Mindanao. Called *Spaces for Peace*, these communities have been able to engage local government to reconstruct traditional dispute resolution methods and keep the conflicts that inevitably arise from becoming violent and displacing its citizens. These efforts are part of constructing workable governance that encourages community members to keep their local leaders focused on the task of government working for them.

The barangay leaders in the G7 know their job is to work for the betterment of the community. Part of the leadership task is to intervene in conflicts that would disrupt community life and, in the past, has displaced entire communities. So they have been schooled in Culture of Peace materials, conflict resolution strategies and even peacebuilding training. These tools help them to become more effective leaders individually. Collectively, the seven communities that comprise the G7 have peers that provide the next layer of support, if the potential conflict spills over to neighboring communities.

In the G7 Spaces for Peace they do not demand that people give up their guns. The gun gives the holder a perceived sense of empowerment and security in the absence of any national security forces. The G7 leadership does, however demand that "people behave" as the director based in Pikit, North Cotabato, explained. In the most recent violence following the MOA-AD crisis, G7 communities were not displaced but served as hosts to IDPs who were displaced from other communities. Since the G7 was known for its ability to be a secure place, many fled there.

3. The Grassroots Peace Learning Center (GPLC) was initiated in 2003 by Catholic Relief Services to train local leaders in peacebuilding efforts and build upon the numerous Culture of Peace workshops that had been conducted since 2000. Aimed at sustaining and systematizing the skills among grassroots peace actors in Mindanao, over the years more than 300 community level leaders have been trained by the GPLC. The course runs in ten modules one weekend per month. The GPLC participants learn a module, practice the skills in their communities and spend time reflecting on their learning during each succeeding learning cycle.

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70 http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/project_profile.php?pid=STEPS&pname=Steps%20Towards%20Conflict%20Prevention

71 The smallest unit of government administration similar to a township or neighborhood.

V. Guide Points on the Peacebuilding Compass

This section will analyze the case study findings and break them into issues that have a direct impact on Peace Writ Large and "peace writ small" (peace at the local/community level). Through looking at lenses of language, theories of change, linkages and cooperation, and indicators of success, we will uncover some challenges as well as supports in the quest for peace.

A. Language leveling: definitions of peace

"In the beginning was the word….If you can't say it, you can't have it. – NGO director

Our initial interview question was "What is the definition of a peaceful Mindanao?" This question elicited a wide variety of responses. Some interviewees could not answer clearly and concisely, and we wondered if, for these persons/organizations, peace had become something static, an activity, rather than a descriptor of positive change. The diversity of definitions from those with lots to say about peace, led several interviewees to recommend that it is time once again to come to a common understanding of the definitions used by peacebuilders. Perspective, based on position in society, makes a huge difference in how gains, gaps and learnings of peacebuilding are perceived.

We observed that the more technical and conceptual the definitions of peace seemed to be, the further removed a person was from the actual shooting war. People at some distance used more abstract terms and phrases, such as "ability/capacity to be/do/become," "justice," "respect," "harmony," or "participate in government." But those closer to the ground used more tangible definitions: "kids go to school," "food on the table," or "freedom from fear."

1. Definitions from interviewees. Definitions of peace range from visionary to technical, conceptual, historical, to basic and immediate needs. These are presented in the following chart:

Most common definitions of peace

Personal	Communal	Conceptual	Structural
▪ Freedom from fear/live in security - 7 ▪ Have a voice ▪ Children have laughter ▪ Inner peace in the heart/mind -3 ▪ 3 meals a day -2 ▪ Kids go to school ▪ Work for everybody	▪ Freedom to celebrate cultural/religious - 4 ▪ Solving problems without guns - 4 ▪ Killings stop - 3 ▪ Live in harmony with self/others -6 ▪ Live in harmony with nature ▪ Harnessing our own resources ▪ Development	▪ Rights/right to self-determination -9 ▪ Respect -4 ▪ Ability/capacity to become ▪ Bias and prejudice reduced ▪ Acceptance ▪ Progress with obstacles ▪ Territory -3 ▪ Understanding history -2 ▪ Identity	▪ Government is responsive / working for people -7 ▪ Military leave us alone -3 ▪ Basic services -3 ▪ Equal opportunities -2 ▪ Justice -7 ▪ Peace processes in place - 4

From the chart above, **personal peace** has a strong connection to freedom from fear, having a say, and experiencing peace on the interior as well as exterior, with the simple, yet essential things in life: food clothing and shelter. Hope expressed in children laughing and going to school is an important indicator, as is the dignity that work brings. One interpersonal/relational definition is that of inner peace, which implies a personal transformation influencing relational and religious experience. The CBO IMAN has a definition of peace printed on T-Shirts that summarize this definition:

I am organizing for Peace
-ONE VISION
A community that is: -God fearing
-just
-peaceful
-harmonious
-drug free
-progressive

For **communal peace**, the ability to worship and practice cultural values is critical to expressing the desire to live in harmony with self and others. Reducing violence and increasing capacities to solve problems is an important indicator. Also mentioned was development that is eco-sensitive as well as sustainable.

There were many **conceptual definitions of peace**. These, surprisingly, came from the whole spectrum of stakeholders from the grassroots to Track 1. Rights and the right to self determination emerged as perhaps the biggest indicator of peace. Actual definitions for these terms were elusive, leading the interviewers to the conclusion that people know when these concepts are absent but are not as able to distinguish their presence. The ideas of territory and history are also concepts worth further exploration.

In the **structural definitions of peace,** it is clear that government has a huge role to play. Whether government needs to provide essential services, respond to people's aspirations or just get out of the way (in the case of the military being perceived as the problem), structural definitions need more attention from all stakeholders.

