

THE MINDANAO THINK TANK

**Strengthening the Peace Process by Facilitating
Dialogue with Stakeholders**

Monograph 3 of 4

A Project Supported by

“hd

Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue

Mediation for peace

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I. Introduction

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre), with funding from the European Commission in the Philippines' Instrument for Sustainability Project, established and supported the Mindanao Think Tank (MTT) from June 2009 to September 2010. This was an integral part of HD Centre's support to the GRP-MILF peace process.

The Mindanao Think Tank comprises the following individuals:

*1. Hon. Linda Ampatuan
Cotabato City Councilor*

*2. Hon. Anwar Malang
Cotabato City Councilor*

*3. Mrs. Tarhata Maglangit
Executive Director of the
Bangsamoro Women's Solidarity
Forum*

*4. Mr. Rodel Manara
Chairman of the Regional
Agriculture and Fisheries Council,
Former Mayor of Cotabato City*

*5. Prof. Reydan Lacson
Director of the Notre Dame
University Peace Center*

*6. Fr. Jonathan Domingo, OMI
Chief Executive Officer of the
Mindanao Cross weekly newspaper*

*7. Ustadz Esmael Ebrahim
Director of the Halal Certification
Board*

The Mindanao Think Tank was developed to respond to the need for greater consultations with stakeholders on the peace process. This need became most relevant in the aftermath of the failure in the signing on August 2008 of the previously-initialed Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD). This failure came as a result of a Temporary Restraining Order issued by the Philippine Supreme Court, a day prior to its scheduled formal signing. A month later, the Supreme Court declared the MOA-AD unconstitutional in process due in part to its lack of consultations with concerned stakeholders.

All of this led to renewed hostilities between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the MILF forces, and to the displacement of more than 650,000 people. Through the Mindanao Think Tank, the HD Centre endeavored to bring the stakeholders – the GRP, the MILF, civil society, Local Government Units, the ARMM, the Lumad leaders and their communities, the Christian leaders and their communities, the Muslim leaders and their communities, the internally displaced persons (IDPs), agrarian reform beneficiaries, MILF communities, women, youth, religious leaders, and media into a process that allows them to express their sentiments and desires relative to the peace process, how it is being pursued, and to the attainment of peace in Mindanao.

The Mindanao Think Tank began its initiatives with a survey of results and papers from various consultations, forums and research on the peace process in Mindanao. This was then augmented with a series of interviews with key informants who either supported the peace process, was critical of the way it was being handled, or had particular insights to share. A Mindanao Think Tank core group was established comprising of leaders and eminent persons who could engage in serious and proactive discussions on the different topics. This core group included ARMM and Local Government Unit officials, academicians, intellectuals and scholars, senior civil society leaders from groups working with the Moros and the communities, Lumad leaders, and members of the business, religious, media, women, farming, and youth sectors.

After initial MTT core group meetings to discuss the project and its early results, the Mindanao Think Tank then proceeded to conduct community consultations with the Muslim, Christian and Lumad grassroots. These community consultations later also entailed providing support to the

GRP and the MILF in their own consultations with Local Government and Lumad leaders, respectively. Having focused on these two important sectors, the Mindanao Think Tank decided that opportunities should also be given to other sectors, and so more sectoral consultations were undertaken with internally displaced persons (IDPs), agrarian reform beneficiaries, MILF communities, women, youth, religious leaders, and the media.

In February 2010, the Mindanao Think Tank conducted the first two of four workshops and roundtable discussions. The first focused on the GRP-MILF peace process from the Government perspective and featured no less than GRP peace panel member, Dr. Ronald Adamat, as resource speaker. This workshop and roundtable discussion also tackled the results of the GRP peace panel consultations with the various Local Government Units in the conflict areas in Mindanao. The resource speaker for this was Alberto Hamoy Kimpo, project officer of the HD Centre for the Mindanao Think Tank who attended all the GRP peace panel consultations.

The second workshop and roundtable discussion focused on the GRP-MILF peace process from the non-Government perspective and centered on the results of the Konsult Mindanao consultation initiative on the peace process conducted by the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC). This was presented by Dr. Norma Gomez of Notre Dame University who was a local partner of BUC in the conduct of these consultations. Also discussed was a paper by senior Muslim scholar, Professor Abhoud Syed Lingga, which tackles one of the possible causes for the breakdown of the peace process that he refers to as 'spoilers'. A final topic which was supposed to be discussed at the first workshop and roundtable discussion, but had to be postponed, was also covered. This was a comprehensive presentation of the Ceasefire Mechanisms of the GRP-MILF peace process by the Head of Secretariat of the GRP-CCCH (Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities), Philippine Army Major Carlos Sol Jr.

In June 2010, the third MTT workshop and roundtable discussion was conducted aimed at critiquing the various consultation initiatives undertaken by different NGOs and Government agencies/bodies. No less than seven consultations were honestly and thoroughly critiqued, namely: the Konsult Mindanao, Dialogue Mindanao, the GRP peace panel consultations with LGU leaders, the MILF consultations with IP community leaders, the congresses and assemblies of the Consultation of Bangsamoro Civil Society, the policy forums of the Institute for Autonomy and Governance, and the Mindanao Think Tank.

In August 2010, the fourth MTT workshop and roundtable discussion was tasked with coming up with an overall assessment of the Mindanao Think Tank.

8. Mr. Edtami Mansayagan
*Lumad Leader and Former
Commissioner of the National
Commission on Indigenous Peoples*

9. Ms. Hyriah Candao
*Leading member of the United Youth
for Peace and Development*

10. Prof. Moner Bajunaid
*Director of the MIND Center and
Commissioner of the National
Commission on Filipino Muslims*

11. Mr. Guiamel Alim
*Chairman of the Consortium of
Bangsamoro Civil Society and
Executive Director of Kadtuntaya
Foundation*

12. Prof. Abhoud Syed Lingga
*Director of the Institute of
Bangsamoro Studies*

13. Atty. Ishak Mastura
*Chairman of the ARMM-Board of
Investments*

14. Dir. Diamadel Dumagay
*Director of the Regional Planning
and Development Office-ARMM*

The overall objective of the Mindanao Think Tank was to mobilize stakeholders in Mindanao to contribute to the formation of a paradigm for peace and development as input to the on-going peace process and the eventual peace agreement.

The main end-users of the results of the work of the Mindanao Think Tank have been the Government and the MILF, specifically their peace panels. Other bodies of the two parties also benefitted from the Mindanao Think Tank such as the GRP's Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the MILF's Vice Chairman for Political Affairs. Both parties were briefed on the Mindanao Think Tank when it started, and the inputs during these briefings helped shape the Mindanao Think Tank to become more timely to the needs of the peace process. The results of the Mindanao Think Tank were regularly submitted to the parties through confidential updates and through inputs to the International Contact Group to which the HD Centre is a member. Finally, the parties' own consultation initiatives were directly supported by the Mindanao Think Tank both logistically and in substance through design, facilitation, and the provision of resource speakers.

Other end-users of the results of the Mindanao Think Tank were the stakeholders themselves, given that everyone consulted (through the members of the MTT core group, the community consultations, sectoral consultations, key informant interviews, and the workshops and roundtable discussions) were always given thorough updates on the developments of the peace process. For most of them, these updates filled their desire for information on the peace process, as understandably they – most especially the communities – are among those who suffer most when the process falls short of its goal of attaining peace, or worse when fighting erupts.

Finally, through this series of Mindanao Think Tank publications consisting of four monographs, HD Centre hopes that its readers will be better informed of the concepts and aspirations of the various stakeholders in the peace process in Mindanao. Furthermore, HD Centre and the Mindanao Think Tank hope these publications will lead the stakeholders to derive greater insight into the intricacies of this challenging peace process.

The overall objective of the Mindanao Think Tank was to mobilize stakeholders in Mindanao to contribute to the formation of a paradigm for peace and development as input to the on-going peace process and the eventual peace agreement.

Specifically, the Mindanao Think Tank aimed to:

1. Encourage greater communication and rapprochement among the key stakeholders in Mindanao.
2. Support the MTT workshops and roundtable discussions to become a venue for dialogue between the stakeholders, whereby political changes pursued by the Bangsamoro can be appreciated more by the stakeholders and conversely, the individual concerns of the stakeholders can also be taken into consideration by the Bangsamoro Groups.
3. Document the recommendations on how issues of concern to the stakeholders, especially in the grassroots, may be addressed with the Bangsamoro Groups, through the GRP-MILF peace process and any new juridical entity resulting from the peace process.
4. Document recommendations from the Mindanao Think Tank that shall be submitted as confidential reports to the parties and their peace panels, the Malaysian facilitator, other key stakeholders, and key members of the diplomatic community.

Reading this Report

This report consists of seven parts, including this one, “Part I Introduction”. It is then followed by Part II Activities of the Mindanao Think Tank”, which introduces the initiative in detail and explains its processes.

“Part III Results of the Review of Related Literature” follows next. After which is “Part IV Results of the Community and Sectoral Consultations, and Key Informant Interviews”.

“Part V Results of the MTT Core Group Meetings” comes next, followed by “Part VI Results of MTT Workshops and Roundtable Discussions”. And finally, “Part VII Recommendations and Conclusion”.

The four monographs of this Mindanao Think Tank publication series:

Monograph Number 1

“The Mindanao Think Tank - Recommendations of Prominent Observers of the Peace Process to the New Philippine President”

Monograph Number 2

“The Mindanao Think Tank - Review of the Mindanao Peace Process Consultations”

Monograph Number 3

“The Mindanao Think Tank - Strengthening the Peace Process by Facilitating Dialogue with Stakeholders”

Monograph Number 4

“The Mindanao Think Tank - Perspectives, Issues, and Concerns of the Mindanao Peace Process”

II. Activities of the Mindanao Think Tank

A. Survey of Related Literature

At the start of the project, activities were focused on the survey of related-literature, and preparation of guides for the community/sectoral consultations and key informant interviews.

The survey covered the following sources:

1. The Bangsamoro Future: Prospects and Challenges, Dr. Astrid S. Tuminez. *Autonomy and Peace Review*: Vol. 3, Issue No. 3 (July to September 2007)
2. Identity, Self-Empowerment, Ancestral Domain, Dr. Grace Jimeno-Rebollos. *Autonomy and Peace Review*: Vol. 2, Issue 1 (January to March 2006)
3. A Time for Reckoning for the Bangsamoro People, Atty. Michael O. Mastura. *Autonomy and Peace Review*: Vol.2, Issue 2 (April to June 2006)
4. Finding New Paths to Peace: Ancestral Domain and Moro Self-Determination, Professor Rudy B. Rodil. *Autonomy and Peace Review*: Vol. 3, Issue 3(July to September 2007)
5. Constitutional Challenges of Philippine Peace Negotiation, Atty. Soliman M. Santos, Jr. *Autonomy and Peace Review*: Vol. 5, Issue 2 (April to June 2009)
6. The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the Peace Process: Imperatives, Challenges and Prospects, Professor Rufa Cagoco-Guiam. *Autonomy and Peace Review*. Vol. 2, Issue 1 (January to March 2006)
7. Charter Change and the Mindanao Peace Process Challenges and Prospect, Atty. Zainudin Malang. *Autonomy and Peace Review*. Vol. 2, Issue 1 (January to March 2006)
8. Peace Advocates Raise Concerns Over Ancestral Domain Draft Accord With MILF, Isagani De Castro, Jr. *Autonomy and Peace Review*. Vol.4, Issue 3, (July to September 2008)
9. Ancestral Domain Perspectives in Dialogue: Contrasting Concepts of Ancestral Domain, Jowel Canuday. *Autonomy and Peace Review*. Vol.4, Issue 2, (April to June 2008)
10. Land Tenure Stories in Central Mindanao, Kadtuntaya Foundation. Local Government Support Program for ARMM. 2009.
11. ARMM Fiscal Decentralization and Bangsamoro Economic Development, Atty. Ishak Mastura. *Autonomy and Peace Review*. Vol.4, Issue 2, (April to June 2008)
12. Promoting Human Security in Western Mindanao, Norgianna Suleik. *Autonomy and Peace Review*. Vol.4, Issue 4, (October to December 2008)
13. An Appraisal of the Municipalities in ARMM Directly Affected by the Armed Conflict Between the AFP and the BIAF, Notre Dame University Center for Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation, 2002
14. Role of Third Parties in Mindanao Peace Process, Professor Abhoud Syed M. Lingga *Autonomy and Peace Review*. Vol.2, Issue 2, (April to June 2006)
15. An Alternative Formula to the Armed Conflict in Mindanao, Colonel Restituto L. Aguilar, PA. *Autonomy and Peace Review*. Vol.3, Issue 3, (July to September 2007)

B. Key Informant Interviews

Twelve interviews of key personalities were then conducted with people who had important experiences to share and whose opinions and voices matter to the peace process in Mindanao. These included the following:

1. Bishop Orlando Quevedo, Archbishop of Cotabato, from the Religious Sector, interviewed on 26 August 2009
2. Ustadz Omar Pasigan, Grand Mufti of the Darul Ifta of Mindanao, from the Religious Sector, interviewed on 20 August 2009
3. Fr. Eliseo Mercado Jr. OMI, Executive Director of the Institute of Autonomy and Governance, from Civil Society, interviewed in July 2009
4. Hon. Celso Lobregat, Mayor of Zamboanga City, from Government, interviewed on 20 August 2009
5. Mr. Carlos Bautista, Technical Assistant of North Cotabato Vice-Governor Manny Pinol, from Government, interviewed on 13 August 2009
6. Mr. Romy Saliga, Executive Director of the Lumad Development Center from Civil Society, interviewed on 13 August 2009
7. Prof. Abhoud Syed Lingga, Executive Director of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies, from Civil Society, interviewed on 12 August 2009
8. Mr. Boyie Martinez, a plantation owner, from the Business Community, interviewed on 15 July 2009
9. Mr. Ernesto Mao, Barangay Human Rights Action Officer of Kusiong, Datu Odin Sinsuat, from the Grassroots Community, interviewed on 15 July 2009
10. Mr. Ramon Pesante, Barangay Chairman of Rosary Heights 9, Cotabato City, from the Grassroots Community, interviewed in September 2009
11. Dr. Ofelia Durante, Consultant of the Ateneo de Davao University and the Konsult Mindanao, from the Academe, interviewed on 13 August 2009
12. Prof. Reydan Lacson, Director of the Notre Dame University Peace Center from the Academe, interviewed in September 2009

The key informants provided directions for the project. Some of those in the original list agreed to attend the initial meeting of the Mindanao Think Tank and became active members of the MTT.

There were also some key informants who provided inputs to the work of the Mindanao Think Tank, although formal interviews could not be conducted with them. These included the following:

13. Ms. Miriam Suacito, Executive Director of Nagdilaab Foundation in Basilan, from Civil Society, interviewed in April 2010
14. Lt. Gen. Raymundo Ferrer AFP, Commander of the Eastern Mindanao Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, from the military, interviewed in March 2010
15. Dr. Ronald Adamat, GRP peace panel member, from the Government, interviewed in January 2010
16. Mr. Francis Yu, Cotabato City-based businessman, from the Business Community, interviewed in February 2010

Finally, there were key informants who were interviewed as prominent observers to the peace process, and their recommendations to the new Philippine President were included. Some of them were already previously interviewed, but were again sought for their valuable input on this specific topic. These interviews took place from April to May 2010. The results of these interviews are contained in Monograph 1 of this Publication Series. The prominent observers interviewed were:

17. Fr. Eliseo Mercado Jr. OMI
18. Dr. Ofelia Durante
19. Prof. Rudy Rodil, professor of the Mindanao State University and former member of the GRP peace panel, from the Academe
20. Prof. Abhoud Syed Lingga
21. Dr. Danda Juanday, member of the board of the Bangsamoro Development Council and the executive director of the Bangsamoro Development Agency, from the Civil Society
22. Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar, Vice Chairman for Political Affairs of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, from the MILF
23. Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia AFP (ret), former chairman of the GRP peace panel, from Government
24. Mayor Celso Lobregat

C. Community Consultations

Consultations of grassroots communities were conducted during the months of July 2009 to April 2010. There were 18 community consultations conducted in total: 5 in Christian communities, 7 in Lumad communities, and 6 in Bangsamoro communities. These included:

Christian Communities

1. Barangay Darugao, Upi, Maguindanao; conducted 14 July 2009 with 11 participants (5-male, 6-female)
2. Brgy. Poblacion, Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte; conducted 25 August 2009 with approximately 30 participants (citing security reasons following the post-MOA-AD rampage of their Barangays, the community refused to sign an attendance sheet)
3. Brgy. Bagolibas, Aleosan, North Cotabato; conducted 28 August 2009 with 9 participants (6-male, 3-female)
4. Brgy. Balogo, Pigcawayan, North Cotabato; conducted 1 December 2009 with 13 participants (8-male, 5-Female)
5. Brgy. Rosary Heights 9, Cotabato City; conducted 3 December 2009 with 20 participants (6-male, 14-female)

Lumad Communities

6. Brgy. Borongotan, Upi, Maguindanao (Teduray Tribe); conducted 14 July 2009 with 16 participants (6-male, 10-female)
7. Brgy. Badak, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao (Teduray Tribe); conducted 15 July 2009 with 16 participants (6-male, 10-female)
8. Brgy. Aroman, Carmen, North Cotabato (Aromanun-Manobo Tribe); conducted 17 July 2009 with 15 participants (7-male, 8-female)
9. Brgy. Balisawan, Aleosan, North Cotabato (Aromanun-Manobo Tribe); conducted 23 September 2009 with 72 participants (23-male, 49-female)
10. Brgy. Tagoranao, Matalam, North Cotabato (Aromanun-Manobo Tribe); conducted 13 September 2009 with 12 participants (8-male, 4-female)

11. Brgy. Tenorio, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao (Teduray Tribe); conducted 9 March 2010 with 20 participants (15-male, 5-female)
12. Barangay Liliongan, Carmen, North Cotabato (Aromanun-Manobo Tribe) conducted on 24 March 2010 with 60 participants (24-male, 36-female)

Bangsamoro Communities

13. Brgy. Rapasun, Marawi City, Lanao del Sur; conducted 23 July 2009 with 12 participants (6-male, 6-female)
14. Brgy. East Poblacion, Baloi, Lanao del Norte; conducted 23 July 2009 with 11 participants (7-male, 4-female)
15. Brgy. Lilod Madaya, Marawi City, Lanao del Sur; conducted 24 July 2009 with 15 participants (8-male, 7-female)
16. Brgy. Rosary Heights 6, Cotabato City; conducted 23 August with 12 participants (5-male, 7-female)
17. Brgy. Biniruan, Cotabato City; conducted 19 October 2009 with 17 participants (10-male, 7-female)
18. Barangay Boheiwias, Lamitan, Basilan conducted on 7 April 2010 with 30 participants (27-male, 3-female)

To organize and conduct the community consultations, facilitators were added to the MTT team spearheading these consultations. These were Edtami Mansayagan for the Lumads, Hyriah Candao and Harun Al-Rasheed Baraguir for the Bangsamoro, and Cheryl Peditamanan for the Christians. HD Centre's Alberto Hamoy Kimpo conducted the consultations in Lanao del Norte and Basilan. The facilitators were trained on the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide developed for these community consultations, and on a situationer that served as the basis of discussion.



D. Sectoral Consultations

As the work progressed, the Mindanao Think Tank saw the need to address key issues and concerns faced by certain sectors directly and indirectly affected by the conflict and the peace process. For this purpose, a series of 12 focus group discussions were lined up with major sectors from December 2009 to July 2010, as follows:

1. Local Government Unit (LGU) Chief Executives and representatives from Region 9 and the ARMM Island Provinces (Sulu, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi), conducted in Zamboanga City on 15-16 December 2009 with approximately 40 participants
2. LGU Chief Executives and representatives from Region 9, conducted in Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte on 7-8 January 2010 with approximately 60 participants
3. LGU Chief Executives and representatives the ARMM Island Provinces, conducted in Zamboanga City on 11-12 January 2010 with approximately 20 participants
4. LGU Chief Executives and representatives from Region 12 and the ARMM Mainland Provinces (Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur), conducted in General Santos City on 3-4 February 2010 with approximately 40 participants
5. Indigenous People's community leaders from all over Mindanao in Crossing Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, conducted in Crossing Simuay on 28 February 2010 with over 100 IP leaders and representatives from all over Mindanao
6. An MILF-aligned Bangsamoro community in Barangay Gang, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao conducted on 10 February 2009 with 15 participants (11-male, 4-female)
7. Internally Displaced Persons hosted in an evacuation center in Datu Anggal Midtimbang, Maguindanao conducted on 25 March 2010 with 40 participants (29-male, 11-female)
8. Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries in Barangay Baluno, Isabela City, Basilan conducted on 8 April 2010 with 25 participants (5-male, 20-female)
9. Youth leaders from Notre Dame University, Cotabato City conducted on 22 May 2010 with 10 participants (5-male, 5-female)
10. Women leaders from the Bangsamoro Women's Solidarity Forum conducted on 3 June 2010 in Cotabato City with 14 participants (all female)
11. Catholic religious leaders from the Archdiocese of Cotabato conducted on 16 June 2010 in Cotabato City with 10 participants (6-male Priests, 4-female Nuns)
12. Media practitioners in Central Mindanao conducted on 2 July 2010 in Cotabato City with 12 participants (7-male, 5-female)

Photo taken during a sectoral consultation with women in June 2010 in Cotabato City.



