CO-CREATING PEACE IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED MINDANAO
A FELLOW AT A TIME

VOLUME 1

AIM TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership
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Greetings! In behalf of the Asian Institute of Management, I am honored to present to everyone this publication, entitled “Co-Creating Peace in Mindanao (A Fellow at a Time),” a product of one of our most renowned leadership programs offered by the AIM Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership. The Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) began in 2005 and is hinged on the Bridging Leadership Framework. The fellows who graduated the program are executive officers and distinguished directors, representing different sectors from the government, non-government organizations, civil society organizations, security, and others.

This casebook contains twelve success stories of our MBLP Fellows who graduated in 2012 and 2013. The stories highlight the challenges our fellows have experienced in the course of addressing the societal divides in their respective communities. Featured as well are articles from our supportive professors and mentors of the MBLP. Their exemplary skills in honing bridging leaders have helped many of our brothers and sisters in Mindanao to advocate and promote peace and development through this program.

The BL Framework is divided into three phases: Ownership, Co-Ownership, and Co-Creation. This framework seeks to generate “prototypes” and institutionalize innovative processes and policies to address societal problems through partnership and collaboration. The case stories shall be presented based on these three phases.

The MBLP encourages all sectors to collectively think of peaceful means to solve societal problems. The BL Program was designed for different regions in the country, but has recently focused on Mindanao, a region that became an arena of political conflict and exclusion. The AIM and TeaM Energy Center introduced the MBLP as a first step towards peace and development in Mindanao, incorporating in the program design values and relationships unique in the region that will help better address societal problems.

Thus, I am glad to share with you our small contribution to the peace and development efforts in Mindanao. In this casebook are stories of our fellows who have striven hard to promote peace and societal equity in their home communities.

I hope that these stories of leadership will inspire you to become leaders as well – to create positive change that will influence others to become citizens of hope and development. Thank you for your continued support to AIM. May God bless and support you in your leadership endeavors.

Steven J. DeKrey
President
Asian Institute of Management
Of the many initiatives the TeaM Energy Foundation, Inc. (TEFI) has funded in its more than a dozen years of existence, the Bridging Leadership Program is one that we are most proud of. This was created to try to fill up what we felt was the lack of quality leaders, not only at the national level, but at the local level as well. The Bridging Leadership Fellows Program, implemented by the Asian Institute of Management – TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership is the flagship program of the Center. It has trained well over a hundred individuals representing various sectors of society in bringing conflicting parties or sectors together to collaborate for the greater good. Most recently, the Center has partnered with the World Bank for the Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program (MBLP).

TeaM Energy Corporation (TEC) has no operations or business in Mindanao, however, we believe that any trouble arising from conflict areas affects the country as a whole, most specially the economic environment which has impact to our business, our industry. Food security is also an issue here, since 40% of the country’s food requirements are sourced from Mindanao. Bringing peace and progress to Mindanao will lead to a more stable economy and, probably, a sustainable resource that will support the needs of a growing Philippine population.

In the MBLP, 43 individuals representing various sectors in Mindanao underwent the 17-month training period. It was the first time that representatives from the private sector, particularly from consumer goods companies, were accepted to mix with representatives from local government units, the military, tribal leaders, religious sector, and civil society organizations. The MBLP fellows know that the challenge of a New Mindanao may look formidable at the onset, but it can definitely be met with willpower, determination, passion, and that never-ending dream of a New Peaceful and Progressive Mindanao. In this case book we will look into the journeys of several of these Fellows who had gone through a lot of obstacles and were able to overcome these obstacles leading to new arrangements with their stakeholders that can be an assurance of an improved quality of life for their constituents. A journey, they say, begins with a single step. These Fellows may not be able to see the immediate realization of their dreams, but at least, they will pave the way for a better tomorrow that can be picked up and continued by the next generation of leaders.

Federico E. Puno
President and CEO
TeaM Energy Foundation Inc.
Acknowledgment

The Research Unit of the AIM TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership would like to share with our constituents, fellows, and partner institutions the stories of twelve cohorts who have had exemplary change projects, which they developed, enhanced, and implemented during the Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program (MBLP).

Our gratitude goes to these cohorts who shared with us their stories of challenges and hard work to effect social change. This casebook would have not happened without the support, trust, and cooperation of the following individuals, institutions, and agencies:

First, the twelve MBLP fellows who shared their stories of challenges and triumph: Mr. Yusop Alano, Sec. Myra Alih, Ms. Ruby Andong, Mr. Ernesto Casiple, Mr. Abdulwahab Husin, BGen. Daniel Lucero†, Ms. Zenaida Masong, Ms. Nena Undag, Mayor Jasper Que, Mayor Nacianceno Pacalioga, Jr., and Mayor Romeo Tiongco. In the process developing this casebook, the Center would like to express our special thanks to our two fellows: Dr. Sherjan Kalim, for his cooperation and support and for sharing his knowledge and MBLP experience to the Masters in Development Management (MDM) students in July 2013; and Lt. Col. Romulo “Bim” Quemado, for sharing his photographs for this casebook’s cover;

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Our special citation to Prof. Cielito Habito of the Ateneo de Manila University and Mr. Francisco Jota Lara of International Alert for their article contributions on Peace and Inclusive Growth in Mindanao. Also, to the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) for sharing their messages to our MBLP Fellows during their Public Recital on March 21, 2013.

Lastly, we extend our sincerest gratitude to the AIM-Team Energy Center family. The success of publishing this MBLP Casebook Volume I reflects the unity and ingenuity of the team.

Nieves R. Confesor
Executive Director
Table of Contents

**Messages** ....................................................................................................................... i

**Acknowledgment** ........................................................................................................... iii

**Preface** ............................................................................................................................. 1

**Introduction**

Mindanao 2020: Towards a Holistic View of Mindanao’s Future .............................................. 5  
_by Cielito F. Habito_

Building legitimate institutions and inclusive coalitions:  
Political settlements and peace in Mindanao ................................................................. 14  
_by Francisco J. Lara Jr._

**The Bridging Leadership Framework**

Ownership ......................................................................................................................... 19  
_by Juan A. Kanapi_

Co-Ownership ................................................................................................................... 22  
_by Jacinto C. Gavino_

Co-Creation ......................................................................................................................... 23  
_by Nieves R. Confesor_

**The Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program** ................................................................. 27

**Stories of Leadership**

1. Assurance of Security & Protection of Human Rights

From Arms to Farms: Promoting Peace in Lantawan Through Agriculture ....................... 36  
_by Myra Alih_

Warriors to Peace-Builders: Redefining Community Relations among Marines in Sulu ........ 58  
_by Romulo Quemado II_

Advocating for the Recognition of Indigenous People’s Rights in Mindanao ......................... 74  
_by Nena Undag_
2 Improving the Delivery of Basic Services

Bridging Communities through Blood Banks ................................................................. 96
*Sherjan Kalim*

Strengthening the Bongao Local School Board to Raise Performance in Basic Education .......... 110
*_Jasper Que and Abdulwahab Husin_*

Demilitarization as a New Model for Peace-Building ...................................................... 130
*Romeo Tiongco*

3 Provision of Livelihood & Economic Opportunities

Letting Go and Letting Come: Growing Oneself with the Community ............................. 146
*Ruby Andong*

Healing the Unhealed Wounds through Micro-Enterprise Development ............................ 166
*Ernesto Casiple*

From the Hills to the Halls: Cultivating Dumingag Out of Poverty .................................... 182
*Nacianceno Pacalioga, Jr.*

4 Strengthening of Social Capital & Social Cohesion

Inter-Faith Youth Assemblies for Peace .......................................................... 202
*Yusop Alano*

Strengthening Electoral Reforms: A Building Block for Good Governance in Marawi City ........ 216
*Daniel Lucero*

Transforming Media in Sulu for Peace and Development ................................................. 236
*Zenaida Masong*

Closing Paper

Message for the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program: Co-creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao ........................................ 245
*by Teresita Quintos-Deles*
The Philippines is a country beset with complex divides. It is marked by high inequality, not solely in terms of the distribution of income, but also of access to basic social services such as health and education. This situation of high inequality leads to the continuing presence of widespread poverty throughout the country. These circumstances, coupled with the general unresponsiveness and weakness of institutions, rouse social unrest that result to peace and security concerns.

Communities in Mindanao, especially in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), best illustrate areas of complex divides. When compared with the national averages, striking gaps appear in terms of the region’s poverty incidence, income, literacy, and life expectancy. The unevenness of the provision of opportunities provided by the state and society is a culprit.

The Philippines is increasingly beleaguered by complex divides. It is clear that the way we do leadership in the past is not effective to address the new problems that we face. The complex leadership challenge of our time demands a new breed of leaders armed with different leadership knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to effectively handle complexity. We need a “new” energy to “bridge” the sectors, so they may interact in the future to solve the toughest problems of our times.

Continuously responding to the pressing need to develop this new breed of leaders, the Asian Institute of Management-TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership (The “Center”), through the generous support of the World Bank, introduced the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP).

The overall objective of the MBLP is to build a cadre of Bridging Leaders in Muslim Mindanao, who can effectively address issues like peace, poverty and economy, education and health, disaster management, land and clan conflict, elections and poor local governance, traditional justice system, cultural and sustainable tourism, the empowerment of tribes and farmers, the role of media, and youth entrepreneurship. It has two key components: (1) Leadership Formation Program for individuals, and (2) Institutional Development for academic institutions to conduct research and training during the period.

Among the objectives of the MBLP is to produce a series of publications that would be used in other programs of the Center and in AIM courses. The cases featured in this volume are the first half of the 24 cases selected from the MBLP Cohorts 4 and 5. In this first volume of the MBLP...
Casebook, we share a compilation of 12 “change” stories from the two cohorts, which graduated in 2012 and 2013. These fellows were selected by the Center, together with the Bridging Leadership faculty of experts, based on the gravity of their projects’ impact on the lives of their home communities. The casebook stories present the strengths of the fellows during the conduct of their change project, which follows the order of the Bridging Leadership Framework.

The Fellows

There are 12 fellows featured in this Casebook, of whom majority graduated in 2012 (Cohort 4). The other four fellows graduated in March 2013 (Cohort 5). The fellows are from (and also implementing their projects in) Zamboanga del Sur, Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, and the provinces of the ARMM. The fellows come from various levels of the government, non-government and civil society organizations, the military, media, business, and medicine.

For the readers

The cases are categorized based on four platforms for peace and development initiatives in conflict-stricken areas, namely (1) assuring security and protecting human rights, (2) improving the delivery of basic services, (3) providing livelihood and economic opportunities, and (4) strengthening social capital and social cohesion. Presenting the cases in sections is intended to help the reader easily find examples with specific focus. However, it must be noted that the stories deal with complex situations and may cut across two or even all four of the abovementioned platforms.

The fellows give a narration of their experience from conceptualization to the actual process of selecting a specific social divide they wished to address. The stories also relate how the fellows formed their team of stakeholders, who would be their support group during the conduct of their projects. The social outcome of each change project depends on the extent of the collective response of the stakeholders and communities in their efforts to promote peace and development. Some case stories present how the fellows were able to achieve social equity, while some struggle towards it.

Lastly, some of the projects contained in the cases are still ongoing. Some have been included in the plans and programs of the local government units and/or in the institutions the fellows were connected with during the MBLP.
Mindanao 2020: Towards a Holistic View of Mindanao’s Future

by Cielito F. Habito

"Mindanao is the future of the Philippines," remarked my daughter some time ago, when I brought my family to Tagum City, Davao del Norte for a short visit. She was marveling at the futuristic new city hall under construction then, the wide highways we traversed to get there, and the great natural wealth visible in the lush agricultural crops around. I told her I could not agree with her more. As my work in recent years had involved helping plan the future of Mindanao, and more recently of the conflict-affected areas therein, I assured her that much more would be coming especially once those areas achieve lasting peace and draw stronger interest from investors. The island group's superior natural endowments relative to the rest of the country are readily apparent to anyone who lives in or has traveled in Mindanao.

Mindanao accounts for about a third of the country's land area, a quarter of the country's population and a seventh of overall income, measured as gross domestic product (GDP). The incongruence of those ratios already reflects an anomaly, especially in light of what must be a much greater share that Mindanao possesses of the country's natural wealth. Mindanao, in other words, could easily account for a far greater share of the country's production and incomes, had it not been for long-standing barriers to attaining lasting peace and development therein. Why it doesn't is obvious to most: for decades, lasting peace and development has been elusive in the island group.

“Fixing” Mindanao: The Roots of the Problem

What will it take to “fix” Mindanao?

It is common to hear it asserted that poverty and underdevelopment is the root of the conflict in Mindanao. If we could only bring development to Mindanao, the reasoning goes, peace should fall into place. This argument found wide credence in the 1990s, when the Ramos government pinned its approach to Mindanao on the twin goals of peace and development. As such, development initiatives in Mindanao saw a dramatic boost in the 1990s. A tangible manifestation of this is how the Ramos government tripled the share of government infrastructure spending directed to Mindanao between 1992 and 1995 alone. The Mindanao 2000 Development Framework Plan was crafted in the mid 1990s, primarily focused on accelerating economic development in the island group. In further support of this thrust, President Ramos pushed vigorously for direct international economic linkages for Mindanao through the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA). The development blueprints drawn up for Mindanao at the time were prominently economic-oriented. Development, particularly economic development, became the key thrust for addressing the “Mindanao problem” in the 1990s.

The accompanying peace thrust of the Ramos government hinged on a peace process that culminated in the 1996 peace agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Nur Misuari. The agreement and
the political and institutional changes it brought about led to some semblance of peace in Mindanao for a number of years, but this proved to be short-lived, as subsequent developments would show.

More than a decade after the Mindanao 2000 economic blueprint was embarked on, MEDCO’s assessment on its implementation found its goals and targets largely unmet, albeit with notable progress in infrastructure development. Seen to be largely responsible for this shortcoming was the breakdown in peace in the post-Ramos era. The decades-long violent conflict in Mindanao is estimated to have come at a cost of at least 120,000 lives, and displacement of about two million people, with much of it occurring within the 2000-2010 decade. While it had been hoped earlier that addressing development would usher in peace, recent experience has brought the focus back on lack of lasting peace as the primary impediment to development in Mindanao. It has become a vicious circle whose solution appears to many as intractable.

More recent analyses, especially from those who do not see things from a predominantly economic lens, have asserted the view that the real root of the Mindanao problem is injustice, which has come in many forms. It is seen in the exclusion and marginalization of the Bangsamoro and indigenous peoples (IP) from mainstream political, economic and social life. It is seen in numerous Mindanaoans’ loss of access to land and other key resources. It is seen in limited economic opportunities, and in extreme poverty resulting from seemingly inherent unfairness in the economic and political system. It is seen in the perceived suppression of Moro and IP traditions, customs and traditions. It is seen in unresolved human rights abuses committed by forces on both sides of the political conflict. It is seen in the imposed institutions of government marked by absenteeism of elected local officials, corruption, inefficiency, abuse of power, and maladministration of justice. Injustice in Mindanao is manifested in many other ways, with victims not necessarily limited to the minority Muslims and IPs. Newer forms of injustice have also emerged, further exacerbating the situation. It has become evident that lasting peace will not come to Mindanao unless and until the more basic problem of injustice is convincingly dealt with.

A Vision for Mindanao

In 2010, guided by this belief and the observation that economic growth was not enough to bring lasting peace and development to the area, the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA – formerly the Mindanao Economic Development Authority or MEDCo) embarked on the formulation of the Mindanao 2020 Peace and Development Framework Plan, and requested me to lead a team to facilitate the process. As a long-term framework plan, Mindanao 2020 seeks to chart the future of Mindanao to the year 2030. Notwithstanding this time frame, the choice of the name was deliberate. It affirms what came out strongly from the countless people who took part in the plan’s formulation: That Mindanaoans (the widely favored term to refer to the people of Mindanao) possess a clear 20/20 vision on the Mindanao they would like to see in 20 years. Given its turbulent history, it is easy for Mindanaoans to describe their desired image of Mindanao twenty years hence, in key words that persistently came up as the planning team made the rounds of the island group. These key words are synthesized in Mindanao 2020’s vision statement:

By 2030, Mindanaoans of all cultural or socio-economic backgrounds shall have attained a sustainably uplifted quality of life through their collective achievement of a peaceful, developed, autonomous and integrated Mindanao that is the vanguard for the country’s sustainable development.

The recurrent key words have been “peace,” “development” and “integration,” along with “self-reliance” and “self-determination.” The latter two are captured in the assertion that the desired attributes for Mindanao will be collectively achieved by Mindanaoans themselves, and will not come through the actions of some external entity – particularly not from the “imperial Manila” that is so
widely lamented in Mindanao owing to historical experience. And in the end, the fruits will be enjoyed by all Mindanawons in all their diversity.

Early on, MEDCo under the leadership of then Chair Virgilio Leyretana saw wisdom in ensuring that the next long term plan for Mindanao would find widest ownership, hence support. For people to support the plan and work to achieve its fruition, they must first of all own it; this means that they must be actively part of its very formulation. Thus, the planning team saw it fit to undertake a highly participatory approach to its formulation, such that the diverse people of Mindanao are its ultimate authors, with the multi-disciplinary planning team primarily being facilitators, analysts and writers. But they also recognized that the planning task covered challenges well beyond the economic dimension; thus, they chose to organize the work, and subsequently the plan document itself, into the themes of Peace and Security, Human Development and Social Cohesion, Economy and Environment, Governance and Institutions, and Enabling Conditions. In so doing, planning for Mindanao’s future was approached from a holistic and integrated perspective at the very outset.

Integrating Mindanao

The professed economic development strategy for Mindanao was to build on the island a unified and integrated economy. The age-old lament about Mindanao is that there had not been a unified Mindanao economy to speak of in the past. Instead, what it had was a fragmented economy whose economic centers (particularly the cities of Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato, Davao, General Santos and Zamboanga) lacked meaningful links among one another. Instead, each had stronger links with Manila and Cebu in a vertical nucleus-satellite relationship. While this has changed in the last 15-20 years with improved infrastructure interconnecting these centers, there remains great scope for further improvement, particularly because mere physical interconnection is far from enough. As Mindanao looks to its future in the next two decades, attaining a unified and integrated economy must be an overriding goal.

In light of the above, Mindanao 2020 defines economic and ecological integration as one of two key thrusts (the other one being inclusive wealth creation) in the economy and environment theme. Economic integration has an external and internal dimension to it. External integration means that Mindanao must pursue development within the broader national, regional and global contexts. It must widen, deepen and transform traditionally vertical and lopsided economic linkages with Luzon and the Visayas through Metro Manila and Cebu, and achieve a more horizontal, co-equal relationship with them. Mindanao will also play a key role in the regionally integrated economy being envisaged for Southeast and East Asia, especially through the impending ASEAN Economic Community. This is of great significance in the context of the political conflict in Muslim Mindanao, because while Muslims make up a minority in Mindanao and the Philippines, they are the majority in Southeast Asia. Inclusive economic development in Mindanao, particularly in Muslim areas, thus stands a better chance if pursued in the broader regional context, leveraging opportunities in Islamic markets for products and services. Mindanao must also pursue wider economic links with the Middle East and the rest of the global economy.

Internal integration must happen on two fronts. First, Mindanao’s progressive growth centers must continue focusing on expanding complementary interconnections among one another. More importantly, Mindanao’s growth centers must be more strongly linked to the lagging areas through their respective complementary roles in the economic value-chains. This way, the growth centers can help “pull up” the lagging areas, rather than have the latter pull down the former, as in the way investments and tourism therein are deterred by the misplaced perception that all of Mindanao is beset by violent conflict. The value chain needs to be improved to address its traditional lopsidedness in favor of the progressive growth centers.
This would be served by having more value-adding activities (such as processing) closer to primary production areas and in smaller enterprises, and clustering of producers to achieve economies of scale especially in marketing.

Ecological integration implies planning Mindanao’s development on the basis of its ecosystems, dominated by marine resources, fertile river basins and watersheds. It means planning with full cognizance of the carrying capacity of the environment and natural resource base. It also recognizes that Mindanao, like the rest of the country, is an archipelagic economy; thus, plans must not be dominantly terrestrial or land-based in orientation. In inland areas, a river basin/watershed-based management approach will help enhance synergy and cooperation (and thus better integration) among and across different government units and administrative jurisdictions. It could also help unify affected residents across cultural, political and socioeconomic lines when they are common stakeholders to the same river basin ecosystem.

Economic and ecological integration implies seeing economic development and responsible stewardship of the environment not as incompatible goals, but as mutually reinforcing objectives that make development sustainable. One without the other is shortsighted and of limited benefit, as past experience in Mindanao has already shown. It is only when both ends are jointly served that the ultimate goals of development would be attained, and the Mindanao economy would find true integration.

Environment as Planning Platform

An important innovation in the approach of Mindanao 2020 is its use of the environment and natural resources as the “stage” on which to plan Mindanao’s future sustainable development. As a region built on extremely well-endowed river basins along with rich coastal and marine ecosystems, Mindanao’s economy has traditionally thrived on production built on its natural wealth: its agriculture, its forests, its fisheries, and its minerals. Agriculture and agribusiness are particularly prominent. Much of the islands’ wealth derives from its fertile soils and conducive climate fueling a thriving agricultural export industry of high value crops such as coconut, banana, pineapple, oil palm and rubber – and many more still waiting to be tapped. Mindanao’s rich forestry industry has been both a boon and a bane, the latter due to wanton exploitation abetted by traditional weaknesses in governance, marked by a highly oligarchic power structure in the islands.

As mentioned above, development plans of the past, including those for the whole country, are seen to have been too land-oriented, neglecting that under its broad definition, the bulk of the country’s territory is water. As an archipelago, the Philippines and Mindanao in particular must be planned as an archipelagic area, with full cognizance of its water-based resources both inland and offshore. The stage for planning Mindanao’s future is indeed wide, and this very stage – Mindanao’s bountiful natural wealth – must be nurtured and sustained even as it provides the basis for creating further wealth to benefit all Mindanawons. In the end, it is this shared wealth of Mindanao, in which all Mindanawons have a common stake, that should unite them to rally behind Mindanao 2020 and the peace and development that it envisions to achieve within 20 years.

The Environment and Mindanao’s Future

Nowhere in the country has the economy-environment tradeoff been more evident than in Mindanao, where its natural wealth had been exploited over many decades for the benefit of a relative few, and at great cost to future generations. As an economy that has derived its growth primarily from resource extractive activities, Mindanao must build a sustainable future based on much more prudent management and stewardship of its inherent wealth than in the past (Tan, Antonio and Habito 2012). Mindanao 2020 is based on this key premise.
Agriculture and agriculture-based industries will continue to be the most prominent driver of the Mindanao economy well into the future. But the right balance between large plantation agriculture and smallholder farming needs to be sought, to both widen benefits and sustain the environment. Apart from bananas, pineapple, oil palm and other plantation crops now dominating Mindanao’s exports, there must be stronger efforts to tap the potentials of non-traditional high value crops thriving in Mindanao, such as coffee, cacao, cassava, mangosteen, marang, lanzones, rambutan, pomelo, durian, and many more (see Dy 2012). These crops lend themselves to farming models based on sustainable smallholder systems, inasmuch as the existing structure in these crops are already primarily of this nature. Due to their highly perishable nature, expanding the markets for these crops will entail greater value adding through processing, thereby presenting opportunities for further agri-based industries.

Organic farming and Halal food production will expand within Mindanao’s farm sector, given its natural suitability for these specialty niche segments of the market. As these are inherently associated with sustainable production practices, their expansion will also be in keeping with the imperative of planning Mindanao’s future around an increasingly fragile environment.

The forestry industry can no longer rely on logging of old growth forests, which are close to depletion in Mindanao. Forest products must henceforth be derived from sustainable forestry based on well-managed commercial tree farming. Massive reforestation is called for in the face of large-scale deforestation over the past decades, now being manifested in serious environmental disasters such as landslides, devastating floods, and depleting groundwater resources.

Coastal and marine fisheries will have to be pursued in more carefully measured steps, to avoid the further depletion of fishery resources that has already impacted on the lives of millions of Mindanaons. Mariculture will figure more prominently in Mindanao’s fisheries sector, particularly as efforts to rejuvenate marine fisheries resources through fishing moratoriums on key fishing grounds will reduce production from that source in the short to medium term.

Mining is in Mindanao to stay, and there is no room for extreme positions on this. A number of large mining projects are just starting or are in the pipeline, and it is widely agreed that the key imperative is to ensure responsible mining operations, whether by large, medium or small firms. The immediate need is to clearly define and achieve wide consensus on what it means to undertake “responsible mining.” Apart from environmental sustainability, achieving broader benefits from the industry than is currently obtained needs to be addressed with appropriate policy and program interventions. Part of this is the need to ensure greater domestic value adding in the industry, by encouraging more processing of mineral and metal products within the country and minimize if not avoid the direct export of raw mineral ores.

The prospects for industry and manufacturing will be severely constrained by energy availability and cost through the medium term (see Antonio 2012). Large hydroelectric dams and power plants are now faced with greater risks to efficiency and profitability due to siltation of waterways and loss of surface water. In light of this, there must be a conscious move towards small hydroelectric plants and other renewable energy facilities (solar, wind, biomass), along with work to reforest and restore the Mindanao’s watersheds.

Tourism development, particularly ecotourism, can be a win-win for the economy and environment, and must be pursued vigorously through policy reform and public investments. Much has been done in preparing the groundwork for this under a tourism cluster approach; what is needed is to reach Mindanao-wide consensus on the prioritization of tourism development initiatives, as well as in packaging tourism attractions.
It is important to note that peace and security is likely to be compromised anew within the next 20 years if various natural resource and environment pressures are not properly managed and allowed to lead to new tensions and conflicts. These pressures include tightening water supplies; competing claims over agricultural and mineral lands; depleting fisheries; and air, soil and water degradation due to pollution from mining and industrial activities. This makes it even more critical that ecosystems are planned and managed in a way that will prevent such pressures from even arising. Fostering common stewardship of the shared natural resource base across social, economic, cultural and political lines would help avert or minimize the likelihood that such tensions will arise and escalate into violent conflict in the future. Indeed, the very future of Mindanao rests on the future of its environment.

**Securing the Peace**

Will lasting peace finally become a reality in Mindanao?

Even as negotiations toward a Peace Agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front had gained headway, and is widely expected to reach conclusion in the near future, seasoned analysts point out that the road to peace will not be easy, as there are still many facets that must be attended to and resolved. The people of Mindanao have made their sentiments known on the matter of pursuing the road to peace in their lands and waters, as articulated in Mindanao 2020. The following are among their indicated imperatives in this quest for lasting Mindanao peace:

First, make peace a government-wide concern. This means that securing a lasting peace in Mindanao should be a concerted effort from all government entities at all levels. This cannot just be the work of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and a few other relevant agencies by themselves. Every government entity has something to contribute to the overall peace effort, and OPAPP, as coordinator for peace, must determine how they could and should contribute to securing peace in Mindanao. All policy and institutional impediments to sustained peace, development and human security in Mindanao must also be addressed. Both wittingly and unwittingly, numerous policies, rules, mechanisms and personalities in government have actually posed hurdles to peace. In the past, lack of sincerity and political will was a major obstacle. There were wide perceptions that certain political personalities, including the top leadership, actually had a vested interest in prolonging conflict and war, either for the sake of perpetuating power or monetary gain. But under a new national leadership that is perceived to be truly sincere in securing lasting peace in Mindanao, a major obstacle to peace has thus been overcome.

Second, pursue a unifying peace in Mindanao. While a definitive agreement with the MILF is the current goal, the government must ultimately seek to achieve a consolidated peace settlement with both the MILF and the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front), with whom an as-yet incompletely implemented “Final Peace Agreement” had been signed in 1996. Pursuing two separate agreements in approaching the Muslim insurgency in Mindanao – i.e., one for the MNLF and another for the MILF – is to pursue the contradiction of a segmented or divided peace, risking the prospect that no peace will ultimately be achieved. Separate agreements with each group, especially if involving territorial concessions, will inevitably invite jealousy and continuing discord, not to mention likely ill feelings and possible antagonistic responses from affected Christian and Lumad populations. While the split between the MNLF and the MILF is an internal affair of the Bangsamoro, it is impossible, even with utmost goodwill, to reach satisfactory closure through separate government negotiations with both, involving the same territory, same peoples and same transitional governance mechanism. It would help if the Organization of Islamic Conference could play a pivotal role in shaping a common platform for both the MNLF and MILF to reach a
consolidated agreement with the government.

Third, nurture and firmly entrench a culture of peace among all Mindanawons. Over the long term, there is need to reverse and transform the negative culture of separation, discrimination and exclusion fomented by years of war and conflict, into a positive culture of peace. Discrimination and prejudice must be deliberately addressed through the educational system. Peace education needs to be integrated in the official curricula at all levels, while ensuring cultural sensitivity of textbooks, teaching methods, school calendars, and even physical landscapes. Platforms for cultural and religious dialogues and exchanges (both inter-faith and intra-faith) need to be established at all levels to promote wider understanding within and across religions of the historical roots of the Mindanao conflict, as a tool to overcome it.

Finally, there is need to forestall potential new threats to peace and security in Mindanao in the medium to long term. In particular, conflicts arising from environment and natural resources mismanagement need to be proactively avoided. This means safeguarding environmental security through sound environmental management policies, forward looking climate change adaptation planning and disaster preparedness and management planning. Mindanao’s future development cannot be pursued at the expense of environmental integrity and judicious natural resource management, for without these, new conflicts over resources are likely to arise, and threats from environmental disasters are likely to worsen. It is thus critical that Mindanao’s future development be pursued with environmental integrity as a central concern. Otherwise, any development achieved will be under threat of a renewed breakdown in peace and security.

Governance and Institutions

The great diversity found in Mindanao presents a daunting challenge for planning Mindanao’s future. There is wide variation within the island group in terms of natural and physical endowments and attributes, historical and cultural backgrounds, ethnic composition, and political perspectives. It would thus appear to be wishful thinking to expect that a consensus could ever be reached on the elements of such a plan. And yet, it is this very diversity that makes it all the more imperative that wide consensus be sought to the extent possible. Even then, one cannot entertain the illusion that universal agreement will ever be reached, especially on particular elements of the development approach for Mindanao. The governance mechanisms and institutions that will lead the island group’s path to the future, and the leaders that will steer them, are critical to the achievement of the vision of Mindanao 2020.

Securing the vision requires an enabling governance and institutional environment that apart from upholding transparency and accountability, must also assert subsidiarity, self-reliance and self-determination for the people of Mindanao, sentiments that are strongly articulated all over the island group. For this reason, the call for federalism was a prominent theme in the Mindanao 2020 consultations. So is the call for a participatory and culture-sensitive governance and political framework marked by (1) stable, self-reliant and responsive LGUs, (2) a sincere and empowering central government that is genuinely interested in uplifting Mindanao and allows local governments and communities to take the driver’s seat in development, and (3) effective coordination and monitoring mechanisms at the Mindanao-wide, regional and inter/intra-provincial levels.

The Promise of Muslim Mindanao

Finally, it is important to focus attention on the part of Mindanao that is most challenging, yet also most promising. Muslim Mindanao has remained for many years as an undiscovered “gem in the rough.” It is blessed with what ought to be key ingredients to be a prime investment area within the Philippines. It possesses superior agro-climatic conditions, with certain crops such as cassava,
white corn and coffee actually attaining better yields than elsewhere. It is blessed with an abundance of primary resources including minerals and rich marine resources. It still has large tracts of idle lands yet to be productively utilized. And wage rates, both official and de facto, are lower compared to most of the rest of the country. It also possesses vast scope for economic growth and diversification owing to Mindanao’s BIMP-EAGA connection – a linkage that is of even greater significance and potential for Muslim Mindanao relative to the rest of the country. This is because as mentioned above, Muslims comprise the majority of the population in Southeast Asia, giving Muslim Mindanao the potential edge in meeting their particular demands for goods and services.

Notwithstanding all these, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is where the highest incidences of poverty in the country are found, and where average incomes are among the lowest. Poverty rate in the region has risen faster than in rest of the country in the past decade. The reasons for this contradiction are well known. Persistent conflict and violence have impeded economic activity and deterred investment, whether from within or from outside the region. Infrastructure facilities are poor and inadequate. Land access and tenure security can be problematic in the face of uncertain instruments of land ownership (see Briones 2012). The labor force is largely unskilled and unstable. Weak governance and institutions, fraught with weak capacities and a checkered history of graft and corruption, further undermine the business environment. All these have perpetuated a vicious cycle of low investment and persistent poverty that the region simply must find a way to break out of.

The imperative and challenge for Muslim Mindanao, then, is to raise the level of investments in the region. Even wealthy individuals from within the region itself – those who would be the most logical first investors therein – have traditionally tended to bring their own wealth outside of the region, to Davao, Cagayan de Oro, Metro Manila or overseas. This reverse demonstration effect makes it even more difficult to convince outsiders to overcome their reluctance to put their stakes there. But attracting greater investment in Muslim Mindanao by both locals and outsiders is the only way out of the poverty trap that the region finds itself in.