2. Positive and negative language

> *Instead of calling them 'Conflict Zones' we call them "Peace and Reconciliation" (PAR) Zones to focus on the positive work not the negative.*
> *–A faith-based NGO in Davao*

The poster on the wall of an NGO office showed a crowd of people with banners. One sign board said "*The People Say Yes to Peace*" while over him, the dominant message was superimposed on the poster was a big red sign "*Say No to War*." The poster summarized starting points for peacebuilding. One sign begins with a negative assumption, about what people *don't* want, while the other affirms what people *do* want. We found that the language people use to describe a peaceful Mindanao reflects their assumptions and processes in working at peace.

Some of the institutions that have worked the longest and hardest at peacebuilding seemed to use negative language to define what a peaceful Mindanao would look like. For example, some used

the term "*a reduction in bias and prejudice*" (negative) and other reframed this same concept in the positive saying "*people respect each other, allowing for cultural and religious freedom of expression*." There was a loose correlation between those who were most taken aback by the Supreme Court ruling on the MOA-AD and those who expressed peace definitions in negative terms, reacting to what peace was not. During that time those institutions that had some real and tangible gains were able to cast the definition in a positive light, reflecting their successes.

An academic in western Mindanao noted that more than ten years ago the word "peace" was "*corny*" and a "*motherhood*" term that was only used by moms in the home. Now it has been elevated to a serious point of study, and many wish to adopt the word "peace" in order to legitimate what they are doing. Peace economies, peace pacts and bike riding for peace are some of the many examples where peace is in vogue.

In some cases, language is co-opted by powerful entities for their own use. In one case in Central Mindanao, upon hearing of the successful Spaces for Peace (G7), the government declared an area nearby as a Zone of Peace. This co-option of the concept completely overlooked all of the careful consensus building, dialogue and negotiation that it took to set up the Spaces for Peace. Another worrying trend is militaries using peace/peacebuilding terms to pacify communities that would otherwise protest/rebel against the occupation of military forces.

3. Technical terms in the talks. At the base of many conflicts with an identity component is respect or lack thereof. Reflected in the phrase, "you can't have it if you can't say it," the idea of a Right to Self Determination (RSD) is a case in point. The right to self determination is a distillation of the complex realities that separate the two disputants in the MILF/GRP peace talks. The concept of Right to Self Determination has been "acronymized," meaning it has become a buzzword, which has an assumed, though nebulous, meaning. The interviewers did not hear a clear consensus on what RSD means.

Harnessed with the RSD question is the question of what is ancestral domain (AD). The peace process at Track 1 is looking at the following areas for the definition of ancestral domain: concept, territory, resources, and governance.

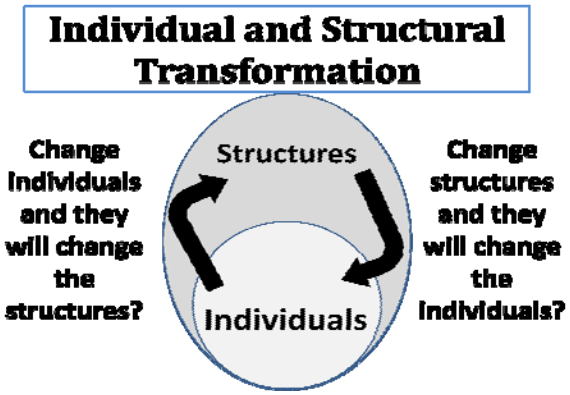
While the panels grapple with the technical meaning for AD, persons on the ground have a different starting place for this term, namely respect for their right to control their lives and live peacefully on the family homestead. This disconnect in meanings for AD suggests that careful consultation needs to take place between what the peace panel is concluding in the Track 1 process and how people view the concept on the ground. Therein lies the gap for the most recent MOA-AD controversy.

B. Theories of change

The language used is also indicative of one's theory of change. Does one arrive at peace by starting with personal, communal, conceptual or structural change? There are two basic starting points which are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary.

The simple individual/structural transformation diagram below implies an either/or approach to change. In reality, both approaches are needed, and from the Mindanao examples above, the

work is complementary. The challenge for Mindanao peacebuilders is for each approach to acknowledge and bless the other, since both are needed for fully sustainable peace.



Do destructive relationships at the individual level need to be transformed into positive and constructive interactions by individuals before people can change structures that promote and enable peace? Or is the opposite true? Or do structures need to change first, thus causing a reorientation of interpersonal relationships toward constructive and positive interactions?[72]

Those who start from personal, internal change assume that transformation of persons will influence families, communities and ultimately national and international systemic structures, with the goal of reducing the forces that result in violent conflict. One NGO director emphasized that the critical work was with "*the youth and children so we will not have angry, broken, and resentful young people.*" Another NGO promoting dialogue has a motto, "*Dialogue starts from God and brings people back to God*." This NGO works at promoting active harmony among peoples, starting with dialogue with self then others and God. Their theory of change is that, in any situation, one discovers that injustice is personal distance from God. Introspection leads to becoming closer to God and invites others to do likewise, promoting justice.

For Mindanao, the culture of peace workshops, interreligious dialogue, values formation programs in university settings and values trainings at the community level all start with the assumption that individual transformation yields structural transformation. Such programs presuppose that it is individuals who are making day to day decisions that impact conflict. Most of these efforts focus at the local level and react to some crisis which has occurred.

These approaches assume that as people meet people who differ in their faith, ethnicity or world view, individual transformation leads to healthier relationships. Animosity is, at best, transformed into friendship. At least a healthy curiosity of "other" develops, thus leading to greater interaction. This interaction then assumes that people will demand and support reform of religious, social, political and economic structures in promoting peace.