(Opposite page) Photo taken during a Lumad community consultation in March 2010 in Barangay Liliongan, Carmen, North Cotabato. Conducting the consultation is Prof. Eva Tan.

It is important to note that in line with the needs of the two parties, the Mindanao Think Tank responded to the request of the GRP peace panel to provide resource persons, facilitators, and documentors to their series of consultations with LGU Chief Executives (numbers 1 to 4 on the list, previous page).

Members of the MTT core group and the HD Centre agreed to be resource persons during the consultations. These were Guiamel Alim, Esmael Ebrahim, Edtami Mansayagan, Reydan Lacson, Professor Eva Tan and Alberto Hamoy Kimpo. These were conducted in partnership with the Western Mindanao State University Center for Peace and Development of Zamboanga City, and the Notre Dame University Peace Center of Cotabato City, who provided the facilitation and documentation with the support of the MTT.

The MTT also responded to the request of the MILF to assist in their Consultation with Indigenous Peoples' community leaders. HD Centre's David Gorman, and the MTT core group's Moner Bajunaid, Guiamel Alim, and Professor Eva Tan were the speakers and facilitators in this consultation, which was chaired by Vice Chairman Ghadzali Jaafar of the MILF.

E. Mindanao Think Tank Core Group Meetings

The first MTT core group meeting was organizational in nature and was undertaken for the members to define their roles and functions in relation to the peace process in Mindanao. This was held on 25 August 2009. The consensus was for the body to address, in general, issues of peace in Mindanao.

A second MTT core group meeting was called on 7 October 2009 wherein the group discussed the proposed Joint Advocacy Initiative which was recommended during the first meeting. During this second meeting, a representative from the ARMM and a newspaper correspondent were invited. The JAI document was finalized and was sent to both panels for action. A copy of the JAI document can be found on page 40 of this publication.

The third meeting on 15 January 2010 of the MTT touched on the talking points of the GRP-MILF talks. The group decided to use an alternative conceptual framework for discussions, to depart from the usual consultations

conducted by other groups. A copy of the framework can be found on page 41 of this publication.

In addition to the above MTT core group meetings, the Mindanao Think Tank also co-organized a roundtable discussion in Manila with Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research (PIPVTR) and the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies (IBS). It likewise held meetings in Cotabato with eminent persons whose visits to the Philippines and to Cotabato were organized by HD Centre. These included Mojanku Gumbi, former advisor to South African President, Thabo Mbeki; Gerry Kelly, formerly of the Irish Republican Army; Omar Dajani of the Palestinian Liberation Organization; and former Sudanese Ambassador and United Nations Envoy to Burundi, Nureldin Satti.



Photo taken during the GRP peace panel consultations with LGU chief executives from Central Mindanao and the ARMM mainland provinces, held in February 2010, in General Santos City. Shown seated fourth from left at the presidential table is then GRP Panel Chairman, Ambassador Rafael Seguis. At the rightmost, standing, is Prof. Reydan Lacson, a member of the Mindanao Think Tank, who was the lead facilitator for this sectoral consultation. Others in the photo are the LGU chief executives/representatives.

F. Mindanao Think Tank Workshops and Roundtable Discussions

In addition to the MTT core group, the MTT workshops and roundtable discussions (MTT Wshops/Rtds) were participated-in by invited members from Government, Civil Society, MILF affiliated personalities, and other stakeholders in the peace process in Mindanao. During these MTT Wshops/Rtds, the updated results of all the previous MTT activities were discussed, in addition to updates on the peace process. Timely and key topics were identified for discussion during each MTT Wshop/Rtd, and to lead discussions, the Mindanao Think Tank invited key individuals to act as resource persons.

The first MTT workshop and roundtable discussion was held on 20 February 2010 at Notre Dame University with over forty participants coming from the MTT core group, Notre Dame University academic community, student leaders, partner organizations such as the Bangsamoro Development Agency, Bantay Ceasefire, and Nonviolent Peaceforce. This MTT Wshop/Rtd was entitled: Updates on the GRP-MILF Peace Process from the Perspective of the Government. A member of the GRP panel – Dr. Ronald Adamat – was the main resource person. He spoke at length about the positions of the GRP peace panel at the formal negotiations. This Wshop/Rtd also tackled the results of the GRP peace panel consultations with the various LGUs in the conflict areas in Mindanao.

The second MTT workshop and roundtable discussion was held on 26 February 2010 at Sardonyx Restaurant in Cotabato City. In addition to the MTT members, there were 32 participants coming from the youth and various NGOs. This MTT Wshop/Rtd was entitled: The GRP-MILF Peace Process from the Perspective of Non-Government Organizations. It centered on the results of the Konsult Mindanao consultations conducted by the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC). This was presented by Dr. Norma Gomez of Notre Dame University who was a local partner of BUC in the conduct of these consultations.

Also discussed was a paper by senior Muslim scholar, Professor Abhoud Syed Lingga, which tackles one of the possible causes for the breakdown of the peace process that he refers to as 'spoilers'.

A final topic which was supposed to be discussed at the first MTT wshop/Rtd, but had to be postponed, was also covered. This was a comprehensive presentation of the Ceasefire Mechanisms of the GRP-MILF peace process by the Head of Secretariat of the GRP-CCCH (Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities), Philippine Army Major Carlos Sol Jr.

The third MTT workshop and roundtable discussion was held on 28 June 2010 entitled: RTD of Peace Consultations. This was a critiquing of the various consultation initiatives undertaken by different NGOs and Government offices. No less than seven consultations were honestly and thoroughly critiqued. These included Konsult Mindanao and Dialogue Mindanao, for which the resource person was Dr. Norma Gomez of Notre Dame University; the GRP peace panel consultations with LGU leaders for which Alberto Hamoy Kimpo of HD Centre was the resource person; the MILF consultations with IP community leaders for which Prof. Eva Tan was the resource person; the congresses and assemblies of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society for which its Chairman, Mr. Guiamel Alim spoke at length; the policy forums of the Institute for Autonomy and Governance which was discussed to a certain degree by those who knew about one particular controversial policy forum that is said to have preempted the MOA-AD; and the Mindanao Think Tank which was discussed at length since most of the participants were MTT core group members.

Finally, the fourth MTT workshop and roundtable discussion was held on 17 August 2010. The MTT core group members and other stakeholders were invited to make an assessment of the Mindanao Think Tank.



Photo taken during the Mindanao Think Tank workshop and roundtable discussion number 1, held on 20 February 2010 at NDU, Cotabato City. Photo shows MTT core group member Ustadz Esmail Ebrahim delivering an overview of the peace process.

III. Results of the Survey of Related Literature

The basic reference material most useful for the Mindanao Think Tank was the aborted Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001 (MOA-AD) which was supposed to be signed in August 5, 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It contains terms of reference (previous agreements), concepts and principles, and the provisions on territory, resources, and governance. It also provides the territorial core of the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE), the areas where a plebiscite would be conducted within 12 months following the signing of the MOA-AD (Category A) to determine the composition of the expended BJE, and the conflict affected areas outside the BJE core and Category A (Category B) which shall be the subject of special socio-economic and cultural affirmative action for the next 25 years.

In view of the needs of the MTT to get additional ideas for the community consultation on the peace process, the framework for the survey of literature included the focus areas, or talking points, in the peace dialogue, namely: a) Bangsamoro Identity; b) Governance; c) Land Rights and Territory; d) Resource Sharing; e) Restitution; f) Shared Security; and g) Cross Cutting themes and Implementation.

A. Bangsamoro Identity:

- The Bangsamoro Future: Prospects and Challenges
Dr. Astrid S. Tuminez. Autonomy and Peace Review: Vol #3, Issue No. 3 (July to September 2007)

The article summarizes a series of forums with Young Muslim Leaders (YMLs). At these forums, the process of defining the Moro identity was more of a process than a conclusive outcome and the YMLs did not come up with a comprehensive definition. Although Islam was seen as a unifying factor, the existence of different tribes and dialects worked against the claim of a unified Moro nation, or *Bangsamoro*. However, the historical experience of oppression and struggle against outside rulers strengthened the objective of self-determination and independence.

- Identity, Self-Empowerment, Ancestral Domain
Dr. Grace Jimeno-Rebollos. Autonomy and Peace Review: Vol. 2, Issue 1 (January to March 2006)

Dr. Rebollos writes about Bangsamoro identity on the basis of positions taken by prominent individuals during a forum conducted by the Mindanao Study Group. Mindanao scholar and historian, Prof. Rudy Rodil, attributed Bangsamoro identity to two elements: the ethnic element, and the element of the political struggle. ARMM Deputy Governor for IPs, Fatima Kanakan, On the question of “*Are the Bangsamoro considered Indigenous People (IPs) and vice versa?*”, cited key officials who had made public pronouncements considering the Bangsamoro as IPs. A lawyer aligned with the Moro National Liberation Front, Jose Lorena, added that in the MNLF Manual of Political Cadres, the Moro includes IPs, stating that there were even IP representatives in the MNLF council. However, the Expanded ARMM Law (R.A.9054) separately cites the Bangsamoro people and the tribal (indigenous) people. Santos Unsad, an IP leader from the Teduray tribe, stated that they have declared their affiliation with the Bangsamoro State, but wish to assert their own identity, ancestral domain, and system of governance as Teduray.

- A Time for Reckoning for the Bangsamoro People
Atty. Michael O. Mastura. Autonomy and Peace Review: Vol.2, Issue 2 (April to June 2006)

Atty. Mastura lays down in this article salient points in the struggle of the Bangsamoro people for self-determination. According to him, “the struggle emanates from their identity claims and collective interests. The Bangsamoro ‘vertical’ variant includes ethnies stranded between tradition and modernity who seek to resolve their own identity crises by reasserting the history and culture of their community.”

- Finding New Paths to Peace: Ancestral Domain and Moro Self-Determination
Professor Rudy B. Rodil. Autonomy and Peace Review: Vol. 3, Issue 3 (July to September 2007)

In this article, Prof. Rodil expounds on the historical events (mainly the ‘assimilationist’ and ‘integrationist’ policy of the Philippine Government) that led to the marginalization of “non-Christian” tribes in Mindanao. The large scale movement of the population starting in 1913 was made possible through a series of resettlement programs which

attracted settlers, resulting in the rapid marginalization and displacement of the indigenous populations mainly the various Moro and Lumad (IP) tribes in their own lands. This became a major cause of the Moro rebellion. “The effect of the policy is to salvage what is left of their territories and dignity, and their right to self determination”.

B. Governance and Power Sharing:

- Constitutional Challenges of Philippine Peace Negotiation
Atty. Soliman M. Santos, Jr. Autonomy and Peace Review: Vol. 5, Issue 2 (April to June 2009)

Atty. Santos talks about the first Philippine jurisprudence on peace negotiations with rebel groups – the Supreme Court decision that the initialed but unsigned final draft of the MOA-AD is contrary to law and the Constitution due to the concept of associative relationship and the expansion of territory. According to him, a closer look shows that the SC declaration actually hinges on two procedural matters, and not really on the contents *per se* of the MOA-AD. The first one has to do with the constitutional right of the people to information, the constitutional state policy of full public disclosure, and constitutional and statutory provisions on public consultations, all of which the SC found the concerned GRP Peace Panel to have violated. The other has to do with constitutional processes and constituent powers for amendments or revisions of the constitution which the SC found the concerned GRP Peace Panel to have ‘usurped’ by ‘guaranteeing’ to the MILF that constitutional changes will be made to conform to the MOA-AD. One implication of this case is that if the GRP-MILF peace negotiations are to arrive at a higher level or degree of Moro self-determination than that provided by the Constitution’s existing provisions on autonomous regions, then these negotiations should be reframed to partake of the nature of constitutional negotiations.

- The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the Peace Process: Imperatives, Challenges and Prospects
Professor Rufa Cagoco-Guiam. Autonomy and Peace Review. Vol. 2, Issue 1 (January to March 2006)

Prof. Guiam writes about the creation of the ARMM, from the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 to the passage of the Organic Act for Muslim Mindanao or RA 6734 in 1996. In a forum of the Mindanao Study Group, it was brought out that the Moro National Liberation Front rejected RA 6734 because “they were totally excluded from the process of formulating the autonomy law. To make matters worse, the ARMM had negligible powers – there were more restrictions rather than actual powers devolved to it”.

It was also mentioned that the ARMM was hostage to the power-brokers in Manila. The current peace process between the MILF and the GRP is viewed as the second window of opportunity for ARMM’s ‘deliverance’. Prof. Guiam believes that the peace process should create a stronger structure of autonomy and bring greater honesty and competence to the regional government. She quotes Dr. Jose Abueva who defined good governance as, “the sustained capacity of the government and related political institutions to make and carry out timely policies and decisions that effectively respond to our problems, challenges and goals as a nation.” Prof. Guiam believes the MILF does have a governance structure and even a justice system. However, when the group talks about the corruption of the “moral fiber” as one of the problems besetting the Bangsamoro people, its meaning is not quite made clear.

- Charter Change and the Mindanao Peace Process Challenges and Prospect
Atty. Zainudin Malang. Autonomy and Peace Review. Vol. 2, Issue 1 (January to March 2006)

Atty. Malang writes about the discussion on Charter Change and its Impact on the Mindanao peace process as discussed by the Mindanao Study Group. Here, Dr. Tuminez and Prof. Lingga “opined that moves towards federalism might pre-empt the Bangsamoro exercise of the right to self-determination. Prof. Lingga insisted that instead of rushing Cha-Cha (Constitutional ‘charter change’), we should follow the Bougainville formula of waiting for the peace pact first and then incorporating it in the charter change later.”

Atty. Malang also cites the comment of Atty. Soliman Santos about the need to redefine or restructure relations between the Republic and the Bangsamoro. Atty. Santos suggested that the Cha-Cha be used as a forum to confront the majority with the concept of ‘two-nations, one country’. Atty. Malang added that constitutions suffered from a democratic deficit because of the failure to adopt this concept. The one-nation country concept made the minority subservient to the political decisions of the majority. However, Dr. Tuminez thought that its a losing strategy to fight for a constitutional provision denoting the Bangsamoro as a nation distinct and separate from other Filipinos. It will likely whip up further prejudice and anger among the majority and hurt Moro chances of advancing their interests.

C. Land Rights and Territories:

- Peace Advocates Raise Concerns Over Ancestral Domain Draft Accord With MILF
Isagani De Castro, Jr. Autonomy and Peace Review. Vol.4, Issue 3, (July to September 2008)

Mr. de Castro writes about concerns raised by participants in a forum organized by the Institute of Autonomy and Governance, mainly well-known peace advocates, on the MOA-AD issue. He cited the protest of North Cotabato Vice Governor Manny Pinol who decried the fact that local officials like himself were not even consulted on what barangays will be included in the plebiscite that will determine the new Moro homeland. VGov. Pinol denied he was anti-Muslim and had called for armed struggle. One way to address the roots of the conflict, he said, is to define which of the Moro lands were acquired through forced dispossession. "We should come up with a mechanism there. Once these forcibly-acquired lands are defined, these should be rightfully returned to the Moros."

- Ancestral Domain Perspectives in Dialogue: Constrasting Concepts of Ancestral Domain
Jowel Canuday, Autonomy and Peace Review Vol.4, Issue 2, (April to June 2008)

This article puts into writing the results of the discussion on Comparative Systems and Contexts convened on March 3, 2008 in Davao City. The discussion centered on the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), a law recognizing and protecting IP rights as well as delineating their ancestral domain. Gregorio Andolana, one of the major framers of the IPRA, asserted that beyond gaining control over lands and resources, ancestral domain encompasses IP's rights not only to secure land but most importantly the exercise of indigenous means of political governance to determine their status and renew their traditions and cultural practices. The identification and delineation of ancestral land, however, is vital as it serves as the 'anchor' in which IPs exercise their rights to self-governance and the development of cultural practices. The IPRA is not limited to non-Islamized indigenous groups. IPRA applies to Moro communities provided that they represent themselves not in accordance with religion, but as ethno-linguistic groups. The MILF however, rejected IPRA on the premise that it fails to articulate the question of Bangsamoro sovereignty. According to Prof. Abhoud Lingga, sovereignty is a fundamental consideration in the Bangsamoro conceptualization of ancestral domain. For Lingga, "A Bangsamoro ancestral domain is inextricably linked to the notion that the Bangsamoro is a distinct nationality that had historically established its sovereignty in areas that have been 'annexed' by the Philippine

Government in the process of gaining independence from the United States in 1946. Claiming historical antecedents of a centralized Bangsamoro governance structure, ancestral domain can be meaningfully appreciated as a territory where the Bangsamoro 'nation' had already exercised state authority."

- Land Tenure Stories in Central Mindanao
Kadtuntaya Foundation. Local Government Support Program for ARMM, 2009.

This is a collaborative study of five land tenure disputes in the provinces of North Cotabato, Maguindanao, and Sultan Kudarat which is multi-faceted and has generated its own share of bloodshed. Among the conclusions of the study as related to the GRP-MILF talks is that: "There is a need to design and implement land redistribution and reparation policies and programs in Mindanao. To resolve conflicts, initiatives to reconstruct social identities and to search for common grounds should be twinned with concrete land redistribution and reparation policies and support programs. The delineation of ancestral domain of Moros is a way of recognizing and respecting the Moros centuries old struggle for self-determination, and as a way of redressing the injustices committed against them by government resettlement programs and discriminating laws and policies. Land rights of Christian settlers in the ancestral domain of the Moros should be clarified and respected."

D. Resource Sharing:

- ARMM Fiscal Decentralization and Bangsamoro Economic Development
Atty. Ishak Mastura Autonomy and Peace Review. Vol.4, Issue 2, (April to June 2008)

Atty. Mastura in this article presents the pitfalls of ARMM Fiscal Decentralization. He cites the findings of an ARMM Policy Paper sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in 2006 which summarized its findings into 1) weak ARMM Revenue Mobilization; 2) Fiscal dependence on national government; 3) Personnel/overhead burden; 4) Limited program administration capability; and 5) Dispersed resource control and accountability. Atty. Mastura ventured to give the reason for these findings, one of which is that while the LGUs have fiscal autonomy, the ARMM appears to have less control over its allocated funds. Such constraint on the participation of the autonomous region in fiscal resource programming denies the region the power to exercise its basic powers in terms of determining how resources made available to it should be allocated and spent. Atty. Mastura points out that while LGUs are given block grants in the form of Internal Revenue Allotments (IRA), the ARMM budget is generally treated in the same manner as that of national agencies, which is part of the General Appropriations Act.

E. Restitution:

- Promoting Human Security in Western Mindanao
Norgianna Suleik. Autonomy and Peace Review. Vol.4, Issue 4, (October to December 2008)

Ms. Suleik talks about the countless lives and destruction of property as a result of the conflict between Government forces and the Moro rebel groups. After giving a history of the various conflicts, she posits a move beyond national security to a human security policy framework, which she said is an option for the government and CSOs. The human security approach she recommends empowers the people to streamline the interest of the state for progressive, enlightened, committed, and stable societies. The UNDP Human Development Report defined security as “safety from such chronic threats such as hunger, diseases, and repression and protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life”. In conclusion, Ms. Suleik says that the Human Security paradigm provides an alternative to a national security based approach to deal with the peace process to achieve not only lasting peace with justice, but also ensure sustainable development. It is also highly imperative to have an institutional approach to incorporate human security in all levels of policy and decision making.

- An Appraisal of the Municipalities in ARMM Directly Affected by Armed Conflict Between the AFP and BIAF
Notre Dame University Center for Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation, 2002

The research study talks about the situation of people in the Conflict Affected communities in the ARMM as a result of the Government’s military campaign against the MILF during the all out war policy of the Estrada administration in 2000. This is said to have affected 489 barangays in 86 municipalities. Makeshift evacuation centers ran out of basic needs like food, drinking water, medical supplies, and toilet facilities. According the to study, “evacuees suffered from mental stress and many, especially children, had to undergo psychosocial and physical interventions. Fear prevailed in the evacuation centers and even the health workers attending to the needs of the evacuees had to undergo stress debriefing because of over fatigue”.

- Role of Third Parties in Mindanao Peace Process
Professor Abhoud Syed M. Lingga Autonomy and Peace Review. Vol.2, Issue 2, (April to June 2006)

According to Prof. Lingga, “Involvement of third party, as experienced in Mindanao peace process demonstrates, is valuable to bring together conflicting parties to talk peace. When negotiations are at a stalemate, third party intervention is useful to break the deadlock. The role of the third party does not end at the signing of the settlement. It is important to see to it that every provision is implemented not just for compliance but with the spirit of addressing the causes of the problem in order to avoid a relapse into conflict and to build and consolidate sustainable peace. Equally important is a road map of implementation and benchmarks to guide parties to the agreement, third party interveners, and funding institutions in the implementation phase.”

F. Shared Security:

- An Alternative Formula to the Armed Conflict in Mindanao
Colonel Restituto L. Aguilar, PA. Autonomy and Peace Review. Vol.3, Issue 3, (July to September 2007)

Col. Aguilar starts with a historical account of armed conflicts and makes the observation that the years of violence and bloodshed brought forth the realization that “resolving conflicts do not necessarily require the force of arms as the catalyst”. He mentions the continuing advocacy for the culture of peace which has altered the doctrine of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. In this novel concept, the military is brought to the forefront of nation-building and confronts not only armed enemies and terrorists, but serves as one of Government’s weapons in poverty alleviation.