Contrary to common perception, investing in the region need not be a bad business proposition. A good number of firms, both large and small, have in fact demonstrated so. A compilation of case studies of successful investors in Muslim Mindanao (Habito 2012) examines the experience of six private companies that had chosen to locate in the region, and had demonstrably benefited from it. The analysis sought to identify the enabling factors, useful insights and “secrets” that made it possible for the firms to thrive under the otherwise peculiar and often challenging circumstances within the region. Their experiences demonstrate that the rewards to be reaped, both for the investors and for the people of Muslim Mindanao, promise to be well worth the seeming additional risk to be taken on by the investor. The challenge, then, is for the future leaders of the new Bangsamoro to ensure an investment-friendly environment that builds confidence in the stability and the economic promise that this very crucial region holds not only of Mindanao, but of the entire country.

**Concluding Remarks**

There is much going for Mindanao, even as formidable challenges remain and new ones emerge. The problems of widespread poverty, environmental mismanagement and abuse, festering conflicts and historical injustices will take more than a generation to solve definitively, even as new threats from climate change, global economic instability and geopolitical conflicts present new hurdles to overcome. On the other hand, there is keen anticipation that an impending peace agreement will usher in a new era of confidence that will permit erstwhile conflict-ridden areas to begin participating in the dynamic growth already enjoyed by the island group’s traditional economic centers.
Mindanao is inherently well positioned to benefit from new external opportunities, particularly those brought about by the deeper integration of the ASEAN economies. Furthermore, improved governance at the national level and the emergence of new younger and progressive Mindanao leaders in various spheres hold much promise for more effective development management in the island group in the years ahead. The imperative for these leaders, whether in the political, economic, social or cultural spheres, is to be able to bridge the many divides and conflict lines that have traditionally stood in the way of a coherent, holistic and integrative approach to securing lasting peace and development therein. Given the right elements in place, there could be no doubt that Mindanao, indeed, will spell the Philippines’ future.

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In 2012, world leaders heralded the genuine possibility of securing an enduring peace in many fragile and conflict-affected states and sub-states in Asia and the rest of the world. One of the most widely-used conflict databases in the world called the Uppsala Data Conflict Project (UDCP) of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported a significant decline in violent conflict. This finding was confirmed in subsequent studies of subnational conflict in Southeast Asia that The Asia Foundation (TAF) reported in 2013. These studies showed a remarkable change in the nature and duration of conflict, with rebellion-related violence declining and sub-national, horizontal conflict, and crime-related violence accounting for more of the fatalities and homicides.

These trends can be found in the rise of horizontal violence in Mindanao, and the decline in rebellion-related vertical violence. Armed clashes between government forces and rebel groups dropped after the final peace agreement between the GPH and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1996 and the enduring ceasefire agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The decline in numbers is also accounted for by the fewer armed encounters between the government and communist insurgents in the immediate post-Marcos period and later years.

Meanwhile, an intensification of inter- and intra-family, tribal, and clan violence in Mindanao has been recorded in the past decade (Kamlan 2003; Lara 2010). In previous years clan violence and other forms of horizontal conflict tended to erupt during periods of electoral contestation or regime transition. Today the entry of investments in agribusiness and the extractive and energy sector in many parts of Mindanao—far from creating positive conditions for stability and peace—are fueling an increase of violence. Cases of homicides are also on the rise due to the operations of deadly shadow economies controlled by criminal groups such as the illicit drug and gun trade, kidnap-for-ransom, and human trafficking.

Triggers of violent conflict in Mindanao

Understanding the endurance of violent conflict in Mindanao requires an examination of the historical, socio-economic, political, and institutional factors that trigger conflict. Rebellion-related conflict flared up more than four decades ago because of the Moro people’s desire to reclaim their homeland that was lost to colonial and post-colonial policies and military campaigns. The demographic data of the region provides evidence of the rapid and comprehensive in-migration of settlers from other parts of the country that transformed indigenous peoples and Moro communities into a minority group in the region beginning from the post-war period.

Violent conflict, in turn, could not be separated from the economic and other resource-issues that attracted the entry of foreign and domestic agribusiness and extractive interests in the island. Local and transnational corporate investments in agriculture, logging, mining, and energy expanded in Mindanao during the 1950s until the 1990s, introducing new labour arrangements and contract
farming systems that intensified peasant indebtedness and led to the expulsion of farmers, indigenous peoples, and their communities from their lands.

Resource-based conflicts were also reinforced by conflicts over control over Mindanao’s resilient shadow economies—particularly in lootable resources such as gold, timber, and drugs. Some of these economies, including illicit cross-border trade and informal credit, provided a lifeline and a source of employment and livelihoods in conditions of fragility, economic neglect, and conflict. However, intense business competition in other shadow economies such as illicit drugs or small-scale mining led to frequent armed clashes between rival groups.

From the post-colonial period, through authoritarian rule and the democratic restoration, local strongmen, clan-based warlords, and ruthless entrepreneurs had a firm grip on political power and functioned as key agents in extending the politico-economic reach of the central state in Mindanao. Ruthless political entrepreneurs gained control over the region’s political structure and processes. Their control over political office was later consolidated by their access to huge amounts of internal revenues following the wave of decentralization and devolution that swept across the region in the 1980s.

Finally, traditional institutions of the clan continued to hold sway—resisting the absorption of democratic institutions and practices. Clans offered the critical protection and access to welfare that individuals and families needed, but they also held back meaningful reform that can extend the freedom and equality of rights that many groups and sectors desire within Bangsamoro society.

**Institutional legitimacy**

The conflict-effects of the aborted institutional evolution in Muslim Mindanao can be found in the World Bank’s 2011 World Development Report “Conflict, Security, and Development.” The study argued that the key to a resilient peace was to build inclusive and legitimate institutions—the set of laws, rules, and norms that are not externally generated but instead emerge from peoples life struggles in fragile and conflict-affected communities. These are the sort of institutions that can actually structure the behavior of state and non-state actors and mitigate the short term risks and long term consequences of fragility and violence.

Yet development workers and peace-builders are starting to realize that what is legitimate at the level of the nation state are radically different from what is seen as legitimate in the eyes of people at the sub-national or community level. Change actors recognized that the key to sustaining reforms was to navigate and appeal to legitimate institutions from top to bottom, and to learn how to engage with both the formal and informal institutions, and their corresponding formal and shadow authorities in a constructive and non-violent manner.

For development actors the implications are clear—business leaders could no longer ignore the fact that all economic actions are socially-oriented. Karl Polanyi (1957) had famously argued that all economic institutions are social institutions, embedded in arrangements of reciprocity, redistribution, and exchange. To ensure inclusive growth and a lasting peace, development actors, investors, and business leaders had to acquire the capacity to bridge peoples of different aspirations and diverse cultures to create the certainty and security that could enable dialogue and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Growth and development models needed to adapt more inclusive and conflict-sensitive processes of production, trade, and the allocation of property rights.

**Institutional pluralism**

The new scholarship on conflict and peace-building has moved towards identifying the multiplicity of institutions that structure the behavior of states
and non-state actors when they deal with fragility and conflict. The approach epitomizes the importance of institutional pluralism or hybridity—the new buzzword among institutional theorists that highlights the ability of peace-building actors to transport themselves from one institutional universe to another in mediating conflict and building peace. The institutional terrain is broad enough—it includes knowing how to adhere to democratic institutions while appealing to ethnic and clan rules and practices, religious principles, insurgent beliefs and teachings, etc.

The notion of institutional hybridity finds traction in the theorizing on political settlements in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS). Political settlements refer to the elite bargains and arrangements that are critical in securing stability and growth. On the one hand, they denote the importance of elite bargains and an inclusive approach in the allocation of rents. On the other hand it also denotes the importance of social contracting, i.e., getting citizen support for these politico-economic arrangements. Resilient change would come about through a dual process of elite bargaining and social contracting.

The principle of inclusive political settlements underlies the World Bank (2011) call for establishing “inclusive enough” coalitions to deal with short-term risks in periods when society moves from conditions of fragility and conflict to conditions of stability and peace. These risks become frequent as peace processes move towards a successful conclusion, i.e., war is ended and powers are shared and devolved to the local level. The 2013 GPH-MNLF flashpoint in Zamboanga City underscores the likelihood of destructive actions that erupt just as peace processes reach their zenith.

To be sure, the establishment of inclusive political settlements is easier said than done. In the Philippines, numerous attempts to bring warring factions to the negotiating table have failed because processes are perceived to be exclusionary—outstanding issues from previous negotiations remain unresolved or local strongmen and ruthless political entrepreneurs cannot accept deals that emerge from democratic institutions that will leave them vastly disempowered. The same holds true in places such as Aceh, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, or Nepal where violent conflict continues to endure. Distrust of democratic institutions lingers and there is little social capital to bridge the gap between perceptions and reality.

From doing no harm to doing good

The situation requires a paradigm shift that forces all stakeholders to do good, rather than just doing no harm. Doing good means going beyond “what the law mandates,” or what is legally required for development groups, aid agencies, and business firms to operate in fragile and conflict-affected areas. It includes measures to enhance inclusiveness, protect the environment, or empowers women.

In short, legal licenses should be bolstered by social licenses, i.e., the full consent of local people who have been engaged in determining aims and objectives, and involved in the process of developing projects and generating investments. Getting a real social license is often ignored by development, aid, and business groups, and there are plenty of cases where consent has been manufactured by simply getting the approval of local elites and local government units. In these instances violent conflict, instead of profit, has become the usual outcome.

Recent actions by peace-building organizations to develop conflict-sensitive economic governance (CSEG) are therefore a big step in the right direction. Previous strategies that persuade companies to employ conflict-sensitive business practices (CSBP) are based on the notion that companies will voluntarily comply with standards such as the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR), the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), or the UN Global Compact on Business and Human Rights. Yet human rights and peace-building groups have discovered that
persuasion and voluntary compliance can only go so far. In contrast, CSEG focuses on a tripartite approach that requires engagements with local people, business, and local governments.

**Peace dividends**

The dividends of an enduring peace are all too familiar to countries that were previously wracked by rebel or sectarian violence but are now on the way towards inclusive development and economic growth. Consider Rwanda and Mozambique in Africa, or Vietnam and Timor-Leste in Southeast Asia.

Scholars have argued that it will take more time to bridge various institutions and cultures to achieve a lasting peace, and it will require a constant process of trial and error. The conflict scholar Paul Collier (2011) had shown evidence that around 45 percent of peace agreements usually collapse in the first five years of their existence. In the Philippines it may mean that more people will die before an enduring peace is achieved in hotspots like Mindanao.

But the future for peace-building is certainly brighter. This is so because peace makers now possess a more powerful arsenal that builds political settlements across sectors, classes, ethnicities, and other identities. Beyond the occasionally successful peace agreement between warring parties, peace builders are learning to build a peace with society. ■
The Bridging Leadership Framework

Ownership
by Juan A. Kanapi

A leader who considers initiating a process of change is usually motivated by great dissatisfaction with the current reality and/or a vision of a more desirable future state. For a Bridging Leader (BL), the discontent also stems from the recognition that one is very much a part of the issue. This is what is meant by ownership. In the Ownership Stage of a bridging leadership process, a BL takes stock of the dynamics of an unwanted social issue and how one is part of it (systems view of current reality), what one has to offer as a leader (leadership style and capital) in helping to resolve the issue, and the more equitable social reality one wants to create (vision), before deciding on whether or not to take on the challenge of working with others to transform a complex social issue.

Systems View of a Social Issue

A BL must be able to view a social issue from a “systems perspective.” How do different forces combine to create a complex issue that seems to be ‘resistant to change’? “How am I a part of this vicious cycle?” Through the exercise of understanding the issue from a systems perspective, a BL will have a better appreciation of the complexity of the challenge. This perspective will show the stakeholders that keep the issue in place through their present way of relating with one another. Key representatives of these stakeholders must be eventually drawn into meaningful conversations, directed towards co-owning the issue, if an effective resolution of the issue is expected.

In the attempt to understand a social issue from a systems perspective, a BL must resist the temptation of depending only on what one already knows. Dr. Otto Scharmer of Theory U calls this “downloading.” He proposed that a leader go on a “learning journey” to get a better sense of the current reality of a social issue, especially from the perspective of those who are suffering most from the system and those who have done something successful already, but whose work is not yet mainstream. By going on this kind of a learning journey, a BL is able to expand understanding of what is really going on and what can be. In exploring co-ownership, the “learning journey” may come from listening to the unique perspectives of relevant stakeholders drawn in to converse about and deal with a complex social issue that affects them all.

Leadership Style

All of us were born with a set of unique gifts and tendencies, and we are at our best when we ap-

Part of the cycle

“The divide that I wanted to address was the negative perception created by sensational news reporting that makes our province look notorious to the world. And the truth is, in the past, I was a participant to this. I am a journalist. I participated in creating this problem.”

- Zeny Masong
ply our natural gifts in appropriate situations. However, over time, because of the belief that older people know better than us, many of us became alienated from our true self. We lived and made choices according to the expectations of those whom we assumed knew better than us, e.g. parents, school teachers, church leaders, etc. Thus, many of us went through life behaving and working from a space that produced less than maximal results, most of the time. To increase our ability to operate from a space of excellence, it is important for us to regain awareness of our natural, set of unique gifts and behavioral tendencies, so that we may apply these in situations where our “genius” can come out. One way of doing this is by going back through our history and recalling “times when we felt most alive and effective.” Recalling these extraordinary experiences and studying the patterns will allow us to recognize what is great about us and what situations we can naturally excel. Only when we operate from our areas of strength can we possibly expect regular excellent results. We cannot excel consistently by always behaving according to someone else’s idea of who we should be. A BL can only expect to excel, in contributing towards the resolution of a complex issue, with awareness of one’s natural, unique leadership style, applied in appropriate context.

Leadership Capital

What does an individual leader have that makes people want to follow them? The response to this question reveals one’s “leadership capital.” Leadership capital is accumulated through one’s social history. Reviewing one’s successful leadership experiences will show what was gained through the years, which make people want to follow one as a leader. Some sources of leadership capital are:

- Family background
- Lived values
- Mental, emotional, and physical attributes
- Leadership experiences
- Formal training
- Leadership style

One of the most neglected leadership resources is called “social capital.” This refers to people whom a leader knows, who also know the leader and, because of the relationship between them, will most likely help the leader when requested. It is a resource politicians know and use very well. BLs

Realizing ones social capital

“I realized, despite my being so timid, I can do the Bridging Leaders’ work as well. I became more aware of my social capital, which I had come to recognize only when I started connecting with [people] for my project. I learned to understand and practice ‘letting go and letting come,’ which helped me in my process of connecting for allies. I realized, in the end, I can make a difference in the lives of my people.”

- Ruby Andong
must develop this resource because of the characteristics of “complex social issues.” A complex social issue involves many different stakeholders, whose relationships among them lead to the maintenance of the vicious cycle of an oppressive social reality. No matter how brilliant a BL is, one’s natural competencies and resources will not be enough to do everything that needs to be done to resolve a complex challenge. Other people’s help will be needed. This is where social capital comes in. The more social capital a BL has, the greater the probability that the right talents will be drawn into the work, to help create new, more desirable realities. More than quantity, it is the quality of people tapped by a BL, especially as part of one’s “trust circle” or “core group,” that can provide the needed support, during times when the temptation to give up is high.

Vision of a Desired Reality

People who are aware of realities they do not like may not know what they want as alternative. A BL, who is only aware of what is not desired, will not be able to establish what can be done strategically to transform an unwanted reality. An awareness of current reality and desired future state are two “anchor points” necessary for the design of an effective change strategy.

A desired future state is referred to in the BL framework as “new arrangements.” It is a description of a new way of relating among different stakeholders that make possible more equitable realities. The more specific and concrete a desired vision is, the greater the chance that it can be created. A BL’s continuing learning journey will allow one to gradually know what specific new arrangements are desired by those who suffer most, and what is already possible from the work of successful change agents. This expanded sensing of current reality is the platform from which a BL can have an idea of the kind of new arrangements one can create with others.

Whole brain thinking is important when establishing a desired future state. A desired future state can only be “new” if it comes from deep within people. If not, a “vision” may simply be a “downloading” of what is already known, easily leading to the same old arrangements – same dog, different collar. A BL must have the capacity to “go into silence,” in many different ways, to allow truly new ideas to surface from deep within. If this process is done properly, whether by an individual or a group, new ideas will also tend to be passion-filled, which will be needed in the face of challenges that will surely surface along the way.

A BL’s Response

“The success of an intervention is dependent on the inner condition of the intervener.”

- Bill O’Brien,
  late CEO of Hanover Insurance

The person of a leader is the most important element in a Bridging Leadership process. It is personal clarity that will allow a BL to know what leadership role(s) and tasks one can deliver with excellence. From inner strength will come the courage (or lack of it) to go on in the face of challenges presented by complex social issues. All the effort invested into knowing one’s self, expansion of one’s understanding of current reality and establishing what one will be passionate enough to create, are but preparation for the point when one has to decide whether or not to go to the next stage of the BL process of co-ownership. A BL must enter the stage of co-ownership and engage other stakeholders only if one feels confident about one’s passion for the work and “chances of success.” If not, it is best for the BL to back off, stay with the status quo, until one feels ready to face the greater task of working with others in transforming an unwanted complex social reality.
Co-Ownership
by Jacinto C. Gavino

Co-ownership, the second stage of the Bridging Leadership Framework, is where the bridging leader takes his personal mission/vision to a forum of multi-stakeholders, who will converge and work together to address the societal divide.

The BL framework explains that there are various leadership approaches that correspond to different problems and societal inequity. Social divides cannot be addressed by a single entity. Societal divides have deep-rooted complex conditions, which are classified as follows: (1) dynamic (cause and effect are far apart in space and time); (2) generative (presence of an unfamiliar and undetermined future when no clear solutions are currently available); and (3) social (stakeholders addressing the problem have multiple perspectives, principles, and priorities). (Kahane after Scharmer and Senge)

The Bridging Leader can analyze the nature of complexity through Systems Thinking, particularly through causal loops. The Bridging Leader selects the core group members that would best work together addressing the social inequities. Also, a guiding coalition is formed from the bigger group of allies to support the processes of mitigating the social problems. This way, the group collectively owns the social problem, and they would be willing to work together with common direction and purpose.

To organize the stakeholders, they are segmented according to allies, adversaries, and neutral. In this process, the following key questions should be asked: Who are the stakeholders we need to involve? What are their common objectives? What are the strategies used to achieve the social equity? Stakeholder engagement also means dwelling down to the level of personalities within sectors and segments.

The bridging leader and the stakeholders undergo a process of dialogue and engagement to fully understand the divide and to propose solutions around it. In the process, relationships among the actors, including those that are adversarial, come to play. It involves creating a sense of awareness on the importance of collective work and developing a process of dialogue and conflict management. The process facilitates trust-building, which is essential to develop a common response to the situation. It challenges the stakeholders to see new ways to relate with each other and, in the process, develops new forms of relationship.

Accordingly, stakeholders can work together when the following are met: the goals and objectives are identified; stakeholders are categorized according to interest and power; the strategies identified consider their interests; and they have agreed on taking specific roles and responsibilities. In the same way their purpose and objectives for engagement should also be addressed: What is in it for me? Why should we work together? Why is this our problem?

Listening and dialogue are essential during the engagement and collaboration of the stakeholders. The dialogue is a means to deepen their understanding of issues, to recognize that they are part of the problem and the solution, and to acknowledge the necessity for a collective response. Stakeholders are empowered to see the multiple perspectives of the group and build a common ground amidst possible tension. The phase of building co-ownership is also about consistently building trust among stakeholders despite their conflicting views. Through bridging partnership with the stakeholders, the process allows them to own the problem as a group and to bring about a shared vision with a collaborative action.

“The work of leadership of the Fellows are journeys they have made together with their constituents.”

- Prof. Jacinto Gavino, DPA

an article, “Developing Bridging Leaders"
Co-Creation, or the actual work of collaboration, is the third phase of the Bridging Leadership Framework. By this stage, the bridging leader has already gained the trust and support of stakeholders. A safe space has been created where the different groups work together in creating new solutions to old problems, or new ways of doing things. In the BL framework, these are referred to as new institutional arrangements.

Innovative solutions to bridge societal divides can be drawn out from multiple sources. Ideas may spring from directly observing what people want and need in their lives, and what they like and do not like about current realities. For a bridging leader to succeed, he cannot only be an expert in his field. He needs to be a "generalist," with the beneficiary in mind. Moreover, he needs to surround himself with passionate and creative individuals, who are themselves experts in their own fields. (Brown, 2008) Co-creating the shared vision assumes that the leader can no longer take hegemony over the outcome.

Now, assuming collaboration has been initiated, how does the group ensure that the work they have done together become institutionalized and sustained? How do they ensure that these co-created solutions transcend the term of the mayor, or any bridging leader for that matter? What relationships are involved to which these new institutional arrangements must be embedded, thereby sustaining the benefits that result from them? And who are the actors in this nexus?

Transforming Power Relationships

In its 2004 World Development Report the World Bank identified three major players whose power relationships with each other need to transform for constituencies to feel the real impacts of projects. These are:

1. Leaders - They are the heads of institutions, including mayors, governors, the Battalion or Brigade Commander, presidents of private sector companies, of schools, and the like. They usually have the power, resources, and influence to govern groups of people.

2. Citizenry - They are the constituents, the project beneficiaries. They are the ones by which projects are intended for.

3. Service Providers - They are usually the civil society – those that provide services to your citizenry in case the institutions are not responsive. As an extension, these service providers are those who sit at the frontlines of government agencies, like the municipal health officers or Department of Health officials. They compose the bureaucracy that provides services to the community.

The links that connect this triad of actors are where new arrangements, or changes in existing ones, can take shape.
for the outcomes of their policies and projects. In turn, when leaders answer this call, they become responsive to the articulated needs of the citizenry, by providing programs and services the latter demands.

In Lantawan, Basilan, where MBLP fellow Myra Alih situated her project, the Lantawan Farmers’ Association (LaFA) has been a vehicle for farmers to communicate their concerns to their local leaders. Previously, the determination of programs and projects has been concentrated on the mayor and legislators. But this top-down approach has produced projects that are not needed by farmers, at least at the moment. With the formation of the LaFA and its formal recognition by the local government, the farmers have now been given a voice on how their municipal funds will be budgeted.

The above example epitomizes what was concluded in the 2004 World Development Report: the main difference between the success and failure of services is the degree to which citizens themselves, as beneficiaries of these services, are involved in determining the quality and the quantity of the services which they receive. Interestingly, this also brings us to the relationship citizens share with service providers.

**Between the Citizenry and Providers**

The empowerment of citizens is further enhanced when they are given a central role in co-creating innovative arrangements. As recipients, they know what improvements can be made in the delivery of services to best address their needs. Participation is key. When the providers give power for the citizens to influence the way programs are being run by allowing them to participate in the development process, the relationships between the two are changed.

Moreover, change takes place when citizens actively participate, not only in planning, but also in implementing and monitoring the provided programs and services. Radio station manager Zenaida Masong, for example, has bridged the residents of Sulu and the provincial government agencies through media, which has become an effective channel of communication between the two groups. With the help of leaders, providers can actively promote citizen participation in planning, implementing, and assessing the provision of programs and services.

**Between Leaders and Providers**

When Jun Pacalioga took office as mayor of Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur, he made sustainable agriculture the cornerstone of his administration. In the school level, this meant changing the curriculum to adopt modules on sustainable agriculture, one that is equally sensitive to the traditions and needs of the indigenous Subanen tribe. In producing this curriculum and co-creating the change they envisioned for Dumingag, he needed to collaborate with teachers who are at the frontline of basic education.

As policymakers and heads of agencies, leaders have power over how services are delivered to citizens. Leaders can empower the providers within their jurisdiction, by giving incentives for instance, to deliver responsive programs and services. They can also steer the direction of their respective institutions towards the vision they now share with stakeholders. In addition, leaders can partner with external providers, such as non-government organizations, to initiate projects that complement those that exist or to fill the gap in service provision that are not yet existing, especially in far-flung communities.

Nevertheless, coordinating mechanisms and clear accountability on the performance and expectations of both leaders and providers must be present. In some cases, for example, government employees are appraised using a performance matrix. By rewarding the effective delivery of services and penalizing the ineffective, policymakers can get providers to serve poor people better.

**Translating New Relationships into New Institutional Arrangements**

When the relationships change between the three
major players, institutionalization would have to be cemented by working mechanisms and trusted policies that reflect the new relationships. These can be in the form of inter-faith dialogues, for example, which fellow Yusop Alano has helped organize among youth in Lantawan. Another would be that of Myra Alih between farmers and the local government. The newfound platforms for communication in both cases have been institutionalized through legislation.

Co-creation goes to the level of organizational relationships and ensures that even if the actors change, there would be mechanisms and policies that would serve as the basis for the level of relationship that must be maintained among the new set of actors.

Certain principles guide the co-created mechanisms and policies. They are:

1. **Inclusiveness** – All stakeholders even the marginal ones have their say on the mechanisms and policies. They are all involved and are able to participate in the development process.

2. **Transparency** – The dealings of the organizations are transparent for everyone to take part and see. This means that the three main players are able to open up to one another because of the level of trust that they have with each other.

3. **Accountability** – Because resources are involved, often jointly put up by the stakeholders, accountability makes sure that all resources are used efficiently and effectively.

These principles are also the three main principles of effective local governance.

**Exploring the Future by Doing**

As they have not been done before, the programs and projects that result from these new institutional arrangements call for experimentation, or a fielding of an actual case to gauge their strengths as well as their flaws. This is referred to as prototyping, which Otto Scharmer (2009) succinctly defines as “exploring the future by doing.” This necessitates the integration of the intelligence of the head (open mind), of the heart (open heart), and of the hand (open will). It very quickly creates results that can then generate feedback and suggestions for improvement by all key stakeholders of the system at issue. (Scharmer, 2009)

Jasper Que and Abdulwahab Husin demonstrate a good case of prototyping. The mayor and the Department of Education district supervisor hoped to address the poor academic performance of students in their municipality of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi. Seeing the magnitude of the problem, they decided to initially focus on four public elementary schools to test their interventions. Six months after the baseline survey and a series of programs for the students, the reading skills of students in the four pilot schools were seen to have improved substantially, as shown in the post-intervention survey they conducted. The success in the pilot schools convinced them to replicate the program in another set of schools in the locality.

**Sustaining Outcomes**

Society is ever-changing, and achieving social equity is not a one-strike deal. The bridging leader needs to ensure the new institutional arrangements are sustained. This is made possible by capitalizing on the improved power relationships – by allowing citizens, leaders, and service providers to take on the role of continuing the projects that produce the desired outcomes.

As an example, MGen Dan Lucero, who was momentarily assigned in Marawi City, was influential in redefining the relationship between the electorate and politicians in the area. To trim the inflated voters’ list that had been an instrument of electoral fraud for many years, he enjoined stakeholders to conduct a general voter registration that would ascertain the correct number of voters. This ran alongside other mechanisms that gave citizens voice and candidates a chance at fair and clean competition. The month before elections, the general was transferred to another area. However, this did not hold back a no-election failure turnout in Marawi.
Achieving social equity takes time, hence, maintaining the commitment of stakeholders will be critical. And for his part, the bridging leader needs to sustain his work by creating spaces for reflection, renewal, and learning.

Further Readings


The Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program

The Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program is an intensive 17-month training and workshop for public sector leaders, civil society groups, the academe, and entrepreneurs. The program aims to build a cadre of Bridging Leaders in Muslim Mindanao, who can address conflicts and issues like peace, education, health, land conflicts, poverty, and poor local governance. The program provides leaders the opportunity to understand the social divides in their home communities. Also, the program allows the fellows to improve their leadership skills and goals in achieving social equity.

The program is designed to combine the leadership theory with social—political issues and personal experiences which will be used to learn the Bridging Leadership Framework. The AIM-TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership gathered a pool of experts from the AIM faculty to train the fellows through the workshops and trainings conducted in three phases. The training courses and workshops merged BL theory and practices. The fellows also participated in learning events with veteran development practitioners, while enjoying improved access to resource institutions. The program has two key components: Leadership Formation and Institutional Development.1

Leadership Formation is an intensive fellowship for leaders that is anchored on the Bridging Leadership Framework as the appropriate leadership approach for addressing complex societal inequities. Essentially, the Fellowship’s goal is to develop socially responsible Bridging Leaders who are able to look at a problem, understand its complexity and develop a collaborative response to address it, in order to reach societal equity that is sustained by institutions and stakeholders that are transformed toward greater responsiveness and participation.

The fellows underwent training courses to merge Bridging Leadership theory and practice, discussed real-world cases and personal experiences, and went through mentoring sessions with local academic institutions and development professionals—all partners of the Center. The fellows will also participate in learning events with veteran development practitioners, and enjoy improved access to resource institutions. The additional technical support provided for the fellows includes:

1. Technical input on the Bridging Leadership Framework, its related concepts and skills such as systems thinking, stakeholder analysis, generative dialogue, and the like;

2. Mentoring and coaching as the fellows work towards leading their organizations and communities in planning and implementing their programs;

3. Technical input on various approaches to sustaining, monitoring, and evaluating their programs; and

4. Enabling the Center’s network to assist fellows

1 AIM TeaM Energy Center, World Bank-AIM TeaM Energy Center MBLP Program Information
in the mobilization and management of resources and networks for enhanced implementation of the fellows’ programs.

This component specifically targets leaders who are committed to addressing Local Governance concerns throughout the conflict-affected areas in Muslim Mindanao through multi-stakeholder and inclusive processes towards peace-building.

Institutional Development is an equally important component of the BL Program is the development of local academic institutions to provide Bridging Leadership training to leaders who will be part of the Fellowship.

Through this approach, the development of leaders will happen at a much closer, more efficient, and more contextual level, than if the capacity building occurred or was centralized at the AIM or at the Center. Also, local academic institutions are better equipped to provide Bridging Leadership training in the local dialect and to incorporate local and culturally-effective elements to the course.

These local academic institutions will be in a position to train and form these leaders in Bridging Leadership by being purposively engaged in the training and execution of the cohorts of Bridging Leaders.

The model for institutional engagement in the cohorts starts with the institutions collaborating to identify and then train co-trainors for the first cohort of fellows, alongside the AIM-TEC faculty and resource persons. The successive cohorts should see the local institutions as co-convenors and organizers of the capacity building activities under this Program, with the Center serving as main coordinator and facilitator.

Local institutions will be expected to adapt the Bridging Leadership Framework into an even more local context, as well as develop mechanisms for coordination, both between the different local institutions and also with the leaders they are training and supporting. In order to sustain their interventions, these institutions will work hand in hand with the Center to create knowledge and training materials, and even academic research, in the subject.

Over the course of the program, fellows participate in seminars and other learning experiences that will increase their ability and motivation to:

Program Objectives (Addressing Societal Divides)

- Utilize their leadership capital instilled with values of trust, integrity, and stewardship to address societal divides;
- Analyze the dimensions of the divide and identify all stakeholders with whom they could form bridges of understanding and action;
- Convene and engage diverse stakeholders of the divide into owning the problem and seeking a collaborative solution to the issues;
- Build the capacity of the various stakeholders to translate their collaborative response into concrete strategies and effective programs by making existing systems more participative and responsive to the inequities; and
- Continuously develop self-mastery and enhance personal resilience to sustain the commitment to produce social outcomes.

The BL Framework

The Bridging Leadership Framework is a leadership approach that makes use of multi-stakeholder processes of addressing and ending societal inequalities. It is leading through collaborative action to social change. The BL framework has three stages: Ownership, Co-Ownership, and Co-Creation.

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Ownership

The goal of the first workshop was for participants to become aware of how the BL framework can be used to guide their efforts towards more effectively responding to a social divide. At the end of the workshop, they should have written plans on how they intend to continue their development as Bridging Leaders and how they will organize their respective guiding coalitions (i.e., individuals with whom they can work with, in doing something about a specific social divide).

Workshop Objectives

A. Awareness of
1. The mission and vision of AIM TEC Center for Bridging Leadership and its expression through the Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program;
2. Data about (a) poverty indicators and alleviation programs in the Philippines; (b) historical roots of Mindanao social divides; and (c) Mindanawon identity, poverty and the future;
3. The current reality about attempts by co-fellows to resolve social divides in Mindanao;
4. Bridging Leadership as a guiding framework to respond to the need to resolve complex, social divides;
5. Social tools that can be applied during the stages of the BL process;
6. Theory U as a process framework to guide the application of tools in the BL process;
7. The role of one leader’s journey, style, and capital in producing positive social outcomes;
8. Ones calling vis-à-vis a social divide one is passionate about;
9. Different forms of application of the BL concept by Fellows in the field;
10. The importance of engaging other stakeholders, starting with a guiding coalition;
11. Image of my Highest Future Self, as guide for defining a personal leadership plan.

B. Skill in
1. Focusing in the here-and-now with open mind, heart, and will;
2. Effective interpersonal communications, for team learning;
3. Differentiating data from opinion and feelings;
4. Inquiry and advocacy to build trust and facilitate learning;
5. Describing the systemic dimensions of a preferred social divide;
6. Identifying critical stakeholders, their motivation towards change, and the resources they can share;
7. Defining images of a preferred future state, showing that a social divide is being resolved;
8. Using whole brain methods to enhance learning, facilitate the creation of new ideas, and achieve greater levels of self-mastery;
9. Choosing and organizing members of an initial guiding coalition;
10. Rapid area assessment towards creating a shared understanding of a chosen social divide, among the members of the initial guiding coalition, and what it can look like when the divide is moving towards resolution.