Key leadership people, who have experienced their own transformation, have demonstrated new ways of thinking and relating to the "enemy" and then lead the way in change. A good example

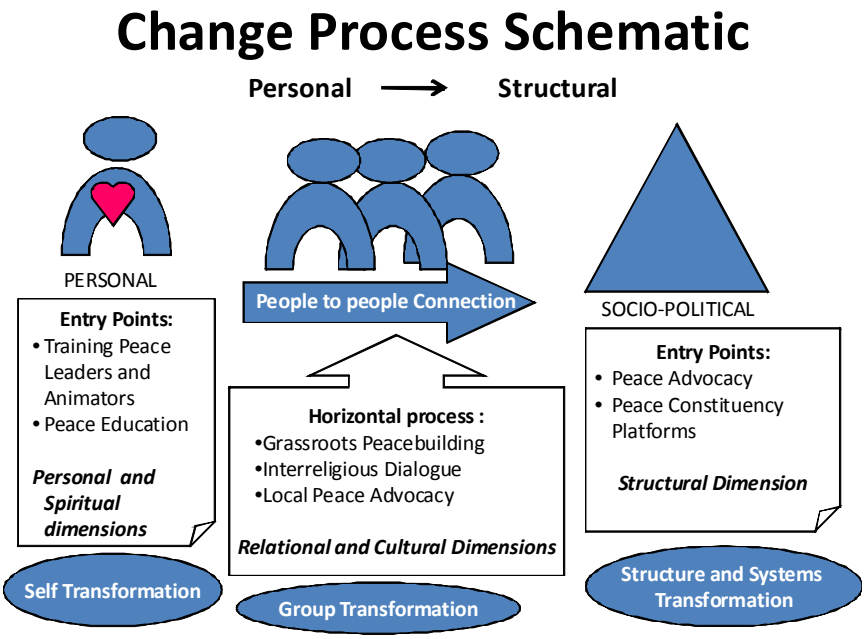
[72] CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice came to a similar conclusion, noting that efforts to change individual attitudes, perceptions and behaviors do not automatically lead to changes in institutions and structures. Rather change at the individual/personal level must be linked to change initiatives at the socio-political level. These findings are reported in *Confronting War*, cited earlier, and are captured in the RPP Matrix.

is a local priest or imam who reaches out to the religiously "other" neighbor as a central tenant to the faith. He can bring the whole religious structure to bear on the issues of peace.

Structural transformation assumes that religious, social, political and economic institutions must first be reformed to support peace, and then people will get along. Those who start from this point of view assume that the problems arise, or at least are generated, because fundamental structures of society are broken or absent. Structural change programs include reform of legal systems or building capacity in governance, security sector reform, a range of domestic policy changes, constitutional design, and changes in economic inequalities. As an example, some Bangsamoro insist on the implementation of *Sharia* law that they believe will bring about the changes in the societal structure that they desire. Likewise, some NGOs see changes in Manila government administration as the only way forward for peace in Mindanao. Still others consider that only by addressing extreme economic inequalities will you achieve sustainable peace. Advocacy groups support the peace process assuming that, by achieving an agreement that both GRP and MILF adhere to, the shooting will stop. Another example of structural change from the Philippines is adopting policies that make peace education in schools mandatory.

Peace processes, military actions, advocacy, lobbying, policy analysis, peace pacts, zones of peace and government capacity building and reform are all efforts at the socio-political level in Mindanao to bring peace. These efforts hope to bring institutional and structural transformation to a system that has cyclically supported war for the past decades—some would say centuries. These wars are fueled by marginalization, lack of voice, desire for self determination and resource grabbing, to name a few. The long-term solutions to these issues are structural in nature, supported by parallel changes in individual attitudes.

Schematics for change are clearly thought out theories that include the *who, what* and *how* of change. The Change Process Schematic shown below is one example. What follows is a simple verbal schematic for how community organized sustainable peacebuilding has been created:



[The gains in peace] started with the desire to bring peace in one community, and with that came the responsibility to educate themselves and then became pragmatic in achieving their desire.

–Peace trainer and program administrator

The interview sessions uncovered interesting schematics for change. The first was from the long-term NGO worker quoted above.

1. Start with desire to bring peace to the community
2. Community discovered their responsibility to educate themselves
3. Through education, they developed pragmatic ways of achieving their desire.

A slightly more complicated schematic for change was developed by a Manila academic who has extensive Mindanao field experience:

1. The processes of conflict resolution taught/learned by community members become common practices between people
2. That lead to new norms in behavior.
3. In the next conflict crisis a key person articulates the dilemma: "Do you want destruction (using old methodologies), or peace (using the new patterns recently developed)?"
4. Now facing a named dilemma, the community makes a conscious *decision* to live together which. . .
5. Compels a critical mass of the community to *work together* to create new ordinances which cultivate constructive values.
6. The new norms are institutionalized through ordinances, resolutions, laws.

It is interesting to note that both of these processes come from actual experience with positive gains in community peace.

C. Linkages and cooperation

As a nation state with more than 7,000 islands, the Philippines is connected through cell phones and texting as much as through national and local media. This is a strength and weakness. Rumors and miscommunications can spread rapidly. Likewise, grassroots peacebuilders can be connected vertically through knowing the cell numbers of key government, military or MILF leadership.

Despite all this connectivity, there is still gap in knowing who is doing what for peace in Mindanao. Some attempts have been made at mapping who is doing what where. Although there is no consistent and ongoing directory of peace efforts, this network resides in the collective interconnections of each peace stakeholder, which makes networking and linkages very organic. In terms of organizational networks, convening structures like Mindanao Peace Weavers develop and adapt as needed in response to needs emerging from their constituencies.

For Track 1, at least two interviewees went so far as to say that sincerity in the GRP/MILF peace process was much more important than the technical skills used in achieving a peace agreement. Some Track 1 stakeholders have come to recognize that sincerity in the process is transparency

with information. Information sharing is critical to gaining Track 2 and grassroots buy-in to any decision made at a peace panel level. The panels themselves have grasped the critical nature of consultations, which are two-way conversations in which people can share their expectations and hear about what is happening in the official peace talks.

The failure of the MOA-AD shocked many in Track 2 into recognizing that there was a real gap in harmonizing efforts toward sustainable peace in Mindanao. There is a new spirit of sharing information that is superseding the previous information hoarding and secrecy. Peacebuilders have a new-found capacity to respect each other's work and specific contributions, which has provided a way forward in dialogue and a renewed commitment to focus on a common cause/advocacy of broader peace in Mindanao, even if differences in methods persist. With this maturity comes an enhanced ability to face tough issues, look at large gaps in approaches and philosophy and make use of diversity as strength.