IV. Results of the Community and Sectoral Consultations, and Key Informant Interviews

Of all the activities of the Mindanao Think Tank, the community and sectoral consultations, and key informant interviews were the most extensive and geographically far reaching. The community consultations covered no less than the three ARMM provinces with confirmed MILF presence, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, and Basilan, and the two most conflict affected provinces outside of the ARMM, North Cotabato, and Lanao del Norte, and the main city of Central Mindanao, Cotabato City. The sectoral consultations were also done in these provinces and city, while the key informant interviews, were conducted mostly in Cotabato City, Zamboanga City, and Manila.

The following pages contain the results of these consultations and interviews, which are categorized according to the following talking points:

- A. General Perceptions of Peace and the Peace Process
- B. Bangsamoro Identity
- C. Forms of governance and power sharing
- D. Framework for economic development
- E. Control of resources
- F. Basic concept of territory and land rights
- G. Historical and Restorative Justice
- H. Security and Civilian Protection

All consultations and interviews began with updates on the peace process provided by the facilitator. These updates were based on information provided by the HD Centre, based on its involvement in the formal talks through the International Contact Group, its meetings with the various actors in the peace process, and its monitoring of developments.

After the updates, discussions proceeded to the talking points.

A. General Perceptions of Peace & the Peace Process

The participants of the community consultations and sectoral consultations were first asked to talk about their perceptions of peace, and the peace negotiations between the GRP and the MILF. These perceptions varied depending on location, ethnicity, and the community's previous experiences.

The LUMADS in ARMM

As mentioned, the community consultations were done among Christians, Bangsamoro and IPs, or Lumads as they are generally referred to in Mindanao. The Lumads in Maguindanao, who are mostly Tedurays, are not well aware of the GRP-MILF peace process. This is seen as a result of their already being in the ARMM, after the province elected to join the autonomous region. They have heard of the MILF because they occasionally pass by their communities. When these armed groups ask for food, they immediately provide what is needed to "maintain peace in the community". **Their idea of peace is for them to be left alone with their usual activities and not take any position – for or against any rebel group.** They have heard of a Teduray who was recruited to the MILF, but when he left the organization, he was killed. This has led many of them to shun joining rebel organizations, even if the monetary consideration is said to be attractive for poor people like them.

In the second community, where the Lumads have a CSO group, many of them have attended summits on the on-going peace process. But the Tedurays were not well represented. According to a participant in the consultation, they were even told not to speak during the discussions. When asked specifically if they know about the GRP-MILF peace process, there were those who have not heard about it at all, saying, "We have no way of receiving the news. We don't have radios in the mountains." However, for those who have, they think that their needs were relegated to the background because of the GRP-MILF peace process.

The LUMADS outside ARMM

The awareness of the peace process among Lumads in Maguindanao is the opposite of the awareness among Lumad communities in North Cotabato. Everybody said that they have heard about the GRP-MILF peace process, and that they will be affected by its results because their Barangays are listed in the Category A of the draft Bangsamoro Juridical Entity of the MOA-AD. In one area, majority of the participants agree that the peace process initiated by the Government will eventually bring peace to their community, primarily because of the recognition of their respective ancestral domain. But among the Manobo-Aromanen, they will wait and see if it brings peace to their community. Everybody seemed to agree that they must be open minded about it.

In another area populated by Manobos, everybody in the consultation has heard about the GRP-MILF peace process through radio broadcast. Their community is one of the crisis affected areas. At the height of the conflicts, farmers cannot go on with their farm chores. They cannot sleep at night to guard their community, and most of them got sick because of lack of sleep. Since they cannot work in their farm, their food production was affected. They experienced hunger especially when they had to evacuate.

“It can bring peace to the community if the peace resolution is consistent with the aspirations of our communities”, according to their leader. They suggested that there should be a mechanism for the participation of directly affected communities in the peace process. They seemed to not understand why the peace talks are done in another

country. They added that “There should be more community consultations, not just at this stage but even during the implementation of whatever agreement is eventually reached”.

This wide difference in the perceptions of Lumads may be attributed to the fact that the Lumad organizations outside of ARMM are active in their conscientization activities. Inside ARMM, since their territory will automatically belong to the core area of the proposed Bangsamoro Juridical Entity of the MOA-AD, there were few attempts to make the Lumads aware of the issues. This may be a crucial factor in their passive attitude towards the peace process. As expressed by a Christian coconut plantation owner who hires Lumads as laborers, he wishes that they change their laid-back ways, which prevents them from achieving a developed community. Their attitude towards the peace process is a reflection of this way of life. So long as they are left alone to pursue their usual ways, they are not concerned with the issues in connection with the MILF.

Outside of ARMM, the Lumads are highly aware of the GRP-MILF peace talks. The Manobos in Aleosan (in North Cotabato) were the first among the Lumads to experience the crisis brought about by the aborted MOA-AD. After the group of Commander Ombra Kato of the MILF attacked a farming community, they spent sleepless nights preparing to defend their community against the renegade group. The men did most of the guarding and sent their family to areas which they perceive to be safe. Thus, they have developed a stand and are ready to talk about this in any peace consultation.



Photo taken during a Lumad community consultation in March 2010 in Barangay Tenorio, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao.

The BANGSAMORO

In the community consultation with Maranaos, some of the participants said they do not clearly follow the peace process, although a majority have knowledge about the GRP-MILF peace negotiations. They understood that the war in Mindanao will end soon and the military will pull out from Mindanao. The recent incident that the community heard about the peace process was when the MOA-AD collapsed, which brought in more military presence. Among communities in Marawi City, the participants were aware that Lanao del Sur is part of the war zone between the MILF and the GRP. **They believe that the peace process will bring peace to Muslim areas because it will enable Muslims to practice the Islamic way of life. However, they believe that the situation demands sincerity and commitment from both parties, especially since the peace process is taking so long.** Meanwhile, the participants said that there is a need to follow the Government, as they are still part of the country.

The peace process is widely felt in Cotabato City. Like the Maranaos, the Maguindanaons believed that the peace talks will bring peace to the community if the GRP will show sincerity. In one of the more educated communities in the city, the participants believed in the peace process. **However, the breakdown of the peace process has affected their community. Many of them have relatives who live in the outskirts of the city who have been displaced by the breakdown in negotiations.** These relatives were the ones who own small farms. Their displacement prevented them from earning a living, and as a Bangsamoro people, the city relatives have to help and support them.



Photo taken during a Bangsamoro community consultation in April 2010 in Barangay Boheiwas, Lamitan, Basilan. Conducting the consultation is HD Centre project officer, Alberto Hamoy Kimpo.

The participants hoped that the peace talks will continue without delay. **“If Government will grant the Bangsamoro their requests and sentiments including the practice of our own culture and tradition, and free practice of the Islamic religion, a peaceful way of living would be enjoyed by our community”.** This perception is echoed by a key informant who plays an important role in shaping Moro opinion: **“The MOA-AD is a comprehensive solution to the Mindanao Problem and should have paved the way to peace and development of the Bangsamoro people.”**

The fighting between the three MILF commanders and the AFP was in reaction to the breakdown of peace negotiations. The areas where the three commanders are suspected to have camped out were bombarded by heavy artillery. This caused the evacuation of civilians living in those places to the relative safety of IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps and to relatives in the city. The municipality of Datu Piang, Maguindanao hosted many of these IDPs. These IDPs (mostly Muslim Maguindanaons) view the military as the ones disturbing their peace, and accuse them of indiscriminately bombing and shooting civilians. In the Datu Piang area, the number of IDPs rose to 60,000 during the month of May 2009, when the military campaign peaked. This later tapered down to 30,000 IDPs, but 94 died among the civilians, and 14 were wounded.

During the GRP peace panel consultations with LGUs, the representatives of Moro-dominated municipalities, especially from the island provinces of the ARMM, expressed their concern that while the MILF is visibly engaged in their peace process with Government, this is not felt in their areas, specifically Sulu and Tawi-Tawi provinces. For these LGUs, it is still the MNLF that are the concern of their area, and the implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement. They reminded that this peace accord should not be forgotten, especially given that the MNLF in their areas have not been thoroughly subjected to DDR.



Photo taken during a Christian community consultation in August 2009 in Barangay Darugao, Upi, Maguindanao. Conducting the consultation is Mrs. Shiela Acquiatan, finance officer of the Mindanao Think Tank (leftmost).

The CHRISTIANS

“The peace process is not new to us”, said the Christians in a consultation held in Maguindanao. “We have heard about it through the radio.” However, there was a lack of understanding on what the GRP-MILF peace process is all about since NGOs who visited their area prioritized the Lumads in their peace dialogues. In another Christian community in North Cotabato, some of the participants said that they are not that familiar with the MOA-AD. **They said that the contents of the MOA-AD were never shared with the people. It was only from Vice Governor Pinol’s viewpoint that they heard of the MOA-AD, and for them his opinions are biased. However, they accepted Vice Governor Pinol’s interpretation because it was only from him that they heard of the contents of the MOA-AD.**

In another area outside ARMM, Christian participants in a crisis affected community already heard about the GRP-MILF peace process. They were eagerly awaiting the results of the peace process because the MILF Lost Command still harasses their Barangay. They believed this was because of the Ancestral Domain claims of the Muslims. “Despite all the dialogues and agreements done and signed between our local leaders and the local Muslim leaders, still they attack and harass our Barangay. We cannot say if this peace process will indeed bring peace into our community, until the peace negotiation is finalized. Whatever agreement reached should be strictly enforced and followed. We will wait.”

In another crisis affected community, the Christians came to know about the peace process after the rampage done in their community by the Moro rebels. **“No one ever came to explain anything to us. We were simply left to find out that we were already being surrendered to this expanded Moro Territory.”** It was ironic for them to find out that the peace process led to that rampage. “It was a rampage that we will never forget because we truly suffered. We were hostages, we were kidnapped, some of us were killed, our crops and livestock were burned. And through all of this we were left alone to fend for ourselves. No military or police or Government agency came to our aid. It reminded us of the many times the peace process, and all previous peace processes, failed to give us the security we need”.

Because of this experience, the community does not believe in the peace process. “If a so-called peace agreement with the MILF is forged, there will surely be another Moro rebel group to emerge. **What will bring peace to our place are arms to be used in defense of our hinterland areas. It is in the hinterlands that conflicts arise, because there is no security there. We need a sense of authority in these areas so that there will be no theft of livestock and farm animals, no land grabbing.** But curiously, when we tried to arm ourselves in defense of our lives and our properties, we were apprehended for possession of firearms. But why is it that when they (Moros) arm themselves, they are left alone. So we also tried an indirect approach and petitioned for a Muslim military official to be stationed here. Sadly, instead of improving the situation, it made matters worse”.

B. Bangsamoro Identity

According to Prof. Abhoud Lingga, as a signatory to the United Nations, the Philippines has the obligation to protect, promote and advance “the right of people to self-determination, including the right to determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”. The GRP recognized this right in the Tripoli Agreement of Peace of 2001 between the GRP and the MILF.

As a basic concept, the Bangsamoro people is referred to in the document as “those who are natives or original inhabitants of Mindanao and its adjacent islands including Palawan and the Sulu archipelago at the time of conquest or colonization and their descendants whether mixed or full native blood.” Spouses and descendants, including the Lumads, are also classified as Bangsamoro “unless they choose otherwise.” They are the “First Nation” with defined territory and with a system of government having entered into treaties of amity and commerce with foreign nations.

According to Fr. Eliseo Mercado OMI, there are actually three levels of analysis in defining the Bangsamoro – the earliest definition which defines Bangsamoro as the 13 ethno-linguistic tribes embracing Islam; the second level which defines the Bangsamoro as the people of Mindanao and Palawan who are asserting self-determination; and the MILF definition as stated above.

The Lumads, however, have a different perception of this concept. According to their leaders, the Lumads have their own defined territory, tribal laws, system of governance, and justice system which sets them apart from the Bangsamoro.

The LUMADS

All the Lumad participants in the consultations agree that Bangsamoro is a political collective identity of the people who embraced Islam as their religion. For them, un-Islamized IPs should not be classified as Bangsamoro. “We have a different identity and have our respective laws. Our territories are also distinct from the Bangsamoro. We are not agreeable to be included in the classification of Bangsamoro. We have the IPRA that recognizes our ancestral domain. If we agree to be part of their classification, then we will lose our land due to agreements like the BJE in the MOA on ancestral domain”. They also added that there is difficulty on how to determine the Bangsamoro territory. If there is recognition of their rights, then the rights of the Lumad also should be respected.

Some participants added that there are 13 ethno-linguistic groups that are Islamized, and as such fall under the umbrella of the Bangsamoro. However, each has its own dialect, culture, and traditions. According to some participants, their traditional institutions can better deal with a secular Philippine state rather than a religious one. **But the Lumads agree that the 13 groups’ assertion of being Bangsamoro means an assertion for self-determination.**

Photo taken during the MILF consultation with Indigenous Peoples community leaders in February 2010 in Crossing Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. This sectoral consultation was supported and attended by the Mindanao Think Tank.



The BANGSAMORO

On the other hand, the Muslim communities agree that Bangsamoro means 'People of Mindanao' and 'Moro in one nation'. For them, the Bangsamoro people are the first settlers of Mindanao. The participants explained that Bangsa means 'Nation' and Moro means 'Moros' - the warriors in Mindanao who were thus called by the Spanish colonizers because of their similarity with the Moors who once ruled Spain. Later on, the Moros accepted the term and renewed its definition into "people of one nation" which is now the Bangsamoro, defining it to show that they are one. They assert that because of their defense against the Spaniards, they were not conquered. **They now define the Bangsamoro as the "people of Mindanao who fought against the Spaniards and who are the old inhabitants of Mindanao".**

One participant explained that a Moro does not always mean a Muslim, but Moro is a term understood by the Muslims as a warrior regardless of religion. Lumads can therefore be classified as Bangsamoro because not all Moros are Muslims and not all Muslims are practicing the way of Islam. But the majority of the Moros share a common culture and tradition. History also shows that the Muslims and Lumads are blood brothers. **"To us Muslims, we cannot disagree that Lumads are Bangsamoro because before, we were one and the same inhabitants of Mindanao (citing the brothers Tabunaway and Mamalu ancestral heritage); we just don't have the same religious beliefs."**

The participants believed that the Philippines is a Christian country, and Christians will protect and try to spread the Christian religion. The Lumads have their religion too, like the Muslims. If the peace process will be successful, at least the Muslims and Lumads can exercise their rights to their religion. To date, they understand that this issue is being dealt with and included in the peace negotiations.

The CHRISTIANS

The Bangsamoro People are Muslims. Lumads have their own identity and separate entity, therefore they cannot be classified as Bangsamoro people. For them, "How can the Bangsamoro deal with a secular Philippine state when a majority are Muslims? They claimed that they were invaded by Christians but the truth is lands in Mindanao were exchanged, bartered, or sold to Christians for guns and money". For the Christian respondents, Mindanao somehow progressed because of the Christians who tilled their lands. They do not agree with the Moro's historical perspective. The Lumads were the first inhabitants of the land.

This issue of Bangsamoro Identity is crucial in bringing together the 13 tribes. It points out their difference from the mainstream Filipino identity. However, a known critic of the manner in which the current GRP-MILF peace process is being handled urged people not to think in terms of what distinguishes or separates, but on what binds us together. The peace talks "should focus on all of us being Filipinos, not on them being Moros and us being Chavacanos, and the others being Visayans, Pampangos, etc. " If the peace process were only to result in dividing people, which to him this process currently is, then it should be drastically changed into one that unites the people instead.



Photo taken during a Christian community consultation in December 2009 in Barangay Balogo, Pigcawayan, North Cotabato. Conducting the consultation is Prof. Eva Tan (leftmost, standing).

C. Form of Governance and Power Sharing

In the MOA-AD proposal which was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) will govern the Bangsamoro territory. The relationship between the Philippine Government and the BJE shall be associative, characterized by shared authority and responsibility with a structure of governance based on executive, legislative, judicial and administrative institutions with defined powers and functions. The BJE's purpose is to establish a system of governance suitable and acceptable to them as a distinct dominant people.

Fr. Eliseo Mercado OMI, in an interview, commented that the MILF demand for an “autonomy of the highest order” or what they refer to as “associative relation” is difficult to grant because the present Autonomy Act (RA 6734 and its expanded version, RA9054) does not provide for this local-national governmental relation. Fr. Mercado states, “I believe that one of the reasons why the MOA-AD was declared unconstitutional is precisely the lack of any jurisprudence in this matter. There is a need for constitutional change.” When asked if this is possible to grant at present, he said that the GRP can guarantee steps towards a constitutional change.

The MILF might look favourably on the ARMM (plus the 6 municipalities which voted “yes” to the plebiscite) as the core of their desired local political structure, if a constitutional change is seen in the near future, according to one Key Informant. This will give more power to the autonomous government and might even achieve the “associative relation” that is desired, especially if the form of government will be changed to federal. A proviso that steps will be taken to expand the area through a plebiscite might make this more attractive.

On a more critical note, one of the Key Informants insisted that the only way to achieve peace in Muslim Mindanao is by working on mechanisms that already exist.

Specifically he points to the ARMM. The Key Informant expressed concern that the ARMM is being used as a political tool by the National Government, because there are local political forces that can benefit from National Government, and at the same time those in power in National Government can benefit from local political forces. Unless this kind of relationship is corrected, the ARMM will not develop and prosper on its own as a political unit. So far it has only resulted in the ‘lessening of autonomy’ instead of the strengthening of it. In fact, the respondent is convinced that if the provinces in the ARMM were to engage in a plebiscite today on who could vote out of the ARMM, he said most of them would opt out. Just recently, the Regional Assembly of ARMM passed MMA 241 in which the autonomous government recognized the Tribal Laws, Governance, and Justice System of the Lumads. With this development, the Lumads in ARMM are questioning their inclusion as part of the Bangsamoro, since they have a distinct identity. They want to be assured that the gains they already have in ARMM will not be disregarded in the new Bangsamoro Juridical Entity which may result from the Peace Agreement.

One Key Informant suggested two steps that would help governance and power sharing in Muslim Mindanao, and these are based on the experiences of the ARMM. First, allow for plebiscites and referendums that would open the possibility for provinces to leave the autonomous region, and second, allow each province to develop on their own and for them not to fall under an additional layer of governance like the ARMM. To this Key Informant, the people should also be given options to help improve governance in their areas.

These sentiments were similarly aired during the GRP peace panel consultations with LGUs, a lot of whom expressed strong criticisms of the ARMM, and vehemently objected to their constituencies being included in the BJE, especially among the Christian-dominated municipalities. LGU representatives from Moro-dominated municipalities were softer on their criticisms of the ARMM, even defending them by saying the National Government has not been very supportive of the autonomous government. They were also more open to joining the proposed Moro Homeland, but with conditions most notably on the need for great improvements in the ARMM's ability to govern.

The LUMADS

Among the Lumads in ARMM, all the participants were satisfied with the present form of government and with the tri-people concept. When asked if they are agreeable to the proposed BJE, their answer was “Our municipality will just go through the motions.” Just like when ARMM was established, they were surprised to learn that they are already under the ARMM. This perception may have been influenced by their present situation. Whoever may win in the 2010 elections might change this perception further. That perception has already changed with the passage of MMA 241.

In settling conflicts in the community, they use the strategies unique to this group as a tribe. They have a Barangay tri-people council composed of elders which mediates during conflicts such as land boundaries, non-payment of rents by tenants, or use of water for irrigation. If these are not resolved with the elders, the problem is brought up with the Barangay Chairman, and if not, raised to the Mayor’s Office, which also has its own Council of Elders. For land disputes, the case is brought to the Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer. A most recent problem brought to the Barangay involved a wedding that did not push through because the bride-to-be backed out. The usual penalty is for the bride to return to the groom-to-be the dowry that was given, plus twice the amount. If it was the groom who backed out, he forfeits the dowry already given.

This practice is common in other communities which are composed mostly of Lumads. A Timuay (traditional leader) leads the community and is asked to solve most of the problems. When this is not settled at his level, the case goes up the formal local government set-up – the Barangay justice system, and up the Municipality where a Municipal Court Judge presides.

Among the Lumads outside of ARMM, the participants in the consultations expressed their satisfaction with how their communities are governed, saying “We have yet to understand if we can have more benefits if we will be part of ARMM or BJE as provided in the MOA. The way it is practiced here, co-existence and mutual respect is observed. Affairs of the indigenous peoples are managed through the traditional governance structure”.

The kind of governance that is practiced in these communities are a combination of both the Barangay governance and the traditional system. “We are not so satisfied with the barangay system but there is also so much need for improvement in our own system to cope with present needs. We want full recognition of our own system of governance and the sharing of authority. We are not part of ARMM. As of now, we do not like to be part of the proposed BJE. Our communities are constantly threatened by the Bangsamoro even if we do not bother them”.

The BANGSAMORO

The Muslim communities consulted also have a dual form of governance – the LGU set-up and the traditional system. “We have a Barangay led governance with Maranao customs and traditions (Taritib and Igma)”. Settling conflicts in their community is through Taritib and Igma. Payment of blood money is just an option. But if it is demanded by the parties, it is believed to be the only way to settle conflict. In one community, even if the case is settled based on the law or a court trial, it is still resolved through the Taritib and Igma. According to the participants, Maranaos are strong in integrating their own customs, traditions, and Islamic justice. The Islamic justice system (Shari’ah) should be practiced in all the Muslim areas.