C. Plans on
1. How to continue developing ones bridging leadership competencies beyond the workshop;
2. How each Fellow intends to build a guiding coalition who can help in convening key stakeholders after the second workshop;
3. How each Fellow will be supported during the practicum period prior to Workshop 2.

Co-Ownership

The workshop was aimed at enabling fellows to re-examine and articulate their divides and projects more effectively, particularly through:

A. Increased awareness and appreciation of:
1. Effective ways and challenges in applying BL skills learned in Workshop 1:
   • Rapid area assessment and analysis;
   • Describing the system dynamics of a chosen divide;
• Identifying stakeholders who are allies, neutrals, and oppositions;
• Choosing strategies that maximize strengths in taking advantage of opportunities;
2. The power of appreciative language in creating new realities;
3. The nature of the Co-Ownership and Co-Creation Stages of the BL process;
4. How professionals systematically create prototypes;
5. Strategic approaches to addressing divides and implementing projects;
6. Key elements to social marketing;
7. Approaches to partnership building and resource mobilization; and
8. Areas of growth as a BL.

B. (Further) Development of skills in:
1. Taking time to pause/reflect on the here-and-now, the self, and what it means to work with others;
2. Rapid area assessment, systems thinking, stakeholder and SWOT analysis;
3. Convening a multi-stakeholder group that is interested in reversing the patterns of a specific social divide;
4. Managing a reflective/generative dialogue in one-on-one and multi-stakeholder setting;
5. Systematic prototyping of new change strategies;
6. Transforming a shared vision into measurable success indicators;
7. Project management with clear goals for resource mobilization;
8. Time management; and
9. Creating one’s own public narrative (Fellows able to relate their divides and projects to the peace process, to further understanding and addressing conflict).

**Co-Creation**

The focus of Workshop 3 is the Co-Creation stage of the BL framework. This spanned four full days (or 35 hours and 45 minutes) of sessions and formal discussions. The workshop must orient the fellows on what it takes to mobilize more people to work with their guiding coalitions in change projects directed towards citizen empowerment and creating new arrangements.

**Workshop Objectives**

A. Awareness of
1. Effective ways and challenges in applying BL skills learned during from and post-Workshop 2 such as:
   • Convening, strengthening, and mobilizing Guiding Coalitions;
   • Building partnerships;
   • Mobilizing resources for Change Projects;
   • Transforming a shared vision into measurable success indicators;
2. The costs of leadership and what can be done to manage it;
3. The nature of “co-leading” and co-creating to facilitate citizen empowerment towards new institutional arrangements;
4. The processes that lead to social innovation and its corresponding outcomes;
5. Social forces and the power dynamics in Mindanao and how these play a critical role in the success or failure of movement of change projects; and
6. Principles behind partnership for development and inclusive growth in Mindanao.

B. Skills in
1. Focusing on the here-and-now;
2. Systematic prototyping of new change strategies;
3. Translating the shared vision of the Guiding Coalition into measurable indicators;
4. Using whole brain methods in generating new options to deal with a major challenge;
5. Strengthening the members of the Guiding Coalition;
6. Effective methods and lessons in conflict negotiation and management; and
7. Narrating personal leadership stories towards generating support and responsiveness from other stakeholders.
Stories of Leadership
The 2011 World Bank Development Report explains that conflict increases when citizens are not protected against human rights abuse, not guarded against violence and injustice, and deprived of basic needs. In Mindanao and many other conflict-affected communities, restoring public confidence necessitates the creation of common grounds where institutions and people can work together and rebuild their trust with one another.
From Arms to Farms: Promoting Peace in Lantawan Through Agriculture

The municipality of Lantawan is located on the northwest part of the island province of Basilan. Its name derives from the Tausug word lantao, meaning “to view,” because the poblacion or town center sits on top of a gently rolling hill overlooking a panoramic view of the Sulu Sea and the surrounding islands. The 25 barangays forming the municipality are comprised mostly of coconut farms and fishing villages near the coastal areas. The poblacion itself is rural and bare. Without established streets or buildings, makeshift temporary dwellings are unevenly situated throughout the landscape. Commerce revolves around the occasional sari-sari (variety) store selling basic necessities to residents many of whom have just returned from evacuation sites, having been displaced by years of armed conflict.

Lantawan, one of the disadvantaged municipalities in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), is where Myra Mangkabung-Alih chose to situate her change project for the Bridging Leaders Program.

According to the 2008/2009 Philippine Human Development Report (PHDR), Basilan’s human development index in 2006 was at 0.592, falling below the national average of 0.716. Life expectancy at birth falls at 62.1 years compared to the national average of 70.6 years old. Literacy rate is 66 percent, a third below the national average of 93.5 percent. The quality of life in the island is far from the other provinces in the Philippines, even comparable to West African countries (see Table 1).

The Yakan tribe are the original inhabitants on the island of Basilan and are the province’s largest ethnic group. Following the Yakans were the Tausugs who came in the reign of the Sultanate of Sulu, the ruling sovereign throughout the Spanish occupation of the Philippines. Other waves of migration continued during the Spanish era. Later, the Americans established rubber plantations and brought in migrant workers from Luzon and the Visayas for farm labor.

1 HDI-2 figure. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index of development indicators including life expectancy, education and income. The PHDR computes two sets of HDIs. The first, HDI-1, is used to compare performance across provinces and employs the modified measures for knowledge and standard of living (life expectancy, percentage of adults who graduated from high school, combined elementary and secondary enrollment rate, and real per capita income in NCR 1997 prices). The second, HDI-2, is used to compare provinces with other countries and thus follows the global HDI methodology for comparability (life expectancy, functional literacy, combined elementary and secondary enrollment rate, and per capita income in purchasing power parity in US dollars). The value of HDI ranges from 0 to 1 (with 1 as the highest possible score).

2 Today, the result is a complex mix of cross-cutting social cleavages. According to a report by the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam, “In Basilan, while 71% of the population are
Myra was born to parents of mixed religions and of Yakan descent. Both her parents were technocrats and worked for line agencies in government. Myra herself worked for the government as Provincial Director of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) in Basilan and later as Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment–Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DOLE-ARMM).\(^3\)

Although, by the time of her generation, many members of her extended family were already involved in politics in Mindanao, the memory of her family's roots in agriculture was one she did not forget. "I come from a farming family," she states with conviction as Myra begins her narrative, providing a glimpse to the spark that led to her journey towards becoming a Bridging Leader.

A Great Divide on the Eve of Reconstruction

Basilan's economy is based primarily on agriculture and fisheries. Coconut has the largest share in agriculture (primarily copra), based on land area and production. Other major crops are rubber, coffee, cassava, banana, and corn. Secondary crops include rice, black pepper, root crops, cacao, and other seasonal fruits (see Annex 1).

Classified as a third class municipality\(^4\), Lantawan has a population of 20,087, of which about 90 percent are farmers and fisherfolk as estimated by Myra. A family of six earned an average of Php 3,200 per month, which falls significantly below the national average of Php 17,200 per month. For the period 2000-2006, it was among the bottom ten municipalities in Mindanao. Muslims, Christians own 75% of the land and the ethnic Chinese control 75% of the trade... And while the disputes between Muslims and Christians are real, usually for reasons more economic than religious, these outer more evident conflicts tend to obscure inter-tribal and inter-family feuds among Muslims themselves." Basilan: The Next Afghanistan? (2002) Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, p.4.

\(^3\) At the time of writing, she was Secretary of DOST-ARMM.
\(^4\) A third-class municipality has an average annual income of between 35 and 45 million pesos in the past four years.
anao in terms of output growth (see Annex 2). There is low productivity in farming and fishing due to lack of access to agricultural inputs, technology, and infrastructure. (See Annex 3 for the social condition of Lantawan as observed by Myra herself.)

Currently, Basilan sits on the eve of reconstruction. In June 2012, the two leading political families of Basilan entered into a peace agreement, ending a feud that spanned almost ten years. This was followed by the signing of the Bangsamoro Framework Agreement in October 2012. Since then, the peace and order situation in Basilan has improved. Roads are being built to increase farm-to-market access as the province receives development funds.

For ten years prior, Lantawan was a territory of the criminal group Abu Sayyaf. Lantawan was abandoned as people fled their homes for neighboring Isabela City. “Naging ghost town ang Lantawan. Wala nang tao pumupunta dun kasi lair ng Abu Sayyaf. Diyan yung area na pinupugutan sila ng ulo. Yung mga crops nila kinukuha ng Abu Sayyaf. Even yung mga religious leader namin, pinapatay nila sa area. After ten years, nawala ang Abu Sayyaf pero iniwan na lubog na lubog naman sa kahirapan ang municipality ng Lantawan.” (Lantawan became a ghost town. No one would go there because it was the lair of the Abu Sayyaf. This is the place where [execution by] beheading would take place. They would take farmers’ crops. Even our religious leaders would be executed in that area. After ten years, the Abu Sayyaf were dispersed, but they left Lantawan completely impoverished.)

A Peace and Order Council, comprised of representatives from the Lantawan municipal and barangay governments, national line agencies, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and other organized community leaders, worked together to break up the group. The Council encouraged dissidents to return to their old occupations and farms instead of relying on foreign sponsors, terrorist attacks, and extortion for money. With the Abu Sayyaf cells now dispersed, the task revolved around putting back together constituents displaced by the decade-long conflict.

Myra hoped to provide the citizens of Lantawan an opportunity to improve their livelihood, not through criminal activity, but through increased agricultural production, ‘from arms to farms.’

Initially, she thought of simply providing identification cards to farmers to “legitimize” them, to help drive away suspicion of their affiliation with the rebel groups. But this concept grew in scope to address not merely basic concerns, but the roots of the problems farmers faced.

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5 The Abu Sayyaf Group is a kidnap-for-ransom group that has perpetrated a number of high profile crimes in the country.

6 “Historically speaking, Lantawan has been the haven of the local terrorist group Abu Sayyaf, which victimized hundreds of civilians in the 90’s. At the helm of former Mayor Tahira Ismael from 2001 to 2010, the terrorist group was slowly driven out of the area with the help of the civilians, the military and the police. But the stigma continues to haunt with investors shying away from the area.” Constituency-building towards a reformed security sector in Lantawan (2013, January 23) Philippine Information Agency.
Her idea for a change project revolved around increasing economic opportunity in order to empower the farmers of Lantawan, because she saw increasing farmers’ economic capabilities as the foundation of true peace. “For me, peace is not just uttered over the table. Economic growth should run parallel with peace. How could you sustain peace if the stomach is empty? In order to attain peace, [there should be] food on the table.”

She lamented the culture of “dole-outs” as a hindrance to sustainable development. “We are so used to dole-outs. Sanay na. It is part of the culture already, parang nagiging sanay na ‘yong mga tao. Once in a while, pag nawala, hahanapin nila.” (We are accustomed to dole-outs. Dole-outs are something we are used to and assume to get and have come to rely on.) She describes this as a kind of mendicant attitude, detrimental to true, sustainable development in Mindanao.

Her change project for the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP), entitled “Alleviating Poverty and Promoting Peace through Technology Upgrade in Agriculture,” sought to move away from this and provide farmers with tools to help themselves. Her project sought to provide the technical know-how to increase farm production and farmers’ capabilities through an Agribusiness Summit and the formation of a farmers’ cooperative.

**Her Personal Journey**

Myra was born prematurely in 1973 in a hospital in Zamboanga, 45 minutes by boat from Basilan, the nearest place with an incubator. She was to be the only girl among four brothers.

Myra describes herself as being tenacious and determined when faced with a challenge. In her family, Myra was the one everyone ran to for help or advice. As a Muslim woman, her strong outlook did not go unnoticed as she recalls being called “Amazona” by others. She takes this sort of ribbing in stride. “I don’t easily bend with trials. I don’t easily give up,” Myra says of herself.

She belongs to a prominent political family in Basilan. Her grandfather, Wahab Akbar, the patriarch, served three terms as governor of Basilan. Barred from running a fourth term, he ran and won a seat in Congress. In 2007, he was killed in a bomb explosion, believed to have been politically-motivated, at the House of Representatives. So immersed in politics is the family, according to Myra, “Nahirapan ako maghanap ng area na walang mayor na hindi ko kamag-anak. Halos lahat ng LGU kapamilya ko.” (I had difficulty finding an area whose mayor was not a relative of mine. Almost all LGU [chief executives] were my relatives.)

Even so, Myra’s entry into government came rather unexpectedly. She was a high school science teacher for some years when a scholarship for admission into Harvard University in the United States opened up for ARMM. Desiring to be part of the line-up, she requested her grandfather to recommend her. Instead, unbeknownst to Myra, he went to then ARMM Regional Governor
Datu Zaldy Uy Ampatuan, Jr. to request a political appointment. “Right then, pinirmahan yung appointment ko without my knowledge. Pumunta ako sa Cotabato, akala ko pupunta na ako sa Harvard, only to find out manunumpa na akong director ng DOST sa Basilan.” (Right then, my appointment was signed without my knowledge. I went to Cotabato, I thought I would go to Harvard, only to find out that I would be taking an oath as DOST director of Basilan.)

She eventually lost the seat when a member of a rival political family, Mujiv Hataman, earned the governorship. According to Myra, “Natanggal ako sa ‘regionalcy’ because of him, kasi warring yung clan namin. (I was removed from [the post of DOST provincial head] because of him, because our clans were in a feud.) At the time, I could not be loyal to him because I am part of the Akbar clan. Also, he could not trust me to be in his cabinet. It’s a question of trust and loyalty.”

When she began organizing farmers, she had to make sure people did not think she had political ambitions because of her family background. “If I go to my hometown in Akbar municipality, especially at the time it was nearing election season, the people will have a notion of me—‘si Myra, tatakbo lang yan’ (Myra, [she is here because] she will run [for a position]). Also, I

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News Feature:

**Bridging farmers’ economic opportunities for better Lantawan**

The 1st Agri-Business Summit in Lantawan was held from October 1-6, 2012 at Tairan in Lantawan.

Organized were farmers from 10 pilot barangays, namely: Tairan, Lower Bañas, Upper Bañas, Lower Manggas, Upper Manggas, Canibungan, Baungis, Matikang, and Atong-Atong.

During the summit, the farmers were oriented on the bridging leadership framework as a multi-stakeholder collaboration, facilitated by Miriam L. Suacito of Nagdilaab Foundation. Municipal Agriculture Officer Dr. Julita B. Larracochea presented the situation of the agriculture sector in Lantawan which she described as relatively productive yet many farmers are still struggling.

The farmers were also introduced to biotechnology and rubber technology, to include mushroom culture, organic farming, animal and livestock-raising, multi-cropping farming, marketing, and organizational management.

The highlight of the summit was the organization of a federated association of farmers in Lantawan, which will become the official organization that will represent the Lantawan farmers in local special bodies on agriculture and policy formulation.

*Source: Philippine Information Agency, 8 October 2012*
would be a threat to the Mayor who happens to be my cousin, *kasi registered ako sa area na yun* (because I am registered in that area). I looked for a place [that had] no strings attached [on me]."

Still, she wanted to find a place where she could work on helping to improve the lives of farmers. Myra was aware of the prejudice greater society against farming as an occupation, and she felt a desire to change the way farmers viewed their work. "*If ever yung mga anak niyo rin naka-graduate, do not discourage them pag tumutulong sila sa farm.* (If your children ever complete their education, do not discourage them when they help out in the farm.) You should be happy, because they are the backbone of our economy, not just of Lantawan," Myra would say.

Like herself, many of the farmers in Lantawan were members of the Yakan tribe. She had great difficulty reconciling that, because of her background and position, farmers would shy from speaking to her about their income, or speak lowly of their status and occupation.

Myra recalls her experience visiting and having a discussion with a farmer, "*Magkano ang income mo a month—they will not tell you the reality. Mahirap kami nakakahiya. Kasi for them being poor is a shame. Nakakahiya. They are voiceless—bakit hindi ka lumapit kay Mayor? Paano, wala akong pinag-aralan. Ganito lang ako.* ([I would ask], how much is your monthly income? They would not tell me. [They would say], 'We are poor, it is embarrassing.' They are voiceless. [I would ask] why don’t you approach the Mayor? [They would reply], 'because I am uneducated.')

This internalized prejudice did not sit well with Myra who was proud of their shared Yakan heritage. "*Feeling nila, [sila] ang pinakamababa. Bakit ganon sila ka-inferiority complex? Pareho kaming Yakan. They are Yakan like me. Yet they still feel they are so low.* (They have low self-worth. Why do they have such a feeling of inferiority? They are Yakan like me. Yet they still feel they are so inferior.)

**Team Basilan**

Myra was motivated to situate her change project in Lantawan because there she felt she would not be perceived to have political motives. Though her family’s distant roots were from Lantawan, she herself had never been to the area. She had connections in the local government. Her cousin, whom she wanted to help, was a first time mayor of Lantawan, and her husband, Pablan Alih, was a municipal officer for the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) in Lantawan. She was also encouraged by a prior MBLP graduate, Yusop Alano, who had previously worked there. "*Yusop was telling me, ‘Go to Lantawan para may impact tayo and, perhaps, at the end of the MBLP 1 and 2, meron tayo makitang magandang impact sa Lantawan.’* (Yusop was telling me, “Go to Lantawan so we can create [the] impact [we want] and, perhaps, by the end of the MBLP 1 and 2, we will see that we have created valuable impact in Lantawan.)

When she began her work as a Bridging Leaders fellow, she relied heavily
on the expanding network of the MBLP in Basilan. Earlier graduates of the MBLP had begun to work together in an effort they termed “convergence”—the coordination of efforts by the “Basilan block” of the MBLP.

Many from this group became part of the “Guiding Coalition,” enabling her change project. But each had their own initiatives as well. Dedette Suacito, a fellow from the pioneer batch of MBLP, was the director of the peace and development foundation Nagdilaab Foundation, which was based in Basilan. Yusop Alano worked with youth groups, which typically were targets for recruitment by the Abu Sayyaf. Franco Alano (not related to Yusop) worked with CAFGUs7 also in Lantawan. “Ang Basilan block ng BL nakafocus on Lantawan dahil meaningful ang change sa Lantawan, from a municipality that was haven of Abu Sayyaf nuon.” (The Basilan block of BL is focused on Lantawan, because the change in Lantawan from being a haven of the Abu Sayyaf will be meaningful.)

Later, during the anniversary of Basilan on March 7, 2013, the group was formalized through an Executive Order8 made by Basilan Governor Jum J. Akbar creating “Team Basilan,” conscripted to assist in peace and development efforts. Team Basilan included many members of the MBLP: Myra Alih, Dedette Suacito (Nagdilaab Foundation), Yusop Alano (Provincial Board), Col. Carlito Galvez (AFP-Basilan), and Margie Auxtero (Isabela Foundation).

She describes the function of Team Basilan as “parang support system ng governor na nakaconverge, as members of different agencies. Dun nagstart ang convergence namin. Nagkaroon ng Team Basilan out of the programs namin. With the EO, nagkakaroon ng policy to back up our group.” (Coming from different agencies, we were like the support system to the governor [of Basilan]. Team Basilan was formed out of our programs. The EO was the policy that legitimized our group.)

“We solve cooperative problems, problems on kidnapping. We responded to deportees from Sabah. There are times dala namin ang mandate ng office namin but at other times we go there as Team Basilan. Halimbawa, sa DOST, walang mandate sa kidnapping. But I have to be there as Team Basilan—as a bridging leader,” she adds. (We solve cooperative problems and problems on kidnapping. There are times we brought our office mandates with us, but, at other times, we go there as Team Basilan. A sample case in which a DOST official has no mandate over was kidnapping. So I have to be there as Team Basilan—as a bridging leader.)

**Negotiating Social Capital and Bridging Divides**

She describes being able to engage the current political landscape in Basilan and being able to bridge various groups as an important component of her social capital. For many years prior to 2012, Basilan had a long-standing

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7 The Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit is a civilian reserve unit of the AFP.
8 Executive Order No. 08-2012, Basilan Peace and Development Coordinating Committee (PDCC), known as “Team Basilan”
feud between two political families—the Akbars and the Hatamans. Though Myra is a cousin of the current Governor of Basilan, Jun J. Akbar, she also counts among her friends the ARMM Governor Mujiv Hataman.

She became acquainted with Hataman during her university days when they both belonged to an activist organization of youth leaders called “Anak Basilan.” Myra therefore became one of the first people who was approached by then OIC Governor Hataman when, upon the urging of President Aquino, a reconciliation between the two warring clans was initiated.

Over seven months, Myra participated in the negotiations between the families. The process was not without difficulty. “I had to zip my mouth as if I was not an Akbar,” she says. “If you are part of the negotiating team, you have to be neutral. Mahirap yun sa akin kasi flesh and blood, Akbar ako. So pag nasa negotiating team ka, hindi mo dapat isipin na pamilya ka. You have to be neutral. Isipin mo ano yung gains ng bawat isa and so that you will meet at a certain point.” (If you are part of the negotiating team, you have to be neutral. It was difficult for me because I was by flesh and blood an Akbar. If you are in a negotiating team, you have to temporarily dismiss the fact that you belong to a family. You have to be neutral. You have to think of the gains from each side for you meet at a certain point.)

Her loyalty was questioned during this time. “Nahirapan ako dun. Marami akong batikos na na receive—sabi nila, parang hindi ka na Akbar. Parang tao ka na ni Mujiv. There were instances like that. I tried to prove myself na it’s not that. Iba yung goal natin dito. Hindi yung tao ni Mujiv or tao ni Akbar. I am here as a Basileño. I am here as a Bridging Leader—to try to bridge these two clans.” (I had a hard time. I received numerous criticisms. They said, it’s as if you are no longer an Akbar, as if you are a person of Mujiv. There were instances like that. I tried to prove myself that it’s not that. We have a different goal (issue) here, [we are not arguing about] which person is for Mujiv or for Akbar. I am here as a Basileño. I am here as a Bridging Leader—to try to bridge these two clans.)

On June 6, 2012, a peace agreement was signed and formally witnessed by then DILG Secretary Jesse Robredo and Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Quintos-Deles.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) governing the peace process stipulated the rules, “Sa MOA, may covenant: wala nang Hataman tatakbo against Akbar for gubernatorial race ng Basilan. On the congressional level, walang Akbar tatakbo against Hataman. Other families are welcome to run. Kasi mainit talaga. Patayan. Under the agreement, no one will speak badly about the morality of each clan. Ni-waive din ang mga kaso nila sa court.” (Included in the MOA is a covenant: that no Hataman will run against an Akbar for a gubernatorial race in Basilan, and no Akbar will run against a Hataman on the congressional level. Other families are welcome to run. [Electoral campaigns] are heated. Even fatal. Under the agreement, no one will speak badly about the morality of each clan. The cases pending in the court were also waived.)
Myra considered this historical reconciliation between the two influential families a model for building.

**Trust-Building and the Lantawan Farmers Association (LaFa)**

The farmers’ association, Lantawan Farmers’ Association or LaFA⁹, began with five farmer groups and multiplied across the municipality. There are a minimum of 25 members for each association and a total membership of about approximately 300 farmers.¹⁰

“(It was) easier for me to organize with my husband—nasa LGU ng Lantawan. Yung mga barangay captain di nakikinig sa akin noon. Pag sya ang tumatawag, kasi DILG sya eh, inintroduce niya ako, yung Bridging Leaders, sabi kailangan ko ng farmers. Edge sa akin—I have the right people on board.” (It was easier for me to organize with my husband—he is with the LGU of Lantawan. The barangay captains would not listen to me but, if my husband calls, because he is with the DILG, [they respond]. He would introduce me, introduce the Bridging Leaders Program, say we needed farmers. My advantage is that I have the right people on board.)

Myra identified as one of her greatest challenges the process of gaining trust among farmers. That she was not seen to have any political ambitions was, she felt, important in order to have authentic and legitimate participation from the farmers. “Sabi ko hindi ako mayor, wala akong interest sa inyo. Hindi ako hihingi ng boto sa inyo. Hindi rin ako yayaman sa inyo. Kailangan magtulungan tayo.” (I said I am not the mayor, I have no [political] interest in you. I will not ask for your votes. I will not get rich because of you. We have to work together.)

She describes their lack of faith, “Sabi ng farmer ‘Ay, ang gobyerno pumapasok lang dito kapag eleksyon.’ So yung level of trust nila was very low.” (A farmer said, “Ay, the government only comes here when it’s election season.” So, they had very low level of trust [towards the government].)

“Pag may programa na di relevant sa kanila, feeling nila ginagamit lang sila para documentation. Malaking insulto sa kanila. There are NGOs and politicians na ginagamit lang sila para madaanan lang ng programa nila.” (When a project is brought to them that is not relevant to their needs, [the farmers] feel like they are just being used for documentation [to legitimize projects]. This is an insult to them. There are NGOs and politicians that use the farmers just so [they can say] their programs reached [these farmers].)

Many of the farmers in Lantawan were members of the armed insurgent groups. Many had engaged in illegal activities in the past. As a result, in choosing farmer-leaders, the Guiding Coalition had to agree to confidentiality. There were instances when Myra’s group could not take pictures for documentation or divulge identities. They were judicious in this, because

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⁹ **Lapa**, in Yakan, means “to clear the field of tall weeds and underbrush.”

¹⁰ Barangays included in the LAFA, each represented by a member in the LAFA Core Group, are Baungis, Bulan-Bulan, Bulanza, Canibungan, Matarling, Matikang, Lower Bañas, Parian Baunoh, Subaan, Switch Yacal, Tairan, Upper Bañas, and Landugan.
they needed to gain the trust of members.

Trust-building also had to occur among members of the association themselves. Within the association, members were of different cultures—Tausugs, Yakan, Christians, and Samals. They lived in the same community but differed in cultures and traditions. During the Summit, an inter-faith dialogue was held and members discussed their cultural differences and grievances within the community.

"Kung mag-away tayo dito baka bumalik tayo sa past ng Lantawan na naging haven ng Abu Sayyaf. Sila din repairing their wounds. One way of repairing is to open the wounds again. [This is] one way to repair it permanently. Nagkaroon ng iyakan, nagkaroon ng emotional roller coasters along the way." (If we fight, we might fall back into the past when Lantawan became a haven for the Abu Sayyaf[, they said]. One way of repairing wounds is to open wounds again. This is one way to repair it permanently. There was crying and emotional upheaval along the way.)

During the course of organizing farmers, she relied on help from her Guiding Coalition (GC) to build up trust (see Annex 4 for complete list of GC). Made up of graduates of prior MBLPs, the group was supportive of coordinated efforts for peace and development in Basilan. “Through convergence, we brought the government to the area. Nag converge kami, dinala namin yung mga line agencies doon. (We converged, we brought the line agencies there.) I do not say that the trust level goes up overnight. It builds up over time.”

Face to face with farmers, she would talk about various government services available to them. "Mam hanggang copra lang kami," they would say. ‘Alam niyo ba ang coconut ninyo, pwede maging vinegar, pwede maging nata de coco? Alam mo ba may programa ang DA na pwede nyo pabakunahan ang inyong kambing?" We started having conversations like this,” says Myra. ("Mam, we only know copra," they would say. [I then asked] "Did you know that your coconuts can be turned into vinegar or nata de coco? Did you know that the DA has programs you can avail so you can vaccinate your goats?" We started having conversations like this.)

She describes a situation where there was a disconnect between programs and needs, especially among LGUs in ARMM. “Majority sa ARMM for compliance lang yung municipal development plan—out of compliance dahil kailangan nila magkaroon ng IRA. (Majority in ARMM do municipal development plans out of sheer compliance, because this is a requirement to get their IRA.) If they do consultations, it will take time.”

As an example she describes a program distributing seedlings. “Binigyan ng rubber seedlings ang mga farmers. Paano ngayon matatransport ng tao ang mga products nila out of rubber, or banana, or coconut to the market kung walang roads na madaanaan? Dapat they start with the road. Dapat yun ang

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11 Department of Agriculture
12 The Internal Revenue Allotment is an annual fund from the national government distributed to all local government units based on their population size and land area.
una before the seedling.” (Rubber seedlings were given to the farmers. But how can the products from rubber, banana, or coconut be transported to the market if there are no roads? They should have started with the road. It should have been prioritized over the seedlings.)

The LaFA summit was an attempt to provide a venue for discussion. “Ang ginawa ng Summit, pinresent ang agenda in front of the LGU. Andun ang regional, provincial, and municipal. (The Summit enabled the presentation of the agenda to the LGU. Regional, provincial, and municipal [governments] were there.) They were there when the farmers presented their agenda."

"Kung tutuusin napakasimple ng agenda nila pero napakalalim. It will entail a lot of political will. Gusto nila may truck na hahakot ng goods nila. Sa tutuusin, kaya naman ng LGU yung mga hinihingi nila. Pero hindi nila alam. Sa LGU level, ang planning officer ang gumagawa ng development plan. Pero ni minsan hindi pinakinggan ang farmers.” (Come to think of it, their agenda was simple but had depth. It will entail a lot of political will. They wanted a truck that will collect [and transport] their goods. The LGU can actually provide for this. But they did not know. At the LGU level, the planning officer drafts the development plan. But the farmers’ [concerns] were never listened to.)

In order to get the cooperation of Local Government, Myra tried to convince the LGU officials that working with the farmers would redound to benefits. “Yung IRA nyo is not enough to meet the needs of your constituents. At the end of the day, may impact ba ang IRA ninyo? Gusto nyo ba maging self-sufficient sila na hindi na sila hingi sa inyo ng pera pag magpapakasal, pag magkasakit, o mamatayan?” (Your IRA is not enough to meet the needs of your constituents. [But you still need to ask] at the end of the day, did our [use] of the IRA made any impact? Do you want [the farmers] to be self-sufficient, that they will not ask for money when they marry, when they get sick, or when [a relative of them] dies?)

**On the Road Towards Reconstruction**

The farmer groups were federated into a municipal association of farmers. The LaFA became federated as the Farmers’ Association of Lantawan, registered with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) of ARMM.13

The highlight of activities for LaFA took place with Lantawan’s first Agri-
Business Summit which took place on October 1-6, 2012. During this time, the LaFA farmers were able to hear about the programs and services of various line agencies, collaborate with non-government organizations (NGOs), and partner with other organizations such as the CAFGU Farmers Association, Nagdilaab Farmers Association, and the Lantawan Youth Assembly Farmers Association.

With the aim of preventing farmers from being recruited back into lawlessness, LaFA focused on ways to improve the economic capabilities of its members.

Ninety percent of employment in Lantawan was comprised of farming and fishing. Farmers typically engaged in farming by day and fishing by night. However, their income could not sustain the basic needs of a family of six.

According to Myra, “The farmers—by evening, they are fishermen. Sa araw, farmer sila. So nagkaroon ng shifting. Kapos sila. They only earn 2,000 pesos a month. With average of six members in a family. No wonder prone sila sa recruitment sa lawlessness. So naka-angkla doon ang kahirapan nila. To have instant money they join lawlessness. So after, nung nawala yung Abu Sayyaf, kailangan i-save kaagad na sila before sila ma-recruit ulit from other areas.”

The agriculture cycle for coconut was such that the harvest season was succeeded by a fallow period of three months during which time the farmers had no income. Through LaFA and with the help of line agencies such as the Lantawan Youth Assembly Farmers Association.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Non-Government</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Table 2. Farmer Organizations, before and during the MBLP period (June to October 2012)

14 Capacity-Building Workshops during the Summit were the following: (1) Bridging Leadership; (2) Bio-Technology and Rubber Technology Transfer; (3) High Yield and Market-Driven Product; (4) Marketing; (5) Governance; and (6) Agri-Fair. Sub-activities were also conducted: (1) Induction of the Federated Officers; (2) Market Day; (3) Farmers’ Agenda was drafted; (4) Distribution of Farm Inputs; (5) VetCAP; and (6) DOLE and DA-ARMM Registration. The Summit was attended by 64 participants from 13 barangays. There were representatives from 14 associations and 15 agencies and military units, NGOs, and schools.
as DOST, DTI\textsuperscript{15}, and agriculture specialists, farmers received training in livelihood activities to supplement their income. They were introduced to multi-cropping for coconut, rubber, banana, and cassava. Whence before they stopped at raw products, through trainings, they are now knowledgeable in the production of coconut vinegar and the production and bottling of \textit{kalamansi} (a local citrus fruit) juice.

"\textit{Kasi ang coconut hina-harvest every three months only. They will again wait for three months. So ibig sabihin, may gap, may idle time na wala silang trabaho. So wala din silang mapagkunan ng pagkain. So what we introduced to them is alternative livelihood in the meantime na activity in line with agriculture. Ngayon na-introduce yung multi-cropping—three harvests in one month. Harvest ng coconut, rubber, banana, and cassava. Inintroduce sa kanila ng guiding coalition team ko. I really brought experts with me.}" (Coconut is harvested every three months only. There is a waiting period of three months before they can harvest again. In other words, there is a gap or idle time when they are without an income. They have no means to buy food at this time. What we provide is training in multi-cropping—three harvests in one month. Coconut, rubber, banana, and cassava. This was introduced by my Guiding Coalition. I had to bring experts in (for this).]

LaFA also found a market for the farmers’ charcoal. Previously used only for domestic purposes as a by-product of coconut, charcoal is now sold commercially in the market. They were given information on how to sell by-products of raw banana (previously only disposed of and burned as by-products).