Organizations involved in Track 2 work are now entering a new spirit of engaging peace resources in their own ranks. For NGOs, the need to connect with critical Track 1 actors and their continued advocacy for the grassroots are in constant tension. Networks and alliances are working together to bridge the top and bottom of the pyramid of stakeholders. The capacity for one group to bless the work of another is increasing. Again, the Mindanao Peaceweavers is a good example. This network of networks has a shared secretariat among four NGOs. While recognizing that each member organization focuses on a different agenda, they nevertheless realize (post MOA-AD) that they have to forge common advocacy points.

At the grassroots level, people are beginning to understand their roles in the peace process. By both creating local peace zones and pacts, they are building "peace write small" in their communities. By understanding their responsibility to make their voice louder, through advocacy or through the successes they experience on the ground, they require local government to keep to the task of being public servants, not private entrepreneurs. The G7 is a good example. Members of the G7 communities require that their barangay leaders keep them in the G7 alliance of communities, resist the outbreak of violence and gain access to national level governmental resources.

D. Indicators of success:

"We make commanders dance where they haven't before" –Development administrator

Measuring progress in the realm of peacebuilding has not always been straightforward. One indicator mentioned in the quote above suggested that the community is now exerting influence over commanders who once ran roughshod over their communities. Communities are making military officers more responsive and accountable for their actions at a local level. In this sense, one person's peace writ large (PWL) may be another's peace writ small. If a community such as the G7 is able to create a responsive local government, maintain security and constructively transform its conflicts, even in the face of war outside its borders, then from the G7 perspective this is already PWL. If they have been able to create, within a microcosm, the elements of progress that are used as benchmarks at a Track 1 level, then they have achieved PWL from their local perspective. This kind of bottom-up peacebuilding is the way peace may very well have to 'break out' in Mindanao, given the lack of substantial progress at the peace panel level (Track 1).

One director of a government-sponsored program described the areas where they work as Peace and Development Communities (PDCs), some of which enjoy positive "pockets of peace." They are not dependent on the peace process, but harness their minimal resources to promote peace and development. Local government is working with the people through the PDCs. Leaders serve not only as elected officials, but remain in constant contact with their constituency and plan projects with community input. In these areas, people's organizations are actively developing conflict management systems that include local police and military commanders and local religious leaders. Dialogue, culture of peace and strengthening traditional systems of conflict management are included in the PDC focus.

Due to the cyclical nature of violence in Mindanao, organizations must continually shift from peacebuilding to relief and back again to peacebuilding. A visible indicator of success is when an organization has the ability to see its short term relief work as contributing to a longer term peace solution. Those who ask the question, "How does relief intervention today contribute to PWL in the long run?" have the potential to make a lasting contribution. The Immaculate Conception Parish in Pikit is one example. By using a multi-faith team to deliver relief during massive displacement, a deeper community dialogue was established, eventually birthing the G7.

In our interviews, individuals defined success indicators as including hope, healing, increased trust, a consciousness of the issues, understanding others, and a clearer sense of what is wanted in the struggle. Much of this is summarized by one comment from an NGO director who emphasized: "Listening is an important element, then internalizing the positive elements being learned in the process to work together in harmonious togetherness."

Perhaps the years of work at grassroots efforts to understand context, do analysis and develop a collective culture of peace has fostered a new communal tolerance. At the community level, indicators of success include people taking responsibility for how outside events will affect them. Instead of reacting from old patterns that include violence, people/communities are now more likely to engage first in dialogue about events such as the Supreme Court decision regarding the MOA-AD. Analysis has opened creative options about how to live together in diversity. The Columbio Multi-Sectoral Ecology Movement is one example of success. A local network of multi-sectoral groups from the town of Columbio, Maguindanao came together with other local networks during the MOA-AD debacle to discuss how this news would affect them as Muslims and Christians. Out of this response came an effort to prepare both the military and the local government for dialogue. The idea of peace has become a shared social value, which in turn decreases violence at all levels. One interviewee described this as community "maturity" as they now move to discuss rather than react.

Structurally, gains have been made at some local government levels to coordinate with all agencies during a crisis, including the military. The fact that both sides respect the ceasefire and have continued talks is an indicator of success.

Success is often defined at a donor level by looking at Mindanao as an aggregate. For donors, more war and displacement negates perceived gains. While this perspective informs those looking in from afar, it does not give a balanced picture of the Mindanao context. In evaluating gains in peace work, other indicators are helpful. These include evidence of collaboration, gains in peace resource inventories, and stakeholder involvement in the peace process.

VI. Mile Markers and Bumps in the Road: Lessons Learned and Gaps

Our interviews surfaced significant lessons learned and gaps in all the peace activities in Mindanao, including the following highlights.

A. An end to comfortable "nicey-nicey" peacebuilding

The failure of the signing of the MOA-AD forced the NGO community to take a hard look at some difficult questions. Perhaps naïvely, the hope that the Track 1 process would be a success led the Track 2 stakeholders to gloss over differences and difficult divides that had crept into the positions of major stakeholders in Mindanao. Differences in NGO focus were ignored and became exacerbated during the crisis of post MOA-AD failure and violence, because NGOs found themselves on either side of the MOA-AD debate. "How strategic have our efforts been?" asked one NGO director, "Why didn't we do scenario building?"

One prominent NGO director scoffed at the Culture of Peace trainings, for example, as "nicey-nicey" peacebuilding that does not have any impact when it comes to outside issues pushing their will on the efforts of Mindanaoans. The interviewers did find positive shifts in attitudes and perceptions from the COP trainings, but the question remains, whether and how the COP efforts have been strategic and intentionally connected to other peacebuilding efforts at different levels or have resulted in institutional/structural changes.