Participants from Muslim communities expressed that they are partly dissatisfied with the governance in the ARMM because this is still within the Philippine Constitutional structure and does not integrate the Shari’ah guides as other countries do. They always use the traditional system of settling conflicts (Taritib and Igma) which involves sultans, elders, and traditional leaders. When this fails to work, only then will they resort to the Philippine Judicial system or the Shari’ah if a Sharia Court is accessible. There are also cases when practices such as the payment of blood money may be the only way to resolve a ‘Rido’ or family feud/clan war. However, they still believe in negotiation and dialogue in settling conflicts.

In Cotabato City, which is not part of the ARMM, the participants comply with Philippine laws but Muslim communities there still desire to practice and integrate the Shari’ah teachings. They also appreciate the involvement of the MILF in governance. When the MILF was intervening in the conflicts and guiding of children, most of the communities feared to do bad things. Now that they have been ‘lying-low’, in one of the Barangays consulted, most of the children have engaged again in drug addiction and other illegal practices.

“Our Barangay now is not part of the ARMM, but we would still want to become part of the ARMM (or BJE) as long as the leaders are sincere to deliver service to the people”.

The CHRISTIANS

“We are satisfied with what we have in the LGU and Barangay level right now. The problem is that this is the last term of our Mayor, we don’t know what will happen next,” said Christian participants in a community within the ARMM. However, they complained that ARMM Governance (referring to provincial and regional level) was not felt in their community. “All the projects and maintenance in our municipality were all initiatives of our Mayor. Even the provincial road was not properly maintained.”

They have heard of the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity thru news only. “What we understood of the BJE is that the Moros, or ‘powerful people’ wanted the land because of mining. Self-interest of these people was among the reasons for the BJE.” This was one of the fears of Christians. Other fears expressed were, “these will hugely affect livelihood of the community because of the prohibition in caring for farm animals such as pigs. If the BJE will push thru, the Muslims will dominate and rule the entire Mindanao, thus the Christians and Lumads will be left behind.” **However, other Christians (especially in the urban areas) were open to accepting an ‘Islamic City’ as long as the Christians are free to practice their religion and culture. They have heard that in an Islamic City, the people are more disciplined, thus, can practice peaceful co-existence.**

“We don’t want to be part of the BJE. But if fair treatment will be given and everything will be explained to us, maybe it would be ok,” commented one of the Christian respondents from Cotabato City. People from the ARMM are free to seek assistance from foreign funders because of autonomy. We wish to live with Moros peacefully but still, Christians live in fear of the Moros because of their way of life. You fear for your life if you pass by the Moro area because they might do something bad to you. I believe that values should first be introduced before anything else. Values of peace and respect for one’s fellow men.

Governance in this community follows the formal government structure starting with the Purok up to the Barangay and the Municipal level. Most of the conflicts are settled in the Barangay Chairman’s level, an amicable settlement would usually be the solution because it is usually very expensive for the residents to bring the case to the court’s level (considering the fare, food, stay and lawyers’ fees). There were also times when blood money was paid. This was done through the Mayor’s council. Dialogue between the parties and advice from the elders were sometimes used.

In the communities outside of the ARMM, the participants were satisfied with the democratic and participative governance being practiced – the voices, decisions and approval of the community are respected and followed. For them, “we are satisfied with the kind of governance but there’s a need to change the leadership in our community. We are satisfied with the governance of the Barangay, but not of the Municipal LGU. Furthermore, governance at the Provincial level cannot be felt in this area. Perhaps we are already too far. We are satisfied with the structure of governance, but not with the leadership. It is with the leaders that the problems lie.”

(Note: Respondents’ area is not part of the ARMM, but asked about the ARMM, this was their response.)

“Theoretically, the ARMM is ok. But the question is whether the ARMM has anything to show. Has it produced anything positive? No. In this place, the abuses of people will become much more if autonomy was granted for this area, or if this area were to be placed under an autonomous government set-up. We are satisfied with the way the structure is right now, but we wish there could be some improvement in so far as the leadership is concerned. It is still unfair to give additional territory to them (the Moros). We divided the province of Cotabato, so they can have their own governors, but what happened? They cannot even sustain themselves. They still needed to be supported by the National Government. They must first prove that the ARMM is a success so that they can convince us that we Christians can be involved”.

In another Christian area, the participants disliked the practice in the ARMM where so many municipalities were created just to accommodate the leaders. They did not want this to happen in their area.

In summary, for some respondents the experience with the ARMM did not deviate much from the other administrative regions of the country. Non-Muslim residents of the ARMM think there will be no substantial improvement in governance in the autonomous region, even if it became the BJE. But both Lumads and Bangsamoro would like their traditional systems incorporated in the present practices of governance. The Muslims in particular would like to have more of the Shari’ah integrated in Philippine laws applicable to the proposed Bangsamoro territory. Finally, if there will be a constitutional change, most participants said they are receptive to other forms of government, such as The ‘Federal Republic of the Philippines’, or the ‘Commonwealth Republic of Mindanao’. However, they stressed that the solution to the problem still lies on the leaders who will run the government.

D. Framework for Economic Development

Those who opposed the continuation of the previous peace dialogue maintain that the talks did not provide for a Socio-Economic Program that will alleviate the plight of people in what respondents referred to as “the most economically depressed region of Mindanao and the rest of the country.”

If the quest for self-determination of the MILF includes pursuing socio-economic development for the Bangsamoro, it has to have a program which will be implemented after the signing of a peace agreement.

The LUMADS

The participants in the hillside communities feel that their community is developed. They have a lot of resources – springs, falls, which can still be developed. They heard that there are already investors coming to develop these resources. “We are economically developed in our own way. It is important that we live a peaceful life”. Those on the coast already feel the scarcity in aquatic resources because of dynamite fishing and the pollution of coastal waters. **A primary problem in their area is that most of the government assisted projects that were given do not reach them. They rely mostly on non-government organizations, especially the religious, to help them.** One of the projects provided by the NGOs is micro-financing.

Just like other communities, Lumads look forward to a development framework which will answer the problems that come with underdevelopment: food shortages due to unstable peace and order, water for irrigation, farm to market roads, electrification, water system for drinking, and health services. **Their perspective of development is that which they can effectively participate in, and at the same time enhance their indigenous traditions.**



Photo taken during a Lumad community consultation in August 2009 in Barangay Badak, Datu Odin Sinuat, Maguindanao. Conducting the consultation is Prof. Eva Tan (gesturing), lead facilitator of the Mindanao Think Tank.

The BANGSAMORO

The community of Maranaos, which is most proud of the majestic Lake Lanao and its abundant watershed and fishery resources, says however that they cannot consider themselves economically developed. “Our community cannot develop our resources just by ourselves, we still need to be capacitated and supported. There are many resources for agriculture and crafts, but we need assistance to develop these”.

A drawback in developing their community is the security issue. There is a need to secure the communities around Lake Lanao and its environs for development activities.

They heard that there are investors wanting to come and assist them, but they are hesitant due to the security situation. They hope that with better governance, these security concerns will be solved.

Among the Maguindanaons in Cotabato City, the fear is that their place is deteriorating economically with the transfer of Region XII's regional government centers from Cotabato City to Koronadal City. **However, they think that there are still resources that can contribute to economic development, except that they lack the knowledge and expertise to develop these. They also need financial assistance to pursue development activities such as weaving and other handicrafts. They point out the need to prioritize infrastructure improvements to prevent the recurring floods that have destroyed a lot of properties.**

The CHRISTIANS

The Christians in the ARMM think that their communities are economically developed. Most of the sources of income come from farming, such as the planting of rubber, passion fruit, and coffee. There are still other spring resources that need to be developed to maximize the farming sector. According to the Christians, various NGOs have come to their areas to help prioritize the Lumad communities for assistance. For example, the Lumads were the beneficiaries of a water system (level 1 spring development-6 faucet) worth 100,000 Pesos, and training on alternative medicine from the Assisi Foundation. The CCF (Children Christian Fund) also gave projects to the area.

One of the the Christian communities consulted has received various assistance from Government agencies and NGOs. The ARMM Social fund has also given them a solar drier with warehouse. Synergea has helped with training of public school teachers and the building of additional classrooms. The CCF (Children Community fund) developed the spring water system in the Barangay.

Amidst all these assistance, the main problem according to the community is lack of education of the residents to sustain these interventions. For example, a hose that was installed for a water system was destroyed and cut by the residents because they wanted the hose to go directly into their houses. As a result, These projects now need to be rehabilitated because of the incident.

The following were the identified community needs:

- **Electrification**
- **Farm to market roads**
- **Water for other sitios (communities)**
- **Concreting of Provincial roads**
- **Livelihood for women**
- **School buildings with more classrooms**
- **Repair of dilapidated classrooms**

Outside the ARMM, in crises affected communities, the participants considered themselves economically developed, and the only hindrances was the security concerns in this community. “How can the farmers go and cultivate their farms if they are always harassed every time they work?” Their Barangay is the source of all kinds of vegetables sold in the regional market in Midsayap, North Cotabato. The production is abundant and the people are industrious. **For them, what the community needs in order to be economically developed are peace, pre-post harvest facilities such as warehouse dryer and farm machineries, and communal irrigation.**

In another crisis affected community, the perception is that of despair. “With our current leadership we have become more burdened in debt. There seems to be no progress in store for us. There are still more areas with high agricultural potential especially in the interior highlands. But what normally occurs here is that lands are grabbed temporarily by the troublemakers, and our livestock are mercilessly killed and our corps stolen. Though we are still eventually able to recover our properties, the damage by then has already been done.”

Due to the breakdown of peace and order they do not expect any investor to come. “In the 1970s our place was peaceful. Several years ago it was again peaceful, especially when Philippine Marines Colonel Ariel Querubin established a military camp in the interior highlands after he overran an MILF camp there. From there the military maintained peace in this area, and there was progress. But then they were reassigned and the military presence was removed. So here we are again now.”

“There needs to be a strong mediator here, one who can ensure that the rule of law will be respected, and that the ‘troublemakers’ will not be allowed to do their activities with impunity, similar to what they did in August 2008. Only then will people be at peace and this place be peaceful. After that, then the much needed projects can be put up, such as the needed farm-to-market road in one of our Barangays, a health centre complete with medicines, and a training center for all to benefit”.

All the participants to the consultations have taken stock of the resources that they have in their areas. This is their measure of how rich the communities are. Although they profess the need for technical and financial assistance, they want a development framework which is consistent with their traditions, and one in which they can effectively participate in.

An interesting case was an Agrarian Reform beneficiary Community (ARC) comprising entirely of Christian families. Approximately 400 former employees of a corporation that ran a 1,025-hectare rubber plantation benefitted from Government’s Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). They now collectively own and run the corporation as one big cooperative-business. For them, they are fortunate that they were awarded an operating enterprise. This is why they are doing the best they can to maximize the plantation’s current potential, and even grow it. Unfortunately, the experience of other former big plantations (all are 1,025-hectares in size, part of past Government resettlement and land-use programs) in Basilan are not as good, with many failing and going bankrupt. Some have been portioned-off to their individual beneficiary-families. For the executives of this ARC consulted, Government, whether thru a peace deal or thru other Government initiatives such as support to Agrarian Reform beneficiaries, should do all it can in terms of technical, financial and marketing support to make these plantations once again successful.



Photo taken during a sectoral consultation with an Agrarian Reform Beneficiary community in April 2010 in Barangay Baluno, Isabela, Basilan. Photo shows one of the community leaders responding to a discussion topic.

E. Control of Resources

In the previous position papers, the following were provided for:

- The BJE is empowered with authority and responsibility for land use, development, conservation, and disposition of the natural resources within the homeland. Upon entrenchment of the BJE, the land tenure and use of such resources and wealth must reinforce their economic self-sufficiency.
- The BJE and the National Government agree on wealth sharing based on a mutually agreed percentage ratio in favor of the BJE through an economic cooperation agreement or arrangement over the income and revenues that are derived from the exploration, exploitation, use and development of any resources for the benefit of the Bangsamoro people.

This is in cognizance of the constitutional provision that all resources of the country belongs to the national government. However, the regions are asserting their rights to these resources, taking note of the inequitable distribution of government income from these resources.

Although the concept of control of resources is difficult to ascertain from the grassroots who have difficulty comprehending the macro-economic issues of wealth sharing, the participants have expressed the following:

In the Lumad community, the participants are closely guarding their resources which they know are still abundant. They stated that, **“Our community needs development but we want to do it ourselves. We want to utilize resources within our ancestral domain to ensure that the future generation will have their own share”**. This was echoed by other communities which opt for an IP governance structure to carry out development work in their area.

Using an alternative point of view, one Key Informant asked that focus be put on the mechanism that already exists when discussing resource sharing, wealth sharing and economic development. This Key Informant suggests that **“If there should be changes to these existing mechanisms, then let it not be pursued based on race or religion, but let it be for everyone. If it is now 70-30 and will be 50-50 for the BJE, then let it be 50-50 for everyone. Why distinguish the Filipino Muslims from all other areas in the country?”**

Photo taken during a sectoral consultation with an MILF-aligned Moro community in February 2010 in Barangay Gang, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. Co-facilitating the consultation are HD Centre mediation advisor David Gorman (gesturing) and MTT lead facilitator Prof. Eva Tan (rightmost).



F. Basic Concept of Territory and Land Rights

The MOA-AD bogged down the peace talks because of its controversial provision on territory. Under the MOA-AD, the Bangsamoro territory comprises the following areas:

- The present Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao;
- The municipalities of Baloi, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagoloan, and Tangkal in the province of Lanao del Norte which voted for inclusion in the ARMM during the 2001 plebiscite;
- Additional 732 geographic areas (mostly Barangays) in the provinces of Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato, and Palawan, the entire cities of Cotabato and Isabela, plus some barangays in the cities of Iligan and Zamboanga (designated as “Category A”) which are subject to plebiscite within 12 months of the signing of the MOA-AD; and
- The areas covered by “Category B” are referred to as “Special Intervention Areas”. These are the conflict affected areas outside the proposed BJE which shall be the subject of special socio-economic and cultural affirmative action implemented by the National Government pending the conduct of a plebiscite not earlier than 25 years from the signing of the MOA-AD.

Many of these areas are presently owned and occupied by migrants from the Visayas and Luzon, popularly known as the “Christian Settlers”. Having acquired their land through legal means (“*We have titles to our lands!*”), they fear that being included as part of the Bangsamoro territory will subject their lands to confiscation, especially since the overlying concept of the Bangsamoro homeland encompasses ancestral communal and customary lands, maritime, fluvial and alluvial domains as well as all natural resources therein that have inured or vested ancestral rights on the basis of native title. Those who were consulted in the ARMM area, however, did not experience any case of land grabbing by the autonomous government, except in one case cited by a Lumad Key Informant. According to him, the government has disregarded their claims on their ancestral land when their area was granted as a logging concession to an MNLF commander.

One Key Informant challenged the concept of territory and land rights saying there is only one territory that should be considered in this peace process and that is the territory of the whole Philippine Republic. To him there should be no distinguishing factors as to who owns territory over what, unless it is defined through existing legal means.

This Key Informant stressed that the parties, especially the GRP, should be cognizant of the Supreme Court decision declaring the MOA-AD as unconstitutional and of the

position already taken by the Philippine Government through the Solicitor General that the MOA-AD will no longer be considered by the GRP in its current form or in any other form. He warned that opening up discussions on the concept of territory and land rights is contradictory to this and will only result in another possibility of judicial challenge.

The LUMADS

Three participants in the Lumad consultation admit that they heard of the breakdown of the peace process due to the MOA-AD. But they are not conversant on Ancestral Domain as provided in the MOA. They only heard that the MILF is claiming the whole Mindanao, and desires to “Eject the Christians when the BJE takes over”. They say that in their tribe, **“the ancestral domain concept means that heirs can claim land which were tilled by their ancestors even without a title. This is in conflict with the MILF concept because under Teduray Justice, the Ancestral Domain claim will still go to a Teduray. Under the BJE, the Lumad claims will be lost”**. Many of the participants are working in public lands which the DENR said can only be granted under the stewardship, or *Kabalo*, concept. They have an existing community which was awarded to Tedurays under *Kabalo*. Some of these land rights were already sold at P10,000 per hectare to other people. The Barangay Chairman discourages this practice because the Tedurays will once again end up where they started, poor and landless.

Their proposal for land rights were as follows:

- **Issuance of land titles (Torrens) to the heirs of the land to prevent conflict such as Rido**
- **If this is not possible, they are agreeable to stewardship, if this will bring peace**
- **Convert the areas under stewardship to become titled since their concept of ancestral domain is the right to till or dispose of the land depending on the need**

The objective and the content of the MOA-AD were not properly disseminated and explained to the Lumads. Some of the misconceptions they have were that the Moros wanted to rule the entire Mindanao and that the descendants of Mamalo (legendary leader of the Lumads) would not be allowed to claim ancestral lands. **There were reported cases of land grabbing such as when one entire sitio was subjected by ‘a certain powerful Moro’ to the VOS (voluntary offer to sell) of the Department of Agrarian Reform without the knowledge of the Lumads staying there.**

When asked why their ancestral land in the area was not yet titled to their name, they said that they lack the financial capability to go through the process of land titling.

In another community which falls under Category A of the proposed BJE, the participants claimed that “This community is our ancestral domain. There are no lands here that belong to the Bangsamoros. Their ancestors lived in another place. The IPRA process of ancestral domain claim should be followed.”

This particular community has a long history of land grabbing. It began with the Ilaga and Blackshirts conflict in the 1970s which drove the Lumads away. So much land was abandoned and taken by Christian settlers. Then, at present, the AJMR banana plantation is taking lands from IPs without due process.

Most of the lands here were said to have already been surveyed through the Torrens Titling of lands. The Lumads paid for the survey, but later they found out that different names appeared on record as owning the lands. Some names happened to be relatives of the surveyor himself. This, to them, is another form of land grabbing. According to the participants, the IPRA process in titling of ancestral domain is more appropriate for IPs.

The participants from all Lumad communities were unanimous in saying that ancestral domain is “where the ancestors have always lived”. They were also unanimous in saying that their communities are part of the whole ancestral domain. They heard that part of Aleosan is being claimed by the Dilangalen clan as its ancestral domain. The present land is already occupied by Christian settlers and they have acquired the land through legal and peaceful means. There should be a better process in resolving this, one that is also fair and just for the Lumads who likewise claim it.

The BANGSAMORO

According to the community in Balo-i, Lanao del Sur, their municipality is 98% Muslim. They assert that their lands were owned by their ancestors, and though there are still many lands in Lanao del Sur that remain untitled, the old Moro families know the different land portions and their original owners. To them, all lands in their municipality should be aptly called Ancestral Domain.

In another community, participants believed that most lands in Lanao del Sur and Marawi City belong to the Bangsamoro. They were not familiar with the IPRA. **Their understanding of the claim to Ancestral Domain is for the Moros to have the freedom to till the Moro land and practice Muslim culture and rights.**

In Cotabato City, which is in Category A of the proposed BJE, the participants’ understanding of Ancestral Domain is that it refers to lands owned by the original Moro settlers. The problem is that the lands in Cotabato City are titled already. They have not heard of any case of land grabbing and they are aware of the present laws governing rights to land such as the Regalian doctrine and the Torrens Titling of lands. They are agreeable to these present laws governing rights to land and natural resources.

In another Muslim community, they are not concerned with Ancestral Domain because according to them **“the whole of our Barangay is from our ancestors. We did not migrate; most of us living here are old inhabitants of the place and most of us are relatives. We practice parental arrangements for the wedding of our children to preserve our ancestral land.** However, most of the lands in the other Barangays of this municipality presently already have titles.”



Photo taken during a Lumad community consultation in August 2009 in Barangay Borongotan, Upi, Maguindanao. Conducting the consultation is MTT lead facilitator Prof. Eva Tan.

The CHRISTIANS

For the Christians, “Ancestral Domain is the land that came from our ancestors. The Lumads owned the mountainous areas. There are three types of people living in this area: 1. Lumads who are living in the hills and mountains; 2. Christians who are living in the plains; and 3. Moros who are living in the coastal area.” They have heard of cases of land grabbing which were not reported, but these only involved disputes on land boundaries.

Most of the Christians’ lands were titled. The lands in some of the communities consulted were not being considered as part of the Bangsamoro Ancestral Domain. According to the respondents, the claimants (whoever they may be) have no legal basis for their claims. This may only result in aggression if they will continue claiming their rights when ownership is legal and is occupied by the actual owners.

In another community, the participants heard of cases of land grabbing. These involved Muslims occupying other Muslims’ lands which resulted in the loss of lives. As of now the conflict mentioned was settled.

Yutang Kabilin’ – Literal Visayan translation of Ancestral Domain. This denotes that the respondents view the Ancestral Domain concept as that of the IPRA, not of the proposed BJE, i.e. it is a tenurial definition of land, not a physical area where sovereignty of self-determination can be exercised.

Christian respondents from one community find absurd that their entire place is claimed as part of the Moro Ancestral Domain. **“This area was nothing before our forefathers came and broke their backs developing this area into the productive place that it is today. Who are they to claim this? They did nothing to develop this area!”**

They angrily continued, “The troublemakers and landgrabbers here are from the highlands in the interior. They have tried to grab our lands. But these lands are all titled to us, so they cannot take these away. The problem is that it is not clearly stated in the peace agreement that titled property will be respected.”