"\textit{Yung Chamber ng Basilan, sila yung pumunta sa city during the Agribusiness Summit and presented to the farmers kung saan nila pwedeng ibenta yung products nila. From raw banana to the waste product of coconut husk. Binibili pala 'yon. Di nila alam, sinusunog lang nila nuon.}" (The Chamber [of Commerce] of Basilan attended the Agribusiness Summit and provided information to the farmers about where they could sell their products, from raw banana to the waste product of coconut husk. [The farmers] learned there was a market for this. They didn’t know that before and would simply burn these products.)

This resulted in substantial income benefits. "\textit{Before, three months wala silang income at nangungutang sila sa bodega. Yung harvest-- pambayad utang lang yon. Ngayon hindi na.}" (They used to be without income for three months [during the fallow period] and borrow money from the warehouse. The money earned from the harvest would go to pay past debt. Now, this is no longer the case.)

Farmers also received training from DTI in computing for the value of produce and putting aside money for savings. They learned to be more competitive and more conscious of the value of each product.

"\textit{Sabi ng isang farmer, 'Mam feeling ko peso na lahat nasa utak ko. Pag may}
nakikita akong patay na vegetable, pesos lang ang naiisip ko.” (One farmer commented that he had become fixated on the peso value of his crops and that now money was all he thought of.)

In the past, there was a very weak farm-to-market link. And residents had to travel far to buy basic needs. “They go to the other municipalities or to Isabela City to go to market which is around 30 minutes away from them. The roads are not so good. So kahit toyo lang sometimes you have to go to Isabela. So what they have are small sari-sari stores na tingi-tingi lahat ang benta. (Even for [basic things like] soy sauce they had to go to Isabela City. What they had were small sari-sari stores that sold small portions.) So basically, to have their basic needs they need to travel to other municipalities just to have it.”

After the establishment of LaFA, an ordinance was passed to put up a “market day” within Lantawan Municipality. Through the support of PAMANA\(^\text{16}\) and Gawad Kalinga (a national NGO), a market was established.

Having now been accredited and recognized by DOLE and DA in ARMM and the Local Government of Lantawan, LaFA’s agenda is now included in the budgets of line agencies. The municipal development plan includes several points on LaFA’s agenda. “Now they demand more accountability from the mayor and the local government,” observed Myra.

There are indications of this increasing power as one of LaFA’s items on their agenda was to improve farm-to-market roads and, now, many around Lantawan are being rehabilitated (see Annex 5).

According to Myra, the benefits of the project revolve around capacitating farmers politically. “Meron na silang space sa local special bodies. Meron na silang mandato sa budget planning. Kasali na din sila sa pag monitor. They also have access to the mayor.” (Now, they have [representation] in local special bodies. They now have mandates over budget planning. They are now also involved in the monitoring [of projects]. They also have access to the mayor.)

There is also a marked shift in atmosphere. It used to be that people were barraged with constant news about bombings. But, nowadays, the conversation has shifted. People are preoccupied not with war but with maximizing their production and earning more money.

\(^\text{16}\) Through the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), PAMANA (PAyapa at MArsaganang PamayanAn) is a government fund directed for use in areas affected by conflict.
References

A Filipino Family Earns an Average Annual Income of P206 Thousand in 2009


Province of ARMM: Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao


### Annex 1

**Estimated Area and Production of Selected Crops, 2011**

(from Myra Alih's presentation, MBLP Cohort 2, Workshop 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Area (hectares)</th>
<th>Area Production (metric tons)</th>
<th>Area Yielded (metric tons)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permanent Crops</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coconut</td>
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<td>36,912.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>200.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
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<td>19.68</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporary Crops</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rice/Palay</td>
<td>88.00</td>
<td>288.90</td>
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<td>Cassava</td>
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### Annex 2

**Bottom 10 Mindanao Cities and Municipalities in Indicative Output Growth, 2000-2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>City or municipality</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Turtle Islands</td>
<td>Tawi-Tawi</td>
<td>ARMM</td>
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<tr>
<td>429</td>
<td>Hadju Panglima Tahil</td>
<td>Sulu</td>
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<tr>
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<td>La Libertad</td>
<td>Zamboanga del Norte</td>
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<td>421</td>
<td>Bayabas</td>
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<td>Caraga</td>
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Annex 3
Field Notes from Myra Alih
(from Myra Alih’s presentation, MBLP Cohort 2, Workshop 3)

Households that eat less than 3 meals per day

There are more than one-half or 58.5% total household of the municipality that eat less than three meals a day. Older family members had to content themselves with a glass of coffee or tea and/or two pieces of bread or banana for breakfast if not engaging in heavy works, because most of the households have very inadequate income to meet their basic needs for subsistence due to grave poverty.

Unemployment rate

Unemployment Rate of 54.6% (very high)
Labor Force: 18,201
Unemployment Rate: 9,951
*For the moment they just returned from evacuation

Elementary school participation

Only 83.1% of the school children aged 6-12 are in elementary school. Several reasons cited during the validation with barangay officials:
1. peace and order condition in the area;
2. the very slippery and very dilapidated road network;
3. dilapidated school buildings;
4. but the most prevalent reason presents was the practice of some indigenous people of permitting their children of dropping out of school, to help in the farms or go with the older family member fishing due to grave poverty.

Secondary school participation

The secondary school participation rate of 81.9% of the school children aged 13-16 years old of the five (5) barangays with secondary national high school is relatively high. However, secondary school children in the barangay, which are located very far from these national high schools, have opted to send their school children to secondary schools in the municipalities of Maluso, the City of Isabela, or even the City of Zamboanga, which are very expensive and only well-off families could afford.

Health

Health in the Municipality of Lantawan is still a problem, considering that 1.5% of 0-5 years old children died, caused by the poor delivery of health and other basic services, due to absence of hospitals, doctors, medicines, and the lack of medical personnel to man health centers in far-flung barangays.

Nutrition

There is an alarming problem of malnutrition in the municipality. The lack of money to buy nutritious food, coupled by the stopping of the once established nutrition program, had caused 3.8% of children 0-5 years old to be moderately and severely underweight.

Water

The municipality had a very low percentage of access to safe water supply (only 65% of the total households) as a result of dilapidated, un-maintained water sources in the mainland barangays. In the islands, majority of the barangays have a 100% absence of access to safe water supply. Potable water needed by residents on the island barangays are brought from the cities of Isabela or Zamboanga.

Toilet

Only 11.1% of the total households have access to sanitary toilet facilities. The other 84.4% of the households are either using the unsafe antipolo type/open pit, or have no toilet at all. In the island, a big majority of households has no sanitary toilet facilities. Except for some who have splash toilets.

Shelter - Squatters

Land ownership in Lantawan municipality is being dominated by few well-to-do families, especially in the islands. 66.6% of the total households are squatters, who are only tenants and/or part-time laborers of big landholdings. In most barangays along the seacoast and the islands, households built their homes near each other, squatting on somebody’s property for economic subsistence and security reasons.

Shelter - Makeshift housing

As a consequence of the unstable peace and order condition, brought about by the armed confrontation between the AFP and the lawless elements in the area, 13.7% of the total households are living in temporary makeshift housing.

Peace and Order - Household member victimized by crimes

Though the peace and order condition of the municipality of Lantawan has dramatically improved, following the neutralization and splintering of the notorious Abu-Sayyaf Group, the resulting effect of being displaced and the total abandonment of practically all economic activities is grave poverty, which is the cause of crimes, like theft, cattle rustling, family feud, and the like, resulting to a very high 3.1% households members in the municipality victimized by crimes.

* Source: NSO and MPDC as of 2011
** Source: Municipal Health Officer of Lantawan as of 2011
Annex 4
Myra Alih’s Guiding Coalition and Core Group

The following are members of the Guiding Coalition (GC):

1. Franco Alano, West Mindanao Command (co-MBLP fellow)
2. Dedette Suacito, Executive Director, Nagdilaab Foundation, Inc. (NFI)
3. Dr. Rima Hassan, Chief Executive Officer, Mindanao Autonomous College Foundation, Inc.
4. Filipo David Malcampo, Philippine Information Agency (PIA)
5. Pablan N. Alih, Municipal Local Government Operations Officer, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG)-Basilan (husband)
6. Rene V. Carvayas, Field Officer, PIA, Basilan
7. Yusop T. Alano, Sangguniang Panlalawigan/Provincial Board Member (co-MBLP fellow)
8. Dr. Julita B. Laracochea, Municipal Agriculture Officer, Lantawan, Basilan
9. Elves Tindoc, LGU of Lamitan, Basilan
10. Rustam Ismael, Mayor of Lantawan
11. Carlito Suela, TARBMC Manager, Barangay Chairman of Tairan
12. Dr. Regelio Bahinting, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)-ARMM
13. Abdulcarim Hairin, Province Agriculture
14. Sagira Asid, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)-ARMM
15. Suwaib Ismael, Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR)-ARMM
16. Dr. Nasser Salain, Basilan State College
17. Delmar Halipa, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)-ARMM
18. Arnold Yap, DTI-ARMM

Additional members after the second workshop:
19. Parasa Atalad, Provincial Planning and Development Office, Basilan
20. Maksurin L. Rizal, Science Research Specialist II, Department of Science and Technology (DOST)-ARMM

Additional members after the third workshop:
21. Col. Carlito Galvez, AFP-Basilan
22. Jonathan A. Doroja, Organic Farming Coordinator, DAF-ARMM
23. Ahmad Alih S. Ismael, DAR-ARMM
25. Sali Guillermo, Provincial Agriculture Office
26. Nonito S. Manuel, DTI-ARMM, Basilan

27. Ruben Mustafa, Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator, Lantawan
28. Momoy A. Cohombo, Project Officer, NFI
29. Tony Locson, DAR-ARMM, Basilan
30. Captain Mike Swanger, Civil Affairs, Balikatan

At the start, the GC members were only eighteen (18). It became twenty (20) during the second workshop. And finally, it reached thirty (30) members right after the third workshop.

The following are the members of the Core Group, which includes some GC members:

1. Dedette Suacito
2. Dr. Rima Hassan
3. Pablan N. Alih
4. Basilan Governor Jum J. Akbar
5. Yusop Alano
6. Tahira Ismael Sansawi, Provincial Administrator, Basilan

The following are members of the Core Group of Lantawan Farmers:

1. Bambi J. Ismael, Baungis
2. Ibno K. Mawalil, Bulan-Bulan
3. Husib I. Pio, Bulanza
4. Nurham L. Dahoroy, Canibungan
5. Carlito L. Ramos, Matarling
6. Murahab H. Ahilun, Matikang
7. Nelson E. Virtucio, Lower Bañas
8. Hajir H. Ahmad, Parian Baunoh
9. Musalin D. Sapilin, Subaan
10. Engr. Danilo R. Itorraldes, Switch Yacal (deceased)
11. Manolito M. Arechea, Tairan
12. Bensar M. Damsid, Upper Bañas
13. Arvynn M. Palisoc, Landugan

The following are key stakeholders of the GC and Core Group:

1. Julita B. Laracochea provided the baseline data used for the change project.
2. Tahira S. Israel provided venue and snacks during meetings.
3. Rene V. Carvayas assisted the farmers in formulating their agenda.
4. Momoy A. Colombo assisted the workshop on situation analysis.
Annex 5

Lantawan Local Poverty Reduction Plan and Investment Plan, 2013

Through the LaFA, farmers now wield influence over municipal planning. Assistance in agricultural production has been adopted as a municipal strategy for poverty reduction. Among these are the provision of farm inputs and facilities, as well as the micro-enterprise development. To enhance the connectivity of the farms to the market, road improvements have been included in the Annual Investment Plan (AIP). The AIP is a prerequisite for the disbursement of funds (internal revenue allotment) from the national budget through the Department of Budget and Management.
A bridge called Baitamal was located in the municipality of Indanan, deep in the countryside of Sulu. In September 2009, the bridge was blown up by insurgents. Some members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) deployed in the area rebuilt the bridge the following month, but it was bombed again two months later, in December.

Lt. Col. Romulo “Bim” Quemado II was assigned in the area and recalls the incident: “When I was assigned in my battalion in Indanan, we asked, ‘What can we do about the bridge?’ This bridge is here to serve the people and yet they want to destroy it,” he thought. “Something was very much amiss.”

Although the AFP contemplated bringing in government units to rebuild the bridge once again, they desisted. Doing so will not solve the pith of the problem; it will only perpetuate the cycle.

“This bridge can be rebuilt. But without genuine relations, it will be bombed again.” What was needed, it seemed clear, was another form of investment—an investment in human relations.

As a Marine deployed in Sulu, Bim had ample opportunity to reflect upon the tenuous relationship between different groups caught in the midst of armed conflict. He witnessed several incidents of clashes between the military and the locals, while deployed in Jolo, the capital of Sulu.

At the time of his admission into the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP), his designation was as executive Officer of the 9th Marine Battalion for the Philippine Marine Corps—Operations Officer of the Sulu Island Command. “Iba yung background ko. (My background is unique.) As a field-grade officer, I was never assigned to a stable area. Always in the isolated, critical area.” Bim was typically assigned to sensitive missions. He describes his work, “I was known to produce persons of significant value.”

Hence, when he was fielded as a candidate for the MBLP by his superior, MGen. Rustico O. Guerrero, the change in his mind’s framework from that of a soldier to that of a peace-builder was quite profound. “[Throughout] my career, ‘kinetic’ ako. Ang option is to barge in and do the military option. Ganyan ang pananaw ko. Wala akong space to grow ideas about peace-building before.” (Throughout my career, I’ve been in combat situations. My option was the military option. This was my mindset. I did not have space to nurture ideas about peace-building before.)
When asked to think about a project for the Bridging Leaders Program, Bim at first wanted to work on mediation in clan warfare or *rido*. Rido poses a significant problem in parts of Mindanao and is a large factor contributing to insecurity in the region. However, a colleague informed him that the ambivalence of soldiers in the area towards this problem might render his plans futile. “Someone asked me, what’s your project about? I said, clan engagement. The officer laughed and said, ‘You might want to change. *Ayusin mo muna relations sa mga tao.* (Work on your relations with the people first.) They don’t trust you.’”

Bim explained the dilemma placed upon the soldier, sworn to serve and protect the people: “It is part of our job to enter jungles of Jolo and engage in combat with insurgents. The struggle is how to maintain relations with the people when at the same time we have been doing these things to them. Since time immemorial, there has been historical distrust.”

He recognized that soldiers suffered from lack of credibility in many sectors. At times, this was for good reason. While they are trained to serve and be champions of the people, there were instances when soldiers abused their position.

“We are not a perfect organization,” said Bim. “However we wish to project a good image to the public, there will be bad apples. Their poor judgment can create big waves that automatically destroy what gains we have built.”

At the start of his fellowship with the MBLP, the security sector in Sulu was undergoing tensions with in-fighting between local police and the Marines. In 2009, a series of bombings had occurred in Jolo. According to Bim, “The church was bombed and after the explosion, a Marine became a suspect. There was a verbal joust between the police and the Marines. The chief of police was relieved of his position. After that, we eased our engagement with the local police.”

At about this time, Bim himself was enlisted to mediate in an incident involving a Marine who had a fistfight with one of the locals. The incident turned out to be the unlikely beginning for a future partnership. In the course of mediation, he became acquainted with members of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD)\(^1\). During their meetings, Bim came to understand the perception of Suluanos towards the military. He would be told, “*Takot sa sundalo yung mga tao sa Sulu.*” (People are afraid of soldiers in Sulu.) He was confronted with the question, “*How can you work on peace-building and clan mediation kung ikaw mismo hindi ka pa namin nakikita as part of us?*” (How can you work on peace-building and clan mediation if the people do not consider you as part of them?)

These conversations provided clarity for Bim. It was then that he decided to shift his focus inward—to look at the weaknesses within his own organization. Bim surmised, “If we were truly to win peace, it was important that we first get our act together."

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\(^1\) Since 2005, the CHD works with the Government of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Peace Working Group in conflict mediation as in Sulu.
The Philippine Security Sector and Civil-Military Operations

When he was deployed in Sulu, Bim was among 3,000 Marines in the province. The Philippine Marine Corps (PMC) is an elite unit of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) which was designed to be a light, hard-hitting, highly-mobile force, composed of disciplined and dedicated officers, capable of aggressively and persistently pursuing seagoing smugglers, pirates, and other lawless elements throughout the Philippine archipelago. According to Bim, “The Marines were originally designed as a hard-hitting force to storm hostile beaches. Our original design is for territorial defense. Instead, of over 62 years of existence, we have constantly found ourselves entangled in a self-inflicted domestic war.”

Since inception, the Marine Corps has been conscripted in internal warfare against communist insurgents and Muslim separatists. This has resulted in what Bim called “historical distrust,” a feeling of resentment among native Suluanos for the military. In the last decade, armed conflict intensified as the Marines were again conscripted in the war against terrorism. Once again the Marines were enlisted to fight an internal threat. The end result: “Marines were deployed to fight a global counter-insurgency campaign. We ended up fighting in our own soil, killing our own blood.” In this situation, “nobody wins or loses because we are all Filipinos,” said Bim.

Historically, the main focus of the Philippines’ national defense policy has been on internal security rather than territorial defense. The nature of the country’s security policy was tied strongly to its position as an American colony and, subsequently, close political ally. The presence of American military bases in the country for 45 years until 1991 made territorial defense redundant during those years. Instead, the military concentrated on defending the state not from external threats but internally, against local communist insurgency and Muslim separatist insurgency.

Traditionally, the military handled the maintenance of relationships with communities through the practice of Civil-Military Operations (CMO). The CMO is a doctrine that provides a program of activities the military undertakes in order to build relationships with the communities in which it is active. The AFP defines CMOs as activities that are non-combatant in nature, undertaken by the military independently or in coordination with civilian

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2 The Marine Corps was created by AFP General Orders No. 319 dated 02 November 1950 authorizing the organization of a Marine Battalion as a unit of the Philippine Naval Patrol.
4 The country’s security sector is also characterized by a practice of engaging in non-traditional military roles and involvement in civic-political affairs, employing a developmentalist approach in military relations. According to Carolina G. Hernandez, Professor of Political Science at the University of the Philippines and an expert on military affairs, as a consequence of the strategy used against the communist Hukbalahap insurgency during the late 1940s to the early 1950s, the role of the military in society slowly expanded beyond external defense, internal security and peace in order to include socioeconomic functions. The military performed developmental roles through the management of socioeconomic programs and projects. The developmental role of the military continued on into Martial Law years when, rather than curbing the power of the military, Marcos expanded the role of the military to maintain his position in an authoritarian regime.
entities with the primary objective of supporting a military mission. The CMO is usually engaged prior or subsequent to combat operations.\(^5\)

Since its early beginnings, the CMO formed part of a counter-insurgency strategy. In the 1950s, the Magsaysay administration, with the assistance of Lt. Col. Edward Landsdale of the Joint US Military Advisory Group, embarked on vigorous military campaigns against local communist insurgency posed by the Hukbalahap. In support of the government’s counter-insurgency (COIN) operations, the AFP simultaneously performed various civic duties like infrastructure activities, medical missions, and legal services to citizens in the countryside.\(^6\)

The nature of a CMO was such that the end goal would be to achieve military gains (penetration, intelligence gathering, surveillance, etc.) In this situation, the efforts towards building a relationship with the communities took on a hollow character. The resulting relationship was topical and superficial and lasted only for so long as the dole-out or project would last. Bim describes the practice, “Before, ginagamit namin yung CMO (we used to use the CMO) and do something for the community, to cover our tracks. For example, the military would do a CMO medical mission. Then after, they would do a raid in that community or adjacent community. Or we do the CMO after a raid like a ‘band aid’ to make amends for the raid.”

The goals of CMOs tended to be shortsighted. This was seen as contributing little to lasting peace if not counter-productive. According to Bim, “Our natural impatience in peace-building easily tempts us to take shortcuts. We often end up buying peace, or simply resorting to armed violence. Easy. But we end up with a problem becoming more complex and intractable.”

**A Paradigm Shift Leading to Transformation**

During his State of the Nation Address on July 26, 2010, President Benigno Aquino announced a new Internal Peace and Security Plan (IPSP) for the AFP. Stating that “a purely military solution is not enough,” the IPSP Bayanihan gives “equal emphasis to combat and non-combat dimensions of military operations. The IPSP departs from the old parameters and explores non-combat parameters of success in addressing the country’s peace and security problem.” It is designed such that the capabilities of internal armed threats are reduced to a level that they can no longer threaten the stability of the state and civil authorities, thereby ensuring the safety and well-being of the Filipino people.\(^7\)

In a nutshell, Bayanihan represents a paradigm shift on how the Armed

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\(^7\) The IPSP will be implemented from 2011 to 2016. The AFP will focus its efforts on addressing internal armed threat groups until 2016 when it will hand over the lead role in internal peace and security to appropriate government agencies and transition to a territorial defense-focused force.
Forces views its mandate. The primary objective of AFP internal security operations shall be "Winning the Peace," rather than simply defeating the enemy using barrels of guns and cannons. The AFP will be guided by two equally important strategic imperatives: Adherence to Human Rights/International Humanitarian Rule of Law and the involvement of all stakeholders in the peace process.  

Against the backdrop of this policy, Bim put forth a radical idea: to forego the military agenda altogether within the traditional CMO—the doctrine traditionally used by the military to frame civil-community relations. The idea of traditional CMO was hinged on, ultimately, advancing a military agenda. This was the intention of CMO and the direction which set the tone for the activities within the program.

Gathering heads together, Bim and his group put together the idea for a new kind of training for soldiers—the Community Relations Training (CRT). The CRT is a training course originally designed for Marines to equip them with the necessary skills to work with communities in which they are assigned. The training endeavored to provide frontline soldiers with a better understanding of local history, culture, and practices. As time passed, the CRT began to evolve and became not just a training course, but a venue for networking and collaboration between members of the security sector and the local community.

The initiative towards reform in the security sector had antecedents in the work of prior figures, many of whom were graduate fellows of the MBLP. In 2005, discussions had begun between then Col. Raymundo “Ding” Ferrer and Col. Benjamin Dolorfino, along with Balay Mindanaw Foundation executive director Ariel Hernandez, on an advocacy to train soldiers in conflict management and to transform them into peace-builders. MGen. Rustico O. Guerrero created the Muslim Community Engagement Training (MCET), the forerunner of the CRT.

A typical Marine battalion in Sulu has around 70 percent of its forces deployed in detachments spread out within its area of responsibility. This results in a situation where the junior ranks—from Privates to Lieutenants—are mostly the ones exposed to the local communities. According to Bim, “their unguided exposure to the locals partly explains their tendency to violate cultural and other sensitivities.”

The CRT Program is the first peace-building initiative where the AFP engages in broad collaboration with civil society and the grassroots at the community level. The curriculum is flexible and locally designed in consultation with members of the local community, religious scholars, and the academe (see Annex 1 for sample module). It is aimed at equipping Marines with skills to engage with communities for peace and development efforts.  

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8 President Aquino unveils new AFP Internal Peace & Security Plan (2010, December 22), Zambotimes.
9 The training outcomes of the CRT Program include the following: (1) understand the socio-cultural, religious, and historical context in Sulu; (2) develop self-
Forming Partnerships for CRT

At the start of his fellowship with the MBLP, Bim was working to mediate in an incident—a fistfight involving a Marine and a local civilian. The incident was small, but it had made the local evening news. It turned out to be the unlikely beginning of a partnership towards improving relations between the military and community in Sulu.

The civilian involved in the incident was a volunteer staff of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD), an international peace organization based in Jolo. In the course of mediation, Bim met Mr. Vandrael Birowa, the head of the CHD, and other members of the organization. It was Mr. Birowa who gave counsel when Bim expressed a desire to participate in clan mediation. “It would not be appropriate for a uniformed man to go into communities and address conflict,” said Birowa, “because the feelings are still there, the trauma is still there.”

It was through conversations with the CHD that the idea for CRT came about. Initial discussions were held with Mr. Darren Datilles (Notre Dame of Jolo College), Rosemain Abduraji (CHD secretariat), Fr. Romeo Villanueva, Ryan Lacuesta (a former NPA turned Marine Officer), Col. Eric Macaabac (also a Marine who, as a junior officer, was on duty with Bim).

As part of their mandate to provide an avenue for dialogue between the awareness in relation to the overall peace campaign for Sulu; (3) establish a sustainable partnership with key sectors of the local community; (4) participate in community dialogues or informal engagements; (5) form partnerships for community-empowered socio-economic development projects based on community needs assessments and dialogues; and (6) conduct effective advocacies in support of community peace-building efforts.

Perception Survey (2011)

A perception survey among the Marines in Sulu in 2011 revealed that, while majority of the Marines felt they did not really understand the local Tausug culture, majority expressed willingness to learn about it. Majority felt it was important for them to gain the trust of the Tausugs and believed that mutual trust was vital to achieve peace in Sulu.

Results of the Perception Survey (2011)

- 53% do not trust the average Tausug
- 70% either do not understand or understand little of the Tausug Culture
- 93% declared they wish to learn the local culture
- 92% think mutual trust between the military and the local populace is important in order to attain lasting peace in Sulu
- 91% also believe mutual trust between the military and the locals are achievable.
The CHD had an interest in developing lines of communication with the security sector. The AFP has been involved in prior work of the CHD because of their role as peace-keepers and guarantors to cease-fire agreements. According to Birowa, “Because of the nature of our work in dialogue and mediation, especially in some areas of Sulu where the Marines have free rein to enter, we thought it is important to involve them. It would be better to formally train them about the local culture and [this] would help us if they understood how the locals perceive them.”

Bim did not have the know-how to run the program. The CHD and partners provided facilitators, helped develop the program and scheduling, and provided some resource persons. “Yung social capital na ng CHD yung gumana. May credibility sila—cross-sectoral sila. Sila ang nag-invite ng mga lecturers at sila ang nagfa-facilitate. They were the face of the program.” (We used the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MGen. Rustico O. Guerrero, AFP</td>
<td>Commandant, Philippine Marine Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BGen. Romeo G. Tanalgo, AFP</td>
<td>Commander, Joint Task Force-Sulu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. Remegio C. Valdez, GSC</td>
<td>Commanding Officer, 3rd Marine Brigade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Hanibal Bara</td>
<td>MBLP Fellow/Mindanao State University-Jolo (Sulu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Amildasa Annil, DM</td>
<td>Chairman/CEO, Ulangig Mindanao, Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilfredo Torres III</td>
<td>Program Director, The Asia Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fr. Charlie M. Inzon, OMI Ph.D.</td>
<td>President, Notre Dame of Jolo College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Mike Alar</td>
<td>Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Manila)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandrael Birowa</td>
<td>Head of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Sulu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino, AFP (Ret)</td>
<td>Former Commandant of the Philippine Marine Corps (father of Security Sector Reform in the AFP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bantay Bayanihan Core Group (coalition of civic society organizations, NGOs, and academe based in Manila)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Rosemain Timbreza Abduraji</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. Darren Datiles</td>
<td>Notre Dame of Jolo College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Nash Abuhadi</td>
<td>Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marjana Imran</td>
<td>Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (daughter of an MNLF member)</td>
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<td>Khammar Allama</td>
<td>Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Lt. Ryan F Lacuesta, PMC</td>
<td>S5, MBLT9, Philippine Marine Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lt. Gwen Rowena Bonon, PMC</td>
<td>G7, 3 MBDE, Philippine Marine Corps</td>
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<td>Sgt. Francis Morales, PMC</td>
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Table 2. The Guiding Coalition

Table 3. The Core Group

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\(^{10}\) The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is a main proponent in the Moro separatist movement.
Anecdotes from the CRT Journey
by Nash Usman Abduhadi, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

It was through an accidental meeting that I had the chance to be involved in the Community Relations Training Program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. I participated as a “CRT Documentor.”

It was with amazement when, during the lectures, the Marines were very keen to ask questions relating to culture, religion, and tradition of the locals, thinking that these were the reasons why we can barely attain peace in Sulu. What caught my attention was, when they were given a task to draw how they see Sulu in the next few years, a drawing of a soldier shaking hands with the local startled me. Though it was a modest depiction, it is where genuine relations start. “Salam” (shaking hands) is a humble gesture, extending peace to anyone.

What I thought were only lectures turned into applied action during the Mindanao Week of Peace celebration. I was humbled when I saw the Marines putting their hands off the trigger of their firearms, parking in a right way, and learning how to say “Assalamu alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatu” (Peace be with you). These are just but few of the important lessons the CRT has also taught us.

Partnership matters

CRT would not be made possible without the strengthened and collaborative efforts from its partners and this was proven true, especially during the conduct of the second CRT with the Philippine National Police, US Task Force Sulu, D’Alert Radio Club, Notre Dame of Jolo College, SACC, Silsillah Inc., The Asia Foundation, and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. If my memory serves me right, it was during the CRT-2 that the police and Marines first re-established their relations amidst the historical internal animosity amongst them. It is important to note that CRT has helped them to converge in the quest for an ever-elusive peace in the province.

Bim also enlisted some friends from the academe. From Notre Dame of Jolo College, Fr. Charlie M. Inzon helped design the program of instruction for the CRT and provided input for the modules. Dr. Hannbal Bara from the Mindanao State University (MSU) was the connection to the Ulama (learned men of Islam), who became lecturers for the CRT. The Sulu State College provided an expansion of the network of friends.

The CRT’s guiding coalition also included Gen. Rustico O. Guerrero, Bim’s superior who nominated him for the MBLP and who himself was a forerunner in the field of community engagement within the Marines. With finan-
cial support from The Asia Foundation, this CRT “Dream Team” conceptualized means to help capacitate the Marines to become better peace-builders in Sulu.

Transforming from Within

“My project was a hard sell, I thought,” said Bim. In the past, community relations training would take place with partners, however, some portions of the training would be classified “for Marines only,” covering topics such as intelligence gathering, profiling, and labeling of enemies. While he had initial victory in convincing his superiors to declassify the course and make it open for review by partners, there remained some skeptics.

The CRT received resistance from people within the ranks of the security sector who thought that such a program would make soldiers weak and less effective on the field. “Many Marines thought a training event like the CRT makes the Marines ‘too soft.’ They equate combat ineffectiveness to humanitarian undertakings. The warrior sub-culture is certainly hard to crack. It is along these arguments that I usually have a hard time selling the idea to other units in the field,” said Bim.

In order to convince them, Bim’s group had to present results. “We showed them our success with engagements. We were able to develop informal lines of communication with the MNLF11 and, through coordination, prevented a lot of encounters and saved a lot of lives. Walang lokohan, derecho lahat. (There was no deception. Everything was straightforward.) What you see is what you get.”

As more and more CRTs were conducted, they could see the results: improved relationships, better networking, trust-building, and lives of soldiers saved as a consequence.

Bim himself was in a unique position because of his background as a special operations Marine assigned in frontline situations. “Mas madali ako mag-turo. They know me, may credibility ako to say this, because I’ve been there. If stubborn yung ibang officer, minsan alam nila where I come from and what I used to do.” (I was effective. They know me, I had credibility to say what I was saying, because I had been there. If some frontline officers were stubborn, [they would soften when] they know where I came from and what I used to do.)

Though there might be resistance, they were convinced it was possible to gain some measures of success. “With the military, kung may gain na positive, pwedeng ibenta yung idea sa kanila kahit bago.” (With the military, if it produced positive results, an idea can be accepted even if it is a new one.)

When asked for an insight into how transformation takes place within an organization such as the military, he describes the importance of convincing the leadership. “Triangle yan—mga bosses, ma-convince yan at tuloy-

11 The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is a major group pushing for the Moro separatist movement.
tuloy yan pababa. Magkakaroon ng konting resistance sa baba but in time mawawala na din. Kaya kailangan tuloy-tuloy and programa.” (It’s like a triangle. If you can convince the leadership, [the mandate] will cascade down [the organization]. There might be some resistance in the frontlines but, in time, this too will wane. It’s important to have continuity in the program.)

When, by the fourth run of CRT, one of the commanders, who was very vocal about his opposition in the past, requested for a next run, it was clear that the program was gaining some inroads (see Annex 2 for a narrative).

On a personal level, Bim himself experienced a profound transformation. “I’m so lucky I got into the program. Now na fully understood ko na yung problema. I have found, may ibang solution pala. Akala ko noon wala eh—zero-sum game. Meron pala. We are told to win wars. Or the peace that follows. May kulang dito. We have to first be capacitated for peace building and for genuine relations.” (I’m so lucky I got into the program. Now I fully understand the problem. I have found there is another solution. I didn’t used to think so. I used to think it was a zero-sum game. We are told to win peace. But there is something lacking. We have to first be capacitated for peace-building and for genuine relations.)

Building Genuine Relations

The CRT was a product of a shift in the way the military would approach Civil Military Relations as part of the AFP’s “internal reflective reform program.” While the original concept began as a training course, later on, the CRT evolved into something altogether larger.

The training course was declassified and had broad participation from among Marines, the Philippine National Police, and civilian volunteers. Invited speakers were from the MNLF, the Ulama, and the academe. The classes became venues for reflective dialogues between locals and the security sector. “Initially, we had the community teaching us and the security sector was the learner. But this evolved. Later, teachers became learners as well. The classroom became an area for reflection and mediation.”