B. Addressing elephants in the room

The failure of the MOA-AD signing and subsequent violence and displacement has compelled stakeholders to take a look at the "elephants in the room," the unacknowledged, undiscussed and difficult issues that are divisive, contentious and tend to polarize people. These issues were grossly neglected in the peace initiatives by all stakeholders for fear of upsetting the Track 1 talks. What are these "elephants"? One example is the indigenous versus Bangsamoro understanding of ancestral domain.

When the Bangsamoro and Indigenous Persons found themselves on opposite sides of the debate over the impending MOA-AD, it became clear that this issue had not been addressed adequately at the grassroots level. This gap was ignored in the MILF/GRP talks, as they considered it an issue to deal with later. The lessons here is that peace talks, as difficult, tedious and riddled with setbacks as they are, must include all stakeholders in the discussion, or risk that gains in the Track 1 talks will be scuttled in the end.

Another significant "elephant" issue is corruption within the ARMM, whether from political influence pedaling or absconding with project monies. This sensitive issue surfaced during CDA's Listening Project[73] in Mindanao.

> *One team recognized the structural nature of corruption in the ongoing peace talks. These stories of deep corruption do not surface in the peace talks because if they do, it is counterproductive to confidence building. But if it is never truly dealt with, the conflict issues will never truly be resolved.*
>
> *—Lanao/Misamis Listening Project team feedback*

[73] CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, Mindanao Listening Project looked at how well foreign assistance was implemented by listening to recipients in Mindanao. The final document is found at: http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/project_profile.php?pid=LISTEN&pname=Listening%20Project

Peacebuilding practitioners have generally avoided dealing with spoilers. It is clear that a handful of people can derail peace talks, either through the legal system or through force of arms. There is widespread acknowledgement that these so called "spoilers" are also stakeholders in the peace process in one way or another and must be engaged. A few people we interviewed recognized the problem and were working on developing back-channel dialogues, in order to surface potential spoiler interests and draw them into supporting peaceful outcomes to violence.

One other "elephant" is the land and resource interests of local politicians. Some local government officials are buying land and/or staking claims for resource exploitation in a way that compromises their ability to govern for the good of all people. This issue points to a larger conflict with regard to land ownership and a history of failed land reform efforts which is at the heart of many grievances in the whole of the Philippines.

C. Good Governance

Our field research found almost unanimous testimony that lack of good governance was a contributing, if not direct, cause of conflicts. Interviewees described good governance as consisting of authorities who are responsive to the needs of people rather than their own gain. Many people commented on how, during the 2009 election season, many roads were being fixed up. Affixed to each project area was a prominent sign with a picture of the President wearing a hard hat, and the local political official also prominently displayed. People assured us that this is a regular feature during the run-up to national and regional elections, and that sometimes the sign is the only work accomplished.

With respect to governance in Track 1 peace processes, there is a perceived lack of sincerity of national government. One suggestion to address this, we were told, would be to make OPAPP less vulnerable to the political winds in Manila. Finding some way to communicate to the grassroots that national government is not monolithic (OPAPP vs. security departments) would be helpful. It would also be helpful to communicate that there are differences between the national government and local government realities. Sadly, the only face of national government that many see at the grassroots is the AFP, since many areas experience the failure of the state to deliver essential services. Track 1 actors need to develop the capacity for hearing local voices by placing someone on the ground.

The Local Government Units are certainly concerned about peace, if only because cessation of hostilities will remove obstacles to economic development within their jurisdictions. But peacebuilding, whether through culture of peace, interfaith dialogue and/or empowerment of barangay leaders, has not emerged as a priority among local government administrators. Some notable exceptions include those Peace and Development Communities where ACT for Peace is working and the G7, which has mandated their barangay leaders to become peacemakers in order to preserve harmony and security in their communities.

The violence following the MOA-AD Temporary Restraining Order showed that different arms of the government were not in harmony. The government peace panel, Supreme Court, Malacanang (the President and Executive branch) and the military were each perusing their own agendas. Heavy handed approaches to criminality in the form of combat operations, for example, are still the norm for dealing with lawlessness. Dialogical and/or legal approaches have not been

accepted by enough decision makers in either the military or the governmental to permanently change the way things are done in Mindanao.

D. Militarization

Militarization was another named source of conflict. The military, in the absence of effective police forces, actually do policing work. The military uses hard power (bombers, artillery, and large troop movements) to capture rogue MILF commanders who are accused of attacks. These actions by the military routinely displace thousands of people. In Western Mindanao there are many allegations of actual incitement of violence by the military, which is seen as an occupation force on the islands in the Sulu chain.

A gradual transformation in the way the Armed Forces of The Philippines (AFP) operate is underway. One General summarized his experience this way:

> *Peacebuilding training at MPI has done me good professionally. I am able to gain a better understanding of the conflict we were in. Our mindset is programmed to see the other side as enemy and we are trained to fight. I gained better understanding of the conflict and am now accorded a wider range of options in dealing with conflict other than armed option. I was able to educate other officers and soldiers on peacebuilding . . . but I can't avoid some sectors of the military that emphasize our core competency is fighting. That is old school. We can solve conflict without resorting to arms. That is the best way for everybody.*

Military officers have learned that small, localized family feuds or community policing issues can develop into full scale wars, when one family or side in the community knows military commanders in the AFP, while the other side knows the MILF command. The escalation following an incident can provoke the engagement of actors far beyond the local context, thus making localized issues look like national civil war. Commanders, through acculturation training, can more quickly spot these dynamics and make consensus choices about what type of intervention is needed.

E. Mindanao as a national issue

Although Mindanao makes the headlines for its violence, the Mindanao peace process has not captured the national consciousness. Many interviewees in Track 2 and 1 recognize that Mindanao must become an agenda of concern to the whole country. Peace advocates in Mindanao are trying to put the peace process on the national agenda for elections, so that candidates can issue policy statements.