For the Agrarian Reform beneficiary Community (ARC), since their location is in Category A, they were concerned that if they become part of the Moro Homeland, that their ARC status would be changed. For them, the tenurial status of their land is perfectly legal, except that it is not an instrument governing individual ownership, but communal ownership. They added that important details such as this should be clearly stipulated in drafts of any peace deal, and made know to the MILF so that their people do not go on murderous rampages similar to those they did in 2008 after the fall of the MOA-AD.



Photo taken during a Christian community consultation in December 2009 in Barangay Rosary Heights 9, Cotabato City.

G. Historical and Restorative Justice

A primary reason for the insurgency is the claim of historical injustice by the rebel groups. However, many historians find this difficult to define. Prof. Abhoud Syed Lingga, in one of the Round Table Discussions conducted by the Institute of Autonomy and Governance mentioned that **the negative experiences endured by the Bangsamoro include strong biases and prejudices by the Christian majority towards them, minoritization in their own land, failure of Government to deliver basic services, and failure of Government to protect their persons and property.** However, a Key Informant said that there was collusion of some Moro leaders with Government in the implementation of past policies, particularly in land ownership. It is therefore difficult to define historical injustice solely as the fault of one party.

One Key Informant simply said it is not very clear what this concept means, but said that if it should deal with historical injustices then, this is not acceptable. To him, there is simply no basis for that. **All people are subjected to historical injustice in one way or another, why should Filipino Muslims be given special treatment for this. History is history, and we should all learn to move forward regardless of what has happened in the past. If a mechanism were to be proposed for this, then either it is fair for everyone, or it should not be discussed entirely.**

The LUMADS

According to the Lumads, “We are not safe in this community. Most of the time, peace in the community is disturbed. In the immediate past, there was the Ilaga-Blackshirts conflict, the all out war of the Estrada administration, then at present the AJMR banana plantation. There has been a series of armed confrontations and evacuations since the 70s, the latest of which is the attack by the group of Ombra Kato. There is a need to improve the security structure in our community. There must be a full recognition by the military of the traditional security forces. We recommend that traditional systems and structures be recognized and supported by Government. We always bring our cases to our tribal courts and the traditional leaders. We have a tribal peacekeeping structure.”

The CHRISTIANS

According to the Christians, “Peace in this community was already disturbed when the MILF harassed it and wanted to control our Barangay. But the people fought until they succeeded in protecting their community. Unfortunately, some families were displaced while some lost their houses and sources of living.”

In another Christian community whose residents became victims of the recent fighting, the respondents believed civilian peacemakers already exist in the community; they only need additional police and military forces to improve the security in the community. First and foremost they wanted their areas to be secure, and for that they desire most that a battalion size military presence be put in their area. They do not believe in a ceasefire, and clearly there was no trust for it left. For them, regardless of an MILF-SOMA, the spectre of heavily armed Moros descending from the mountains in the south of their villages remains. As they were speaking they were convinced that the Commander Bravos were just waiting for best time to strike.

Confronted with the very low socio-economic indicators in areas which are identified as crisis affected communities, some of the respondents wanted the prioritizing of assistance for these areas. One KI suggested the formulation of a ‘Mini-Marshall Plan’ that would be the basis of the program for reconstruction and rehabilitation of crisis affected communities.

Another Christian community suggested that one way of rectifying injustice is through education. In the teaching of Philippine History, only the Aetas were mentioned as aborigines. The Lumads in Mindanao should also be mentioned. Most of the books available are more on Luzon only. “We are happy that there is now Maranao history found in some books, but still none about Maguindanaons and other tribes. The next generation should know about their role in history. Education should rectify this injustice”.

As provided for in the second strand of the GRP-MILF peace process, the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) is presently managing and administering projects funded by the Mindanao Trust Fund for the Reconstruction and Development of conflict affected communities. The MTF is a World Bank led multi-donor fund which is still in the stage of capacity building for the BDA. A similar effort was done in 1996 after the GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement where the assistance was initially coursed through the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), but later implemented by the ARMM. This is now known as the ARMM Social Fund.

The provision of the BDA seemed to auger well to the Moro communities which they have reached so far. According to the Grand Mufti of the Darul Ifta of Cotabato City, the BDA has been very successful in delivering its assistance to its recipients and was performing well as an organization. The centerpiece of the BDA's assistance is the campaign for Values Transformation which is part of every reconstruction project they implement. However, the inertia created in performing this task is hampered by the absence of a Peace Agreement which donor agencies placed as a prerequisite before they provide additional funds to the BDA.

The LUMAD and CHRISTIANS

The first Lumad community interviewed was in favor of the Bangsamoro Development Agency as the organization that will implement the reconstruction and rehabilitation of conflict affected communities. The Government also should provide funding to the BDA. Its mandate extends to initiating economic development. But BDA should only focus on the Bangsamoro. Indigenous Peoples should have their own equivalent institution.

On the other hand, another community said that they are not in favor because of corruption. "We are doubtful of their effective management. Government should not provide funding to the BDA. Its mandate should not include economic development".

The Christians consulted have heard about the BDA, "... but they do not have any project in our community. It would be good if the BDA will bring projects in our community. But they have to show us (non-Moros) first if they can successfully develop the Moro areas before coming to us".

The BANGSAMORO

Not all the Bangsamoro Communities where consultations were held knew about the BDA. However, all were agreeable to the BDA's handling of the reconstruction and development of crisis affected areas.

An immediate concern encountered by the MTT during its consultations was from one of the last few remaining IDP communities - a community of Moros - who are still evacuated away from their home area. The discussion inevitably steered to the issue of restorative justice, since they obviously have something to say about their plight as evacuees and the hurt and suffering this has brought. They were happy to know that this is one of the talking points in the peace talks, because there is much to be improved in Government's disaster preparedness.



Photo taken during a Lumad community consultation in March 2010 in Barangay Tenorio, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao. Photo shows one of the community leaders responding to a discussion topic.

H. Security and Civilian Protection

The concept of shared security was introduced when the program for Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DDR) was put on hold during the previous peace talks. The present set-up of the Barangay Tanod, the Community Volunteers Organization (CVO), the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU), the AFP, and the PNP should be part of the discussion.

In the consultation with an IDP community, when asked what would make them decide to go home to their community, they gave the following recommendations:

- They want the MILF (not Government) to inform them that there will no longer be any fighting in the future;
- They want livelihood assistance since their farms have not been cleaned and still need to be prepared, and they do not have funds to start planting again;
- They should be given shelter since their homes have been burned during the fighting and they have no houses to go home to in their community; and
- They should be given food assistance in the meantime that they have no income from their farms.

On shared security, one KI asked that whatever new changes should come, these should not only be given to the Filipino Muslims, but to all LGUs. This KI said that the PNP is already national in scope, so why is there a need for another security mechanism. He also added that all LGUs have actually been asking for their own policing powers different from the PNP. If the special security mechanisms are granted to Filipino Muslims, then this should also be granted to all other LGUs.

The LUMADS

The present security structures seem to serve the purpose of providing protection to the Barangay, although after hearing about an incident wherein a residence was robbed, they felt that the community policing plan that they formulated with the assistance of the National Defense Institute should be implemented. **The plan involves putting a policeman in each barangay who will be assisted by the barangay tanods (village watchmen) and CVOs. However, there are not enough police to be deployed and most of the municipalities do not have the funds to pay all the CVOs required by the plan.**

Another participant suggested strengthening and improving the communications facilities in the Barangay so that when trouble erupts, the police can be immediately alerted. However, another participant enjoined that even with the sophisticated communication equipments, there are not enough policemen to respond to their call.

The justice system in the Barangay starts with bringing the case to the traditional leaders, or to the tri-people council when the case involves Christians or Muslims. If the Barangay cannot decide on the case, it is brought up to the Municipal level. If this is not decided at that level, the case is then brought to the Civil Courts.

In another Lumad community, the participants felt safe. “Only a few cases of cattle rustling happened in our community”. Since the Barangay structure is not functioning well in their place, they wanted to ask for more military detachments. There should also be the creation of separate security groups for the Lumads. They also added that the traditional governance structure should be recognized and respected, including its traditional peace keeping structures.

The BANGSAMORO

Security problems in Moro communities are primarily caused by ‘Rido’ (family feuds), banditry, and drug addiction. Although a few said that they are already used to rido, the rest expressed that they still don’t feel safe because there still is banditry and drug addiction is rampant.

They want criminal cases to be brought to regular court, while family matters and hereditary (Tamok) disagreements should be brought to the Shari’ah court. The participants expressed that though there is already a police force in the communities, they suggest that if the communities these law enforcers serve are majority Muslim communities, the Shari’ah law should be integrated in their enforcement.

The participants expressed that peace and security concerns must be addressed by the law that fits the communities. They explained that there is Shari’ah law, but not all of the laws in the Shari’ah are accepted by Government. Shari’ah still needs to be instituted in order to address community problems. If Marawi City is an Islamic City, then Muslim laws should be integrated. Law enforcers should be oriented on the Taritib and the Igma of the Maranaos.

Law enforcers are in place in Cotabato City, but local governance should be strengthened. If there is a need to enforce the Shari’ah law, it should start with the LGU. If it is just a matter of integration, the government can make a program special for Mindanao with regards to adopting the culture, tradition and religion. There seems to be a need for law enforcers to have an orientation about culture, practice and religion of people in Mindanao especially if they will be assigned in Muslim dominated areas.

In another Muslim community, they thought there is no need for a religious police force. There are existing law enforcement agents already; perhaps the Shari’ah together with the MILF and MNLF religious and political committees, or the BDA, should have a program that integrates a training or orientation to law enforcement agents about Bangsamoro Culture and tradition, and the Islamic way of life, laws and practices.

The CHRISTIANS

The Christians in ARMM felt safe in their communities because of good governance. They recalled that before the present LGU leadership, there were bombings, rapes and shooting incidents in the area. There were also reported cases of rebel commanders collecting revolutionary taxes whenever they passed the community. The business sector was mainly affected by this. Failure to pay the revolutionary taxes would mean great loss of goods or even lives. These armed groups would usually ask for support in the form of money, food, and shelter from the residents. To solve the problem, it was recommended that they should increase Police visibility and army detachments.

In another Christian community which suffered an armed attack by the MILF, all participants said that their lives are in danger, and that they feel unsafe in their own community. Civilians were forced to protect their lives from the harassment. Thus, their economic activities were neglected. According to them, “We recommended to our military or even the police to deploy additional forces to protect our community. That will allow us to go back to our own farms free from harassment. The rampage should no longer be repeated! We underwent so much suffering because of that. Something should be done about an unresolved issue in the area concerning a 24-hectare property that has been contested far too long. This has been the bitter fuse that has triggered so much of the problems in this area, as it concerns both Moros and Christians who feel they have been dispossessed and oppressed.”

Respondents from the same Christian community continued, “The area is very open and there are many ins-and-outs to our place. Because of this, a permanent military presence should be established that will defend the peace-loving people from troublemakers. We, the civilians here, cannot sleep soundly at night fearing that another Commander Bravo will come raiding us once again! The military only comes when we have already been raided! This cannot go on like this! If they really cannot provide us permanent security, then why don't they just delineate the areas for the AFP and for the MILF! There must be sincerity when negotiating. Do not give us up to the Moros! The peace process should take place in Mindanao because the conflict is here in Mindanao. Should this be granted we will go and attend and listen and take part, because we are in the center of all this. We are the ones most affected.”

Another Christian community believed that there is a problem in dealing with armed groups who are supposed to provide security to communities. You cannot claim that you are a peace advocate if you have arms. A peace advocate will always opt for disarmament. But it is a difficult idea, easier said than done. We can educate them (our security force) and give values to those provided with arms. Another alternative is to legalize the ownership of guns so it can be regulated.

A KI believed that there is a need to implement DDR at the end of the negotiation. Otherwise, there will be problems of various armed groups proliferating. This should be applied to the MILF, the MNLF, CAGU, and other para-military units.



Photos taken during a sectoral consultation with a community of Internally Displaced Persons in March 2010 at the evacuation center of Datu Anggal Midtimbang municipality in Maguindanao. Conducting the consultation on the top photo, (rightmost in white shirt) is Mr. Harun Al-Rasheed Baraguir, MTT field researcher.

Analysis of Data and Recommended Approaches

The data taken from the community consultations, sectoral consultations and key informant interviews showed varied perceptions and aspirations due to the differences in location, traditions, and beliefs. The rampage of some MILF commanders due to the debunking of the MOA-AD did not help clarify the problems, and instead added more fuel to the controversy.

In one of the Mindanano Think Tank meetings to which these findings were inputted, the members proposed a framework that can be used for analysis and determine gaps and subsequent recommendations. *(Please see page 41 of this publication which reports on the third MTT core group meeting.)*

In his paper entitled “Challenges for Mediating a Successful Negotiation Process in Mindanao”, Fr. Ramon Bernabe OMI suggests specific approaches that offer ideas to the parties in the peace process. His recommended approach fits-in the results of the discussion of factors/ issues affecting the peace negotiations.

a. Understanding the Issues

For Fr. Bernabe, this is the key initial approach. The consultations and interviews undertaken validate this approach. The results of the MTT consultations and interviews show that the issues affecting the peace negotiations have been muddled. Although everyone agrees that clarifying the Bangsamoro identity is key to self determination, other sectors like the Lumads do not agree to the definition which includes them as part of the Bangsamoro. Their having a separate identity, beliefs, and traditions puts them apart. This has been acknowledged by MMA 241 passed by the Regional Legislative Assembly of ARMM. **There should be a deeper study on who should comprise the Bangsamoro people, which should include the different laws and pronouncements that were already made in relation to this issue.**

The failure of the MOA-AD only showed that the framers did not understand the issue of constitutionality. One of the hallmarks of the Philippine Constitution is the separation between church and state. Thus, any negotiation must take cognizance of the Constitution.

The Christian settlers are aware of this when they questioned how the Bangsamoro, majority of whom are Muslims, will deal with a secular Philippine state. But according to Fr. Mercado, **“A constitutional amendment (not a revision) is not difficult for a government with good social capital and high credibility. This is the way it was done in most countries that have successfully negotiated peace agreements.”**

On the other hand, Cotabato Archbishop Orlando Quevedo said the process should be very clear with regards to the Philippine Constitution, and on the territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines. To him, **“even if difficult decisions are to be made in the run up to, or as a result of a future peace process, the people would be better prepared to do so if these matters were laid out clearly in front of them. As much as possible there should be no ambiguity, constructive or otherwise, with regards to these two matters, especially given our experience in August 2008.”**

b. Overcoming distrust

Fr. Bernabe points out the high level of distrust between Government and the military on one hand, and the Bangsamoro groups on the other. This distrust is regularly fuelled by military campaigns from both sides (i.e. the rampages of Commanders Bravo, Kato and Pangalian, and the AFP response undertaken on the pretext of catching the MILF commanders), ambushes, bombings, kidnappings, beheadings, and other crimes attributed to members of the MILF. This distrust is evident among the IDPs who fled their homes due to these militarist activities from both sides. With 94 civilians dead and 14 wounded among the 30,000 IDPs in Datu Piang, trust in the military has declined immensely among the Muslim population. On the other hand the Christians who were victims of the MILF attacks after the failure of the MOA-AD signing have not recovered from the incident, and still view the MILF with deep-rooted distrust.

Since the events that transpired cannot be undone with the stroke of a pen, **a sustainable peace building mechanism should be put in place. Both peace panels should take the initiative to bring up the root causes of the conflict, and introduce measures that will build trust in all the people.** Fr. Bernabe gives as an example the “US-led global war on terror which only reinforces the militaristic approach” and which cannot be judged as successful until now.

One of the community consultations mentioned the approach taken by President Lincoln in providing equal treatment to both the blacks and white races in the United States. Instead of separation, the policies were promoting trust and peaceful co-existence. This was reinforced by a statement from a known ‘critic’ of the peace negotiations who said, **“The peace process should not dwell in what separates people in Mindanao; rather it should focus on similarities, which can be the basis in building trust.”**

c. Winning public support

In all the consultations and interviews, the stakeholders wanted to be involved in the peace negotiations, many of them in favour of the localization of the peace process. This means that the issues to be discussed in the peace dialogue should be the result of consultations with various sectors particularly the grassroots, and whatever agreements reached should be validated in community consultations. As mentioned in one community consultation, the reason why the Christians were against the MOA-AD was because they only heard one version (the Pinol version), and although they know this was biased, there was no alternative.

This pointed to the need for a communication plan or structure which will answer the clamor for information regarding the progress of the peace talks. OPAPP Assistant Secretary, Atty. Camilo Montesa, admitted that there is yet no definite communication plan in mind. A respected Ustadz said that the government should initiate sincere steps to gain the trust and confidence of the Bangsamoro. Information dissemination and advocacy for all Filipinos should be done for them to be well-informed of the benefits and goodness of the agreements made by both parties.

d. Role of third party mediators

Recommendations for the International Contact Group (ICG) and the continuation of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) have been viewed as positive developments by a Key Informant, because there clearly is a need for an independent and neutral body in the peace process.

Another Key Informant said that international NGOs and donor agencies are playing vital and bigger roles. These are very timely since resources coming from the Philippine Government are very limited. The ICG will also take in the added role of seeing to the implementation of the provisions of the Peace Agreement.

Furthermor, the ICG will give a guarantee to the MILF that “what we commit, you will sign”. On the part of Government, the ICG is leverage because no country will be a party to an agreement for independence.

Some are still however suspicious that the Malaysians have a vested interest in Mindanao, which is the reason why there is always talk of replacing Malaysia as third party facilitator. According to one Key Informant, it would be better if the United Nations select the members of the ICG to assure neutrality and non-partisanship.

In a meeting with Assistant Secretary Montesa, the spokesperson for the GRP panel which was led by Ambassador Seguis, he informed the MTT about the outputs of the Kuala Lumpur meeting between the GRP and MILF. He said they discussed two points, one of which is the need for trust building.

There are however questions on the fact that the ICG is composed mainly of internationals. Some think that Mindanao based groups should also be part of the ICG, similar to how the Civilian Protection Component comprises of a mix of international and local NGOs.

e. Clarifying interlocking issues – the 1996 GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement and a GRP-MILF Comprehensive Compact

The parties to the agreement are the MILF and GRP. The MNLF should not be involved in the process because their concern is the implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement. However, it also represents a power bloc in the Muslim population which the MILF claims to represent. Furthermore, it is still recognized by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) as the legitimate representative of the Muslims in the Philippines. Government should open separate negotiations with the MNLF to tackle the non-implementation of some provisions in the Final Peace Agreement.

f. Intergovernmental coordination for the peace process

One of the complaints of local governments with regards to the 1996 GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement is their exclusion from the negotiations. This is especially true in the local governments of ARMM, where the local executives are not involved in the peace process, and in the implementation of the peace agreement. Consultations with LGU on the issues of the peace agreement were conducted, with the help no less of the MTT. But there should be efforts to give them a bigger role in the peace process itself. Eventually, peace in Mindanao will be lodged in the hands of these LGUs; so mechanisms to bring them into the process should already be initiated this early.

V. Results of the Mindanao Think Tank Core Group Meetings



Photo taken during the first MTT core group meeting. Seated clockwise from top left are Hon. Linda Ampatuan, Prof. Reydan Lacson, former Mayor Rodel Manara, Mrs. Tarhata Maglangit, Hon. Anwar Malang, Mr. John Unson, Mr. Edtami Mansayagan (partly hidden), Prof. Moner Bajunaid, Fr. Jonathan Domingo, and Ms. Hyriah Candao (with back to the camera, in headscarf).

A. First MTT Core Group Meeting, 26 August 2010

The first MTT core group meeting was arranged for organizational purposes and was undertaken for the members to define their roles and functions as a think tank in relation to the peace process in Mindanao. The consensus was for the body to address, in general, issues of peace in Mindanao.

The following agreed to be the core members of the MTT. All are leading active members of Government, civil society, the academe, and some sectors. Each with their own ideas and pursuits for peace in Mindanao.

1. Hon. Linda Ampatuan, Cotabato City Councilor, from the Local Government
2. Hon. Anwar Malang, Cotabato City Councilor and Youth Leader, from the Local Government and the Youth Sector
3. Mrs. Tarhata Maglangit, Executive Director of the Bangsamoro Women's Solidarity Forum, from the Women's Sector
4. Mr. Rodel Manara, Chairman of the Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Council, and former Cotabato City Mayor, from the Farming Sector
5. Professor Rey Dan Lacson, Director of the Notre Dame University Peace Center, from the Academe
6. Fr. Jonathan Domingo OMI, Chief Executive Officer of the Mindanao Cross weekly newspaper, from the Media
7. Ustadz Esmael Ebrahim, Director of the Halal Certification Board, from the Muslim Religious
8. Mr. Edtami Mansayagan, Lumad Leader and Former Commissioner of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, from the Indigenous Peoples (IPs)
9. Ms. Hyriah Candao, Leading Member of the United Youth for Peace and Development, from the Youth Sector
10. Professor Moner Bajunaid, Director of the MIND Center and Commissioner of the National Commission on Filipino Muslims, from the NGO Sector and Government
11. Mr. Guiamel Alim, Chairman of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) and Executive Director of Kadtuntaya Foundation, from the NGO Sector
12. Professor Abhoud Syed Lingga, Director of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies from Civil Society
13. Atty. Ishak Mastura, Chairman of the ARMM Board of Investments, from the ARMM Regional Government
14. Mr. Diamadel Dumagay, Director of the Regional Planning and Development Office of the ARMM, from the ARMM Regional Government

In addition to those who agreed to be MTT core group members, the others who were invited committed their best efforts to attend the MTT activities. Unfortunately, they could not commit their membership to the MTT given time constraints and possible conflicts of interests. These included:

Dr. Danda Juanday, Executive Director of the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA)

Mr. John Unson, reporter of the Philippine Star

Mr. Nash Maulana, reporter of the Philippine Daily Inquirer

As the months progressed, the following invited participants regularly attended the MTT activities:

Philippine Army Major Carlos Sol Jr, Head of Secretariat for the GRP-CCCH (Coordinating Committee for Cessation of Hostilities)

Dr. Norma Gomez of the Notre Dame University who was involved in the Konsult Mindanao and Dialogue Mindanao consultations on the peace process

Mr. Essex Gugiento of the Notre Dame Peace Center.