The CRT became an expanding network of alliances for restoring communication and building trust. Later, CRT graduates became trainers, project directors, community coordinators, advocates, or members of support groups. As a result of the training, some soldiers had become equipped with skills to engage with the community in new ways. According to Birowa, “CRT helped us in mediation activities. Some of the community conflicts we worked on were endorsed to the military. Because of the training, some of their officers have begun to do some basic mediation, basic negotiation, enabling them to facilitate some conflict on their own level. A number of clan conflicts have been resolved with the support of the AFP.”

Follow-on activities, a product of partnerships formed, emanated from the CRT alliances. One initiative of the CRT core group and graduates is Lakbay Kapayapaan, a grassroots peace and development planning and conflict me-
diation mechanism that deals with clan feud, providing a venue for community dialogues, conflict-mapping, and training for peace advocates.

The *Lakbay Kapayapaan* project has given rise to a number of infrastructure projects. Conflict-stricken areas are set to benefit from a water system project supported by the local Rotary Club. Discussions are also underway for the repair of the Sala’am Baitamal Bridge. In light of the previous attacks that destroyed the bridge more than once, the eight coastal barangays of Indanan have signed a manifesto to keep it intact and guard it as “their own.”

Numerous outreach projects have also emerged from the CRTs: promoting literacy through books and computers (*Batang Dakila* Project\(^{13}\)), providing medical and dental check-ups for families and veterinary services for their livestock (*Ground Zero Outreach*\(^{14}\)), as well as organizing educational field trips for students to promote inter-generational healing and values formation (*Kahanungan Project*\(^{15}\)). These have been supported by various government and non-government organizations.\(^{16}\)

However, the end result of CRT were not projects. The emphasis was placed on the process of building relationships. According to Bim, “CRT is not a project-driven undertaking. We wanted it to be open-ended. We agreed that

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12 Supported by the USAID and Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTFP)
13 Supported by Dakila Foundation
14 The outreach was supported by ACIM and the Department of Health and has benefited 200 families in Barangay Silangkan, Parang, Sulu with support from the MNLF.
15 The students toured Camp Bud Datu, the location of the Shrine of Rajah Baguinda, a missionary who was instrumental to the spread of Islam in Sulu. Seven field trips were organized, with a total of 3,868 students and teachers. “Culture of Peace” and Peace Dialogues were later inculcated in the program. Some schools have included this activity in their curricula.
16 Another activity is the “Plates for Peace,” a fundraising event to support Peace-Centered Communities (PCC) and CRT initiatives, the culmination of Mindanao Week of Peace 2011. About 1,200 attendees from various sectors raised funds for the student-led solidarity walk, *Panawan in Taumpah Kuh Ku Ha Hika Sung Sin Pangadjih Ku* (Walk My Shoes for My Quest for Knowledge), also a CRT initiative. Participants walked from the Jolo town proper to the Provincial Capitol Playground, carrying pairs of shoes, school supplies, school bags, and personal hygiene kits for donation.
there is no project in the end. The learners just build upon genuine relations and what follows or does not follow after that, then so be it.”

The focus is on localized context and knowledge. The training is flexible rather than prescriptive and is designed to be adaptable to specificities of the local context in which it is applied. Majority of the guest lecturers come from local partner organizations.

CRT departs from civil-military operations of the past because hidden motives—penetration, intelligence, counter-insurgency—are set aside. Setting aside the military agenda meant that civil-military relations evolved from purely a military training into something else more meaningful.

**Snapshot: Ripple Effects of Improved Community Relations**

In August 2007, the 33rd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army departed its area of responsibility in the municipality of Parang, southwest of Indanan in Sulu. Prior to this, a highly-sensitive mission targeting leaders of the Abu Sayyaf Group, a militant group connected to the Al-Qaeda, was ordered. On the way to their target area, the army was attacked and, in the exchange of gunfire, the MNLF Municipal Commander, Habbi Jeili, was killed. The MNLF retaliated with a series of ambush attacks. The resulting exchange of counter attacks killed 33 soldiers and scores of insurgents, intensifying the warfare between the military and the MNLF and Abu Sayyaf groups in this area of Sulu. From that time on, no military personnel could ever step foot within the municipality of Parang, which became a stronghold of the MNLF.

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**CRT Updates**

- Initially supported by The Asia Foundation and facilitated primarily by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and Matawaksi Foundation, the CRT now is a funded program by the Philippine Marines.
- A CRT-Facilitator’s Training Workshop has been implemented to insure a vast pool of competent CRT facilitators around Sulu.
- A jointly-developed CRT Facilitator’s Manual has been published.
- The Commandant of the Philippine Marine Corps, MGen Rustico O. Guerrero AFP, who himself created the Muslim Community Engagement Training (MCET), the forerunner of CRT, is now laying the groundwork for doctrinal adaptation of this new approach within the Marine Corps training and doctrines system.
- The Philippine National Police (PNP) in Sulu, in cooperation with the CRT Core Group, has already started to conceptualize their own version of the CRT.
- In Basilan, there is already a derivative version of the CRT being developed, called Community Involvement Training with the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGUs).
- In Central Mindanao, CRT-like trainings in Lanao and North Cotabato are also being developed with the support of The Asia Foundation.
Barangay Silangkan in Parang had been isolated since the war in this area of Sulu sparked. Most of the time, health services could not be provided because health care workers were afraid of the dangers awaiting them.

On March 14, 2012, however, a combined team of government agencies, military units, and NGOs conducted a medical mission in the barangay. It was the first time in five years that outsiders entered the area. The singular, noteworthy fact about the event: It was requested by the MNLF themselves. The MNLF took charge of the logistics, including the venue and coordination with local officials. They also ensured the protection and safety of the medical and nonmedical teams and the military troops throughout the day.

Normally, the military would have had to secure the area before, during, and after the medical mission. This time, the MNLF did this job, since the military could not penetrate into the MNLF areas. The only precaution made was to take the sea route from Jolo City as a land trip posed danger from MNLF forces around the area who do not know of the medical mission.

Free medical services were provided such as consultations, dental extractions, minor surgeries, and veterinary check-ups for livestock. It was the peaceful interaction between the MNLF and the military without guns involved—that was priceless and historical.

According to Bim, in the past, the military carried out programs aimed towards cultural sensitivity and building relationships with the communities. But none had gone so far as the CRT in allowing for the community—even those traditionally perceived to be enemies—to enter the classroom and teach soldiers, to partner with them without a military agenda in development projects. The result was a genuine starting point for peace, providing soldiers an opportunity to become more than warriors—to become true peace-builders.

References


President Aquino unveils new AFP Internal Peace & Security Plan (2010, December 22), Zambotimes.

Annex 1

*Community Relations Training (CRT) Sample Course Module*

Typical CRT course topics range from discussing the history, practices and traditions of local people, the values of community engagement and collaboration, security forces as perceived by the locals, and the perspective of the security forces on community relations. The table below presents a sample module of CRT with the context-specific subjects highlighted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLE MODULE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Tribes in Sulu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sultanate of Sulu</td>
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<td>Fundamentals of Islam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tausug Culture &amp; Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Perspectives on Leadership</td>
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<td>Understanding Sharia Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding the Protracted Conflict in Sulu</td>
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<td>Understanding Clan &amp; Community Conflicts in Sulu</td>
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<td>Threats &amp; Obstacles to Peace &amp; Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Updates &amp; Outlooks on the Peace Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Sensitivity &amp; Violence Against Women/Child</td>
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<td>Societal Divides in Sulu</td>
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<td>Sulu Area Coordinating Center (ACC Concept)</td>
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<td>PPOC, MPOC, &amp; Other Formal Dialogues</td>
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<td>Role of the Ulama in Peace-Building</td>
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<td>Security Sector’s Role in Peace-Building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values Education &amp; Human Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Message Development &amp; Public Speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) &amp; LGUs in Sulu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Conflict Mediation &amp; Resolution (Sulu)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating in Multi-Stakeholder Reflective Dialogues (Sulu)</td>
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<td>Community Organizing &amp; Community Needs Assessment</td>
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<td>Co-Ownership &amp; Co-Creating New Realities</td>
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<td>Community Immersion</td>
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Heavy on Sulu’s context
Annex 2

Field Notes from Bim Quemado

Our first experiment was CRT 1. After graduation and learning about the history and traditions of the Tausug, we realized our military camp was located in the same area where the Sultan of Sulu was buried. The security measures in place for the camp had deprived the people from visiting and paying homage to their ancestors buried in the area. So we removed our military signboards and roadblocks. A portion of Camp Datu is now a boy scouts area open to be visited by the public. And then we decided that we will not only open our gates for visits but actually do something with the community to improve the Baguinda Shrine. We made sure the shrine was refurbished. In Baguinda Shrine, the Tausug youth were given the chance to appreciate their proud history.

We did the same thing in Camp Matatal. We made a portion open to the community. When that happened the visitors started to come in big numbers. That’s how interested they were in understanding what a Marine camp is. That’s when we started to make many friends. I also brought my daughter inside the camp to play with locals. Part of camp became also playground for everyone. The camps became a venue for colleges around Sulu to visit.

And then came CRT 2.

This time we had to expand representation from security sector. We included the police. The same local police we had a conflict with. We wanted to rebuild a bridge but wanted to make sure everyone was on board. We did mediation with the communities affected. We tried to extract ideas about how and when to be involved from residents of the barangay who lived across the bridge. We did a solidarity march bringing schools supplies and shoes for school kids.

By the time we did CRT 3, I was at the “letting go” stage. Another NGO ran it independently and with a unique flavor. Every CRT as we found out later had its unique attributes. CRT 3 was about a growing co-ownership with the people of Sulu. For the first time, the CRT was attended by the grassroots. The beauty about having good relations with the community is that it makes everything else easy to accomplish things with them. Genuine Relations drives sustainable community-based initiatives. Community Organizing becomes a lot more effective. The space for strong co-ownership and inclusive co-creation becomes dramatically more fruitful. This was CRT 3’s message.

By CRT4 we had cracked the nut. Many Marines thought a training event like the CRT makes the Marines too soft. They equate combat ineffectiveness to humanitarian undertakings. The warrior sub-culture is certainly hard to crack. One of the battalion commanders who was really against it in the past said lets do CRT 4.

By CRT 5 we thought, what if we do this in areas where nobody wants to go? So we went by sea, by air, by land to the most unstable, unreachable places where people don’t want to go. The “ground zero” of the war. Partners changed and the line-up of resource people changed by venue and date. (Shows picture of bomb crater). It was the first time that Marines stepped in Gorung to help people.

The beauty of doing a deep dive is you discover more opportunities to help other people, people who you could least imagine you would help—your enemies’ sons and daughters. Eto mga orphans ng mga namatay na mujahideens. (These are the orphans of the deceased mujahideens).

The relatives said, “Sir, ito yung mga namatayan.” (Their relatives brought them and said, “Sir, these are the orphans.)

And we brought help to them.

I thought it was the end at 6 CRTs. But when I went to the battalion headquarters, some soldiers and community members were doing something. Apparently some graduates of past CRTs were conducting another CRT. Asan pondo nyo? (Where did you get the funds?, I asked.) We just chipped in.

It was raining and storming then. Maybe CRT had acceptance and sustainability on the ground. The lecturers some showed up asking for nothing. The field trip happened by itself. They had their own graduation and ball. The full cycle was happening right before my eyes.

1 A Muslim guerilla warrior engaged in jihad
Advocating for the Recognition of Indigenous People’s Rights in Mindanao

Nena Dawa Undag, or Bae1 Rose to her tribe members, is a Higaonon, a member of an indigenous peoples group that inhabited the mountainous areas of North and Central Mindanao. Bae Rose’s father was a respected tribal leader, while her mother was a baylan, a healer and religious tribal leader. Her grandparents were respected tribal leaders in Northern Mindanao, as well.

Bae Rose took up BS Education in college but was not able to finish it due to financial constraints. However, this did not stop her from exploring other opportunities. She worked under an ex-nun who organized the Catholic Church’s Apostolate on Tribal Filipinos in Cagayan de Oro City. She also worked as a data-banking officer under the sponsorship of the Ethnic Studies and Development Center. In 1989, she got a scholarship to join a three-month diploma course on Asia-Pacific Intercultural Women’s Studies at the Institute for Women Studies in St. Scholastica’s College in Manila.

She described her college days, between 1982 and 1987, as very memorable for she got actively involved with progressive groups. She was a recruit of the League of Filipino Students (LFS), a board member of the Kabataang Makabayan (KM, Patriotic Youth), and an organizer of the Higaonon out-of-school youth and students in Misamis Oriental. Because of her involvement in these groups, she was considered an activist and was always under close surveillance by the military and the police.

Bae Rose considers her husband, Datu Balitengteng (Antonio D. Luman-dong), her mentor on her advocacy work for indigenous peoples (IP). According to Bae Rose, if not for him, she could have drifted away from the issues confronting indigenous peoples. Datu Balitengteng was the Secretary General and volunteer worker of Kahiusahan sa mga Higaonon, Inc. (KHI, United Higaonon), a federation of 12 people’s organizations in the province of Misamis Oriental, the city of Cagayan de Oro, and some parts of Bukidnon. Bae Rose volunteered as a consultant for one of KHI’s projects, the Building Bridges for Peace (BBP) Program. In this organization, she got the opportunity to work with the Higaonon communities in Gingoog City and other parts of Misamis Oriental.

Because of their involvement in activist groups, Bae Rose and her husband were accused of being sympathizers and members of the New People’s

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1 Bae is a female tribal leader. (Daug & Neri, 2013)
Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The couple was brought for questioning to the army brigade’s camp in Sitio Migbanday, Claveria in Misamis Oriental. After several days of being detained, they were able to clear their names with the help of lawyers from the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) and human rights advocates from the Tribal Filipino Apostolate (TFA). These organizations came to their defense and vouched for their integrity and innocence.

Bae Rose’s skills and experience in community organizing were enhanced through the international seminars she attended. She was a fellow of the Peace-Building Seminar in 2008 held at the Queensland University of Technology in Australia through the Australian Leadership Award. She also joined a program on human rights in Switzerland sponsored by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. She considered such exposure as very helpful in preparing her for the role of a tribal leader: “I am no longer shy as I used to be in my younger years.”

She immersed herself in community work to advocate for IP rights. She regarded her mentors, some of her colleagues in NGOs, her fellow tribal leaders, and other women advocates as having strengthened her into becoming a leader. She wanted to address the neglect experienced by the IPs by gaining more knowledge and skills in leadership and management. In July 2011, Bae Rose joined the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) with 21 other leaders from Mindanao. Her initial objective for joining the fellowship was simply to learn how to write proposals. She wanted to source funds for a project that would help IP groups in Mindanao secure their Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT).

The Social Divide

The Higaonons are an ethno-linguistic tribe that inhabit the northern and central regions of Mindanao, particularly the provinces of Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon, Agusan del Sur, Agusan del Norte, and Lanao del Norte. The term “higaonon” was derived from the words higa (to live or reside), goan (mountain), and onon (people). They were described as the “people of the living mountains” and “people of the wilderness.”

The Higaonons of Misamis Oriental and Agusan were said to be among the most impoverished and often neglected IP groups. Aside from being vulnerable to recruitment by insurgency movements, they were also vulnerable to exploitation by people who wanted to claim their ancestral lands. A study conducted by the Asian Development Bank in 2002 (Rovillos & Morales, 2002) revealed that indigenous peoples, including the Higaonons, did not have a concept of poverty. When asked whom they considered poor, the IPs referred to those who had no land as poor, as well as those who were lazy, ignorant in the use of weapons, or those who used weapons to gain control of the resources and lands of the indigenous peoples. The study further

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2 The Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT), or Certificate of Ancestral Land Title (CALT) as provided in Republic Act No. 8371, is a document which recognizes the rights of indigenous cultural communities (ICCs) or indigenous peoples (IPs) to their ancestral domains and lands.
stated:

The indigenous peoples assert that they are not poor, but are living in difficult circumstances brought about specifically by loss of land and access to resources. They can only rise from this condition if they are able to gain control of their territories again.

In one of her papers presented to an international audience, Bae Rose provided the following description of the Higaonons and the difficult life that they have been enduring:

The Higaonon people are part of the 22 Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao, otherwise known as Lumads. In 1982, the Higaonon population was 233,000 and, in 1996, the defunct Office for Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC) estimated the number of Higaonon to be 312,840. Higaonon reside in all provinces of Northern Mindanao: Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, Agusan del Norte/Sur, Lanao del Sur (along the boundaries of Misamis Oriental Province), and Camiguin Island. However, in the same survey it conspicuously dislodges Higaonon in the municipalities of Balingasag and Claveria.

Most of them dwell in the mountain areas of the region. However, there are Higaonon who live in the plains and coastal areas but almost [all] of them are assimilated. They have adapted to the values and life ways of lowlanders. On the other hand, majorities of the Higaonon in the hinterland still practiced their culture and tradition. However, the influence from the mainstream has embedded into the life ways and value system of the Higaonons, brought about by cash economy and globalization.

In the past, big agricultural growers already used Higaonon territories for plantation business. American corporations like Del Monte planted pineapple [to cover] thousand of hectares in the province of Bukidnon, displacing thousands of Higaonon. This multinational
company still exists through the local subsidiary, the Philippine Packing Corporation.

Currently the influx of non-traditional plantations like palm oil are regarding Mindanao as a site for their business and this made some of the local government unit in frenzy. LGU provided favorable atmosphere to attract business interest in oil from palm. The LGUs in Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental spearhead this interest. Impasugong town of Bukidnon is in full force to implement oil palm industry, offering their best resources, Talakag will appropriate 30,000 hectares, mostly under CBFM, the town of Manolo Fortich 50,664 hectares while Balingasag and Claveria are planning to avail this kind of project.

Most of these areas are located in the Higaonon Peoples Ancestral Domain and currently; the people are still processing their application for the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT). The usual come-on scheme and their advertisement are focused on economic benefits such as increased household income and diversity source of income. However, the scheme did not elaborate the downside of oil palm plantation previous account however revealed. Palm oil plantation did more harm than good. In the province of Agusan del Sur, thousand of Manobos people migrant settlers were displaced. Report also disclosed that quite a number were salvaged defending their land from business interest.

**Issues Facing the Higaonons**

In 1997, the Indigenous People Rights Act (IPRA) was passed. In this law, Bae Rose found new hope for the Higaonons. The IPRA, which was modeled on the provisions of the United Nations Draft Declaration on Indigenous Peoples’ Rights, guarantees the rights of IPs to ancestral domain, self-governance and empowerment, social justice and human rights, and cultural integrity.

However, many experts and the indigenous peoples themselves claimed that even with the IPRA, the IP sector still remained vulnerable and weak. The IPRA provisions were not fully enforced and the method of implementation was unclear.

According to Bae Rose, the Higaonons in northern and central Mindanao have not fully benefited from the passage of IPRA; neither have the IPs benefited from any programs of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). For instance, it has been taking a very long time for the IP groups to secure their CADTs since they lacked the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to process their claims following the rules and regulations set by the NCIP. Based from the experience of the Higaonon tribes that Bae Rose has been helping, it has taken them almost a decade to file their CADT, but to no avail. The CADT, according to Bae Rose, would allow the

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3 The word *salvage* in the Philippines may mean “to kill an individual.”
Higaonons to set up internal systems that would enhance the management and governance of their ancestral domain.

“[Among] the Higaonon Peoples, not one community was awarded with CADT to date. This is true, because application for the title is costly. IP applicants have to seek help from non-government organizations (NGOs) for financial support in the application.

“If IP communities will process (CADT claims) via government channels, nothing will come out of it. The budget for NCIP in CADT processing is still tangled in the government bureaucratic red tape. Most IP applicants for CADT have donor agencies, which help them in processing their application. On the other hand, most IP communities have to wait for a long time for their application to move.”

In addition to the CADT, there was also the issue of non-recognition of IP Rights for mandatory representation in local governance. Bae Rose wanted to help in this aspect as well:

“I really want the tribe to be given the opportunity to establish their own governance system [and a] mechanism for their self-determination. I hope there is unity among the tribes and that they are not divided. There should be an aim to unite, as there are a number of tribes in Mindanao, [to attain peace].”

Bae Rose also acknowledged that IPs were faced with many internal problems and struggles. The leadership structure of IP communities was problematic. They were divided on the issue of leadership. In addition, politicians and businessmen were using some tribal leaders for their own personal interest. Thus, some tribal leaders were regarded as ‘tribal dealers’ of businessmen.

Bae Rose was certain that if this divide continued, the IPs would always be dependent on outside help from politicians and local and international NGOs. This dependence would make them more vulnerable to exploitation and the recruitment of insurgency groups. If this is not resolved, Bae Rose predicted that the tribes would become weaker, divided, and would continue to live in a state of conflict.

Bae Rose personally experienced this divide among the tribes. “Jealousy is common among the tribal leaders,” Bae Rose sadly related. A few years ago, she and her husband were accused by other tribal leaders of depositing millions of pesos from an NGO to their personal account. She vehemently denied the allegations and simply ignored them. She believed that other leaders were just out to destroy her and her husband’s credibility. The couple continued doing their work and even increased their presence in the community. Through their perseverance, they wanted to prove to their detractors that they were both sincere in what they were doing. They let their actions speak for their intentions.
The TATRICO-ODLIBA Community

Bae Rose has been helping the TATRICO-ODLIBA (Taladukan Tribal Council–Odiongan, Linugos, and Baliguihan) community since she volunteered for the Building Bridges for Peace Project of the KHI. The TATRICO-ODLIBA community had a Higaonon population, estimated at 10,300, that covered parts of Gingoog City and the provinces of Agusan del Norte and Misamis Oriental.

The community underwent a painful history. In 1982, it was considered a “No Man’s Land” after the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the New People’s Army, headed by Commander Jabbar Mandahinog, clashed in the area. In 1989, the rampant selling of land under the Ancestral Domain of the Higaonons started. In 2005, the TATRICO was organized headed by Datu Alvie Binongcasan to protect their community from groups who wanted to take over their land. Four years later, in 2009, there was another violent encounter between the AFP and the NPA, which forced 113 Higaonon families to leave the area.

In 2010, the BBP project started its initiatives in the community by helping two organizations, TATRICO and ODLIBA, to unify their CADT claims encompassing 14 barangays across the provinces of Misamis Oriental and Agusan del Norte. Through the BBP, paralegal training workshops for the tribal leaders were conducted, and meetings between the TATRICO-ODLIBA and the Provincial Peace and Order Councils (PPOCs) of the two provinces were facilitated. This resulted to the commitment of both PPOCs to support the TATRICO-ODLIBA claim and to coordinate further on issues of peace.
and security in the area. However, due to the difficult and bureaucratic process of getting CADTs, the TATRICO-ODLIBA had yet to realize their dream of acquiring titles for their ancestral domain.

**The Change Project**

Initially, Bae Rose wanted to focus her change project on helping the Higaonons in their CADT application, specifically those in the TATRICO-ODLIBA area. She envisioned that the CADT for TATRICO-ODLIBA would allow the community to exercise self-governance, thereby maximizing their participation in peace-building and development. Her mission was to build a Higaanon community where governance was rooted in the culture of the tribe and where people were enjoying sustainable livelihood.

The unified claim covered nine barangays in Misamis Oriental, two barangays in Agusan del Norte, and three barangays in Gingoog City. She realized later that given the limited time of the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Fellowship Program, which ran from July 2011 to November 2012, what she wanted to accomplish could not be done.

Applying for the CADT has been a slow and difficult process. It was only in 2004 that Sitio Sio-an, located in the barangay of Malinao in Gingoog City, submitted their application for TATRICO CADT at the Gingoog Service Center of the NCIP. The coverage of the claim was estimated to be around 5,275 hectares, with 753 Higaonon families. The Tribal Communities (TRICOM), an NGO, supported their application.

In 2009, the TATRICO Council of Elders went to the service center of the NCIP in Gingoog City requesting funds for the titling. The NCIP had insufficient budget for CADT processing and thus referred them to their partner NGOs: INTER Peoples Exchange, ANTHROWATCH, and Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc. (BMFI). The BMFI then included ODLIBA among their target beneficiaries, citing the testimonies of the tribal elders about their close relationship with the Higaonons in these communities.

In 2010, the BBP Program, where Bae Rose was a volunteer, expanded its program to TATRICO-ODLIBA, covering 29 areas and 22 barangays under the unified claim. Community consultations on the IPRA, conflict resolution, and briefing on genealogical census were conducted while applications for the delineation and titling process of the CADT were still pending with the provincial office of the NCIP.

Other complicating factors also needed consideration. Soon after the CADT claim was filed in 2005, a migrant settler founded a cult in one of the areas in TATRICO-ODLIBA. The cult, called Gintong Araw (Golden Sun), recruited

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4 CADT claims took decades to be awarded. In 2012, the Higaonons of Mt. Balatukan near the northeastern coast of Misamis Oriental marked their 25th year in claiming their right to their ancestral domain. Several documents had to be presented before the NCIP in applying for CADT claims: tribe genealogy, testimony of elders, sketch maps of their communities, specially the metes and bounds, traditional boundaries and perimeter boundary resolution, and current census of population. They had to submit this to NCIP to serve as reference when the NCIP staff conduct their own research perimeter survey, a prerequisite to CADT processing.
some tribe members that led to the division of the Higaonons and a power struggle between the tribe and the non-IPs.

Thus, instead of assisting the TATRICO-ODLIBA solely with their CADT application for her change project in MBLP, Bae Rose widened the scope to include assistance in seeking representation in all levels of local governance—at the barangay (village), municipal, and provincial level. She believed that, if the Higaonons were represented in local special bodies, their concerns, including CADT claims, would be immediately brought to the attention of concerned government agencies.

Ultimately, Bae Rose hoped that her change project would contribute to peace-building, in light of the restlessness of the Higaonons and the presence of insurgents in the area who were taking advantage of her tribe’s misery and sentiments against the government.

**Seeking Mandatory Representation for the Higaonons**

As stated in Republic Act 8371, otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA):

> “IPs/Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) have the right to participate fully, if they choose, at all levels of decision making in matters which may affect their rights, lives, destinies through procedures determined by them as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous political structures and consequently, the State shall ensure that the ICCs/IPs shall be given mandatory representation in policy-making bodies and other legislative bodies.”

This provision for mandatory representation was issued by NCIP in 2009 (see Annex 1 for full document). It stated that an IP representative to the provincial board can initiate, sponsor, and support enactment of resolutions and ordinances that recognize, protect, and promote the rights of the indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples.

The representative was also tasked to present to the provincial board the Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plans (ADS-DPPs) and other programs, projects, and activities for integration to the Provincial Development Plan and the Annual Investment Plan.5 In 2010, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) issued Memorandum Circular 2010-119, series of 2010 further directing all Local Chief Executives to strictly observe the mandate of IPRA, specifically the ICC/IP mandatory representation in the local legislative councils.

However, even with the issuance of the guidelines and memorandum circular from national government agencies, mandatory representation could not be implemented without local government units pledging to appropriate budget and support mechanisms for this.

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5 The Annual Investment Plans and Local Development Plan are development blueprints, each program or project accompanied with a budget, which local government units are required to submit to the Department of Budget Management for review and for funds from the national revenue collection to be released for the outlined projects.
Based on the data of NCIP, as of 2010, there were only 124 IPs who assumed posts as members of legislative councils in the entire country: 99 of whom served in the village level (Sangguniang Pambarangay), 21 in town councils (Sangguniang Bayan), two in the provincial legislative council (Sangguniang Panlalawigan), and one in the city council (Sangguniang Panlungsod).

Bae Rose was bent on fast-tracking the representation of the Higaonon tribe in various levels of local governance. She wanted IP representation in the local government units of Gingoog City, Agusan del Norte, and Misamis Oriental—from village to provincial level.

This project entailed assisting Higaonon communities in the process of selecting their representatives by helping define criteria and guidelines for nomination of their sectoral representative. It also entailed assisting Higaonons in getting required documents from various agencies and submitting them to the respective NCIP offices.

This was not an easy undertaking. The tribal leaders lived in remote villages, far away from the town centers where most government offices were located. They had to go to the offices not once but several times to complete the documents that would show they met the qualifications for IP representation (see Section 9 in Annex 1). Bae Rose helped each prospective representative secure their birth certificates, draw up a genealogy chart to prove they were part of the tribe, and obtain other needed documents.

“Iyong documents na kailangan nilang i-submit, isang ruler ang kapal kapag pinagpatong-patong.” (If we put all the documents that they had to submit in one file, it would be one-foot high.)

Bae Rose herself admitted that she had limited resources to help the Higaonon leaders in completing the requirements:

“Wala kaming pera para sa pamasah. Minsan, nakikisabay na lang kami sa mga government vehicle na galing sa lugar namin at pabalik sa bayan.” (We didn’t have money for transportation. Sometimes, we just hitched a ride onto government vehicles that happened to pass by our community and were on their way back to the town center.)

With these challenges, Bae Rose knew she could not achieve the goal of IP representation alone, she need the support of government agencies and elected government officials.

Forging Relationships with Stakeholders

Collaborating with various government agencies was a totally different approach from the activist approach that Bae Rose used to employ in her younger days. Back then, she simply assailed government officials for not knowing the plight of indigenous peoples and for not doing anything to improve their situation. But Bae Rose realized one important thing on collaboration and dialogue:
“If I don’t tell them my problem, they will not know how to help me. So it is really a must that you meet with them every now and then.”

Bae Rose’s advocacy work on the welfare of the Higaonons took a wider perspective when she became part of Provincial Peace and Order Council (PPOC) of Misamis Oriental in 2009. It was in the council’s regular sessions where she was able to forward immediate concerns of the Higaonons. Given the kind of acceptance she gained from the council, Bae Rose considered the PPOC as her guiding coalition (GC) for her change project under her Bridging Leaders Fellowship (see Annex 2 for a list of PPOC members).

Bae Rose discussed her chosen divide and change project with the council. Her objectives fit into the PPOC’s vision and mission: a stable peace and order situation in the whole province. The council later adopted the project as their own and provided support. She was able to secure funding for her change project: the provincial government allotted Php 300,000 (about US$ 7,500), while the city government of Gingoog pledged Php 200,000 (about US$ 5,000). The said amount was partially given to the barangays, to fast-track CADT processing, and to capability-building programs for IP leaders, so they can represent their communities well in local councils.

The PPOC also provided assistance in the identification of the IP representatives in several barangays. It also conducted several orientations for the members of the guiding coalition to enhance their skills, knowledge, and attitude on IP development in relation to the change project. Below are other activities undertaken by the coalition:

- Capability-building for IP representatives on sustainable agriculture, conducted in partnership with Green Mine and Xavier University;
- Completion of the basic requirements for ancestral domain claim;
- Assistance in the selection of IP representatives in Barangay Malinao, Odiongan, Panggasihan, Talisay, Kalipay, Kamanikan, Bonifacio, Candidis, Pagasa, and Kibungsod based on the NCIP, DILG, and local guidelines;
- Conduct of community consultation leading to certificate of affirmation from the DILG and NCIP Regional Offices;
- Allocation of 40 hectares for sustainable agriculture in partnership with TATRICO-ODLIBA; and
- Assistance to TATRICO-ODLIBA in developing a 2000-seedling nursery of timber and fruit trees.

Bae Rose collaborated closely with key government officials for her change project. Some of them even became members of her core group (see Table 2).
She sought the assistance of then-Misamis Oriental Governor (now mayor of Cagayan de Oro City) Oscar Moreno, a co-fellow in the MBLF fellowship, since she saw that there was clear complementation between their change initiatives.

The governor’s change project also involved the IPs in his province. He solicited the support of Bae Rose on social preparation and community mobilization, and Bae Rose solicited financial support from him. She proudly recalled being consulted by the governor on a number of issues concerning the Higaonons. These incidents encouraged her to continue with her work and to continue working with others. She said:

“I felt useful and important, [because] my opinion was sought by a high-ranking local government official.”

Other members of her core group assisted her as well: Vice Governor Babiera provided the policy and ordinance support for the allocation and release of the financial commitment of the province. PPOC Executive Director Teddy Sabugaa facilitated the link between and among LGUs in the province and the agencies of the government. PNP Director Mijares assisted in the dialogue and security of the areas covered in her change projects. NCIP Provincial Director Damasco assisted in the technical aspect of the project, especially in ensuring that they adhere to the process of selecting IP representation in local governance.

Bae Rose also became acquainted with other stakeholders whom she considered to have significant roles in advancing her cause (to help the IP communities). She made her presence felt in the offices of many elected officials to get their support for IP representation, even though it meant being humiliated in front of many people.

Bae Rose recalled going to the office of Mayor Ruth Guingona of Gingoog City and being berated by the mayor for not coordinating her activities with the city government. Later, Mayor Guingona became Bae Rose’s strong ally, and provided the resources and influence support she needed from the city government.

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**Table 2. Bae Rose’s Key Stakeholders, Core Group in the PPOC**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Office</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Oscar Moreno</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Misamis Oriental Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Norris Babiera</td>
<td>Vice Governor</td>
<td>Misamis Oriental Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teddy Sabugaa</td>
<td>Executive Officer (also Provincial Social Work and Development Officer)</td>
<td>Provincial Peace and Order Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/Supt. Graciano Mijares</td>
<td>Provincial Director</td>
<td>Philippine National Police, Misamis Oriental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Ruthie Guingona</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Gingoog City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Vincent Damasco</td>
<td>Provincial Director</td>
<td>National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Misamis Oriental</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She also recalled a time when she had an argument with a government agency representative during a forum over the need for IP communities to get a permit when cutting rattan and other forest resources. She found the courage to stand up and speak on behalf of her tribe. She reasoned that the IPs normally did not cut in high volume and therefore did not need to get a permit from any government agency.