On several occasions, Mindanao grassroots organizations have asserted themselves on the national level with positive results. The first time was after fighting resumed in 2003 and displaced persons lined the national highway for a day to protest their inability to go home. By holding banners and gaining much media limelight, they called national attention to their plight in being displaced for nearly a year, due to ongoing fighting between the MILF and the AFP. Dubbed *Bakwit Power I*, this event culminated in displaced persons traveling to Manila and meeting law makers, civil society groups and ultimately the President to press their demands. Action to bring a ceasefire and provide security quickly followed the visit to Manila. Likewise,

Bakwit Power II was held in 2009 to protest the massive displacements following the failed MOA-AD and subsequent fighting. Like the first protest, it was one form of pressure to stop the shooting war.

F. Catholic and Evangelical Church involvement

We heard from many sources about the large gap between the Catholic Church hierarchy and priests who give community leadership to peace efforts and promoting good governance. A leader from one Muslim CBO, who is promoting interfaith dialogue in an attempt to foster local understanding between communities, lamented that there was little interest among the Catholic priests in his area. He stated that he could gather thirty Muslim leaders and thirty Protestant pastors but only one Catholic priest for an event. And in the eventuality that there is a community crisis, "We can't assume how they [Catholic priests] will respond, if we go to them for help in solving a community problem."

For the Evangelical churches, only 2.8% of the Philippine population,[74] engagement with peacebuilding has not been a traditional priority. One NGO based in Davao has made it a point to engage Evangelicals and has done so by stressing inherent Christian peace theology to energize the churches to care about injustice and conflict in Mindanao. Through inviting the children of key church leaders to an interfaith youth camp, these young people have made friends with indigenous and Muslim children in Mindanao, thus shaping a generation of Evangelicals. This NGO has also brokered a meeting between MILF leadership and Evangelical church leadership. The meeting was structured so the Evangelicals would hear the Bangsamoro perspective. This was the first time these leaders had met, and it fostered a deeper commitment from Evangelicals to support the peace process. Lastly, this NGO has sponsored medical missions to some of the poorest areas of the ARMM, where Evangelical doctors from Manila gave free clinics. This bridge building is helping to reshape the Evangelical viewpoint of their religious neighbors.

G. Spirituality

> *"You can't attain peace if [you are] not peaceful in your beliefs." --Muslim Ulama and grassroots development director*

While the conflict in Mindanao is not about religion, beliefs have become a convenient fault line along which sides line up. This reality cannot be ignored if sustainable solutions are to be achieved at the PWL level, and the question is whether religious groups will exacerbate or help mitigate the conflict. In our interviews with Muslim groups, they either started with prayer or at least began talking from a religious framework right away. When faced with any intervention in his community, one Muslim responded that his first question is, "What do the Ulama [scholars] have to say about it."

In order to deal with tough, substantive issues, the role of religion and how it informs polity, social and economic issues will need to be addressed in discussions. In the absence of such talks, peace will remain superficial. We heard a call for interfaith forums like the Bishop/Ulama Conference to tackle the substantive issues that divide the Christian and Muslim communities.

[74] http://www.omf.org/omf/nederland/azie_info/landenlijst/andere_landen_engels/the_philippines

Given the sticking points in the current peace talks, the question of spirituality addresses how well the Philippine nation state understands the aspirations of the Muslim *Ummah*, the meaning of *Sharia* law, and how a secular state and theocratic governance might be able to coexist. Likewise, attempts by the Muslim *Ummah* (community) to understand the need of the nation state to maintain the integrity of borders and boundaries will advance Track 1 negotiations.

Although some donors have discomfort with funding religious training, others have, nevertheless, supported values transformation. In the Mindanao conflict, we heard an implicit call for donors to recognize the centrality of religious practice and to find ways to continue funding religiously based values transformation that supports peace and development. Religious values, based on the best of each adherent's revered scriptures, will be a major contributor toward peace.

H. Gender perspective

"A demilitarized Mindanao is thinking of women not men." --NGO Director

Although the Philippines is one of twenty-four countries worldwide that has a female leader or head of state,[75] there are serious gender issues related to the conflict in Mindanao. Some of the cultures in Mindanao are patriarchal, and yet there is general acknowledgement that women have major spheres of influence. Still, women's participation in projects has been sidelined, or, when insisted upon by donors, given a token hearing. Women and children are suffering the most from the displacement and wars caused primarily by men. One gap noted was in "*getting the MILF to recognize that gender is central to the conflict,*" because men have a "*need for control [and are] at the root of war*."

Women have an increasing voice in peacebuilding in Mindanao, thanks, in part, to the peace education many are receiving. Efforts like the women's livelihood projects by IMAN encourage organization and collaboration among women at the grassroots level that has an impact on the peace and order situation in their communities. These women define peace as: unity among women, trust and confidence, and helping promote Islamic values. One community leader said, "*It's easier for women to come together [as evidenced by] higher participation among women who are more motivated*."

At a Track 2 and Track 1 level, the Mindanao Commission on Women sends an NGO representative to the official peace talks. Through efforts like their Mothers for Peace, a national peace movement, the MCW has asserted a gender voice for ceasefire, resumption of peace talks and media awareness of how war affects everyone. MCW is engaging a full spectrum of women and men on the issues of peace and war.

[75] http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/

VII. Are we there yet? Gains, Challenges and Critical Questions

In this final section we will attempt to distill the history, interviews and other wisdom we have gleaned from this project, by offering our analysis of issues of concern for all stakeholders in Mindanao. Our interviews identified seven challenges and critical questions that each peace stakeholder should be able to answer for themselves with regard to their efforts at Mindanao peacebuilding. Our hope is that these points will serve to promote discussion that will eventually lead to greater strategic cooperation and focused programs, which will enable sustainable peace in Mindanao.

A. How does analysis really impact strategy?

Analysis tools have been around for a long time and have been utilized in almost every type of planning done by stakeholders in Mindanao. Yet has the analysis influenced strategy? Beyond the immediate impact, the conflict context is dynamic, requiring a continual renewal or updating of analysis. Do organizations have a learning structure that is able to react to a continually changing environment?