The following organizations and institutions were also constantly present when invited to the MTT activities, through various representatives:

Mindanao Peoples Caucus - Bantay Ceasefire

Nonviolent Peaceforce

United Youth for Peace and Development (UnYPaD)

Mindanao Human Rights Action Center (MinHRAC)

Moslem Organization of Government Officials and Professionals (MOGOP)

Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG)

Notre Dame University

B. Second MTT Core Group Meeting, 7 October 2009

At the second MTT core group meeting, a proposed Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) was discussed. This was recommended during the first core group meeting as a means whereby the main actors to the peace process, together with the help of key stakeholders, could generate support and better understanding for the peace process. This comes after the sad experience of the failure of the MOA-AD, which for many observers was a matter of misunderstanding of the botched agreement, and an absence of knowledge about it and its potential benefits.

After much discussion, the proposed JAI document (*see box, next page*) was finalized and sent to both panels through the HD Centre for their consideration. At the time it was believed that both parties would welcome such a proposal given its joint nature, its purpose, and given the fact that it would be supported by the MTT and the HD Centre. Unfortunately, the parties needed more time to get ready for such a joint endeavor, and so the JAI idea was not pursued.

Nonetheless, as the MTT activities continued, it became more and more apparent that such an advocacy initiative is definitely needed. Whether or not this is pursued by either or both of the parties, or just by the stakeholders. The cost of the peace process succumbing to the pressures as a result of misconceptions is simply too high, and the Mindanao peace process cannot afford another setback as the MOA-AD fiasco in August 2008.

With this said, the JAI will have to be revisited at some point in the near future. As to whether it will be implemented - jointly or otherwise, or entirely by the stakeholders - is just a matter of time.

Mindanao Think Tank - Joint Advocacy Initiative
“Breaking Walls and Building Bridges”
A Proposal of the Mindanao Think tank

Mandate:

An independent body to assist the two parties (in the peace negotiation) whose task is to:

- a. inform the public about the developments in the peace negotiations;
- b. provide and communicate feedback to the two parties;
- c. promote/advocate for peaceful resolution of conflicts

Operation:

- a. The JAI would be overseen by the two parties but would be staffed by independent personnel
- b. It will be counselled by the Mindanao Think Tank for ideas and direction
- c. It will be connected to the ICG by the HD Centre
- d. It may be led by an expatriate with expertise
- e. It would have offices in Manila, Zamboanga City, Cotabato City, Iligan City, Jolo, and Datu Piang

List of Intended Audience:

- a. MILF and its supporters
- b. Christian settlers in Mindanao
- c. National govt., ARMM and LGU
- d. CSOs, NGOs, International NGOs
- e. Youth and women
- f. National and local media
- g. Lumads
- h. MNLF
- i. Traditional leaders
- j. Religious sector and the academe
- k. Influential business organizations in Manila and Mindanao

Desired Outcome:

- a. Better understanding of the peace process by communities and key stakeholders
- b. Better understanding of each community's needs and fears by the 2 panels
- c. Improved support for the peace process
- d. Dispelling rumours and misconceptions

Core messages:

Breaking Walls and Building Bridges

- a. Information on developments in the peace process
 - Peace process mechanisms
 - Substantive issues discussed
 - Controversial issues or unsettled issues
- b. Feedback from stakeholders on the peace process
 - Results of community consultations and Key Informant interviews
- Results of MTT-RTD
- c. Perceptions on peace and development
 - Local Interpretation of peace (from BUC study)
 - Economic aspirations of the Bangsamoro people
 - Others such as the “Root of the Mindanao conflict”, etc.

Activities (methodology for getting the message across):

- a. Regular press conferences by the two parties
- b. Seminars and fora with key stakeholders on understanding the agreement
- c. A weekly TV talk show
- d. A weekly radio talk show
- e. Printed journals, brochures, press releases
- f. Internet blogs and chats and web pages
- g. Sitcom, dramas, spot radio messages
- h. Sporting events and parades
- i. Pins, car stickers, billboards
- j. Surveys and grassroots consultation
- k. Targeting peace zone development

Feedback mechanism to determine how the target audience responded to the message:

- a. Community consultations with Lumads, Christians, and Bangsamoro people
- b. Round Table Discussions of the Mindanao Think Tank
- c. Interview of key informants

C. Third MTT Core Group Meeting, 15 January 2010

The third Mindanano Think Tank core group meeting was designed to discuss the talking points of the reconvened GRP-MILF peace talks. These same talking points were the research/discussion topics during the MTT activities previous to this meeting, namely the review of related literature, the key informant interviews, and the grassroots community consultations. The results of these activities were constantly collated and updated in the manner as shown in Parts III and IV of this publication monograph, and reported and analyzed during this third MTT core group meeting.

As a result of the meeting, a framework was proposed to be used for further analysis (*see below*). This was designed based on the talking points of the peace dialogue, i.e. peace talks/negotiations, and identifies the strategic issues, tactical results of the consultations, gaps and gives subsequent preliminary recommendations.

This approach was unanimously decided on by the MTT core group members in recognition of the opportunity presented by the membership in the International Contact Group of the HD Centre. For the MTT core group, using this alternative conceptual framework for discussions, to depart from the usual consultations conducted by other groups, could give the results of the Mindanao Think Tank more relevance and usefulness to the peace process, its actors, and stakeholders.

Analysis of Issues, Gaps, and Recommendations

Talking Points in the Peace Dialogue	“Strategic” Issues	“Tactical” or result of consultations	Gaps identified	Preliminary Recommendations
Identity	-13 Moro Tribes -13 Moro Tribes + -Lumads + those married to Moros -Those seeking self-determination	-Lumads want to be excluded -Some Muslims do not want the word Moro -All tribes claim to be first nation	-Reconciling claims for self determination -Should identity be: Inclusive? Exclusive?	-Study of legal definitions in the constitution and RA 9054 -Study of the role of Bangsamoro identity in the peace process
Governance	-Associative Relations -Highest degree of autonomy -Expansion of ARMM -Unconstitutionality of Asso. Rel.	-Performance of ARMM a negative factor -Shariah/Tribal laws should be part of Phil. Jurisprudence -Refusal to be part of ARMM -Need for charter-change to allow more powers	-Improving the image of ARMM -Scope of Sharia that can be adopted to Phil. Jurisprudence -Process of expanding ARMM -Revision in the constitution	-Study of asymmetrical arrangements between the national and the sub-state -Study of the Shariah that can be applied to ARMM situation -Study of Tribal governance
Resources	-75-25 sharing -50-50 sharing -Regalian/LGC provision on control of resources	-Everyone positive to sharing arrangement -Multiple titles/ownership of some lands	-What sharing to adopt? -How to localize control over resources in: Constitution? Local Govt. Code?	-Study on sharing arrangements -Popularizing info on issue of land tenureship
Restitution	-Defining of ancestral lands -Titling of ancestral lands -Monetary claims for dispossessed -Dev. Projects in Conflict affected communities (CAC)	-Lumads want IPRA -Encroachment of AD in titled lands -More comprehensive program for CAC -Acceptability of BDA	-How to reconcile IPRA with MOA-AD? -Who will handle compensation or reparation claims? -Who will implement CAC reconstruction?	Develop master plan for CACs -short term -medium term -long term Identify super agency to handle all CAC reconstruction activities
Security	-Establishment of regional security force -DDR	-Localization of security mechanism -Tribal structure part of security force -Need for civilian protection	-Who will be armed? -Relationship of regional to national forces? -Functionality of Civilian protection mission	-Study of para-military units (on-going) -Function and composition of Civilian Protection Mission
Cross-cutting		-Distrust and prejudice apparent -Conflicting view on peace	-How to live in peaceful co-existence -Revision of educ. Curriculum in ARMM?	-Assessment of existing initiatives in curr. integration in ARMM -Inter-faith dialogues
Transitional justice			How to promote Reconciliation and justice?	Education activities that includes: -Culture of Peace -Reduction of Prejudice -Intercultural dialogue
Implementation issues	-International Monitoring Team	Role of IMT and other mechanisms established such as the CCCHS, CPM, ICG	-Avoiding the problems experienced by the Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF	-Study of issues in relation to implementation of agreements -Legislative orders in support of the peace agreement -Institutionalizing peace mechanisms

D. Other MTT Core Group Meetings

In addition to the previous meetings, the MTT core group also supported a forum and roundtable discussion in Manila on the GRP-MILF peace process, and held meetings with eminent persons whose visits to the Philippines were organized by the HD Centre. The forum in Manila was in partnership with the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, while the meetings with eminent persons included Gerry Kelly, formerly of the Irish Republican Army, Omar Dajani of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and former Sudanese Ambassador and United Nations Envoy to Burundi, Nureldin Satti.

Forum and Roundtable Discussion in Manila on the Peace Process

On 5 February 2010, the Mindanao Think Tank supported and attended a forum and roundtable discussion entitled, “The GRP-MILF Peace Process: the Continuing Search for a Negotiated Solution to a Deep-Rooted Armed Conflict”. This was in cooperation with the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research (PIPVTR) and the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies (IBS), and was held at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Among the lead speakers were Ambassador Rafael Seguis, then Chairman of the GRP Peace Negotiating Panel for Talks with the MILF, who articulated the Government position. Dr. Cesar Pobre of the Office of Strategic and Special Studies of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Atty. Nasser Marohomasalic, Convenor of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy and Chairman of the Muslim Legal Assistance Foundation gave the academic and civil society perspectives, respectively.

MTT Meeting with Gerry Kelly and Omar Dajani

On 25 May 2010, the MTT core group and invited guests from the Government ceasefire office and the International Monitoring Team met with Gerry Kelly and Omar Dajani. They had a lively conversation with the guest international negotiators. Following were the highlights:

- On the possibility of undergoing a transition period, what is important is that there will be a continuation of the peace process and that the process has a strong facilitator (the U.S. was suggested because the GRP is thought to be afraid of them). Furthermore, the peace process must also be popularized (the MTT should do this) not just in Cotabato but also in the entire Philippines. The stakeholder community must also be well defined and engaged - including both small and large parties since if more people are involved the more popular it becomes. Stress was given to the need for public scrutiny, talking to both parties, doing back channel negotiations and second track negotiations, especially since some issues are very complex (the example of allocation of sovereignty over Jerusalem was cited).
- It was also suggested that all these be pursued as Confidence Building Measures, and that each of the various activities must have substantial coverage of issues. In Preparation for this, what civil society such as the MTT could do is to experiment by getting a set of people who don't like each other in a room, getting them to brainstorm, and then document the things that they don't like about each other. These 'lateral actions', conversations, agreements, and involvement of the civil society do a lot to help move the process ahead.
- **Among the hard issues that really need to be addressed in the peace process in Mindanao are the biases. Moros are looked down upon, untrusted. It is a very insecure community. The prolonging of the peace process means more waiting for the people in Mindanao. The more they wait, the more the gaps become big. This is all because of prejudice, and the people, especially the youth, are now getting impatient.**



Photo taken during the MTT meeting with Gerry Kelly and Omar Dajani. Seated at the far end of the table fronting the camera are Kelly, Dajani, and HD Centre mediation advisor and Philippine country representative David Gorman.

- The need for a shift in the peace process was also suggested, given the lack of ownership by the people, the lack of owning the problem. A “trusting dialogue” between Muslims and non-Muslims was recommended. The people of Mindanao should know how to own first the problem. As an example of this is that Christian settlers in Mindanao do not realize the validity of the claim of Bangsamoro.
- **The possibility of succes and sustainability in approaching such a situation is something that one can be hopeful for. Putting or accepting a settler as a resident into a community is not necessarily a bad idea because the settlers have their influence and it would always be better to be talking to each other, rather than engaging in conflict.**
- Not all Mindanaons know about the MOA-AD. They only learned about it after its fall in August 2008. But if serious discussions about this are continuous, eventually there will be acceptance. But if not, each set of leaders who come and go will just forget about it, and the Mindanao peace process will always be starting from scratch. There should be clearer understanding of the problems and continuous searching for solutions.
- Another perspective on this, however, was that clearly there are biases on the understanding of the MOA-AD. In addition, there is a sense of fear regarding the desire for change during the new administration of President Aquino, especially with too much high expectations of the new Government.
- For the part of the Indigenous Peoples, just like the Bangsamoro, there is also that feeling of exclusion. They think the process of negotiations are alike and much has to be learned as the process goes.
- The fighting in North Cotabato Province in Mindanao did not actually start with the fall of the MOA-AD, but two months prior. There were also movements of armed MILF members because of the floodings that took place at that time, but admittedly there were reports of killings while the evacuations took place. After the fall of the MOA-AD, there in fact were negotiations taking place between the Ceasefire Committees and the leaders of the MILF’s 105th Base Command (which is blamed to have caused one of the rampages at the time), and it was learned that they did not understand what the MOA-AD was all about. They thought it was a problem of agriculture. More worryingly, they thought that the MOA-AD was about land that was to be returned to them, or new land that would be given to them. The same could be said of the Christian local government leaders who opposed the MOA-AD. Then North Cotabato Vice Governor Pinol’s ignorance of the MOA-AD resulted in the issuance of the TRO against it, and its declaration of unconstitutionality.
- **The problem of the peace process in Mindanao is a problem of transparency. To popularize this and gather support for it, every stakeholder has to be engaged. It also has to be disclosed and explained directly to all the groups in order for the negotiations and its possible implications to be fully understood. Just as importantly, while all this is happening, peace should be maintained on the ground.**
- A perspective of a member of the International Monitoring Team was that seemingly there are no rules for too much attention on the MOA-AD. It is all a debate that has been recurring over and over again. Perhaps it is simply a matter of looking at it from different views. While this is taking place, the people are suffering so there is also the need to focus on development. For now, the legal framework has gotten Mindanao nowhere.
- In response to these concerns, the international negotiators advised that the role of civil society in the peace process is how can it help and provide different ideas and put it on the agenda. The two parties are discussing it within their own groups and finding out different solutions for the peace process. Hopefully the parties will soon also discuss it between themselves during formal talks.
- There is really a need for the constant effort to convince the Government to act. This was the experience of Northern Ireland with the governments of both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Without the willingness of Government to move the process forward, there is very little that can be achieved.
- Finally, three anecdotes were shared.
 1. In Palestine, what was done in the effort to turn Israeli public opinion in the favor of the Palestinians was to focus on American Jews. A powerful advocate is necessary to influence a powerful actor. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this powerful actor is the US President, who cannot turn a blind eye to his Jewish constituents.
 2. **The strategy of the Palestenian Authority is to focus on their own issues, and put the issues up for negotiation - a unilateral approach. For Dajani, “We don’t care if we have partners or not. We will prove to the world that the relations between our civil society and Government is strong and transparent. A little bit of self-help is also necessary.”**
 3. Civil society here in Mindanao, and the experience of the MOA-AD, can be pursued as a peace process experiment. And success can actually be achieved in this case. One way that this can happen is to pursue a strong partnership between civil society and Government, and perhaps write a book about it for others to emulate.



Photo taken during the MTT meeting with Ambassador Nureldin Satti (speaking into microphone).

MTT Meeting with Ambassador Nureldin Satti

On 17 August 2010, the MTT core group and invited guests from the youth, academe, the Government ceasefire office, and various NGOs met with Ambassador Nureldin Satti. This meeting took place during the fourth MTT workshop and roundtable discussion. Following were the highlights of the MTT discussion with Ambassador Satti:

- The problem of Southern Sudan began with decades of mis-governance by successive Governments in Khartoum. This has resulted in the South being very much marginalized and deprived compared with the North.
- Resulting from such marginalization and deprivation, a civil war transpired. When the Government in Khartoum decided that they could not beat the SPLM militarily in the South, they entered into a peace process, and in 2005 a peace deal was struck. Part of this deal was the agreement that a referendum would be conducted six years after the signing of the peace deal.
- But the implementation of this peace deal has been far from perfect. Sudan is the only country with two UN peacekeeping missions ongoing at the same time. This shows how mismanaged the peace process is in Sudan.
- Popular consultations have not been seriously pursued in order to find out from the people of Sudan if the 2005 peace deal has been satisfactorily implemented.
- There are troublesome implications on self determination for South Sudan, should it win at the referendum: no less than 16 African countries can take precedence from this.
- Looking deeper, are secession and self determination the answers to the problems of governance in Southern Sudan and other African countries? The answer is, 'No.'
- Seeking and providing answers to this is a role that the communities, the civil society, groups like the MTT should play and advise the GRP and MILF on.
- The Sudanese experience in minority representation in Government dates back to the British colonial era when 500 posts were opened-up for "Sudanization". Of the 500, only 8 went to Southern Sudanese. After the 2006 peace deal, so much power was transferred to the Southerners in both the Government in South Sudan and in the National Government in Khartoum.
- The Sudanese experience in Right to Self Determination began when their neighboring countries underwent 'confederation' processes. If Sudan did the same, it is possible that the civil war could have been averted.
- This 'mistake' of not following was a result of successive Governments and political class in Sudan having 'one-way' thinking: in 1983 Shari'ah was introduced, Bashir came to power through a coup, the Constitution was changed to one with very Islamist tendencies – all this resulted in the South being more and more marginalized and deprived until they eventually pursued a rebellion.
- **There has not been a lot of community involvement in the peace process in Sudan between the North and South. But today, in Darfur, there has been a rise of civil society groups and they are now part of the peace process. As a result there are now consultations in the process in Darfur that were not present in the North-South peace process.**
- But should these consultations not answer the right and important questions, the only recourse is to constantly build on the process. It is never an easy task, but it must be done.

- Advice to the GRP and MILF, while it is good to pursue political negotiations, do we truly know what context we want to see ourselves in, what future we want?
- **It is good to talk about power and wealth sharing, but has the bigger picture truly been drawn up and understood? Do we know what it is that we want to achieve, what we want our country to look like in the future?**

VI. Results of the Mindanao Think Tank Workshops and Roundtable Discussions



Photo taken during the Mindanao Think Tank workshop and roundtable discussion number 1. Photo shows then GRP peace panel member, Dr. Ronald Adamat (fourth from right) taking questions. Others in photo are (left to right), Prof. Eva Tan, Director Diamadel Dumagay, Prof. Moner Bajunaid, Adamat, Mr. David Gorman, Atty. Ishak Mastura, and Prof. Reydan Lacson

A total of four MTT workshops and roundtable discussion (RtDs) were undertaken, each focusing on a different set of issues, perspectives, and concerns relative to the peace process in Mindanao. These are:

- MTT Workshop/RtD No. 1, held on 20 February 2010 on “Updates on the GRP-MILF Peace Process from the Perspective of the Philippine Government”;
- MTT Workshop/RtD No. 2, held on 26 February 2010 on “The GRP-MILF Peace Process from the Perspective of the Civil Society”;
- MTT Workshop/RtD No. 3, held on 28 June 2010 on “The Critique of Various Consultation Initiatives on the Mindanao Peace Process”; and
- MTT Workshop/RtD No. 4, held on 17 August 2010, an “Assessment of the Mindanao Think Tank”.

These workshops/RtDs are extensively covered and discussed in the different monographs of this MTT publication series.

- The presentations made during MTT Workshop/RtD No. 1 are included in the publication monograph entitled “Perspectives and Issues Relevant to the Mindanao Peace Process”
- The presentations made during MTT Workshop/RtD No. 2, are included in the publication monograph entitled “Recommendations to the New Philippine President from Prominent Observers to the Peace Process”
- MTT Workshop/RtD No. 3 has the publication monograph entitled “Review of the Mindanao Consultations” dedicated all to itself.
- Finally, the results of MTT Workshop/RtD No. 4 are contained in this monograph.

A. MTT Workshop/RtD No. 1, 20 February 2010, Notre Dame University, Cotabato City

The first MTT workshop and roundtable discussion was attended by over sixty participants from the MTT core group and guests from the NGO sector, the academe, and the youth. These included the Bangsamoro Development Agency, I-Watch, Bangsamoro Center for Justice, Mindanao Peoples Caucus – Bantay Ceasefire, Nonviolent Peaceforce, UnYPAD (United Youth for Peace and Development), and students and teachers.