Incidents like this did not deter Bae Rose from continuing her advocacy; rather, these taught her key lessons. Among them was the need to coordinate with local officials before doing activities on the ground. These events taught her to be firm and to use reason in persuading others so they could come to understand the plight of indigenous peoples. Standing up and making oneself heard earned her new allies in government.

Through her new allies, Bae Rose was able to conduct a seminar on governance and sustainable agriculture for some of the IP representatives. Xavier University provided the modules (content and resource persons) through its Governance and Leadership Institute and Sustainable Agriculture Center, while the provincial government of Misamis Oriental provided administrative and logistical support.

The governance module was designed for the IP representatives to gain technical knowledge and enhance their capacity as members of local special bodies. The sustainable agriculture component of the seminar was designed to support the livelihood initiatives of the IP communities.

Bae Rose further maximized her presence in the PPOC. She sought opportunities, through the council, to engage other stakeholders. The council served as a venue for her to initiate dialogues with other government officials. She was able to mobilize resources from the local governments of Misamis Oriental and Gingoog City. She considered these results as significant, considering that she was not even part of these agencies.

Collaborating with her tribe

Her change project required Bae Rose to spend more time on the ground to hold meetings and consultations with tribal leaders, to win their commitment in seeking representation in local government bodies.

At the community level, Bae Rose’s constant presence and advocacy work provided hope and encouragement for greater participation of the Higaonons on concerns involving their communities. Her presence encouraged them to know more about their rights. More importantly, she has gained the trust of the communities she was assisting.

Fruits of collaboration: More collaboration in other concerns

Bae Rose soon realized that collaborating with others on one issue was just a starting point for collaboration on other issues and concerns.

When Typhoon Sendong (international name: Washi) hit Northern Mindanao in December 2011, Bae Rose sought the help of her allies to channel
assistance to the victims. The typhoon brought heavy rains and flash floods mostly in the northern and western part of Mindanao, in the provinces of Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon, and Lanao del Norte.7

Bae Rose organized relief assistance to Higaonon communities affected by the flash floods. She kept in touch with an MBLP co-fellow, Iligan City Councilor Frederick Siao, and solicited support from organizations like Samdhana and Xavier University’s Tabang Sendong Program. Through Samdhana, she was able to access relief funds from the World Food Program, Habitat for Humanity, United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF), Catholic Church’s Commission on Social Action, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the International Organization for Migrants (IOM).

She focused on providing assistance to IP communities in the far-flung villages of Cagayan de Oro and Misamis Oriental.8 These areas barely received assistance from other NGOs, partly because their remoteness kept them from gaining media exposure. On her collaboration efforts, Bae Rose has this say:

“One should not work alone. You need co-ownership... You engage in partnerships so that you have several ideas apart from those you get from the training... you should inform your different networks, your stakeholders or the members of your core group so that it won’t be a burden to you. It would further strengthen relationships and sustain [them].”

Initial Results

Bae Rose’s collaborative approach resulted to the realization of her goals for IP representation at different levels of local governance. Eight barangays in Gingoog City and the municipality of Magsaysay in Misamis Oriental eventually allotted IP representation in their legislative bodies.

Through the MBLP, Bae Rose further developed her self-confidence. Her experiences in reaching out to others, especially the key personalities in government, have contributed to this. She has become regular in IP-related gatherings and is being sought after by the IPs for guidance and assistance.

She gained much confidence in dealing with government officials and leaders of various backgrounds. Her linkage with MBLP co-fellows, namely: former Misamis Oriental Governor Oscar Moreno, Datu Vic Saway (Datu Migketay), and Damulog Municipal Mayor Romy Tiongco, has given her deeper inner strength and the confidence to build an alliance with them.

Bae Rose used to be selective in dealing with the tribe, but since the fel-

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7 According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council’s final report, Typhoon Sendong affected about 624,600 people, leaving 1,268 people dead and 181 missing. The estimated cost of damages to properties amounted to two billion pesos.
8 These included Tumpagon, Pigsag-an, Pagalungan, Tuburan, Taglangi, Tignapoloan, San Simon, Lumbia, Bayanga, Dansolihon, Besigan, Dansolihon, Barangay Upper Malubog, Mahayahay of the Municipality of Manticao, and Barangay Limunda of Opol.
lowship, she has made it a point to be more inclusive by consulting other members of the tribal council and valuing their inputs. She believes that the fellowship helped her enhance her ways and approaches in leadership, thus becoming more effective in co-creating peace in her beloved land.

References


Annex 1

NCIP Administrative Order No. 001, s. 2009

National Guidelines for the Mandatory Representation of Indigenous Peoples in Local Legislative Councils

The following guidelines are promulgated to set up the processes and mechanisms for the mandatory representation of Indigenous Peoples in local legislative councils pursuant to Section 16 of Republic Act 8371 (RA 8371), otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997.

Title I. Preliminary Provisions

SECTION 1. Title. This guidelines shall be known as the “National Guidelines for the Mandatory Representation of Indigenous Peoples in Local Legislative Councils,” also referred herein as Policy Guidelines.

SECTION 2. Statutory Basis. Section 10, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that the State shall promote social justice in all phases of national development. Section 17, Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution also provides that the State shall recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and institutions. It shall consider these rights in the formulation of national plans and policies.

To carry out these State policies, Section 16 of RA 8371 provides that the Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) have the right to participate fully, if they so choose, at all levels of decision-making in matters which may affect their rights, lives and destinies through procedures determined by them as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous political structures. Consequently, the State shall ensure that the ICCs/IPs shall be given mandatory representation in policy-making bodies and other local legislative councils.

In addition, Section 6, Part I, Rule IV of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Administrative Order No. 1, Series of 1998, or the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of RA 8371 provides that the ICCs/IPs shall be provided mandatory representation in all policymaking bodies and in local legislative councils. ICCs/IPs representation shall be proportionate to their population, and shall have the same privileges as the regular members of the legislative bodies and/or policy making bodies.

ICCs/IPs representatives shall be qualified and chosen by their own communities in accordance with a process to be determined by them. In consultation with ICCs/IPs, the NCIP in close coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Governments (DILG) shall come up with appropriate measures to ensure the full participation of ICCs/IPs in matters affecting their development. Such measures shall also include the provision of technical assistance to develop the ICC/IP representative’s knowledge of traditional socio-political systems, customary laws, justice system and skills in interfacing with non-IP governance and policy making.

SECTION 3. Declaration of Policy. Pursuant to the provisions of international and national policy instruments, it is the policy of the NCIP to:

a. Promote and protect the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights of ICCs/IPs through participation in the Government and in the conduct of public affairs as provided in Paragraph c, Article 5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD);
b. Ensure the fulfillment of the ICCs/IPs right to full participation in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the state as provided in Article 5 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDPIRIP) as well as the right to participate in decision-making through their chosen representatives as provided in Article 18 of the same instrument;
c. Enhance State recognition and promotion of the rights of ICCs/IPs within the framework of national unity and development as expressed in Section 22, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution; and,
d. Adopt, coordinate and enforce the provision of Section 16 of RA 8371 on the mandatory representation of IPs/ICCs in local legislative councils and policymaking bodies.

SECTION 4. Operating Principles. In the implementation of this guidelines, the following principles shall be observed:

a. Primacy of customary laws and practices. Customary laws and practices shall prevail upon mainstream mechanisms in the manner of selecting the mandatory representatives to the local legislative councils of the ICCs/IPs. Moreover, customary laws and practices shall be used primarily to resolve disputes in the selection process.
b. Consensus Building refers to the process of arriving at a decision by the ICCs/IPs on issues and concerns affecting them by employing their own traditional decision-making processes.
c. Inclusivity and full participation. The NCIP shall ensure that all ICCs/IPs residing within the political jurisdiction of a given Local Government Unit (LGU) shall actively participate in the selection process.
d. Representation of the collective interests and aspirations of IPs/ICCs. The IP mandatory representative to the legislative council shall represent the general concerns and welfare of all the ICCs/IPs in a given LGU.
e. Sustainability of the Indigenous Peoples Consultative Body. The ICCs/IPs mandatory representative shall provide support in sustaining the constitution and operations of the Indigenous Peoples Consultative Body (IPC) at his/her level of representation, either at the barangay, municipal, city, or provincial level.
f. Capacity building. The skills and capacities of IP mandatory rep-
representatives to engage effectively and efficiently in mainstream governance as well as to preserve and exercise their traditional political structures in their respective communities shall be enhanced through culture sensitive training modules, taking into primary consideration the cultural diversities of the ICCs/IPs, to be developed and regularly implemented by the NCIP in partnership with the Department of the Interior and Local Governments (DILG) and concerned LGUs, other government agencies/offices and the civil society.

g. Gender equity and sectoral representation. ICC/IP women and youth shall enjoy equal rights and opportunities in the selection process as provided in Section 26 and 27 of RA 8371.

SECTION 5. Coverage. All ICCs/IPs residing within the ancestral domains and/or resettled communities within the political jurisdiction or boundaries of concerned LGUs may be represented in the local legislative councils of the LGUs exercising jurisdiction over the area. However, in cases where an ancestral domain or resettled community is overlapped by two (2) or more political boundaries of LGUs, only the members of the ICCs/IPs whose residence are covered by the concerned LGU may take part in the selection of IPs mandatory representative for the said LGU.

SECTION 6. Definition of Terms. For purposes of this Policy Guidelines, the following terms shall mean:

a. Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples refer to a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits or who have through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos. ICCs/IPs shall likewise include peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonization, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains.

b. Resettled ICCs/IPs refer to the two groups clarified below:

i. Forcibly resettled ICCs/IPs – refer to ICCs/IPs who, as a consequence of social, economic, political or other reasons such as displacement due to natural disasters, development aggression and armed conflict, were, against their own free will, resettled outside of their ancestral domains/lands.

ii. Voluntarily resettled ICCs/IPs – refer to ICCs/IPs who, as a consequence of social, economic, political or other reasons such as search for work opted to resettle or resettled out of their own free will outside of the ancestral domains/lands.

c. Ancestral Domains refer to all areas generally belonging to ICCs/IPs comprising lands, inland waters, coastal areas, and natural resources therein, held under a claim of ownership, occupied or possessed by ICCs/IPs, by themselves or through their ancestors, communally or individually since time immemorial, continuously to the present except when interrupted by war, force majeure or displacement by force, deceit, stealth or as a consequence of government projects or any other voluntary dealings entered into by government and private individuals/corporations, and which are necessary to ensure their economic, social and cultural welfare. It shall include ancestral lands, forests, pasture, residential, agricultural, and other lands individually owned whether alienable and disposable or otherwise, hunting grounds, burial grounds, worship areas, bodies of water, mineral and other natural resources, and lands which may no longer exclusively occupied by ICCs/IPs but from which they traditionally had access to for their subsistence and traditional activities, particularly the home ranges of ICCs/IPs who are still nomadic and/or shifting cultivators. It shall refer to all commonly accepted or publicly known ancestral domains of ICCs/IPs whether or not issued with a CADC or a CADT, or whose application for issuance of CADT is still pending before the Commission or is not actually applied for.

d. Elders/Leaders refer to members of ICCs/IPs who are regarded by ICCs/IPs with a certain degree of wisdom, integrity, esteem and dignity, and who are generally relied upon by community members as leaders in the pursuit of community concerns.

e. Indigenous Peoples Consultative Body refers to the consultative body consisting of the traditional leaders, elders and representatives from the women and youth sectors of the different ICCs/IPs as provided in Section 50 of IPRA and NCIP Administrative Order No. 1, Series of 2004, or the “Rules Governing the Indigenous Peoples Consultative Body.”

f. Peoples Organization (PO) refers to any private non-profit voluntary organization of members of a particular ICCs/IPs which is recognized as representative of such ICC/IP.

g. Civil Society refers to the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women’s organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalition and advocacy groups.

SECTION 7. Objectives. This guidelines is hereby promulgated for the purpose of setting-up, selecting and capacitating IPs mandatory representatives in local legislative councils. It shall:
a. Provide and operationalize a mechanism adaptable to the peculiar situations of ICCs/IPs in the different LGUs nationwide;

b. Ensure state recognition of the exercise of the primacy of customary ways & practices;

c. Ensure participation of ICC/IP elders/leaders including representatives from the women, youth and children sectors;

d. Ensure the collective representation of the general interests and aspirations of IPs/ICCs;

e. Provide a venue for capacity building and empowerment; and

f. Facilitate the over-all active participation of ICCs/IPs making use of the rights-based approach in governance and development.

**TITLE II. THE ICC/IP REPRESENTATIVE**

**SECTION 8. Powers, Duties, Functions.** The powers, duties and functions of IP mandatory representatives shall be the same as that of the regular members of local legislative councils as provided in the Local Government Code of 1991, otherwise known as RA 7160, and other applicable laws. However, IPs mandatory representatives shall focus on the representation of the collective interests of ICCs/IPs; ensure support for the sustained constitution and operations of the IPCB in their respective areas of jurisdiction; and maintain the development and practice of ICCs/IPs traditional leadership titles and structures, justice systems, conflict resolution institutions, and peace building mechanisms and processes that are compatible with the national legal system and with internationally recognized human rights.

**SECTION 9. Minimum Qualifications.** The following shall be the minimum requirements for one to qualify as ICCs/IPs representative in the local legislative councils:

a. The IP representative must be a natural born Filipino citizen;

b. He/She must be a registered voter in the barangay, municipality, city, province, or district where he/she intends to assume office;

c. He/She must be a bona fide IP by blood or consanguinity, an acknowledged leader of the ICCs/IPs of which he/she is a member, and has continuously engaged in ICCs/IPs undertakings setting up a track record of services for ICCs/IPs in a given LGU as certified by the NCIP;

d. He/She must be able to read and write; and,

e. He/She must be knowledgeable of and practices the customary ways & practices of ICCs/IPs of which he/she is a member.

**SECTION 10. Disqualifications.** Any person suffering from or characterized by any one of the following circumstances shall not be eligible to represent the ICCs/IPs:

a. Convicted by final judgment by the council of elders of concerned ICCs/IPs for violating their customs and traditions;

b. Sentenced by final judgment for an offense involving moral turpitude or for an offense punishable by one (1) year or more of imprisonment, within two (2) years after serving sentence;

c. Removed from office as a result of administrative case;

d. Convicted by final judgment for violating the oath of allegiance to the Republic of the Philippines;

e. Possession of dual citizenship;

f. Fugitive from justice, inside or outside the country;

g. Permanent resident in a foreign country or has acquired the right to reside abroad and continues to avail of the same right; and,

h. Insane or feeble-minded based on the findings of competent authorities.

**SECTION 11. Term of and Removal from Office.** The term of office of the IPs mandatory representative in the local legislative councils shall be for a period of three (3) years from the date of assumption to office and can be re-indorsed for another term by the ICCs/IPs constituents but in no case shall the representative serve for more than three (3) consecutive terms. For LGUs with more than one (1) ICCs/IPs residing within its jurisdiction, all ICCs/IPs tribes in said LGU may agree on a term-sharing agreement based on population ratio, or on whatever local arrangement they may deem suited and applicable to address the cultural peculiarities in that LGU.

The IPs mandatory representative can be replaced anytime by the ICCs/IPs who selected him/her to the position in accordance with their local guidelines on recall/removal from office.

**SECTION 12. Selection and Assumption to Office.** The selection of the particular ICC/IP representative to the local legislative council shall be in accordance with the Local Guideline that the concerned ICCs/IPs shall adopt and promulgate, which considers the cycle of traditional or local activities, and must be compliant to this Administrative Order by containing, at least, the following:

a. Title;

b. Definition of Terms;

c. Selection process which should make a delineation of representation to the levels of the Barangay, Municipality, City and Province;

d. Qualifications and Disqualifications;

e. Community Confirmation and Nomination;

f. Vacancy; Disciplinary Action;

g. Term of Office; Recall/Removal;

h. Special Provisions, if any;

i. amendment; and

j. Effectivity Clause

For the purpose of ensuring uniformity in the form of the Local Guidelines to be adopted by the concerned ICCs/IPs, the Office of Empowerment and Human Rights (OEHR) shall develop and make available a guide form.

Assumption to Office shall take place as soon as the selection process is formally certified by the concerned NCIP Regional Director, upon recommendation of the Provincial or Community Service Center head, as the case may be, to be in accordance with this Administrative Order, and the person chosen takes the appropriate oath before an authorized officer and informs the appropriate body/ies of his/her assumption.
SECTION 13. Compensation and Benefits. Compensation, benefits and other emoluments of the IP representative shall be the same with that of the regular members of the concerned legislative bodies as prescribed in RA 7160 and other applicable laws.

TITLE III. NATIONAL COMMISSION ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

SECTION 14. Responsibilities of NCIP. As the office mandated to ensure that ICCs/IPs are afforded every opportunity, if they choose, to participate in all levels of decision-making, it shall be the responsibility of the NCIP to:

a. Facilitate the conduct of general assemblies for Information-Education-Consultations (IECs) on this guidelines and other relevant policies and issuances. The activities shall be done in partnership with the DILG, concerned LGUs and the civil society;
b. Facilitate the conduct of selection process by the ICCs/IPs; and,
c. Assist in the full documentation of selection proceedings and certify the validity of the documents emanating therefrom.

SECTION 15. Duties of the Provincial Office/Community Service Center. It shall be the task of the Provincial Office/Community Service Center to:

a. Assist in the full documentation of the selection proceedings;
b. Certify that the records and all documents emanating from the proceedings are valid and genuine; and,
c. Endorse to the Regional Office the selected representative together with the duly certified documents of the proceedings.

SECTION 16. Duties of the Regional Office. It shall be the task of the Regional Office to:

a. Evaluate the documents and results of the proceedings; if found meritorious, it shall issue a Certificate of Affirmation (COA) to the selected representative. Otherwise, the same shall be returned to the recommending NCIP Field Office with specific instructions for compliance.
b. Submit to DILG for recognition a copy of its issued COA of selected representative including all documents appurtenant thereto, copy furnished the NCIP Central Office through the Office of Empowerment and Human Rights (OEHR).

TITLE IV. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

SECTION 17. Capacity Building of IP representatives. A training module shall be developed to enhance the IPs mandatory representatives’ capacity to engage in mainstream governance while upholding their knowledge of traditional socio-political systems, customary laws, justice systems and skills in interfacing with non-IP governance and policy-making, which shall be facilitated by the NCIP in partnership with the DILG, LGUs, other institutions of government and the Civil Society.

TITLE V. FINAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 18. Construction and Interpretation. This guidelines shall be construed liberally in favor of the ICCs/IPs.

SECTION 19. Transitory Provisions. For purposes of synchronization, the term of office herein provided shall apply to incumbent IPs mandatory representatives whether in the barangay, municipal, city or provincial sanggunian, the period of which will commence only upon the approval of this guidelines. Hence, all existing Local Guidelines shall be reconstituted and harmonized with the provisions of this guidelines.

SECTION 20. Saving Clause. These Rules will not in any manner adversely affect the rights and benefits already granted to the IPs/ICCs under existing contracts and instruments.

SECTION 21. Repealing Clause. The provisions of all NCIP administrative orders, circulars, special orders, office orders or other issuances inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 22. Separability Clause. In case any provision or portion of this guidelines is declared unconstitutional by a competent court, other provisions shall not be affected.

SECTION 23. Effectivity. This guidelines shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette, or in any two (2) newspapers of general circulation, or upon filing with the University of the Philippines Law Center.

(SGD.) RIZALINO G. SEGUNDO
Commissioner, Ethnographic Commissioner, Ethnographic Region III
Region II & Rest of Luzon

(SGD.) ROLANDO M. RIVERA
Commissioner, Ethnographic Region
Island Group & the Visayas Southern & Eastern Mindanao

(SGD.) ATTY. NOEL K. FELONGCO
Commissioner, Ethnographic Region Commissioner, Ethnographic Region
Northern & Western Mindanao Central Mindanao

(SGD.) MIGUEL IMBING SIA APOSTOL
Commissioner, Ethnographic Region Commissioner, Ethnographic Region
Northern & Western Mindanao Central Mindanao

(SGD.) ATTY. EUGENIO A. INSIGNE, MNSA
Chairman & Commissioner, Ethnographic Region CAR & Region I
## Annex 2

**Members of the Misamis Oriental’s Peace and Order Council**

The 35 members of the Provincial Peace and Order Council composed the members of Bae Rose’s guiding coalition (GC):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name and Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hon. Oscar S. Moreno – Governor, Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hon. Norris Babiera – Vice Governor, Vice Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr. Ariel Hernandez – Balay Mindanao, Vice Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hon. Emmanuel Mugot – Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP, Provincial Legislative Council) Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hon. Jimmy Caña – Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP, Provincial Legislative Council) Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hon. Ruthie Guingona – Mayor, Gingoog City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mayor Alexis Quiña – League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hon. Teodoro Buenavista, Jr. – National Telecommunications Commission (NTC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ms. Elisa Pabellore – Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Atty. Jose Justo Yap – National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Regional Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Col. Romeo Gapuz – CO 403rd Brigade 4ID, Philippine Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>PARO Zorida Macadindang – Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>PENRO Edgardo Callanta – Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mr. Jason Vincent Damasco – NCIP, Misamis Oriental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dr. Chery Mae Limbaco – DEPED, District Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dr. Pionciano Caberte – Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Provincial Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>P/Supt. Graciano Mijares – Philippine National Police (PNP) Provincial Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dir. Roberto S. Opena – Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Region 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ms. Fleurdeliz Tabamo – Provincial Cooperative Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>C/Insp. Ciriaco Talines – Provincial Fire Marshall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mr. Vic Aleria – Commission on Human Rights (CHR), Region 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mr. Teddy Sabug-a – PPOC Executive Director/Officer-in-Charge, City Social Work and Development Office (CSWDO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Mr. Danilo Maputol – PANRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mr. Conrado Sescon – Environment and Natural Resources Office (ENRO), Misamis Oriental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Dr. Ignacio Moreno – Provincial Health Office (PHO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Ms. Maricel Rivera – PRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Col. Alex Adeva (Ret.) – Gising Barangay Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ms. Segundina Borcillo – United Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Ms. Ving Delia – DAR Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Rev. Samuel Domingo – Interfaith, United Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Atty. Ombra Gandamra – Interfaith, NCMFN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Rev. Vic E. Arellano – Iglesia Filipina Independente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Msgr. Rey Monsanto – Interfaith, Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Ms. Sabrina Garcia-Balais – Lawig Kalinaw, Balay Mindanao Foundation, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Mr. Kaka Dacup – Balaod Mindanao</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Improving the Delivery of Basic Services

The lack of or unequal access to basic services incites rebellion, conflict, and cyclical poverty. In far-flung and “fragile” communities, these services are fundamental to sustaining peace and economic development. And beyond just making them available, improving the delivery of basic services—seen in the scholastic performance of students or the health statistics among families—requires effective institutions and good governance. This further requires collaboration among neighboring communities and between local governments and civic service organizations.
Bridging Communities through Blood Banks

Whenever Dr. Kalim would share about how the community blood bank began, he would open his talk with an actual medical case.

JA, a 22-year old mother from Barangay Pulayagan, Municipality of Alamada, North Cotabato, is on her 36 weeks of gestation. She was a high school graduate and unemployed. Since this is her first pregnancy, she had five prenatal check-ups in a local health center and, according to the doctor, her pregnancy is healthy.

Few hours prior to admission, she experienced sudden vaginal spotting associated with hypogastric pain. She was suffering from profuse bleeding. She went to have this checked at the Alamada Community District Hospital, a BEmONC\(^1\) facility, which subsequently referred her to Dr. Amado Diaz of the Provincial Foundation Hospital, a CEmONC\(^2\) facility in Midsayap, North Cotabato. Upon arrival, she was assessed immediately. However, the hospital is not properly equipped, and she was hurriedly transported to the Cotabato Regional and Medical Center (CRMC) via ambulance. On the way to the hospital, JA delivered a dead preterm baby boy.

When they reached the hospital, she was rushed to the delivery room where she was admitted due to vaginal bleeding. Her vital signs were stable, but her uterus was pale and boggy. The doctor assessed that JA was suffering from uterine atony, or the failure of the uterine muscles to contract following delivery thus causing bleeding. She was transfused with four bags of blood. A few hours later, her bleeding continued, leading to the deterioration of her vital signs. The nurse intubated her to help her breathe. She was immediately scheduled for an emergency exploratory laparotomy, where the doctors proceeded with vaginal uterine artery ligation.

She received two more bags of blood. But despite the extensive medical management, JA did not fully recover. Few hours after the surgery, she was pronounced dead. The final diagnosis of the doctor was multi-organ failure due to hypovolemic shock, secondary to postpartum haemorrhage.\(^3\)

**Blood is Life**

“Blood is life,” said Dr. Sherjan Kalim, Blood Bank Head of the Cotabato Re-

---

1. Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
2. Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
3. Postpartum haemorrhage refers to excessive bleeding after delivery.
ional and Medical Center (CRMC), as he recalled his grandfather’s experience. “My paternal grandfather died from profuse bleeding. He suffered from chronic arthritis for many years. For pain relief, he took NSAID (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug) frequently, anytime of the day without any prescription. With overuse, the drug damaged the lining of his stomach and resulted in fresh blood discharge in his feces and vomit. In 1996, my grandfather was rushed to the hospital for bleeding.

“He needed blood transfusion. The only way to get blood was to look for donors. At that time, no one among our relatives was available to donate blood. Then, and even until now, blood could be bought through fixers in the hospital.

“My grandfather needed five bags of blood. He was transfused with two bags in the evening, with three more bags of blood pending the following day. Unfortunately, my grandfather passed away before the needed amount of blood was available.”

Dr. Kalim realized that people in remote Muslim communities need the support of the local government and private hospitals to prevent deaths due to inaccessible blood. Explaining why no Moro community organizes a blood donation, he said, “they do not really understand the importance of the blood services.” Therefore, the challenge he faced was how to unite the Moros and non-Moros to address the access to blood and how to improve the health-seeking behavior of the Moros in order accept “health teaching” conducted by the government health workers.

**Cotabato Regional and Medical Center**

The CRMC in Cotabato City is the only hospital and blood facility in Central Mindanao operated by the Department of Health. Its catchment area includes the 1st district of Cotabato and the adjacent provinces of Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur (reaching as far as the municipality of Malabang).

A needs assessment in CRMC in 2011 showed that, on a monthly basis, 392 patients required 851 bags of blood (see Table 1). Since 2007, there has been an increasing trend in blood requirements at the hospital (see Figure 1).

**Table 1. CRMC Needs Assessment, 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>22,513 patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients requiring blood (in the duration of 2011)</td>
<td>4,697 patients (20.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units of blood required</td>
<td>10,209 bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units of blood required/patient</td>
<td>2-3 bags</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4 Catchment area is the geographical area served by the health facility.
5 The 2011 CRMC Needs Assessment was a baseline survey on blood utilization at the hospital, including blood released to other hospitals. It established the data base for the implementation of the blood program of CRMC. It also aided the annual hospital procurement plan for supplies, specifically because a repeat order is difficult considering the government bureaucracy.
The steady increase in the annual blood utilization was attributed to the increase in the number of hospital patients and referrals needing blood, and the improved system of ordering blood products.

Among those who need blood are mothers giving birth. In relation to this, postpartum haemorrhage was the top cause of maternal deaths in Central Mindanao and the ARMM with 38 mothers dying out of 100,000 live births, according to the 2005 report of the Health Research and Development Priority Agenda Setting (see Annex 1).

The United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for maternal mortality in the Philippines was to reduce maternal deaths to 52 per 100,000 live births. In 2009, maternal mortality rate for the country was 91.6 per 100,000, way behind the goal, with postpartum haemorrhage as the third leading cause of maternal deaths (see Annexes 2 and 3).

A closer look at the situation in the catchment areas of CRMC showed that although Cotabato and Maguindanao showed good performance with maternal mortality rates of 42.2 and 52.5 respectively, Lanao del Sur did poorly with a maternal mortality rate of 858.4.

**A Heart for Medicine, A Mind for Management**

“My grandfather's death had an impact on the choice of pathology as a field of specialization in my medical career,” said Dr. Kalim. In April 2003, after graduating as a Doctor of Medicine from the University of Santo Tomas (UST), Dr. Kalim took his pathology residency at the Philippine General Hospital where he taught public health and allied health problems on basic pathology at the hospital's College of Allied Medical Professionals.

A native of Cotabato City, Dr. Kalim's association with CRMC started with observations in the hospital's laboratory right after his graduation from

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6 Maternal mortality/death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and the site of the pregnancy, from any cause related or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes.

7 Postpartum haemorrhage refers to excessive bleeding after delivery.
UST. In 2009, shortly after passing the board examination for anatomic and clinical pathology, Dr. Kalim joined the Cotabato Regional and Medical Center and became the head of the CRMC Blood Bank.

In 2012, Dr. Kalim became a fellow of the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM). “Doctors always need continuing professional education, but not just in their fields of expertise. We also need knowledge about management – implementation, documentation and accounting – for our departments, including blood programs,” said Dr. Kalim.

It was not surprising that his change project for the fellowship involved the enhancement of existing community blood banking schemes in the catchment areas of CRMC. From the long-held practice of family replacement, Dr. Kalim wanted to advocate for voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation. “Blood could be made available to all, at all times and at no cost through a community-based blood bank,” Dr. Kalim emphasized.

As in the case of Dr. Kalim’s grandfather, family replacement was a painstaking and costly process of finding blood donors at the time of dire need. “Blood could be made available to all, at all times and at no cost through a community-based blood bank,” Dr. Kalim emphasized.

The change project had the mission of establishing “a coordinated and efficient network of blood service facilities based on voluntary blood donation that will ensure safe, adequate, timely and accessible blood supply through a religious- and culture-sensitive advocacy.” The project aimed to broaden the concept of a blood bank by involving the community in its management. “As a community-controlled blood bank, the hospital serves as the storage area, while the community controls the withdrawal of blood and the registration of donors who withdrew blood,” said Dr. Kalim.

Through the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program, the fellow formed his Guiding Coalition to support him in his change project. The following were the members of his Guiding Coalition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Position and Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nazneen Biruar-Piang</td>
<td>Blood Program Coordinator, Bangsamoro Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ibrahim V. Pangato, Jr.</td>
<td>BMS Chairman of the Board of Trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnes Sampulna</td>
<td>Department of Health – ARMM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Baldostamon</td>
<td>CRMC Blood Bank Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norhan Mangansakan</td>
<td>CRMC Donor Recruitment Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Danda Juanday</td>
<td>BL Fellow, BMS President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Blood programs and services include advocacy in the community & LGU, donor recruitment and retention, donor care, blood banking in hospitals, blood testing (HIV 1 & 2, Hepatitis B & C, Syphilis, Malaria), quality management system, good manufacturing services, and distribution network to hospitals.
Continuing awareness and campaign on voluntary blood donation in Muslim communities, organizing blood-donation activities, and managing the CRMC blood bank were the important matters that Dr. Kalim asked of his Guiding Coalition. “Since my GC and CG shares the same aspiration, they introduced us to their networks to be able to implement the project,” he explained.

With the shared vision of “safe blood available 24/7 to all patients who need it,” Dr. Kalim attributed to his Guiding Coalition an active participation in promoting the change project and increasing blood donors, especially during mobile blood-banking activities.

**Blood...Money**

Dr. Kalim admitted, “In a sense, my grandfather was lucky because our family was able to afford the cost of blood service fees. In many cases, patients who come to the CRMC Blood Bank cannot afford the costs incurred by blood transfusion—blood service fee, food and transportation of the donors, and blood transfusion fee.”

Based on DOH Administrative Order 181 s. 2002, blood service fees cost (i) Php1,500.00 for whole blood, (ii) Php1,100.00 for packed red blood cells, and (iii) Php700.00 for other components (platelet concentrate, fresh frozen plasma, cryoprecipitate, cryosupernate). “In a nutshell,” according to Dr. Kalim, “while service fees for whole blood costs Php1,500.00, fees for blood components can go as high as Php 2,500.00.”

The 2012 first semester poverty incidence figures in Cotabato (43.9 percent), Maguindanao (57.8 percent), and Lanao del Sur (68.9 percent) were way above the national average of 22.3 percent. Based on the average monthly family income in Cotabato (Php 11,407), Maguindanao (Php 7,996), and Lanao del Sur (Php 10,998) in 2009, if a member of an average family suffered from massive bleeding, 5 to 21 bags of blood would cost them almost their entire monthly income or even more (see Annex 4).

**Good Blood...Bad Blood**

In 2007, while completing his residency at PGH, Dr. Kalim acted as consultant on Muslim relations to the Department of Health (DOH). The DOH Philippine Blood Center wanted to set up a blood bank for Muslims. Because Muslims from Manila did not like to accept blood from non-Muslims, this created the need for Muslim physicians to educate the community on blood products and services.