We found that the organizations that were best able to integrate analysis into strategy, and continue to do so in a changing environment, maintained the presence of key people with creativity and ability to "roll with the punches," as the conflict situation evolved. Those organizations with a distant locus of control or a much larger bureaucratic structure had greater challenges in being responsive. The greatest help with meshing analysis and strategy was a connection between the home office and people on the ground in the conflict area.

B. Imposing a vertical integration strategy on the grassroots

How much of the vertical integration of efforts can be imposed on the grassroots. After all, they are the ones most directly impacted by lack of PWL. Their efforts should be the benchmark that Track 2 and Track 1 respond to, not the other way around. The peace panels should have regular reporting sessions along with representation from civil society groups, so that the grassroots efforts can inform the Track 1 talks seeking PWL.

One way grassroots can inform the official initiatives is for donors to monitor the programs they fund more closely. In the case of The Asia Foundation and their *rido* intervention program, active participation by staff gives a clearer window into Mindanao, which can inform them as they meet Track 1 actors. If donors, particularly international donors, become more actively involved in the efforts they fund, it will go far in connecting the two ends of the pyramid.

C. Explicit vs. implicit peacebuilding programming

Much of the peace work being done is implicit. It is assumed that economic prosperity will chip away at the root causes of conflict, in this case poverty. The assumptions that NGOs apply to do implicit peacebuilding have been reexamined in light of the MOA-AD ruling. Likewise, NGOs working at explicit peace programming also need to examine their assumptions. How are the peacebuilding programs you are doing actually adding up to structural change and PWL? These questions are for each stakeholder to answer, but a larger forum is needed to address them, so as to move simultaneously toward a national harmonization of peace efforts.

A truism often repeated in Mindanao is, “No peace without development…no development without peace.” The questions raised by this statement include the role of corruption in national development, the level of national resources going to militarization of Mindanao vs. the need for stability and order, and who benefits from keeping a specific area of Mindanao underdeveloped. Also some interviewees quoted statistics that show that it is not always the poorest regions which are the “hot” spots, but lack of good governance is a constant in conflict areas.

D. How do we know when we have arrived?

How do all the stakeholders know when they have peace? When a peace agreement is signed? When there is 5% annual economic growth in the most poverty stricken areas? When the violence levels have dropped 50%? How do they know that justice is done? Each of these assumptions may be part of the overall peace and security situation, but until all agree upon common benchmarks, how can the goal of Peace Writ Large be achieved?

Distilling and publishing the tremendous wealth of data from the myriad of consultations held in the recent past could start a larger conversation towards a shared, national definition of peace. Much of this data describes peace in terms of local, regional and national understandings. A national discussion could help raise Mindanao to a national issue.

E. Vertical analysis of corruption/mismanagement as impact for sustainability

We noted that there is a vertical dimension that corruption and mismanagement exert on the Mindanao peace and security scene. We wonder how much analysis has been done to see how corruption connects the grassroots and Track 1 levels. At this time the most obvious issue is that of elections. Credible allegations of election irregularities from previous elections have a direct impact on leadership both nationally and regionally in Mindanao and could undercut any gains to peace. The Maguindanao Massacre is a case in point. Likewise, there are credible allegations that local military commanders have, with cognizance higher up the chain of command, been involved in some incidents that have resulted in loss of life and displacement. These examples have a direct impact on the peace and security situation and need to be addressed through a comprehensive strategy.

F. Crisis response vs. long term system transformation.

Too often organizations do their peace projects in isolation or ignorance of the cyclical nature of war. When the fighting resumes, the peace work suddenly becomes humanitarian intervention based on the immediate reality of human needs. The question is, “how does the response to the immediate crisis facilitate longer term movement toward peace?” In the Mindanao context, the post MOA-AD question NGOs are asking themselves is, “Why didn’t we do scenario building, if we knew this would happen again?”

G. Justice and peace

Injustice was mentioned by many interviewees as a basis for the conflict. The language of injustice includes lack of respect, favoritism, land disputes and political favoritism. In one definition of peace, justice is seen as a key part. Yet what is justice? One interviewee said, “Justice is the fruit of peace.” Another said, “It is the end and means.” People know injustice when they experience it.

One interviewee suggested "reconciliation" as a positive word that would take the focus away from different understandings of justice and begin to look at what people need for healing. In the absence of any one definition of what final justice looks like, a positive recasting of what is needed to address past harm may be the way forward in processing previous individual and community injustices.

It is clear to many observers from the outside that transitional justice mechanisms and human rights are not well integrated in the minds of peacebuilders in Mindanao. Peacebuilders need to address the question of how longer term work for justice can be supported by the more immediate work towards peace?

H. Finally

> *Last year, after MOA-AD, tensions were heightened further by the kidnapping of an NGO worker in Basilan, the Muslim youth of Zamboanga, who had grown accustomed to celebrating their end of Ramadan feast with the Christian youth, were concerned that the parents would keep Christian youth away from the Iftar* [breaking the fast] *celebrated in the Muslim community. Empathizing with the Christian concerns, the Muslim youth came up with an idea to hold Iftar in a community center in Zamboanga City, which would be a more neutral, and perceived "safer" venue for the Christian youth.*
>
> *—Peace organization director*

This story represents a gain in the eyes of the NGO director, who has worked with these youth groups for years. She explained that the empathy shown by the Muslim youth represented a step forward in one community understanding, respecting and validating the concerns of another.

For many residents of areas in Mindanao that regularly experience violence, political and economic marginalization, and lack of security, the recurring rounds of war and displacement overshadow any thought of gains in peace work. Yet the actors for peace involved in the GRP/MILF conflict are gaining experience and maturity in working for a sustainable peace. Gains in connecting the reality on the ground to policy makers demonstrates that the gap between decision makers in Manila and those affected by the decisions is shrinking. Official development aid has pumped millions of pesos into peace projects. National officials are gaining a new awareness of how to support local initiatives. Likewise, local communities in violence-prone areas are organizing themselves to assert their voice in Manila and demand that government be responsive.