The workshop/RtD was entitled: “Updates on the GRP-MILF Peace Process from the Perspective of the Philippine Government”, and featured two resource speakers. The main speaker was a member, at that time, of the GRP peace negotiating panel for talks with the MILF, Dr. Ronald L. Adamat. He spoke at length about the positions of the GRP peace panel at the formal negotiations. *(Dr. Adamat’s presentation and the subsequent open forum can be read in the Annex of this publication monograph.)*

The second speaker was Alberto Hamoy Kimpo, project officer of the HD Centre for the Mindanao Think Tank. He reported on the results of the GRP peace panel consultations with various Local Government Unit (LGU) Chief Executives from the conflict areas in Mindanao, which the Mindanao Think Tank supported and which Mr. Kimpo attended. *(Mr. Kimpo’s presentation can be read in the Annexes of publication monograph number 2 entitled “Review of the Mindanao Peace Process Consultations”. Results of the subsequent workshop can be read on pages 29-31 of publication monograph number 4 entitled “Perspectives, Issues, and Concerns of the Mindanao Peace Process”.)*

Ustadz Esmail Ebrahim, chairman of the non-governmental organization Halal Certification Board, and member of the MTT core group was tasked with presenting an overview of the peace process in Mindanao. This was meant to set the tone for discussions. *(Ustadz Ebrahim’s presentation can be read on pages 12-16 of publication monograph number 1 entitled “Recommendations of Prominent Observers of the Peace Process to the New Philippine President”.)*

The following bullet points highlight the discussions that took place during the first MTT workshop and roundtable discussion:

1. It was raised that there are consensus points that need to be discussed in the formal talks. The public should be informed on what these are, and furthermore, it has been observed that the Government appears to be deviating from them. Unfortunately, Dr. Adamat could not respond directly to this, saying there are details that cannot be divulged given an outstanding agreement entered into by the parties, with the approval of the third party facilitator. To this, it was felt that the process is not being transparent. For the MTT, the people should be included in the discourse since it is they who shall be directly affected by the outcome of the peace process.

2. Another issue raised was the fact that the ARMM Regional Government is not represented in the peace processes in Mindanao, even if it potentially holds an important role to play since it has the experience in regional governance, regional legislation, fiscal autonomy, dealing with the donor community, etc. Even if the ARMM is not formally part of the peace processes, it can serve as a good resource, given that the ARMM is the biggest stakeholder group in the areas of conflict, comprising of five provinces, two cities, 120 municipalities and 4.1 million people. Dr. Adamat responded that various ARMM LGU chief executives have been consulted. But with the ARMM Regional Government itself sitting down with the Government peace panel in any of its activities, that this has yet to be considered by the GRP panel.

3. Another concern raised dealt with the peace policy of Government being a combination of different policies: military pursuit, policy of attraction, development projects, and peace talks. The question was asked, therefore, if the Government is pursuing a ‘unified’ agenda, or is it just the agenda of the Executive branch. It was further added that there still remains a high level of prejudice against the Bangsamoro, and because of this there will continue to be ‘spoilers’ to the peace process. In response, according to Dr. Adamat the Government is really sincere in seeking to address the problems that are the root causes of the conflict in Mindanao, and in pursuing peace. But it must be considered that Government is a system, it is led by Laws, and it has three co-equal branches. It must be known and accepted that this is how Government is and this is how Government works. It is primarily because of this that the only things that Government can offer are those that fall within the Constitution.

4. A comment was raised during the meeting that the GRP position seems to be very cautious, lacking the ambition and drive to really put exciting proposals forward. An example of this could be a proposal

aimed at some degree of 'demilitarization', given the overly-militarized society in the ARMM. Some more aggressiveness should be put forth in Government's executive doables, in order for it's position to be more interesting and acceptable.

5. An observation raised was based on how the GRP Panel in a previous forum said it would not negotiate outside of the parameters of the Constitution. How can negotiations therefore be pursued, especially if changes in the Constitution are needed. As a result, the GRP might not be able to easily get out of the positions it has put itself in. It would also be helpful to see the MILF appreciate the position its counterpart finds itself in, as obviously there will be difficulty if one of the parties insists on something that the other party simply cannot give. Dr. Adamat responded by saying that he agreed very much with the echoed sentiments, and that Government is really using an approach that is frankly the best way forward, and the only way the GRP can move ahead in this process. This simply was the reality.

6. It was asserted that the identity issue should no longer be made part of the discourse given that this has already been defined by law (R.A. 9054), whereby the term 'Bangsamoro' encompasses only the Muslims in the area of autonomy. To keep going back to the identity issue denies its resolution which was part of the MNLF struggle. It was suggested that we accept this as it is.

7. A comment was raised that seemingly all topics pertaining to the peace process have already been studied thoroughly, but it remains to be Government that has yet to deliver its part. It should therefore be asked why Government seems to find it difficult to deliver. A further concern was even expressed pertaining to the ARMM, and how it seems that the Government wants it to fail.

8. On the issue of security, a gap is apparent in terms of the need for strong governance that can deliver a secure environment for the people. It was recommended that human security must be central in the peace effort, and this could be achieved by complete disarmament and total demilitarization. Another gap is the proliferation of firearms in areas where there is armed conflict. As a recommendation, all armed groups in the area should be disarmed including the rebels. Only the AFP and the PNP should then be allowed to possess arms.

9. It was raised that the displacement of the original inhabitants of Mindanao was the result of Government policies. The beneficiary settlers should not be deemed at fault for this. Instead, it should be Government who should acknowledge the displacement that their policies resulted in. With this, reparations can then be made by either having Government return the lands or pay for the lands taken.

10. Finally, it is for the sense of ownership of the peace process that many people are asked for their ideas on issues related to the conflict in Mindanao, and its resolution. The grievances of the LGUs were based on the shortcomings of the ARMM, asking why the things needed weren't delivered by the ARMM and by the MNLF. The MILF's clamour is on the basis that the improvements supposed to be delivered by the 1996 Peace Agreement and the ARMM we're not delivered. It is for this reason that the MILF and the Bangsamoro need to continue the struggle.

Photo taken during the Mindanao Think Tank workshop and roundtable discussion number 1. Photo shows Prof. Reydan Lacson facilitating the workshop process and eliciting a reaction from Atty. Ishak Mastura (gesturing). Also in photo (with back to the camera) is then GRP peace panel member, Dr. Ronald Adamat.



B. MTT Workshop/RtD No. 2, 26 February 2010, Sardonyx Hotel, Cotabato City

The second MTT workshop and roundtable was attended by over forty participants, including the MTT core group and participants coming from the youth, academe, the Government ceasefire office, and various NGOs. These included the Mindanao Peoples Caucus–Bantay Ceasefire program, Nonviolent Peaceforce, UnYPAD (United Youth for Peace and Development), the GRP-Coordinating Committee on Cessation of Hostilities, students and teachers.

The workshop/RtD was entitled: “The GRP-MILF Peace Process from the Perspective of the Civil Society”. It focused on the results of the Konsult Mindanao consultation initiative on the peace process conducted by the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC). This was presented by Dr. Norma Gomez of Notre Dame University who was a local partner of BUC in the conduct of these consultations. *(Dr. Gomez’s presentation can be read in the Annexes of publication monograph number 2 entitled “Review of the Mindanao Peace Process Consultations”.)*

Also presented and discussed was a paper by a senior Muslim scholar and MTT core group member, Professor Abhoud Syed Lingga of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies. Prof. Lingga’s paper tackles one of the possible causes for the breakdown of the Mindanao peace process, that he refers to as ‘spoilers’. *(Prof. Lingga’s presentation can be read on pages 10-16 of publication monograph number 4 entitled “Perspectives, Issues, and Concerns of the Mindanao Peace Process”.)*

A final topic which was supposed to be discussed at the first workshop and roundtable discussion, but had to be postponed, was also covered. This was a comprehensive presentation of the Ceasefire Mechanisms of the GRP-MILF peace process by the Head of Secretariat of the GRP-CCCH (Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities), Philippine Army Major Carlos Sol Jr. *(Major Sol’s presentation can be read on pages 17-34 of publication monograph number 1 entitled “Recommendations of Prominent Observers of the Peace Process to the New Philippine President”.)*

Photo taken during the Mindanao Think Tank workshop and roundtable discussion number 2. Photo shows Prof. Abhoud Syed Lingga delivering his presentation on possible causes for the breakdown of the Mindanao Peace Process. Also in photo are (from left) Prof. Moner Bajunaid and Mr. Guiamel Alim.



The following bullet points highlight the discussions that took place during the second MTT workshop and roundtable discussion:

1. A major concern expressed was the observation that there are various powerful vested interest groups such as politicians, businessmen, church leaders, etc. who are spoiling the peace process. More dialogue initiatives should be pursued with the stakeholders and constituents if the efforts of the powerful vested interest groups are to be countered and hopefully negated.
2. It was confirmed that it is true that some Church leaders, when the issue of MOA-AD blew up, pretended that they didn’t know about the MOA-AD. However, there are also many among the clergy who support peace. They should not be ignored because of the reinforcement they can give to the spirit of the peace process. The challenge is how to echo this down to the Basic Ecclesiastical Communities, the grassroots of the Catholic hierarchy. This should be given importance to create awareness. Let them know at the BEC level what is happening. Give directions on giving the awareness.
3. This was seconded. In addition to BECs, the peace process should go down to the grassroots of the other Christian groups, the Bangsamoro and the IPs. Only in this manner can the influence of the various powerful interest groups be met.

4. More key people should also begin talking about the peace process and gathering support for it, such as the Ulama. They should also have a collective drive. A concern, however, was creating a venue, since in the BUC, the Ulama belong to the Ulama league of the Philippines. The members of the Ulama league are all based in Lanao. Very few Ulamas of other tribes, like the Maguindanao, are members.

5. A question was raised as to who exactly are the people that Government talks to, or are perceived to have influence over the Government? It is important to find out what their concerns and fears are about any possible outcome of the peace process. It should be considered that there are existing prejudices against the Bangsamoro. How long before this can be stopped in order for the peace process to be enhanced?

6. The question was again raised as to Government's sincerity in solving Mindanao's peace problem. This stems from the very vocal opposition of some local government leaders, and the silent but equally deep opposition of others, to the peace talks. Somehow – assuming Government is truly sincere about this – recognition and support by LGUs for decisions made by the GRP peace panel should be ensured by Government.

7. Given the experience of the failure of the MOA-AD in August 2008, the power of the GRP peace panel is once again in question. Why in particular was the decision of the GRP panel overturned by the Supreme Court? To address this in the future, participation of the legislative and judiciary might be needed at the peace talks. Or at the very least, executive, judicial and legislative dynamics be improved within the three branches of Government.

8. A welcome respite to the many challenges of the Mindanao peace process was the Ceasefire Mechanism, which following the presentation of Major Sol seemed to be in good place and jointly functioning between Government and the MILF.

9. In addition to the formal GRP and MILF CCCH (Coordination Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities), the Civilian Protection Component (CPC) mechanism was also warmly received, given its intended focus on non-combatants. The desired clarity on the CPC was well received from Major Sol's presentation, especially from participants from Nonviolent Peaceforce and Bantay Ceasefire.

10. An important point stressed was the fact that many of the ceasefire violations are directly caused or exacerbated by factors outside of the conflict between Government and the MILF. Among the most notable are family feuds or clan wars, referred to as "*rido*", as well as land ownership issues. Stakeholders are encouraged to develop creative ways of addressing this concern.

C. MTT Workshop/RtD No. 3, 28 June 2010, Estosan Garden Hotel, Cotabato City

The third MTT workshop and roundtable discussion was attended by over forty participants from the MTT core group and the NGO community, academe and Government sectors. These included the MinHRAC (Mindanao Human Rights Action Center), MOGOP (Muslim Organization of Government Officials and Professionals), Nonviolent Peaceforce, UnYPAD (United Youth for Peace and Development) and teachers.

The workshop/RtD was entitled: "The Critique of Various Consultation Initiatives on the Mindanao Peace Process", and was meant at providing an honest critiquing of the various consultation initiatives undertaken by different NGOs and Government agencies/bodies. No less than seven consultations were thoroughly critiqued. These included Konsult Mindanao and Dialogue Mindanao, for which the resource person was Dr. Norma Gomez of Notre Dame University; the GRP peace panel consultations with LGU leaders for which Alberto Hamoy Kimpo of HD Centre was the resource person; the MILF consultations with IP community leaders for which Prof. Eva Tan was the resource person; the congresses and assemblies of the Consultation of Bangsamoro Civil Society for which being its Chairman, Mr. Guiamel Alim (an MTT core group member) spoke at length; the policy forums of the Institute for Autonomy and Governance which was discussed by those who knew about one particular controversial policy forum that is said to have preempted the MOA-AD; and the Mindanao Think Tank which was discussed lengthily since most of the participants were MTT core group members.

The results of this third MTT workshop/RtD are extensively reported in the Mindanao Think Tank publication monograph number 2 entitled "*Review of the Mindanao Consultations*". The following bullet points highlight the discussion that took place:

1. A cross-cutting recommendation sought the consolidation of the results of all consultation initiatives, and the identification and harmonization of all 'doables' that have surfaced. Once drawn-up these should then be translated into concrete action plans, programs and agendas for use in the formal negotiation process.
2. Because there obviously still remains a wide awareness gap among the stakeholders about the peace process, the Mindanao Think Tank is also called upon to map out the concerns and nature of this gap by helping to identify the 'spoilers' and 'allies' to the peace process, and helping to understand their issues and concerns.

3. In addition to these, the MTT is also called upon to add focus on the 'communicative' nature of its desired dialogue process. This stems from the groundbreaking initiative of the MTT of providing inputs whenever it conducted any of its activities, which builds more support for the peace process and helps popularize it.

4. The MTT is called upon to initiate a dialogue process direct with the parties and the communities, especially now that it has already accomplished a significant amount of consultations and it has a significant advantage given the HD Centre's involvement in the International Contact Group. It is urged to focus on ideas for agreement and next steps on implementation.

5. Relative to the controversial IAG policy forum, if true, it is recommended that the issues raised during this forum be laid out and addressed since clearly those who were alarmed by this forum had legitimate fears that were important enough to warrant the issuance of a Temporary Restraining Order from the Philippine Supreme Court. These issues need to be identified, threshed out, and addressed, if the same disastrous consequences are to be avoided in the future.

6. The MILF consultations with the leaders of Indigenous Peoples communities greatly improved the respect given to, and engagement with, IPs in the peace process. However, the results of this consultation including the commitments made and the visions shared should be documented because only if written will these aspirations stand a better chance of implementation and enforcement.

7. There is a lot to be learned from the congresses and assemblies of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society that should be carefully considered in the peace process. Their documents should be studied for their positions on the negotiations since they present an alternative understanding of the Moros and their issues.

8. The results of the Konsult Mindanao consultation process could be useful for advocating for support to the peace process, given that it had a strong focus and solid findings on the perceptions and attitudes of people towards peace and towards the peace process. What will be key is the manner of 'messaging' these results so that they will truly contribute to the achievement of peace.

9. The Dialogue Mindanao consultation process results have been presented everywhere except in Central Mindanao where the heart of the matter lies. Perhaps it could be time to revisit the results of this consultation, and make these known to the stakeholders in the key areas of conflict, i.e. Cotabato City and Marawi, and Maguindanao, North Cotabato and Lanao del Sur.

10. One of the key results of the GRP Peace Panel consultations with the LGU chief executives dealt with the perceived failed autonomy in the ARMM. While it is true that the results of this and many previous consultations point to the need to implement drastic changes in the ARMM, it must also be done properly and fairly, starting with the need to also consult the ARMM Regional Government itself. Once attained, the ARMM must seriously undergo these changes if autonomy is still to be used as a means to achieve the political changes called for by the peace process.



Photo taken during the Mindanao Think Tank workshop and roundtable discussion number 3. Photo shows Prof. Eva Tan (standing) facilitating discussions.

D. MTT Workshop/RtD No. 4, 17 August 2010, Estosan Garden Hotel, Cotabato City

The fourth MTT workshop and roundtable discussion was attended by 20 participants including the MTT core group members, the youth, academe, the Government ceasefire office, and various NGOs.

This workshop/RtD had two parts. The first was a roundtable discussion featuring Ambassador Nureldin Satti, an eminent person from Sudan, whose visit to the Philippines was organized by HD Centre as part of its support to the GRP-MILF peace process. Ambassador Satti shared his experiences in conflict resolution, peace building and culture of peace, particularly in Sudan and other African countries. (*Documentation of Ambassador Satti's sharing with the MTT can be read on page 44 of this publication monograph, together with sharings from other eminent persons.*)

The second part of the workshop/RtD was an assessment of the Mindanao Think Tank. This resulted in the following:



Photo taken during the Mindanao Think Tank workshop and roundtable discussion number 4. Photo shows former Sudanese Ambassador Nureldin Satti (speaking into microphone) addressing the meeting during the first part of this gathering.

Gains of the project

- The MTT accomplished a large number of literature reviews, key informant interviews, community and sectoral consultations, meetings, and workshops/roundtable discussions throughout its 15-month existence,
- All these MTT activities resulted in an expansive and thorough wealth of information on the many issues, concerns, sentiments and dynamics surrounding the peace process in Mindanao.
- The MTT reached deep into Christian, Moro and Lumad society in Mindanao, as well as into the consciousness of concerned leaders, organizations and movements based in Manila, to understand the different aspects of the peace process.
- For many, the MTT provided the only link to the peace process soliciting inputs from them and providing updates on the peace process to them.
- The HD Centre's involvement in the International Contact Group (ICG) gave an opportunity for the results of all the MTT efforts to be elevated to the level of the two panels in the peace process, their principals, and to the actual formal talks themselves.
- Through many of its activities, the MTT brought the main actors of the peace process face to face with the stakeholders to help ensure that the former truly heard directly from the latter their concerns and sentiments.
- The MTT made possible the integration of the peace process in teaching Peace Education in the Academic curriculum. This is being initiated by MTT members coming from the academe.
- The results of the MTT have given rise to recommendations on how to move the peace process forward, most especially on how the ranks of the stakeholders can be strengthened in order for them to find a common voice that should be heard and considered.
- The MTT, through this series of publications, will be effectively disseminating the results of its activities to the actors and stakeholders of the peace process in Mindanao.

Lessons learned/Challenges for the MTT

- There is still a wide awareness gap among the stakeholders on the on-going peace process that needs to be filled.
- There is a need to identify and better understand the "spoilers and allies" to the peace process to better define and strategize how to reach a peace agreement and make sure it is publicly acceptable.
- The MTT experience showed that there is a need to get the Local Government Units more involved in the process. Most of them, at present, are silently observing how the new Government of President Aquino will be working on the Mindanao problem.
- Given all the information already derived, there is a need to identify and define what should be done now, what concrete steps should be taken, how efforts by stakeholders should be better organized and made more cohesive, and how the parties should be encouraged to take cognizance of what has already been achieved.
- The "bottom lines" of each party (including the facilitator), actor, stakeholder and observer should be made known. This way, it will be known what can be expected of each in terms of support, or opposition, to the peace process.
- Although a lot of consultations have already been conducted, there is no ownership among the stakeholders of the consultation processes. This is very important and should not be missed.
- There was no consensus made during most of these consultations. There was no synthesis made although the consultations and succeeding peace talks still center on the MOA-AD. Given the Supreme Court decision on this, creative ways should be developed in this regard.
- Government and the MILF should play a more active part in organizing or coordinating these consultations because the Supreme Court directive for more consultations was addressed to the two panels.
- Previous assessments felt that there were too many consultations going on, and the MTT should drop this strategy. However, the Mindanao Think Tank members also felt later that consultations still play a very important role in the process and should not be dropped entirely.
- There is a need for much more horizontal communication and engagement among the various religious and ethnic deonminations in Mindanao.
- What is important now is to move forward with the peace process. The stakeholders want peace and are tired of conflict. The parties must be made accountable and must deliver peace as soon as possible to the people of Mindanao.

(Recommendations arising from this MTT workshop/RtD are in Part VII Recommendations and Conclusion.)

VII. Recommendations and Conclusion

The Mindanao Think Tank has made a contribution to the stakeholders in its effort to engage with the main actors to the Mindanao peace process, namely the Philippine Government and the MILF.

Twenty-five consultations were conducted by the MTT wherein the grassroots communities and the sectors were sought for their opinions and concerns as regards the key peace process issues. Likewise, the MTT also gave the communities and sectors important updates on the GRP-MILF peace process, the implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement, and other national-level developments pertaining to peace in Mindanao.

Just as important, the Mindanao Think Tank also made a significant contribution to the Philippine Government and the MILF in their individual efforts to consult with the stakeholders. Four consultations by the GRP with the Local Government Units and one big consultation by the MILF with the Indigenous Peoples were assisted and attended by the MTT. In each of these consultations the MTT and the HD Centre helped design and implement the proceedings, provided resource persons, and echoed the latest results of the MTT activities.

To beef-up the substance and depth of its research, the MTT also conducted a survey of related literature and key informant interviews. These were helpful in designing the consultations and ensuring that the right questions were asked and answered. These were also crucial in making certain that the MTT and the focus of its activities remained timely and up to date, given the fast changing developments in the Mindanao peace process during the same period that the MTT pursued its initiatives.

The four MTT core group meetings and the four MTT workshops and roundtable discussions focused on processing the findings of all the activities, hearing the presentations of invited resource persons, and eliciting reactions from MTT members and guest participants through a roundtable discussion or a workshop. Each of these activities also provided recommendations on various aspects of the peace process. All meetings provided good venues whereby the stakeholders and the main actors positively engaged and earnestly tried to collaborate in developing solutions in aid of the peace process.

Finally, the results of the Mindanao Think Tank are being disseminated to the public through this series of publications. The MTT hopes this will elicit a greater understanding of the concerns of communities and sectors and the need for more engagement with them.