The same sentiment was shared by Muslims in Central Mindanao. In a region where more than 90 percent of the population belonged to the Islam

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9 Up to four components can be derived from whole blood: red cells, platelets, plasma, and cryoprecipitated AHF. (Source: Red Cross Blood Website)

10 Based on the first semester poverty incidence recorded by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) in 2012, Lanao del Sur was the poorest province in the country. Maguindanao and (North) Cotabato ranked fourth and eleventh, respectively.
faith\textsuperscript{11}, one of the challenges of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation was the fear among Muslims that the blood they donated will benefit the Christians. When Muslims and Christians\textsuperscript{12} encountered each other in conflict areas, wounded military soldiers were brought to the hospital while Muslim fighters fled to the forests. For this reason, Muslims held back about donating blood to hospital blood banks because they were afraid that their blood might save the lives of enemies.

This fear led to the preference for family replacement in hospitals over voluntary blood donation in blood banks. Issues related to the blood extraction process, such as the transmission of diseases and loss of blood, further hindered the promotion of blood services.

**Enhancing the Community-based Blood Banking Scheme**

Health education on the Islamic concept of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation (VNRBD) was key to a sustainable and culture-sensitive blood program in Muslim communities (see Annex 5). To Dr. Kalim, VNRBD is charity for the “Greater Glory of God.” According to him, “A paid blood donor gets his immediate reward with the money he is paid. [On the other hand,] a voluntary blood donor awaits his reward from Allah.”

An enhanced community blood bank received Islamic teachings pertaining to the righteousness of blood donation. Health education was conducted simultaneous with blood donation. Health benefits of blood donation were also given.

Information-Education Campaign materials on VNRBD with translation in Maguindanaon were developed in consultation with Islam scholars (see Annex 6). The Global Fund\textsuperscript{13} provided assistance for the production of the materials.

Two coordinators were designated for each community blood bank. The blood coordinator handled the passbook that showed the deposits, withdrawals, and balance of the blood bank. S/he kept a masterlist, which contained the names of the blood donors and their blood types. The “depositors” in the community blood bank could withdraw as much good blood as they deposited.\textsuperscript{14} A medical coordinator was also available to the community in case members who tested positive for any disease choose to be referred to a medical health officer.

\textsuperscript{11} More than 90\% of ARMM are Muslims, 5\% are Roman Catholic, less than 1\% belong to the Philippine Episcopal Church, and the other 3\% are shared by the Evangelicals, Iglesia ni Kristo, and other religions.

\textsuperscript{12} The military as a whole earned the popular connotation of being Christians. According to Dr. Kalim, the conflict between the Muslims and the military has, therefore, been popularly termed as between Muslims and Christians.

\textsuperscript{13} The Global Fund is an international institution that provides funding to countries to support programs that prevent, treat and care for people with HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.

\textsuperscript{14} If, for example, 100 bags of blood are collected in a community and 10 bags test positive for any transmittable disease, the 10 bags are removed from the stock. Then, an additional 10 bags is removed as payment for hospital fees for blood testing. Because of a law that prohibits tracing the disease to the source, the contaminated donor continues to give and receive (if needed) blood as a member of the blood bank.
PhilHealth membership\(^{15}\) was encouraged among community members to cover blood processing and transfusion fees. Otherwise, without the membership coverage, a patient needed to withdraw twice the amount of blood s/he needed (1:2) from the community blood bank to cover for service fees charged by the hospital.

For any member of a community blood bank, blood was available 24/7 at no cost. Members of partner organizations were immediately attended to, while non-members who are not emergency cases and who came outside of blood bank hours were asked to return.

In case any community member had medical conditions, such as hypertension and diabetes, s/he is disqualified from donating blood, s/he was represented by a family or another community member. A community-based blood bank had two value-added features: (i) a “Bayanihan Desk” to ensure 24/7 access to blood by members upon presentation of a withdrawal slip; and (ii) a Credit Line, in which a blood bank or vendor extended a specified amount of unsecured credit to a borrower for a specified time period.

**Institutional Partnership**

The Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) was a strong partner of Dr. Kalim in his change project. The BDA was established in June 2001 in accordance with the Humanitarian, Rehabilitation and Development Aspects of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines-Moro Islamic Liberation Front Tripoli Agreement. It had the mandate to “determine, lead and manage relief, rehabilitation and development projects in the conflict affected areas of Mindanao.”

Through the organization’s project “Muslim Blood Donation,” the number of Muslim blood donors increased over the years. The BDA also turned out the highest blood collection among CRMC’s partner agencies.

As the Medical Coordinator of BDA, Dr. Kalim was able to forge partnerships with government agencies, Local Government Units, and Non-Government

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\(^{15}\) The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) is a government-owned and -controlled corporation created in 1995, which provides universal health insurance for Filipinos. According to the 2004 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey, PhilHealth has a total membership of 7, 036,041 in 2004. There are 337,527 members in Region XII or Central Mindanao and only 48, 786 members in the ARMM region. ARMM has the lowest PhilHealth membership total in the country.
Organizations. For instance, Dr. Kalim was able to meet with officials of the Department of Education for the inclusion of voluntary donation in elementary and high school curricula, as well as in the alternative learning system. Advocacy campaign materials were also handed to students.

As partners in the blood program management, local officials assumed roles and responsibilities in the network of community-based blood banks. The governors, mayors, and barangay captains were tasked with the overall management of the community blood banks. The creation of a Local Blood Council (as a policy-making body) and of a Blood Program Coordinator (for blood bank controls issuance) were local measures advocated by Dr. Kalim.

Users’ Training on the National Blood Bank Network System was held to build capacity in the use of technology for the database of blood donors. The social media (i.e. Facebook) was used as the platform to acknowledge voluntary blood donors.

On October 17, 2012, an “Updating and Multi-Stakeholders Consultation Meeting of Blood Program Partners and Network” was held through the initiative of Dr. Kalim and his team. The Annual National Consultative Meeting of Blood Bank Heads and Regional Blood Program Coordinators was also held to promote blood programs.

In 2012, CRMC had 80 partner organizations. Annual blood collection reached 11,000 units, half from family replacements and half from voluntary donations. The target for 2013 was to increase the share voluntary don-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Organization</th>
<th>Annual Blood Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil Service Commission</td>
<td>50 – 70 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escasíñas Clan</td>
<td>50 – 70 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midsayap LGU</td>
<td>300 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangsamoro Development Agency</td>
<td>1,200 units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Annual Blood Collection from Selected Partner Organizations

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**Figure 2.** Halal-Haram Concept of Blood Transfusion
nations to 60 percent, bringing down family replacement to 40 percent. Be-
sides LGUs and NGOs, members included local communities, and families.

“We expect membership and blood donation to plateau in two to three
years,” said Dr. Kalim. “Sometimes communities take a rest, especially if
there are no cases needing blood. There is no dormancy in community
blood bank deposits,” he added.

**Keeping the Blood Flowing**

On the sustainability and management of community-based blood banks,
the Cotabato Regional and Medical Center earned revenue in two ways.
First, CRMC claimed Php 1,500.00 PhilHealth reimbursement for every
blood transfusion. Second, the hospital had a continuous supply of blood
for paying patients who paid around Php 3,000.00/bag of blood. For family
replacement, the patients pay for the blood service fee of Php 1,500.00 and
they have to bring a blood donor.

According to Dr. Kalim, the project had a projected profit of Php 1.7 million
per month for the blood bank of CRMC. (Dr. Kalim required income from the
blood bank to be separated from the income from drugs with which it was
lumped in the hospital.)

**Paradigm Shift**

According to Dr. Kalim, blood is not a commodity. Patients pay for blood
service fees, such as testing blood for transmissible diseases and deriving
components from whole blood. Blood, however, must be voluntarily and
freely given. VNRBD is an act of charity.

There is a shift in the mindset of the Moro and Non-Moro in Cotabato. The
community’s response towards a community blood bank was positive. Al-
though it faced various challenges in the beginning, the project was able to
address the social disparity amongst the Moros and Non-Moros. Moreover,
as explained by Dr Kalim, “Muslims and Christians are much united, and
live with harmony. They share blood despite different backgrounds.”

LGUs have also positively responded in the GC and CG campaign on shar-
ing blood to others. Improved systems on blood donation and sharing are
in place, and constituents are included in the system. This new system (i.e.
authority to withdraw blood from the hospital’s blood bank deposits dur-
ing blood donor or blood sharing transactions) helps make the lives of the
patients and attending doctors and nurses easier. This blood bank scheme
is effective because it has been able to support all sectors and address their
need for blood. Also, it has been able to help save the hospital cost. More-
over, patients enrolled and an active member of PhilHealth is covered.

“Our partner communities organized the mobile blood donations. Local
chief executives provide financial and in-kind support for the conduct of
the mobile blood donations,” Dr. Kalim stated. Many people are now becom-
ing aware that donating blood is healthy. Also, some have learned to go past
their differences to help save a life. Now, the CRMC has regular blood donors who support the advocacy and ensure that the hospital will be able to serve patients who need blood.

References


### Annex 1

**Leading Causes of Maternal Deaths in Central Mindanao and the ARMM, 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leading Causes of Maternal Deaths</th>
<th>Rate/1,000 Live Births</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postpartum Haemorrhage</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eclampsia in Pregnancy</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury of the Uterus</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amniotic Fluid Embolism</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congestive Heart Failure</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained Placenta</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dr. Dolores Daguino, Health Research and Development Priority Agenda Setting Central Mindanao and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, October 2005

### Annex 2 - Live Births, Total Deaths, and Maternal Deaths, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Live Births (Count)</th>
<th>Maternal Deaths (Rate per 100,000 live births)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1,745,585</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>285,515</td>
<td>61.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGION XII-SOCCSKSARGEN</td>
<td>61,881</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotabato (or North Cotabato)</td>
<td>16,577</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarangani</td>
<td>5,208</td>
<td>211.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Cotabato</td>
<td>8,022</td>
<td>162.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan Kudarat</td>
<td>7,440</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Kidapawan</td>
<td>4,546</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Santos City</td>
<td>13,503</td>
<td>125.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Koronadal</td>
<td>4,648</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Tacurong</td>
<td>1,937</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>7,263</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basilan</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>549.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanao del Sur</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>858.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maguindanao</td>
<td>1,903</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulu</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawi-Tawi</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>128.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Isabela</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Lamitan</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>490.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marawi City</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotabato City</td>
<td>2,740</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Health, 2009
### Annex 3

**Leading Causes of Maternal Mortality in the Philippines, 2009**
*(Rate/1,000 Livebirths & Percent Distribution)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,599</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Complications related to pregnancy occurring in the course of labor, delivery &amp; puerperium</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hypertension complicating pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Post partum hemorrhage</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pregnancy with abortive outcome</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hemorrhage in early pregnancy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Health, 2009

### Annex 4

**Poverty and Income Data: NCR, Region XII, and ARMM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poverty Incidence among Families (%)</th>
<th>Per Capita Poverty Threshold (PhP)</th>
<th>Average Annual Family Income</th>
<th>Average Monthly Family Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>6,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region XII</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>6,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Cotabato</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>5,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarangani</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>6,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Cotabato</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan Kudarat</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>6,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotabato City</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>7,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>6,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basilan</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>6,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanao del Sur</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>6,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maguindanao</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>6,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulu</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>6,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawi-Tawi</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>5,691</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Poverty incidence** is the proportion of families/individuals with per capita income/expenditure less than the per capita poverty threshold to the total number of families/individuals. **Poverty Threshold** is the minimum income/expenditure required for a family/individual to meet the basic food and non-food requirements. (Data and definition from NSCB)

Income data from the Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES), 2009.
Annex 5

**Advantages of Voluntary, Non-Remunerated Blood Donors (VNRBD)**

1. VNRBD are not under pressure to give blood and are therefore more likely to meet the criteria for low-risk donors.
2. They are more likely to be willing to donate blood regularly, which is important in maintaining adequate supplies of blood.
3. Regular donors are more likely to be free from transfusion-transmissible infections because they have been educated about the importance of safe blood and are screened each time they attend to give blood.
4. They are more likely to respond to an appeal for blood donors during an emergency because they have already expressed commitment to voluntary blood donation.

Annex 6

**Information-Education-Campaign Material**

A sample material on Voluntary Blood Donation, worded in Maguindanaon dialect
Strengthening the Bongao Local School Board to Raise Performance in Basic Education

It was December 2012, Mayor Jasper Que and Abdulwahab Husin were at the Mayor’s Office after a series of meetings with the members of the Local School Board (LSB) of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi. They were both studying the papers in front of them, which showed the dismal National Achievement Test (NAT) mean score of the schools in their beloved town—only 38 percent against the passing rate of 75 percent. But these test results, one of the lowest in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), were from three years ago, SY 2009-2010. They were so glad that the latest NAT scores showed remarkable improvement in Bongao students’ academic performance (see Annex 1). Mayor Jasper Que and Abdulwahab Husin relished the journey that allowed them to reach this accomplishment.

The Fellows: The Mayor and the DepEd District Supervisor

Jasper Que was born in the province of Sulu, and grew up in Zamboanga City. In the early 1990s, his father, Albert Que, set up a business in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi while the family stayed in Zamboanga City. Albert Que later became the mayor of Bongao for three consecutive terms, from 2001 to 2010. Under his leadership, Bongao underwent dramatic changes. Some of the key accomplishments of the local government unit (LGU) were its strict policy against borrowings, which made Bongao one of those few LGUs with no outstanding loan obligations; the formulation of the municipality’s Gender and Development (GAD) Code (Municipal Ordinance 171-2008); and the utilization of the GAD budget for programs and projects that enhance the social and economic benefits of women and children. The local government’s good administration and effective fiscal management also helped improve its financial standing. From just Php 42 million (USD 1 million) in 2000, the municipality’s income increased to more than Php 102 million (USD 2.4 million) in 2011. In just nine years, the town’s classification was upgraded, from fourth-class to second-class municipality.

In May 2010, Jasper ran for the Local Chief Executive post in Bongao and won. He entered politics because of his desire to continue the innovative programs of his father. He knew that taking on his father’s position in the local government would not be an easy undertaking; he was risking not only his reputation but his father’s as well.

“’Ako (na) ang mayor. Kapag bumagsak, mahirap isustain ang pangalang. I promised my father that I would continue what he started.”

Jasper Que
Municipal Mayor, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi

Abdulwahab Husin
Department of Education ESP-2/District Supervisor-in-Charge, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi

Written by Eloisa A. Barbin, under the supervision of Professor Nieves R. Confesor of the AIM TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership
(I am now the mayor. If I failed, it would be difficult to revive our reputation/name. I promised my father that I would continue what he started.)

In January 2011, in a ceremony attended by the late Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Jesse Robredo and Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Armin Luistro, Mayor Jasper received the Galing Pook Award for Administrative and Fiscal Reforms for Bongao. Mayor Jasper knew that receiving the award was not a recognition of any of his efforts, for he knew that he was yet to prove himself as local chief executive. Receiving the Certificate of Recognition and the cheque for Bongao served as a challenge for him to sustain the efforts towards sound practices in local governance that was started by his father.

Abdulwahab Husin, or Wabie to his colleagues, was a native of the town of Talipao in the province of Sulu. He took up BS Elementary Education in Sulu State College, and was proud to be the first male teacher from his community. He taught in a public school in Talipao for a while, but was eventually transferred to Bongao in 1989. He served as a classroom teacher for ten years before being promoted to Physical Education Coordinator in Bongao Central District. In 2003, he became teacher-in-charge of Datu Halun Central Elementary School, and moved up until he became the District Supervisor-in-Charge of Bongao Central District in 2009.

In July 2011, Wabie and Mayor Jasper together joined the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM).

**Education Situation in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi**

Bongao is the political and economic capital town of Tawi-Tawi, the southernmost province of the Philippines. It is classified as a second-class municipality with an internal revenue allotment, or the share of funds from the national revenue, of more than Php 102 million (USD 2.4 million) in 2011. Bongao is among the poorest municipalities in the country (see Table 1), although it had great potential for economic growth.\(^1\)

Bongao is politically sub-divided into 35 barangays, populated by 79,362 residents (based on May 2010 Census). The town is a melting pot of cultures, where indigenous peoples (Tausug and Sama-Badjao), Christians, and Muslims reside. Chinese traders from Sabah, Malaysia have also found a home in Bongao.

The public basic education system in Bongao consists of four districts, covering 42 public elementary schools and six secondary schools. In SY 2011-12, the four districts had a total elementary enrollment of 20,189. For secondary schools, the division had a total enrollment of 4,268.

Just like in other areas in Mindanao, Bongao struggled with limited access

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\(^1\) Bongao is within the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), which makes it a potential international gateway. The BIMP-EAGA is a cooperation program that aims to increase trade, tourism, and investments within and outside the subregion (www.adb.org).
to quality basic education, which was reflected in the very poor participation, cohort survival, and completion rates of learners (see Annex 2 – Bongao Education Indicators).

When the Local Government Code was passed in 1991, much of basic government services (agriculture, social work, tourism, public works, social services, and health) were devolved to local governments. For instance, the health sector was decentralized to the 78 provinces, 118 cities, and more than 1,400 municipalities nationwide. Local governments were made in-charge of provincial, municipal, and district hospitals, barangay health centers, as well as the management of health workers. However in education, the system remained centralized. The teachers, school heads, and principals reported not to the local chief executives but to their district supervisors (municipal or city level), who then reported to the division supervisor (provincial level) who was directly under the Regional and National Offices of the Department of Education (DepEd). Thus, the delivery of education remained a responsibility of the national government (see Annex 3 – Excerpts from the Local Government Code – Local School Boards).

Local governments though have been tapped to provide supplementary resources for public schools. Local school boards (LSBs) were created through the Local Government Code to help fund public school needs through the Special Education Fund (SEF). It was the main instrument by which local institutions such as the LGU, civil society, academe, and community could participate in addressing challenges facing the education sector. However, in most localities, LSBs were only tapped to fund shortfalls in the education system. It was observed that, in most localities, 30 percent of the SEF financed maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), of which a large percentage funded athletic meets (4.5 percent in the case of a city and 6 percent in the case of a municipality). Only one percent of the SEF financed instructional materials, such as books or teaching manuals. Very

---

Table 1. Key Development Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Poverty Incidence among Population (%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Average Annual Family Income (Php)&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Human Development Index (HDI)&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>HDI Rank among Provinces&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>206,000</td>
<td>0.716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>356,000</td>
<td>0.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>113,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawi-Tawi</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>123,225</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongao</td>
<td>34.6&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>28.7&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: (a) NSO, (b) 2008/2009 Philippine Human Development Report, (c) NSCB Small Area Poverty Estimates

2 The SEF is an additional one percent levy that is collected together with real property taxes paid to the local government.
few LSBs took on pro-active and responsive roles in the education system, and worse, most LSBs in the country were not functioning well.

The same situation existed in Bongao. The LSB had limited involvement in setting education priorities. In addition, its budget for education, the SEF, was spent on non-priorities such as sports events, small school repairs, and the construction of comfort rooms (toilets). Fewer resources went to long-term plans for education or for “soft infrastructure” such as textbooks, teaching materials, and staff development (teacher training and performance-based incentives).

There was a weak relationship between the DepEd and the local government. This may be due to the structure of the education system, wherein the delivery of education remained a responsibility of the DepEd. It was clear to the LGU that it had no jurisdiction over the education system. Thus, the local chief executive did not see the need to work with the district supervisor in addressing problems related to education system. The local education officers, on the other hand, never attempted to ask the LGU for help despite their need for resources. It did not make sense to ask, since it was also clear to them that the mayor was not their boss.

There was also very little support coming from the parents. Bongao was one of the poorest towns in the country, and poverty was seen as one reason why parents could not send their children to school (refer back to Table 1). Moreover, their own low-level education had been a discouraging factor for them to provide guidance in their children’s schoolwork, or to motivate them to continue attending their classes.

These systemic problems in education affected the academic performance of students. When Mayor Jasper reviewed the performance of various elementary schools in his municipality, he saw very poor achievement in various tests. Achievement reports showed the students’ very low reading skills, the low competency rating of teachers, and the general low performance of pupils in several subjects. He committed to address these problems in education.


(For me, education is very important. We need to give attention to the children so they learn and eventually get jobs. But we also need to help the parents. Because of poverty, parents could not send their kids to school. If we only focused on the kids, the parents might complain to us, ‘We don’t have money, we can’t even feed our children.’)
Owning Bongao’s education problems

Mayor Jasper was only one year into the local chief executive post when he decided to join the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) at AIM. At that time, Mayor Jasper admitted that his understanding of the education problem and its root causes was very much simplified. He admitted that before joining MBLP, he only met with the members of the LSB four times. He remembered how these meetings went about:


(Because I knew nothing about the education sector then, I simply asked the supervisors and principals what they needed for their schools. They always tell me that they need comfort rooms in every classroom, or a stage. They always asked for infrastructure projects. And because I knew nothing about education, I believed them.)

Wabie Husin saw more problems in education since he was part of the sector. Below was Wabie’s assessment of the education sector:

“Nagpaparticipate yung parents, pero hindi naman buo, hindi solid. Ito ang nagiging problem natin. Also lack of resources [kagaya ng] facilities, and especially textbooks. Ever since the Basic Education curriculum was restructured, we have not received any property. Kaya ang teachers natin, basehan nila yung mga references na nabibili nila commercially. I do not know why we never received materials... Also commitment of the teachers, masyadong mababa. There are indicators that link [this] to the low performance of the pupils. GSIS-teachers’ loans are frozen kapag hindi naka-avail, hindi nagreremit ang dating LGU ng region (ARMM). Reflected naman sa payroll pero wala. Paano ka magkakaroon ng quality teaching kapag gutom ang guro?”

(The parents are participating, but their participation is not complete, not solid. This is a problem apart from the lack of resources like facilities, and especially textbooks. Ever since the Basic Education curriculum was restructured, we have not received any materials. That is why our teachers base their lessons from the references they bought commercially. I do not know why we never received materials... Also the commitment of the teachers is very low. There are indicators that link [this] to the low performance of the pupils. If they have not availed of the GSIS loans, these are frozen and the previous LGU of the region (ARMM) do not remit them. The remittances however are reflected in their payroll [but still, they can’t avail of the loan].
How can you expect quality teaching from them if the teachers themselves are hungry?)

Although aware of the various education problems, Wabie did not know then which problem to prioritize. When he was first asked on what should be given attention in the education sector, Wabie concurred with the other members of the LSB to prioritize the construction of comfort rooms in each classroom:

“Out of the many things that could be improved, bakit CR ang nabanggit namin ni Jasper? It’s related to health. Kapag may health problem [ang mga bata], sabihin natin sa umaga, hindi na sila babalik [sa eskwelehan] ng buong araw.”

(Out of the many things that could be improved, why did Jasper and I choose the lack of comfort rooms? It’s related to health. When children feel sick, we tell them to go home in the morning, but they don’t come back [to class] anymore.)

Just like in other local governments, Mayor Jasper left the work of defining the education priorities to the LSB, which had the function under the Local Government Code to provide budgetary support to local public schools. He allowed them to use the SEF in projects that they deemed important, and it was used for small repairs or building comfort rooms. He also left the task of implementing education programs to the School District Supervisors of DepEd assigned in the four districts of Bongao.

While attending workshops on Bridging Leadership and when he started talking to various stakeholders on education, Mayor Jasper realized that, although building comfort rooms in each classroom would contribute to improving the health condition of pupils, it should not be their priority. He further realized that education is a sector that needed his attention and support.

“Narealize ko mula sa pakikipag-usap sa mga teachers, district supervisors, at parents na hindi pala pagnapapagawa ng CR sa bawat classroom ang kailangan para mapabuti ang quality of education sa Bongao.”

(From my informal discussions with teachers, district supervisors, and parents, I realized that constructing comfort rooms in classrooms was not what we have to do to improve the quality of education in Bongao.)
The mayor also realized one important thing:

“Isa akong parte sa isang problema.” (I am part of the problem.)

Mayor Jasper summarized his and Wabie’s new analysis of the education situation in Bongao:


(The [local] government had very low participation in education. The DepEd and the LGU have a weak relationship. The teachers have very low commitment. We don’t have reliable data. There are many politicians who take advantage of the teachers. We have problems in health. The parents don’t take part in the education system. We have limited funds, or the funds that we have are not being used effectively, that is why we have poor facilities, and children perform poorly in school. If we put all these factors together, it’s chaotic. Everyone is responsible for the outcomes. We can’t put the blame on just one person.)

Figure 2. Seeing the big picture
Forging relationships with stakeholders

The first thing that Mayor Jasper and Wabie did to ensure co-ownership of the concerns in education was to expand the membership of Local School Board of Bongao. From its original composition of only eight members, the LSB was expanded to include the district supervisors of the three other school districts, as well as representatives from non-teaching personnel, teachers’ association, secondary schools, private schools, and higher education institutes. They also included four parent and teacher representatives from all four districts instead of just having the President of the Municipal Federation of Parents-Teachers Conference Association (PTCA) represent the association in the LSB. Mayor Jasper saw the need to get the opinions and concerns straight from education officials and stakeholders.

"Dati yung elected representative lang ng PTCA ng apat na distrito ang kasama sa LSB. Ang nangyayari, kung ano lang ang problema sa distrito niya, iyon lang ang nasasabi niya sa meetings. Hindi naririnig ang problema ng iba."

(Before the LSB expansion, we only had one elected representative of the PTCA [to represent] all four districts. What happened was we only got to hear the problems from his/her district. We didn’t get to hear the concerns of the other districts.)

The expanded LSB also included the heads of key local government departments (Assessor, Planning and Development, and Accounting), and the representative from the association of barangay captains to ensure collaboration with other sectors and the community. The LSB meetings were also opened to representatives from the business and religious sector, and non-government organizations to ensure quality multi-sectoral community participation. The new LSB met every first Saturday of the month.

Mayor Jasper made sure that all LSB members and the institutions they represented were involved in the decision-making process. Traditionally, decision-making in most local school boards in the country rested only on its two powerful members: the mayor as chairman of the LSB, and the district supervisor as co-chair. Through the series of meetings with the LSB, Mayor Jasper helped redefine the directions of the local school board:

**Vision:** Quality elementary education in Bongao

**Mission:** Plan and implement programs focused on education concerns; encourage the support and participation of PTCA, other partners and stakeholders in school improvement; strengthen values education, monitor and evaluate implementation of capacity building activities, projects, and programs for school staff.

After carefully studying the issues and concerns of public schools in Bongao, the LSB laid down their objectives for their initial project:

1. Eliminate non-readers;
2. Use education as vehicle to cityhood of Bongao; and
Table 2. Composition of the Local School Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original members of the LSB</th>
<th>Expanded membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Municipal Mayor (Chairperson)</td>
<td>1. Municipal Mayor (Chairman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. District Supervisor of schools (Co-Chairperson)</td>
<td>2. In addition to co-chairperson, 3 additional district supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chairperson of the Education Committee of the Sangguniang Bayan</td>
<td>3. Principal secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Municipal Treasurer</td>
<td>4. Total of 4 PTCA representatives instead of 1 (to cover 4 districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Representative, Pederasyon ng mga Sangguniang Kabataan sa Sangguniang Bayan (Federation of Youth Board in Municipal Board)</td>
<td>5. President of secondary schools teachers association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Duly-elected President of the Municipal Federation of Parents-Teachers Conference Association (PTCA)</td>
<td>6. Municipal Assessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Duly-elected representative of the teachers association in the municipality</td>
<td>7. Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (MPDC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Duly-elected representative of the non-academic personnel of public schools in the municipality</td>
<td>8. Private schools representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Higher education representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Municipal Accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. President of the Association of Barangay Captains (ABC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Open invitation to NGOs, religious sector representative, other private schools, and members of the business chamber when the need arises</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Sustain the gains of the project and prepare the next leadership of the LGU and DepEd to finish the project.**

In their meetings, the mayor exhorted the members of the LSB to accept the responsibility of putting education system in Bongao into order, not by constructing toilets in every classroom, but by first addressing the low literacy rate among pupils. Mayor Jasper explained:

“Reading is a foundation [of skills] para sa mga bata na dapat matutukan sa early education. Kapag dumating ng mga bata sa high school at hindi mahusay magbasa, naapektuhan ang confidence nila, nagiging cause ng insecurities. At kapag na-insecure na ang bata, hindi na yan papasok sa eskwela, kaya bababa ang school participation, bababa ang antas ng edukasyon ng mga tao sa Bongao.”

(Reading is a foundation [of skills] that should be acquired by pupils in their early education. When they reach high school without good reading skills, it affects their confidence level, and this causes insecurities. And when these kids get insecure, they stop attending classes, bringing down school participation and eventually the level of education among people in Bongao.)

The LSB, with the help of district supervisors, identified four least-performing public elementary schools where they would introduce programs
to improve teaching, learning, and community support of schools. The schools selected were: (1) Pag-asa Elementary School (from Central District), (2) Sama Kasulutan Elementary School (District I), (3) Abdelmunap Bassal Lakit-Lakit Elementary School (District II); and (4) Panglima Annao Elementary School (District III).

The first step in this initiative was to conduct a survey to determine the actual number of enrollees and non-readers in the schools under study. Mayor Jasper and the LSB members believed that everything stems from accurate data. They knew that they could only move forward with a responsive education program in Bongao if they had accurate data on enrollment and the level of reading skills of pupils. Although gathering data seemed to be a simple undertaking, for the LSB members and especially for Mayor Jasper, a politician who still needed to earn the approval of his constituents, it was a risky activity.

On September 12-15, 2011, Mayor Jasper, Wabie, and eight other members of the LSB went to the four schools and administered the survey instrument themselves. They tested the reading skills of pupils in Grades 2 to 6, and covered 30 percent of students in all classes in all four schools.

Another disappointing result was that more than half of the students (51 percent) were in the “frustration” level. Mayor Jasper explained this level:

“Parang ako, nanginginig kapag nagrereport, sila nanginginig kapag nagbabasa.” (Just like when I get nervous reporting [in class], these kids get nervous when they read.)
The poor reading skills of the students was not the only thing that bothered Mayor Jasper, it was the communities’ seeming acceptance that it was okay for the students not to perform well in school.

“Kung iisipin natin, ito ang resulta [pera] tanggap ito ng community sa Bongao dahil ito ang nangyayari... 20 o 30 years nang ganito ang nangyayari.” (These are the results, but the communities in Bongao simply accept this reality, because this is what it has been for the past 20 or 30 years.)

After the results were tallied and analyzed, a community consultation on education was conducted among stakeholders in all four elementary schools. School heads, teachers, parents, and barangay officials gathered to discuss the results of the survey, to identify issues and concerns regarding education and to come up with programs that would allow the community to work together in improving the current state of education in their town.

A municipal-wide Education Summit was held after the first batch of survey was completed. This was done in partnership between the LSB of Bongao and the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP). Its aimed to promote transparency among stakeholders and to have a common understanding of the divide and of the challenges in the education sector.

The summit was attended by various stakeholders composed of representatives from the religious sector, civil society, business, government (regional and provincial government, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and the Philippine National Police), the academe, and the community (parents/PTCA). Mayor Jasper presented the results of the survey, painting the deteriorating state of education in Bongao. Through the summit, the mayor asked for their cooperation and support.

To address the identified problems, several priority programs were implemented by the Bongao LSB. From November 2011 to March 2012, pupils identified as non-readers were made to attend tutorial classes held every Saturday, from 8am to 11am in all four schools. The LGU spent 500 pesos per teacher per weekend class and also provided snacks for the pupils to encourage them to attend. Eleven teachers were tapped to conduct weekend reading classes.

**Table 3. Results of the Literacy Survey among Grade 2 to 6 pupils**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Frustration</th>
<th>Instructional</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Non-reader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The implementation of these classes was not smooth-sailing however. Some parents refused to send their kids on weekend; they wanted their children to help in household and farm work. According to Mayor Jasper, the Badjao parents were more difficult to convince.

Through the leadership of Mayor Jasper, the LSB also conducted a capability-building program for teachers of the four schools. Since the LSB did not have funds for this, they sought help from Ateneo de Zamboanga University and Mindanao State University to do the training.

A feeding program was also initiated in the low-performing schools since the LSB recognized that poor nutrition adversely affects the academic performance of pupils. Mayor Jasper was able to tap the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) for assistance. The organization provided 4,000 sacks of rice, while the local government and schools provided “social equity” by letting parents volunteer and cook the rice for the children. Teachers and parents also contributed money to buy viands for the feeding program. The program benefitted not just the pupils in the four pilot public schools, but pupils in all elementary schools in Bongao.

To provide a better learning environment for students, the LSB provided materials and sent municipal engineers and workers to the public schools for the repainting and repair of classrooms and other facilities. Volunteers also came from the schools and communities (parents). The LSB distributed books and other reading materials, provided by The Asia Foundation, to encourage students to read. To Mayor Jasper, these efforts have become a true manifestation of co-ownership of the education concerns in Bongao.

Building the capability of the LSB

To enhance leadership skills and to be able to craft a more comprehensive education plan for Bongao, the members of the LSB underwent a Bridging Leadership Orientation at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM). Here, they were introduced to Bridging Leadership concepts that allowed them to share a common leadership language, a common framework for their future efforts in being more pro-active and responsive in the delivery of basic education. But more important than the learned concepts was the opportunity given to the LSB members to build a stronger relationship and to forge stronger commitment in addressing the education problems of Bongao.

Initial Results: Improved reading skills

The work of the LSB was not measured by the amount of funds given to the schools nor the number of school buildings repaired. Mayor Jasper and the LSB members knew very well that their contribution to the development of education in Bongao can only be gauged in the improvement in the academic performance of pupils, particularly in the improvement in their reading skills.