Greater coordination among major stakeholders of peace can results as a by-product of crisis situations. This coordination is gradually superseding the old turf battles, compartmentalization and hoarding of information that characterized the work in the past.

The violent conflict in Mindanao is centuries old. That the above named gains and learnings have been made in a short decade and a half speaks highly of the courage, perseverance and hope that characterize Mindanaoans.

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IX. Appendix I: List and Schedule of Interviewees

31 Aug 2009 - Davao

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
1	Orson Sargado and Deng Giguiento	Catholic Relief Services	NGO	Program Manager, Training Officer (2 Pax)

1 Sept 2009– Davao City

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
2	Dann and Joji Pantoja	Peacebuilders Community Inc.	NGO	Co-director (4 pax)
3	Irene (Inday) Santiago	Mindanao Commission on Women and Mothers for Peace	NGO	Chairperson/CEO and Convener
4	Fr. Bert Alejo and Bing Durante	Konsult Mindanao	Academic, Consultation Forum	Director of consultation process, Catholic Focal Facilitator and second in command (2 pax)
5	Gus Miclat	Initiatives for International Dialogue	INGO (locally based)	Director

PBCI – Dann Pantoja, Joji Pantoja, Jeremy Simons, Kriz Kruzado

2 Sept – Zamboanga City

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
6	Sister Emma Delgado	Peace Advocates of Zamboanga	NGO	Director
7	Haji Abdu Rahim K. Kenoh, Atty. Paulino R. Ersando, Pastor Felix V. Senio, Rev. Pablo Palis	Inter Religious Solidarity Movement	Forum	Muslim Sector member, Evangelical sector member, Co-Convener, Member, Vice President Zamboanga Ministers Fellowship (4 pax)
8	15 Students	Grassroots Peace Learning Center	Non-formal Education	Community leaders, (15 PAX)
9	Aryx (Aryameir Ismad and Cecile B. Simbajon	Ateneo Peace and Culture Institute	Academic	Staff (2 Pax)
10	Fr. Antonio F. Moreno SJ	Ateneo De Zamboanga University	Academic	President
11	Mina Sano	Silsilah Dialogue Movement	Forum	Director
12	Dr. Grace Rebollos	Western Mindanao University	Academic	President

3 Sept – Zamboanga City

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
13	Fauzi Johor	Namadzoon Adzeem Foundation Inc (NAFI), CBCS, AGONG, National Poverty Commission	Community Leader	Kagawad Sumisap- Basilan, NGO Director, CRS Partner
14	Dedette Suacito	Nagdilaab Foundation Inc.	NGO	Director

3 Sept – Davao City

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
15	Edsel Mijares	OPAPP	Government	Mindanao Coordinating and Oversight Office
16	Diosita Andot	ACT for Peace	UN/GRP	Director

4 Sept – Kabacan, North Cotabato

#	Key Person	Organization	Sector	Position
17	Fr. Ed Pedregosa	IRD Group Kabacan	Forum	(8 pax)
18	Bapa Mike Alon	IMAN-Development	CBO	(7 pax)

IRD – David Saure sr., Judith Garganilla, Anita Banaynal, Fr Ed Pedregosa, Murray Fernandel, Bernard
Ochavilla, Sonny Befotindos, plus one
IMAN - Zuhairah Hussain, Usman Maongho, Ahmad Tuwan, Shelma Wadi, Mike Alon, Florendo
Abubacar, Halim Adal.

5 Sept – Pikit, North Cotabato

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
19	Nusrat Jahan and Becky Adda-Dontoh	Nonviolent Peaceforce	Peacekeeping	Field workers (2 pax)
20	Manny Suleik	GiNaPaLaDTaKa– G7	CBO	Director (3 Pax)

G7 - Malik Adil, Alica Cuiomabodin, Ibrahim Gromonsay

6 Sept – Cotabato City

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
21	Mike Kulat	Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society	Civil Society	Peacebuilding Coordinator, SE Central Mindanao Coordinator
22	Edwin Antipuesto	CRS	NGO	Justice and Peace Cotabato Staff

7 Sept – Cotabato City

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
23	Fr. Jun Mercado	Institute of Autonomy and Governance	Track 2	Director

24	Emran G. Mohamad	Bangsamoro Development Agency	MILF/GRP	Training Director and Human Resources Development

8 Sept – North Cotabato

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
25	Hon. Jesus Sacdalan	North Cotabato Local Government	Govt.	– North Cotabato Regional Governor

8 Sept – Davao City

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
26	Atty. Mary Ann Arnado	Mindanao Peoples Caucus (MPC)	NGO	Director
27	Yvette G. Valderia and Leah Bugtay	MEDCo, ACT for Peace	Govt, Govt/UN	Senior economic development specialist, Communications Specalist (2 PAX)

9 Sept – Manila

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
28	Patricia (Gi) Domingo	AusAID	Donor	Portfolio Manager, Development Cooperation
29	Ky Johnson, Willy Torres III	The Asia Foundation	Donor, Project Holder/partner	Deputy Country Representative, Program Officer (2 pax)

10 Sept – Manila

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
30	Nabil Tan, Bong Montessa, Ryan Sullivan, Rolly Asuncion	OPAPP	Government	Undersecretary, Assistant Secretary for Peace Making and Peace Keeping, Staff (4 Pax)

11 Sept – Manila

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
31	Zosimo E. Lee	University of the Philippines – Diliman Campus	Academe	Dean of College of Social Sciences and Philosophy
32	Karen Tanada	Gaston Z. Ortigas (GZO) Peace Center	Advocacy	Director, Co-Convenor of the Mindanao Solidarity Network
33	General Pete Soria	Armed Forces of the Philippines	Army	HQ Support Group

12 Sept 2009– Manila

#	Person	Organization	Sector	Position
34	Chito Generoso		Business – Peace Advocate	Director (3 pax)
35	Margie Templo	Independent film maker	Media	Director

46 extra pax + 35 Interviews = 81

Map 2: Mindanao