As the new administration of President Noynoy Aquino takes its place in the seat of the GRP side engaged in all the peace processes in Mindanao and the rest of the Philippines, the Mindanao Think Tank and the HD Centre hope that the MTT experience and these publications will help contribute to the effort for peace in Mindanao.

Much has already been learned, reported and recommended. However, as a final note, the MTT would like to reiterate a few of the many recommendations made throughout the Mindanao Think Tank's work. These surfaced during the last MTT workshop and roundtable discussion which was designed as an assessment.

- Initiate the development of a shared vision for all as regards putting an end to the conflict in Mindanao

Everyone is clamoring for change, this is the root of the MILF rebellion, and one of the pillars of the Aquino Administration's platform of government. The Lumads also want change in the way they are treated and marginalized by society. The Bangsamoro agree with the MILF, and for those who do not, they want to change the never-ending cycle of conflict and violence in Mindanao so that they can live peacefully and progress as they desire. The Christians surely want the same.

However, as pointed out by a guest international negotiator, does the MILF really know what it wants, and can this be a shared vision for all in Mindanao? Does the GRP know what it wants and what is driving it? If the GRP is ready to give-in to some of their demands, will this be in harmony with the desires of its other constituents? Will the Lumads, Bangsamoro and Christians agree to the shared vision of the MILF and the GRP, when one is developed?

Resulting from the various consultations, including the MTT findings, the positions of stakeholders and actors to the peace process are basically known. At the same time, the things that are needed to answer the root causes and exacerbating causes of conflict in Mindanao are also already known from previous studies. Can all these be harmonized in a way that solves the problems and the issues and, perhaps more crucially, in a manner that will be accepted by everyone as a shared vision for Mindanao?

- Initiate a dialogue process directly between the GRP/MILF and the communities and stakeholders leaders

A possible technique to help convince the GRP and the MILF about the positions of the stakeholders, and to ensure that the process is credible, a dialogue direct with grassroots communities could be considered. This would help bridge the gap between the panels and the grassroots, and would augment the consultations already conducted by each party with their constituents. What would be interesting is if the parties dialogued with communities with opposing views from theirs.

In addition to grassroots communities, dialogues among the GRP/MILF and leaders of stakeholders groups could also be initiated, since the voices of these leaders are important for their influence and ability to alter the pace and direction of the peace process. This would be part of the efforts to bring in the 'spoilers' and those opposed to the peace process for whatever reasons.

Finally, there needs to be dialogue among key stakeholder groups within Mindanao to develop a shared vision for Mindanao.

On the other hand, should the stakeholders leaders be open or supportive of the peace process, they could be helpful in the effort to popularize the peace process. Furthermore, their active involvement could result in their having a sense of ownership of the peace process - something sorely lacking today among the stakeholders.

- Fully utilize the results of all studies and consultations to develop concrete plans to implement desired societal changes and action steps

To maximize all previous consultations on the Mindanao peace process, ideas that surfaced should be summarized and simplified for easy understanding. Concrete plans and action steps should also be developed out of these results. Conflicting ideas could be subjected to surveys. Previous recommendations to study the gaps could also be looked into, such as those found on page 41 of this publication.

While it is desired that the peace process be popularized, its issues are often abstract and difficult to understand. Translating these into proactive and concrete plans and action steps makes the issues less challenging to bear for everyone concerned. This will also be beneficial in convincing others to more actively support the process.

- The implementation of a future peace agreement should already be discussed in consultations/dialogues

Implementation should already be given attention, since this is what stakeholders want to see - how a future peace agreement shall affect them and their communities. Naturally, it would be best if the implementation will be beneficial to all those affected. But for those who will not benefit, mitigating measures should already be developed. Certainly, since a peace agreement tries to instill societal changes, not everyone will be affected in a positive manner. There are those who will resist change. Those who fall under this category have to be carefully considered in order for them not to end up as 'spoilers' of the peace process.

- Revisit the Joint Advocacy Initiative proposed by the Mindanao Think Tank

Whether an advocacy initiative is pursued by either or both of the parties, or just by the stakeholders themselves, one must be undertaken. The community and sectoral consultations of the MTT were one of the rare occasions, if not the only occasion, wherein the communities and sectors consulted heard about the peace process or heard updates on it. This is an alarming fact given that the changes that could take place are substantial.

If the peace process is to gather support from the stakeholders, it has to endeavor for it. The proposed Joint Advocacy Initiative is one good method of doing this.

ANNEX: Presentation of Dr. Ronald Adamat at the Mindanao Think Tank Workshop/Roundtable Discussion No. 1

*Slide 1 of
Dr. Adamat's
Presentation*

Status of the GRP-MILF Peace Talks

Resumption of GRP-MILF Formal Peace Talks

- Two-day session in Kuala Lumpur (8-9 December 2009)
 - Resumption of Formal Talks: major breakthrough after more than a year of hiatus
 - Consensus to move forward with negotiations on Comprehensive Compact under an urgent timetable
 - Full attendance of ICG (Japan, UK, Turkey, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Asia Foundation, Conciliation Resources, Muhammadiyah) during opening and closing sessions
 - Other highlights included the renewal of IMT Terms of Reference, addition of IMT component on civilian protection, and reactivation of Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG)
-

Slide 2

January Exploratory Talks

- Panels met on 27-28 January 2010 to exchange drafts; adjourned without discussion
- Issuance of statement from the Facilitator stating:
 - ❖ Preservation of gains
 - ❖ Drafts to be studied and consulted with principals
 - ❖ Consult constituents on options for moving forward
- Panels agreed to meet again on 18-19 February in KL to resume talks

Slide 3

Salient Features of GRP Draft

Main Characteristics:

- Within the framework of 1987 Constitution
- Compliant with national laws
- Guided by SC decision on MOA-AD
- An evolving draft, a work in progress

Slide 4

Salient Features of GRP Draft

Key Principles:

- Acknowledges desire of Filipino Muslims to govern and be governed in a manner that is more attuned to their political, social and cultural roots
- Recognizes the need for efficient and effective governance that guarantees civil liberties and provides equitable opportunities for economic development

Slide 5

Salient Features of GRP Draft

Framework: 3 Proposed Sets of Actions

Slide 6



Continuing Consultations

Slide 7

- Continuing consultations and dialogues with stakeholders to gather inputs towards development of GRP Draft
- OPAPP to launch more dialogues and public "conversations" down to community level

In the Coming Days...

Slide 8

- Consultation activities by OPAPP and Panel
- Refinement of emerging GRP position
- Preparations for next round of talks
- Preparations for redeployment of IMT

ENDS

Following this presentation by Dr. Adamat, an open forum ensued. Dr. Alfonso Gonzales, a political science professor at Notre Dame University, spoke first and sought confirmation on news coming out in the media that the MILF chief negotiator, Mohagher Iqbal, had expressed the MILF's desire for a federal state for the Bangsamoro. This was confirmed by Dr. Adamat saying this has been made public by the MILF panel.

Director Diamadel Dumagay of the Regional Planning and Development Office of the ARMM, and a member of the MTT core group, took the floor next and opened up by saying that the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is a result of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the Government and the MNLF. Currently the implementation of this agreement is still undergoing a final review. Moving to his point, Dir. Dumagay reacted to various negative sentiments raised against the ARMM during Government's various consultations in regard to its current peace efforts with the MILF, and to how the ARMM Regional Government is excluded in the Mindanao peace process, in General. He had two main comments to share.

First was the fact that the ARMM Regional Government is not represented in either the review of the implementation of the 1996 Agreement, nor in the GRP-MILF peace process. For Dir. Dumagay, the ARMM has an important role to play since it has the experience in regional governance, regional legislation, fiscal autonomy, etc. These need to be taken into serious consideration since they are based on real experiences, and can thus give inputs to whatever ideas are put forward for either of these processes. Further to these, Dir. Dumagay also pointed out that the ARMM Regional Government also has experience in dealing with the donor community for peace related, infrastructure related, and development related initiatives which are sure to be significant to the pursuit and implementation of any future agreement. As of the moment, he continued, even if the ARMM is not yet formally part of these peace processes, it can already serve as a good resource. He stressed that the ARMM is the biggest stakeholder group in Mindanao, comprising of 5 provinces, 2 cities, 120 municipalities and 4.1 million people.

On this comment, Dr. Adamat responded that various ARMM local government chief executives have been consulted. But with the ARMM Regional Government itself sitting down with the Government peace panel in any of its activities, he stated that this point will be duly considered. To Dr. Adamat this is a good point and truly must be done.

Director Dumagay's second comment was on the framework for the protection of non-combatants and civilians. This to him is a very immediate concern that needs to be addressed, reminding us that 20 thousand families were still at that time in evacuation centers in Maguindanao. National Government's HELP-CM (Health, Education and Livelihood Program for Central Mindanao) Program as mandated by Executive Order 267 seeks to bring evacuees home. Dir. Dumagay asked how far this has gone, and what National Government's specific plan is as regards this. To him, if Government is able to bring home the evacuees, a high degree of confidence for the process can be achieved.

In response, Dr. Adamat stated that the HELP-CM program still continues, and this is being beefed-up by the International Monitoring Team which is being reconstituted and in addition to this its new Civilian Protection Component.

Dr. Danda Juanday of the Bangsamoro Development Agency then took the floor citing that there are some points that seem to have been left out of the Government presentation that need to be added to the discussions. To Dr. Juanday these points have already been agreed-to as points that need to be discussed in the talks. Firstly, he said that the public should be made to know what these points are, and secondly why the last round of talks went the way they did, which to his understanding was because Government was no longer open to discussing these points and did not mention them in their proposed draft of the final comprehensive compact or peace agreement.

Dr. Adamat, amidst some reactions from some people in the audience, responded to this by saying that the talks they were having with the MILF necessitated that there are some details that cannot be divulged given an outstanding agreement entered into by both the parties as regards confidentiality. This agreement came with the approval of the third party facilitator.

Another MTT core group member took the floor next, Atty. Ishak Mastura, Chairman of the Board of Investments of the ARMM Regional Government. He cited Executive Order 273 that put the ARMM Regional Government under the temporary authority of the National Government's Department of Interior and Local Governments. As a result, Atty. Mastura argued that the regional government can no longer work directly with the President, but only with a subordinate body, which renders the ARMM less autonomous. He pointed out that it was ironic that while the GRP-MILF peace process is talking about enhanced autonomy, the ARMM now finds itself under the DILG.

Dr. Adamat responded to this by saying that he hears Atty. Mastura loud and clear, and that he trusts that this will just be a temporary arrangement given present-day realities in the ARMM, referring to the peculiar situation the ARMM finds itself in given the Maguindanao Massacre.

The next person to take the floor was Mr. Anwar Upahm, an invited guest participant who is the coordinator of the Bantay Ceasefire (*Village Watch*) program of the Mindanao Peoples Caucus. Mr. Upahm also represented the youth civil society group, United Youth for Peace and Development. His first concern was an observation that the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) are almost never represented in the peace panels. With this he directly asked Dr. Adamat, who is an ethnic Teduray (an IP tribe in Maguindanao), if he was now representing the IPs in the GRP peace panel. Mr. Upahm sought this clarification saying that this was a concern always being mentioned by IP communities his groups work with, which he would like to respond to given the opportunity and the right information. On this query Dr. Adamat replied in the affirmative saying this shows the concern the Government has for the welfare of the IPs who find themselves in the middle of the current conflict.

Mr. Upahm's second concern was a question as to what the reason was behind the cancellation of the peace talks scheduled for February 18-19. To this Dr. Adamat replied that the cancellation was a response to the request of the MILF that those talks be postponed to a later date.

Mr. Upahm's third concern was another question about Government, asking that when the term 'GRP' is mentioned, should it not refer to the entire structure from the National Government's Office of the President down to the Barangay level. He asked this given his observation that the ARMM Regional Government doesn't seem to belong in any place here. In answering, Dr. Adamat sought a response from Dir. Dumagay, who obliged by affirming that the ARMM is indeed part of Government. However, he continued, the design of the Government being such that the ARMM enjoys an autonomous status, there is a degree of 'distance' that needs to be maintained.

Mr. Upahm's last concern was an urging of Government to have the three branches of Government already sit down together with the GRP Panel during the talks or in preparation for the talks. To this Dr. Adamat agreed that it is a sound suggestion, but that he could not speak on behalf of the other two branches of Government (the Legislative and the Judiciary). However, he said he did share the view of Mr. Upahm and would take it up with the rest of the GRP panel.

Following Mr. Upahm, Dr. Gonzales again took to the floor inquiring about those who resigned from the GRP panel, and what would be done about the vacancies they left behind? Dr. Adamat responded by first enumerating all five original members of the GRP panel. He then mentioned that the loss of former Mayor Antonino and Atty. Cabili are big losses to the GRP panel. Be that as it may, they have left, and there remain no pronouncements as to their replacements, if any are to be made.

Dr. Gonzales then asked what will happen now that elections are about to take place. To this, Dr. Adamat responded saying all the more is the need for the 'Executive Doables' more relevant, stressing that these can already be acted upon immediately. Although at the same time, Dr. Adamat mentioned that these do not lessen the relevance and timeliness of the proposed Legislative Actions and Changes in Government Policy, both of which will also be pursued. All three taken together, he continued, should not be limited by a change in Government administration, but instead should be pursued by both the present and the next administrations.

Finally, Dr. Gonzales asked about the experiences in other countries. Dr. Adamat deferred to the expertise of Mr. David Gorman in this regard. Mr. Gorman shared the different manners and timeframes in which several peace processes took place. He pointed out that one lesson that could be learned is that a lot of things need to be done before an agreement is reached, leading to a successful implementation. Mr. Gorman stressed that an agreement is not worth the paper it is written on if it is not implemented accordingly. So while an agreement is still being pursued, he said it is wise that mechanisms are already put in place, similar to the BDA.

Next to take the floor was Ustadz Esmail Ebrahim, also an MTT core group member. His first question was whether the GRP panel thinks that an agreement can be signed before the term of President Arroyo ends. Dr. Adamat's response to this was that he would like to believe that this could be done.

Ustadz Ebrahim's second question was whether it is true that the offer of the GRP is limited to the area of the present-day ARMM, and that this is not directly addressed to the MILF. This is unlike the offer given by the Government during the time of President Ramos that directly offered the area of autonomy to the MNLF for them to govern. Dr. Adamat responded to this by saying that because the focus of the MILF is the ARMM as the central area for the autonomy of the Bangsamoro, then the GRP is trying to focus its discussion on the ARMM. He also added that the MILF has never openly sought for benefits to redound to itself – such as that of the power to govern, but instead it only openly refers to benefits that should be given to the Bangsamoro as a whole. For this reason, the GRP has never seen it necessary for a specific area to be offered to the MILF for them to govern.

Next to take the floor was Mr. Guiamel Alim, executive director of Kadtuntaya Foundation, chairman of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, and another member of the MTT core group. His first concern was an observation that for him the peace policy of the Philippine Government is a combination of different policies: [1] a military pursuit, [2] a policy of attraction, [3] development projects, and [4] peace talks. All this considered, he asked if the Government was pursuing a 'unified' agenda, or is it just the agenda of the Executive Branch of Government.

Mr. Alim then aired his perception that there still remains a presence of a high level of prejudice against the Bangsamoro. Because of this, he believed that there will continue to be 'spoilers' like those who played a key role in the failure of the signing of the MOA-AD in August 2008. Because of them, the problems that led to the conflict in Mindanao will continue to fester.

Dr. Adamat responded to both of Mr. Alim's questions by saying that Government is really sincere in seeking to address the problems that are the root causes of conflict in Mindanao. Thus, Government is really sincere in pursuing peace. But it must be considered that Government is a system, it is led by Laws, and it has three co-equal branches. It must be known and accepted that this is how Government is and this is how Government works. It is primarily because of this that the only things that Government can offer are those that fall within the Constitution. What the Arroyo administration is trying to do is commit what it can, and these are the Executive Doables. What the MILF want, which is a Bangsamoro Federal State, can only be attained with a change in the Constitution.

Atty. Mastura reacted to this last statement of Dr. Adamat by saying that caution should be exercised in what is being said in public, for example claiming that the MILF clamour is for a 'Bangsamoro Federal State'. According to Atty. Mastura, this is not clearly spelled out even in the MILF's website Luwaran.com. What the MILF may be asking for is an 'assymetric', 'plurinational' state that is 'federalistic' in character, but not outright a 'federal state'. We have to be careful with this, he reiterated, as it can result in confusion and raise false expectations. The GRP panel needs to correct itself in this regard. Dr. Adamat responded to this by acknowledging that he stood corrected, thanking Atty. Masura for his advice, and saying that he did pick up the idea mostly from an interview granted to media by chief MILF negotiator Mohagher Iqbal that came out in the newspapers, but never from Mr. Iqbal personally.

The next to take the floor was Professor Reydan Lacson of the Notre dame University Peace Center, also an MTT core group member. According to Prof. Lacson, GRP Panel Chairman Rafael Seguis in a previous forum said the GRP panel would not negotiate outside of the box, meaning outside of the parameters of the Constitution. His question therefore was, how will the negotiations be directed, especially if changes in the Constitution are needed. As a result, the GRP might not be able to easily get out of the positions it has put itself in. Prof. Lacson also said he would like to see the MILF appreciate the position their counterpart finds itself in, as obviously there will be difficulty if one of the parties is insisting on something that the other party simply cannot give. He ended by saying we all have to really work on this seriously if the process is to move forward successfully. Dr. Adamat responded by saying that he agreed very much with the sentiments, and that Government is really using an approach that is frankly the best way forward, and the only way the GRP can move ahead in this process. To him, this simply was the reality.

Ms. Sittie Monato, a guest participant representing the Nonviolent Peaceforce was next to take the floor. She said that while some IDPs have already gone home, others were reluctant to because they feared being killed by UXOs (unexploded ordnances), like some who have been unfortunate in this regard. She asks what will be done by Government about this, and about the general situation of IDPs and of Human Rights Violations that are still reported to regularly occur. Dr. Adamat acknowledged that this is truly a problem, and it remains in the Terms Of Reference of the IMT, CPC, HELP-CM, CCCH that these matters are to be addressed. He added that there are frameworks in place to also address HRVs. Mr. David Gorman also added that the problem of UXOs will be addressed with the assistance of the international community. For this purpose, organizations such as Geneva Call and the Mines Advisory Group are actively seeking to participate in the peace process in Mindanao.

Former Cotabato City Mayor Rodel Manara, also an MTT core group member, took the floor next. He commented that the GRP draft seems to be very cautious, lacking the ambition and drive to really put exciting proposals forward. An example he wished to see was that some degree of 'demilitarization' would be put in place. To him, because of the 'overly-militarized' society in the ARMM, the area of autonomy still has so many areas left un-maximized. Mayor Manara wishes to see more aggressiveness put forth in the Executive Doables, in order for it to also be a more interesting an acceptable draft. Dr. Adamat thought well of this idea and he said the GRP panel take serious note of it.

Last to take the floor during the open forum was Mr. Bobby Benito of the Bangsamoro Center for Justice, also a guest participant. He opined that if the President is truly sincere, we can reach an agreement and resolve this problem once and for all. To stress this point, he mentioned that there are a lot of constitutionally questionable acts already done by the President anyway, and yet she prevented the signing of the MOA-AD. Dr. Adamat answered this by saying the GRP panel has to be very careful about their actions now, in order to prevent another TRO. While it is true that the questions on constitutionality are still just questions, and that the President and the Executive can eventually try to justify its acts, no one wants to take the risk. There is too much to lose if a future agreement is again issued a TRO.

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About the HD Centre

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) began operations in August 1999. From its beginning as a venue in Geneva, Switzerland, where discreet discussions took place among those who had a practical impact on humanitarian policy and practice, the HD Centre has evolved into an independent global mediation organisation, with a presence in Europe, North America, Africa and Asia. Its aim is to help alleviate the suffering of individuals and populations caught up in both high-profile and forgotten conflicts, by acting as mediators and by providing other mediators with the support they need to work effectively.

HD Centre in the Philippines

The HD Centre began work in the Philippines in February 2004 when the Royal Norwegian Government requested for the HD Centre's active involvement in support of their role as third party facilitator to the peace process between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front.

In 2005 the HD Centre became involved with the peace process between the GRP and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) when Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Teresita Quintos-Deles requested the HD Centre's involvement in resolving a crisis in Sulu Province between MNLF and AFP forces. The HD Centre held five rounds of informal talks between the two parties and in August 2005, established the GRP-MNLF Peace Working Group. In 2008, the

HD Centre established the Armed Violence Reduction Initiative which is a multistakeholder response to non-conflict related violence that has been prevalent in Sulu. In 2009, the HD Centre established the Tumikang Sama Sama, a group of six eminent persons in Sulu, that attempt to resolve local conflicts and in 2010, it established the Prevention of Election Related Violence initiative, a group of 25 volunteers who monitor and report on election related violence in Sulu.

In 2007, the HD Centre began involvement in the current Mindanao peace process that involves peace efforts between the GRP and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). HD Centre is a member of the International Contact Group (ICG), providing advice to both parties and civil society through eminent persons and experts from around the world. On the ground, the HD Centre established the Mindanao Think Tank, a multi-stakeholder consultative effort aimed at creating an opportunity for communities in Mindanao to be more involved in the peace process. The group conducts consultations at the community level as well as among local experts and officials from key sectors to solicit their advice for the MILF and GRP panels and to keep them abreast of the peace process.

The HD Centre also conducts research through support to the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies.

You may visit us at www.hdcentre.org

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