Mayor Jasper and the LSB conducted a post-test among students in the same four schools on March 12-14, 2012, six months after the baseline survey.
The results showed that the number of students who could not read has been reduced, from 40 percent to only 12 percent (see Table 4).

There was also an increase in the mean scores of students in English, Science, and Math. From less than 36 percent in the first grading period of SY 2011-12, students’ mean scores improved to over 48 percent in the fourth grading period (see Table 5). This showed that the LSB’s interventions had significant effect. Previous improvement trends in most schools were only up to 38 percent by the fourth grading period. Notably, drop-out rate also went down from 10 percent to 2 percent.

To ensure the continuity of the project, a few weeks after the weekend reading classes wound up, a MOA was signed between the Bongao LSB and officials of the four public elementary schools and committed to continuing the reading activities so the initial success would be sustained.

The greater achievement

For Mayor Jasper and Wabie, the greatest achievement was being able to bring together the minds and hearts of DepEd officials, LGU key personnel, and parents and teachers in raising the quality of education in Bongao. Mayor Jasper shared what he thought was the key result of all their initiatives:


Table 4. Results of informal reading inventory, oral test (First Batch of Schools)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Frustration</th>
<th>Instructional</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Non-reader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Mean Percentage Score Improvement in Major Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Period</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Grading</td>
<td>31.32%</td>
<td>33.85%</td>
<td>35.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Grading</td>
<td>51.67%</td>
<td>48.17%</td>
<td>53.28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Dati kasi, dahil ayaw ko silang magalit sa akin, ang lagi ko lang tanong, ‘Ano gagawin natin?’ Formal pa kami dati, kapag magpapatawag ako ng LSB meeting, may letter pa iyan. Ngayon, wala nang imbitasyon, text na lang at pupunta sila sa meeting.”

((Having built a personal) relationship with the members of the LSB, I can now honestly tell them what I think: ‘How come this hasn't been done yet? We've already talked about this in our previous meeting.’ The principals and supervisors can also tell me what they think, ‘Mayor, that's not right. We shouldn't be doing that.’ That is how we conduct meetings now.

Before, since I didn't want them to get mad at me, my usual question was, ‘What should we do?’ We were very formal then, I always sent letters of invitation when I convened LSB meetings. Now, I just send them text messages, and they attend the meetings.)

**Doing it all over again**

The positive results of the LSB’s program in the four pilot schools motivated Mayor Jasper and the rest of the LSB members to replicate the project to another set of four low-performing schools in Bongao. Data-gathering was conducted on October 8-9, 2012 for the second batch of public elementary schools: (1) Bongao Central Laboratory School (Central District); (2) Nalil Elementary School (District I); (3) Tongsinah Elementary School (District II); and (4) Luuk Banca Elementary School (District III). (See Table 6 for the results)

**Conclusion**

Mayor Jasper and Dr. Husin were thankful that their initial efforts to revitalize the LSB in Bongao produced positive results. Personally for Mayor Jasper, the BL experience widened his perspective. It changed the way he analyzed problems, and it taught him the importance of convening those who have a stake on the identified problems and providing them space for collaboration. Mayor Jasper explained in Filipino:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th># of Pupils Tested</th>
<th>Frustration</th>
<th>Instructional</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Non-reader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Results of informal reading inventory, oral test (Second Batch of Schools)
“Before, I always wanted to be the ‘star’, I wanted to be the one who talks [in meetings]. Now, I am just a shadow. I allow them to shine in their work, to be the ‘star.’ Now, I am just a shadow.”

References


Husin, A. I., & Que, J. S. (2012, November 29). Isang Panaginip...para sa mga kabataan ng Bongao. Slide Presentation, Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) Recital, Asian Institute of Management, Makati City.

Husin, A. I. (2013, July 30). Schools District Supervisor, Bongao Central District, Department of Education. (E. Barbin, Interviewer)


### Annex 1

**National Achievement Test for G3 (SY 2011-2012), Select schools in Bongao**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>56.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134898 Bongao Central Elementary School</td>
<td>P02 Bongao Central</td>
<td>20.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134719 Panglima Annao Elementary School</td>
<td>P02 Bongao III</td>
<td>29.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134722 Sama Kasulutan Elementary School (Main)</td>
<td>P02 Bongao I</td>
<td>59.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200391 Bongao Central Laboratory School</td>
<td>P02 Bongao Central</td>
<td>24.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>217520 Nalil Elementary School</td>
<td>P02 Bongao I</td>
<td>18.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134751 Tongsinah Elementary School</td>
<td>P02 Bongao II</td>
<td>60.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134739 Luuk Banca Elementary School</td>
<td>P02 Bongao III</td>
<td>47.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Reading English</th>
<th>Reading Filipino</th>
<th>English Grammar</th>
<th>Filipino Grammar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>MPS</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongao Central Elementary School</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>23.64</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panglima Annao Elementary School</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>33.50</td>
<td>8.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sama Kasulutan Elementary School (Main)</td>
<td>12.99</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>64.93</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongao Central Laboratory School</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>25.60</td>
<td>5.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalil Elementary School</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>24.38</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongsinah Elementary School</td>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>55.75</td>
<td>11.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luuk Banca Elementary School</td>
<td>10.71</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>53.53</td>
<td>11.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Education Testing and Research Center, Department of Education, 2012

Note: An MPS (mean percentage score) of 75% and up indicates mastery of the subject and 50% to less than 75%, near mastery; while a score of below 50% indicates low mastery.
## Annex 2
### Bongao and Tawi-Tawi Education Indicators

#### A. Bongao Enrollment Data, SY 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Data</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Elementary Enrollment</td>
<td>9,757</td>
<td>10,432</td>
<td>20,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongao Central District</td>
<td>2,427</td>
<td>2,526</td>
<td>4,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongao I</td>
<td>2,450</td>
<td>2,660</td>
<td>5,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongao II</td>
<td>2,724</td>
<td>3,022</td>
<td>5,746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongao III</td>
<td>2,156</td>
<td>2,224</td>
<td>4,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Secondary Enrollment</td>
<td>2,087</td>
<td>2,181</td>
<td>4,268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DepEd Basic Education Information System, 2012

#### B. Reconstructed Cohort Survival Rate (Public and Private Schools), SY 2011-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort Survival Rate</th>
<th>Completion Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade I</td>
<td>Grade II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>Total (MF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (M)</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (F)</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| ARMM | Total (MF) | 100.00% | 74.81% | 57.30% | 43.38% | 34.18% | 29.03% | 23.74% |
| Male (M) | 100.00% | 74.86% | 57.13% | 43.32% | 33.31% | 27.65% | 22.35% |
| Female (F) | 100.00% | 74.76% | 57.45% | 43.45% | 34.95% | 30.26% | 24.98% |

| Tawi-Tawi | Total (MF) | 100.00% | 80.50% | 64.74% | 44.26% | 28.95% | 20.36% | 7.61% |
| Male (M) | 100.00% | 79.83% | 62.58% | 42.18% | 26.50% | 18.02% | 6.50% |
| Female (F) | 100.00% | 81.14% | 66.87% | 46.35% | 31.48% | 22.85% | 8.83% |

Source: DepEd Enhanced Basic Education Information System, 2012

*Cohort Survival Rate* is a measure of the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of education services, and is defined as the percentage of enrollees at the beginning grade or year in a given school year who reached the final grade or year of the elementary or secondary level.

*Completion Rate* is the percentage of the first year entrants in a level of education who complete or finish the level in accordance with the required number of years of study.
Annex 3

Republic Act No. 7160 - An Act
Providing for a Local Government
Code of 1991 – Local School Boards

BOOK I - GENERAL PROVISIONS
TITLE FOUR  - LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

SEC. 98. Creation, Composition and Compensation.

(a) There shall be established in every province, city, or municipality a
provincial, city or municipal school board, respectively.

(b) The composition of local school boards shall be as follows:

(1) The provincial school board shall be composed of the governor
and the division superintendent of schools as co-chairmen; the
chairman of the education committee of the sangguniang pana-
lawigan, the provincial treasurer, the representative of the ped-
erasyon ng mga sangguniang kabataan in the sangguniang pana-
lawigan, the duly elected president of the provincial federation
of parents-teachers associations, the duly elected representative
of the teachers’ organization in the province, and the duly elected
representative of the non-academic personnel of public schools in
the province, as members;

(2) The city school board shall be composed of the city mayor and
the city superintendent of schools as co-chairmen; the
chairman of the education committee of the sangguniang panla-
ngsod, the city treasurer, the representative of the ped-
erasyon ng mga sangguniang kabataan in the sangguniang panla-
ngsod, the duly elected president of the city federation of parents-teachers associations,
the duly elected representative of the teachers’ organizations in the
city, and the duly elected representative of the non-academic
personnel of public schools in the city, as members;

(3) The municipal school board shall be composed of the municipal
mayor and the district supervisor of schools as co-chairmen; the
chairman of the education committee of the sangguniang bayan,
the municipal treasurer, the representative of the pedersasyon ng
mga sangguniang kabataan in the sangguniang bayan, the duly
elected president of the municipal federation of parents-teachers associations,
the duly elected representative of the teachers’ organizations in the
municipality, and the duly elected representative of the non-academic
personnel of public schools in the city, as members;

(c) In the event that a province or city has two (2) or more school
superintendents, and in the event that a municipality has two (2) or
more district supervisors, the co-chairman of the local school board
shall be determined as follows:

(1) The Department of Education, Culture and Sports shall des-
IGNATE the co-chairman for the provincial and city school boards;
and

(2) The division superintendent of schools shall designate the dis-
trict supervisor who shall serve as co-chairman of the municipal
school board.

(d) The performance of the duties and responsibilities of the above-
mentioned officials in their respective local school boards shall not
be delegated.

SEC. 99. Functions of Local School Boards. – The provincial, city or
municipal school board shall:

(a) Determine, in accordance with the criteria set by the Department
of Education, Culture and Sports, the annual supplementary budget-
ary needs for the operation and maintenance of public schools within
the province, city or municipality, as the case may be, and the supple-
mentary local cost of meeting such needs, which shall be reflected
in the form of an annual school board budget corresponding to its
share in the proceeds of the special levy on real property constituting
the Special Education fund and such other sources of revenue as this
Code and other laws or ordinances may provide;

(b) Authorize the provincial, city or municipal treasurer, as the case
may be, to disburse funds from the Special Education fund pursuant
to the budget prepared and in accordance with existing rules and
regulations;

(c) Serve as an advisory committee to the sanggunian concerned on
educational matters such as, but not limited to, the necessity for and
the uses of local appropriations for educational purposes; and

(d) Recommend changes in the names of public schools within the
territorial jurisdiction of the local government unit for enactment by
the sanggunian concerned.

The Department of Education, Culture and Sports shall consult the
local school board on the appointment of division superintendents,
district supervisors, school principals, and other school officials.

SEC. 100. Meetings and Quorum; Budget. – (a) The local school board
shall meet at least once a month or as often as may be necessary.

(b) Any of the co-chairmen may call a meeting. A majority of all its
members shall constitute a quorum. However, when both co-chair-
men are present in a meeting, the local chief executive concerned,
as a matter of protocol, shall be given preference to preside over the
meeting. The division superintendent, city superintendent or district
supervisor, as the case may be, shall prepare the budget of the school
board concerned. Such budget shall be supported by programs, proj-
ects, and activities of the school board for the ensuing fiscal year. The
affirmative vote of the majority of all its members shall be necessary
to approve the budget.
(c) The annual school board budget shall give priority to the following:

1. Construction, repair, and maintenance of school buildings and other facilities of public elementary and secondary schools;
2. Establishment and maintenance of extension classes where necessary; and
3. Sports activities at the division, district, municipal, and baranguay levels.

SEC. 101. Compensation and Remuneration. – The co-chairmen and members of the provincial, city or municipal school board shall perform their duties as such without compensation or remuneration. Members thereof who are not government officials or employees shall be entitled to necessary traveling expenses and allowances chargeable against funds of the local school board concerned, subject to existing accounting and auditing rules and regulations.
Mayor Romeo Tiongco explained peace in a parable: “If my neighbors’ farms are infested with rats, I will not put a high fence around my farm and guard it with a troop of cats nor spread pesticide to keep the rats away. Rather, I will cut the grass and clear the surroundings to make sure that the rats do not cross over to my land.”

“In the same manner,” he continued, “contempt among dissatisfied people could only be cleared when public service is rid of discrimination, so that the basic services of health, education, and security could reach all Muslim, Lumad, and Christian constituents. In this way, resentment will be replaced by brotherhood.”

Mayor Romeo Tiongco, the former parish priest of Damulog, Bukidnon who taught through parables and stories, is now the mayor of the locality. Father Mayor (or, simply, Mayor to the younger generation) has served the people both through the sacraments of the church and the laws of the land. “In return for the abundant love that I have received from God, I give back to the marginalized,” said the mayor.

“With my religious background, I believe in servant leadership. Through consultation, a leader identifies the needs of his or her community and serves as the catalyst in formulating reforms that are responsive to their needs,” he added.

**Damulog, Bukidnon**

Bukidnon is a landlocked plateau in Region X or Northern Mindanao. Yet, it is home to some of the highest mountains in the country in its southern and eastern boundaries.¹ It is also the watershed of Mindanao, endowed with six major river systems. Among these rivers are Pulangi and Muleta, which are joined in the boundary of Bukidnon and Cotabato provinces.

Bukidnon was among the 16 poorest provinces in the country in the first semester of 2012 with a poverty incidence of 43.3 percent.² From 2006 to 2012, the poverty situation in the province hardly improved, posing a challenge for the region in its fight against poverty.

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¹ Bukidnon’s notable mountains include Mt. Dulang-dulang (2nd highest), Mt. Kitanglad (4th), Mt. Kalatungan (5th), Mt. Maagnaw (8th), Mt. Lumuluyaw (17th), and Mt. Tuminungan (30th). There are no seaports and airports in the province.

² The national average poverty incidence among families was 22.3 percent.
Damulog, the southernmost municipality of Bukidnon, is a fourth-class municipality of Bukidnon with a land area of 24,419 hectares. It has a population of 25,538 spread across its 17 barangays or villages. Damulog is among the province’s poorest towns.

**No Man’s Land**

Mayor Tiongco gave a brief description of Damulog from 1973 to 2007: “In December 1973, Damulog had a thriving population of 17,000 until the Baracuda-Iлага war broke in the area. By February 1974, only 4,000 of the original settlers were left and lived in houses within a radius of three kilometers from the town center. Although atrocities and violence declined in the following years, armed raids and cattle rustling continued until 2007.”

With greater detail, he recalled, “Back in the late ’70s when I was still a parish priest in Damulog, I would say mass in the town proper on weekends and spend Mondays to Fridays in the villages. At that time, parishes beyond the three-kilometer radius from the town proper were a no man’s land. It was the practice of farmers to work in the villages in the mornings and keep a house in the town to sleep in.

“I walked beyond the radius to say mass and sleep in the villages. Slowly, the farmers went back saying, ‘The priest is not afraid to sleep in the villages so let’s go home as well.’ Eventually, the farmers built their shanties to settle in the area,” Mayor Tiongco shared.

Incidents of conflict left vast areas of land abandoned by landowners and led to the unjust acquisition of land in Mindanao, including Damulog. During the height of the conflict, land was forcibly occupied by armed groups. In more peaceful times, private corporations set up and bought land in Mindanao while many locals remained landless. To Mayor Tiongco, the issue of land ownership further disenfranchised the original settlers of the island and added to the sense of distrust between the Muslim and Lumad and the dominant Christian group.

**Pugad ng mga Rebelde (Nest of the Rebels)**

Across the Pulangi-Muleta Rivers south of Damulog was the village triangle known in the area as the Pugad ng mga Rebelde. The village was comprised of four ghost barangays hardly recognized, if ever, in any of the records of the local government.

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3 A fourth class municipality, according to E.O. No. 246 s. 1987, is one that has obtained an average annual income of three million pesos or more but less than five million pesos during the last four calendar years immediately preceding the classification.
4 NSO, 2007
5 NSO, 2010
6 “Baracudas” was the name given to a loosely articulated gang of some three hundred men (primarily policemen, Muslim PC, and bodyguards), who terrorized Christian settlers in the hills and valleys between Karomatan and Iligan City [in Lanao del Norte]. (Bentley, 2009) The Ilaga was a paramilitary organization known for its anti-Muslim sentiments. It was composed initially, as reported in media, of Ilonggo natives of Panay. (Boncales, 2007)
The population of the village triangle was dominated by Islamized Maguindanaons (60 percent) and indigenous Manobos (40 percent). They lived in harmony, with many inter-marriages, since the start of the twentieth century. They used boats as their means of transportation, with the rivers as the channel to do commerce between tribes.

For almost half a century, the villagers never felt the presence of a government and, consequently, the delivery of basic services. “With no representation in civil registries and tax declarations, the villagers were not only marginalized and deprived of basic services; they were discounted and disenfranchised,” according to Mayor Tiongco.

Most children born in Pugad ng mga Rebelde were not registered with any local government, making it difficult to ascertain their ages. Marriage and death certificates were foreign to the residents as well.

There were no schools in the village for many years. The distance to the nearest schools required the parents to look for boarding houses or host relatives to accommodate their children who went to school.

The residents of Pugad ng mga Rebelde reiterated their needs for potable water, primary health, and livelihood, basic services that the government was expected to provide, according to Mayor Tiongco.

A survey jointly done by the Damulog Local Government Unit (LGU) and The Global Fund revealed a high mortality rate due to inadequate prenatal care and unattended births in the village. The community also showed a high incidence of malnutrition. Children, especially, had low resistance to illnesses such as malaria and typhoid fever because of poor diet and extreme inadequacy of health services.

Neglected by the government, the residents of Pugad ng mga Rebelde were 8 The Global Fund is an innovative financing institution that provides funding to countries to support programs that prevent, treat and care for people with HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria (“About the global,” 2013).

### Total Number of Internally Displaced Population (IDP), August 2008 to May 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inside 546 evacuation areas</td>
<td>62,510</td>
<td>299,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside evacuation areas</td>
<td>81,910</td>
<td>393,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total IDPs</td>
<td>144,420</td>
<td>693,158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Around 400,000 persons have returned by May 2009, leaving at least 240,000 people still displaced inside and outside 127 evacuation centers in over eight provinces of Mindanao.

*Source: AFRIM, Facts and Figures on the Mindanao Armed Conflict*
incited to take up arms to protect their interests. The triangle became a stronghold of combatant Muslim Maguindanaons sympathetic to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Armed conflicts ensued between the Muslims and Christians in the area, adding to the woes of the villagers.

During the height of the conflict, more than half of the population of Damulog had to be evacuated to avoid cross-fire between the rebel and military forces. Damulog was the target of rebel attacks because of the dominance of the Christian population and the widespread presence of the military in the province.

The recognition of Pugad ng mga Rebelde under a municipality had been a matter of contention between the municipalities of Carmen and Pres. Roxas in the adjacent province of Cotabato. Still, the municipality of Damulog in Bukidnon cannot claim the barangays, because they were outside its political boundaries. According Mayor Tiongco, for several elections in the past, the village triangle had been used as a source of buffer votes by unscrupulous politicians.

From the mayor’s point of view, a new arrangement was needed to jointly

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9 The MILF is an Islamist group located in southern Philippines. It is one of two Islamic military groups, the other being the Abu Sayyaf, that claim belligerency against the Government of the Philippines, the United States, and its supporters for political corruption. (http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Moro_Islamic_Liberation_Front.html)
10 Responding to the tension between the newly-arrived Christians and the comparatively poorer Muslim inhabitants in Mindanao, Nur Misuari formed a Muslim advocacy group in the late 1960s called the Mindanao Independence Movement. In 1972, Misuari recreated his advocacy group as an armed terrorist rebel organization and changed its name to Moro National Liberation Front (Moro National Liberation, 2013).
11 The barangay is the smallest local government unit in the Philippines. Cities and municipalities are composed of barangays to make administration as close to the people as possible.
serve the village triangle that had been left abandoned for many years. To resolve the issue, the mayor believed that by virtue of a Memorandum of Understanding, the provinces of Bukidnon and Cotabato could jointly serve Pugad ng mga Rebelde. Funding from senators and congressmen, which was national in scope, could be released to the village triangle.

"[I] went out on my own after two neighboring mayors in North Cotabato refused to jointly deliver services to territories that technically belonged to them," said Mayor Tiongco.

This resolve was met with objections from inside and outside of the Damulog. The mayor was accused of usurping territories and planting seeds of conflict.

**Blame it on the system**

According to Mayor Tiongco, poverty may be blamed on the poor's own doings and shortcomings. Some see the situation as a consequence of indolence or as a way of fetching pity. But the real problem of poverty was beyond personal reasons. Poverty was the result of a systematic deprivation, specifically of services and resources, to some individuals or sectors of the society.

A socio-political obstacle to peace and development in Damulog was the presence of *trapos* (short for traditional politicians). Trapos proliferated their offices with loyalists and with complete disregard for competencies. "I let the success of my programs speak for the importance of qualified people on the job," said the mayor.

According to Mayor Tiongco, it was easy for public funds to be misused because the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) that a municipality received from the national government was based on the area's geographical size and population. It was not based on the monitoring and evaluation of services and projects for which the funds were intended.

The mayor already spoke with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) for the training of provincial and town councilors on the budget process and the creation of monitoring teams to arrest corruption in local governments.

Changing mindsets from traditional means and ways to more progressive and sustainable approaches was a challenge that Mayor Tiongco faced even among his constituents. "For instance," the mayor said, "I discovered in the celebration of the Damulog Fiesta in 2012 that the people solicited up to Php 50,000 from construction firms that operated in the municipality to sponsor the prizes for the Open Basketball League. I made them tow the line by not giving my support to the basketball tournament."

Incidents such as these made Mayor Tiongco consider staying in office for another term. He was aware that a prospective mayor from among the people of Damulog would operate in the same style of traditional politics. He
was hoping that another three years would give him enough time to institute changes in the mindsets and attitudes that would push for effective structures and systems in the development of the municipality.

“I am committed to what I want to achieve. I have become the living witness of how politics should be and, because of this, some say, ‘I can’t work with him,’” said the mayor. “I am headstrong on where I want to go. As for the others, they can make a choice on whether or not they are with me.”

Politics was bittersweet for Mayor Tiongco. “I never had any intentions of entering politics,” according to the mayor. “For the 2007 elections, my friend Rogelio conducted a signature campaign in Damulog to convince me to run as a mayor. Three weeks after the launching of the signature campaign, Rogelio was killed. We had no evidence on who was responsible for the crime except for the strong rumor that it would happen to anyone who challenged the incumbent administration.”

Management (Not Politics) for Good Governance

In 2012, Mayor Tiongco became a fellow of the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM). He hoped to learn frameworks and tools for social analyses that he and his team of local executives and volunteer groups can use in order to have a holistic understanding of the complex realities in Damulog. While delivery of basic services was a variable in attaining peace and order, the situation was not a simple causal relationship between non-delivery of social services and violence, according to Fellow Mayor Tiongco.

The first two terms of Mayor Tiongco’s public service (2007-2013) was a “journey towards peace.” With the battle cry "Tao Na! Pinoy Pa!”, it was a period of demilitarization to make way for the new soldiers of peace—the teachers and the health and agriculture workers. “Feed the hungry, heal the sick,” aptly said by the father mayor, explained the means by which they would achieve peace.

During the MBLP, the mayor chose the theme “Ang Bata, Ipagtanggol” (Protect the Child), based on the declaration of the rights of the child, for his change project. Mayor Tiongco believed that a focus on the child will draw the support of all the sectors of society. The program also aimed to challenge the LGU to gain the Seal of Good Housekeeping award and focus on promoting responsive, transparent, accountable, and just governance.

Moreover, according to the mayor, a rights-based approach was an appropriate intervention to bridge the dichotomies and dualisms of society such as Muslims and Christians, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, and men and women. It was the conviction of Mayor Tiongco that all should be served regardless of ethnicity and beliefs. Change was only possible with a consciousness of Muslims and Lumad as respectful members of society.

12 As explained by Mayor Tiongco, Tao Na! Pinoy Pa! underscores the fact that the people residing in the villages are human beings, and they are Filipinos. Therefore, they have a right to access basic services, and the government is responsible in delivering these services.
instead of fearsome outlaws or inferior outcasts.

As a fellow, Mayor Tiongco formed his Guiding Coalition and Core Group to help him push his program that initially targeted the Pugad ng mga Rebelde, but this eventually included the whole of Damulog. With their support, the fellow hoped for the integration of his rights-based development plans into the Municipal Comprehensive Development Plan (MCDP) to ensure that they were prioritized and given allocation in the budget.

Mayor Tiongco chose individuals from different agencies to be members of his Guiding Coalition. This is to ensure the sustainability of his envisioned project for Damulog beyond his term. He considered people from the Municipal Development Council, the Sangguniang Bayan, and heads of Damulog LGU offices, including PNP-Damulog, as his project’s critical stakeholders—for prompt response and policy support. "My Core Group was composed of those who were willing to die for me; people with whom I can expose my vulnerability without fear of losing their respect and my authority," according to the mayor (see Table 1 for Core Group members).

Core Group members gave their unique contributions to the change project of the mayor. Vice Mayor Pacomio Getican was instrumental in facilitating legislations and LGU resources and technical support. As health officer, Dr. Jane Quimba directly supervised health services and medical missions for immediate response to community needs. Jesus Suarez was an asset in maintaining good relationships with the villagers including the rebel forces, owing to his immersion in the communities. Similarly, Marlon Pagulong, a convert to Islam, had good rapport with Muslim communities. Al Berdera, also an Islam convert, was respected by both Muslim and Christian locals.

The Journey Towards Peace

From the very start, Mayor Tiongco was determined to move the military troops out of Damulog because, to him, the peace and order problem was

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13 The Sangguniang Bayan (or the Municipal Council) is the municipal-level legislative body, presided by the vice mayor.
not a military problem; therefore, a military solution was inappropriate.

Initially, the demilitarization of Damulog was not supported by the vice mayor and the Sangguniang Bayan. Mayor Tiongco proceeded without their support. Eventually, the decline in cattle rustling and armed raids without the military detachments proved the soundness of the mayor’s proposal. The vice mayor became the latest convert of Mayor Tiongco.

“When we demilitarized, MILF and MNLF commanders and soldiers put down their arms and sat down with us in negotiating circles. We laughed and cried at each other’s stupidities. We got to know each other as persons. Slowly, we began to accept that we were fellow human beings and countrymen,” recounted the mayor.

Part of the demilitarization process was finding effective solutions to address the major issue of land ownership in Damulog. To this end, municipal leaders created a tri-people council of elders among the Muslims, Lumad, and Christians who knew the history of the municipality, including the original owners of properties in Damulog.

An agreement with MILF and MNLF leadership that disallowed the entry and acquisition of land by multi-national corporations (MNCs) in the municipality was forged. The presence of MNCs in the area triggered fear among the locals that their rights to their land will be usurped by outsiders.

By September 2007, Damulog was declared a war-free zone through an agreement with the central command of the MILF. As proof of the success of this agreement, the 6th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army and the MILF forces had a joint operation in March 2012 to block NPA\textsuperscript{14} elements from entering the municipality of Damulog.

\textsuperscript{14} The New People’s Army (NPA) is the militant wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Their operations and recruitment are conducted mainly on the grassroots levels, especially in the rural areas.
Because of the recent peace in the area, lives were no longer disrupted by constant raids and evacuations. The mayor, as well as more and more LGU staff, started visiting areas that were once considered dangerous without the protection of government security. Likewise, the presence of Muslim leaders in the town proper of Damulog was unprecedented.

The volatility of peace in Damulog remained considering the on-going peace talks between the MILF and the Philippine government. Notwithstanding, more Muslims were coming forward to register at the municipal office.

**New Soldiers of Peace**

“I started my project ‘Ang Bata, Ipagtanggol’ (Protect the Child) by selling my vision and concepts to my core group. When we went to the ground, we did not present our vision as a packaged deal. Rather, we all threw in our ideas in bits and pieces until, in the process of sharing, we formulated and codified our vision and mission together with the people,” said the mayor.

“To improve education, health, and livelihood in Damulog, we baptized the teachers, health workers, and agricultural extension workers as our new soldiers of peace. Through them, the municipality planned to train a health worker for every 20 households and establish a school for every 50 households. Technical assistance to farmers was also part of the plan.”

Partners in the development of Damulog were likewise soldiers of peace. The new arrangement in attaining peace and development in Damulog was through collaboration instead of armed struggle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGU/Community</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Donor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and Labor Technical Assistance</td>
<td>Macapari High School construction</td>
<td>Materials (Join Together Society-Korea International Cooperation Agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Labor Technical Assistance</td>
<td>Kitas and Bala Elementary School construction</td>
<td>Materials (JTS-KOICA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation of school construction projects</td>
<td>JTS and Muslim-Christian Agency for Advocacy, Relief and Development, Inc. (MuCAARD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With peace, resources were utilized meaningfully for development purposes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund Source</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Amount (Php)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Damulog Disaster Risk Reduction Program Funds</td>
<td>Village triangle projects</td>
<td>400,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Agriculture-Mindanao Rural Development Program</td>
<td>Community fund for agricultural development</td>
<td>5,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Schools, Boat Service, and Fingerlings

“In the beginning, all I wanted was to put a stop to armed raids and organized cattle rustling. From around 2007, there had been no such incidents. As our development plans moved on, however, different stakeholders added their hopes and dreams,” Mayor Tiongco said. “They wanted,” he continued, “to sleep in the huts undisturbed, be able to bring their animals in the open fields, plant permanent crops, send their children to schools uninterrupted, and build semi-permanent and permanent houses.”

To increase access to education in Damulog, a four-fold collaboration resulted in the construction of 14 classrooms and six teachers’ cottages: JTS-KOICA supplied the building materials while the community provided the labor for building the schools. The LGU provided technical assistance to and food for the construction workers. The Department of Education assigned most of the teachers.

To improve health services, a Php 3.4 million-health clinic was handed over by JTS-KOICA to the Rural Health Unit of Damulog, with medical equipment to follow. Boat service (serbisyo de banka) was also established so that medical missions could reach the river villages.

Fingerlings were dispersed in Muleta River, and fish nets were provided for the fisher folks. Under its food program, three solar systems were constructed through the assistance of JTS-KOICA to allow agricultural crop drying and processing in Damulog. Farm roads were also constructed to link Damulog to “a bigger world.”

Relief for Pugad ng mga Rebelde

Life has improved for the people of Pugad ng mga Rebelde with the attention it received from Mayor Tiongco and, eventually, the local executives of Carmen and Pres. Roxas in Cotabato. One of the four barangays, Lebpas, is now recognized as a sitio of a far and separate barangay in the municipality of Pres. Roxas. The three other barangays—Kialum, Paso Rubio, and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTS-KOICA</th>
<th>Macapari High School construction Solar Dryers</th>
<th>30,000,000.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td>Kitas and Bala building construction</td>
<td>500,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>35,900,000.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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15 The Join Together Society (JTS) International, with its headquarters in Seoul, Republic of Korea, consists of field program offices in India, Philippines, North Korea, and overseas chapters in the US and Germany. Since its beginning in 1993, the organization has been committed to working with people in developing countries in Asia to promote equality, rights to development, and sustainable livelihood (http://www.jts.or.kr/eng/)

16 In its efforts to help the Philippines reduce poverty and achieve sustainable socio-economic development, the Korean Government initiated its assistance to the country in 1991 through the invitation of [the] Philippine government officials for training in Korea. In December 1994, the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)-Philippine Office was formally established to directly implement that grant-based Official Development Assistance (ODA) of Korea to the Philippines. (“Philippine program,” 2011)
Muleta—were also recipients of the same assistance that Lebpas enjoyed.

The children attended school in the village with the construction of school buildings in Kialum, Paso Rubio, and Muleta. In 2012, potential sites for additional school buildings were identified.

Agricultural extension services and medical missions in Damulog have reached the communities in the village triangle.

Trust-building was incorporated in the projects for the village triangle through the collaborative effort of rebel forces with the LGU in providing labor in the construction of boats and school buildings.

In 2012, the 4Ps (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program)\textsuperscript{17} of the Department of Social Welfare and Development and PhilHealth\textsuperscript{18} membership started to trickle to the barangays of the village triangle. Through these programs, a community profile of the Pugad ng mga Rebelde was initiated.

**Seeking For Continuity**

In recognition and celebration of individuals and communities who were part of the success of local projects, the municipality held annual celebrations of "Araw ng Damulog" (Damulog Foundation Day) in a very festive mood. In a separate event, municipal staff who contributed to initiatives were also given honor.

In 2010 and 2011, the local government of Damulog was a recipient of the Bronze Seal of Good Housekeeping from the DILG. The award was given to local governments that earned a good standing with the Commission on Audit and gave a full disclosure of its financial transactions. As an awardee, Damulog received a cash incentive of Php 1 million intended for development projects in line with the national government's program to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

Moreover, Damulog was the grand winner for the best performing peace and order council in Bukidnon in 2011. It gave a new model for peace-building after departing from the traditional military and police solutions.

Fellow Mayor Tiongco expanded his Guiding Coalition to include the tripeople council of elders. Their first task was to draft the guidelines and responsibilities of the council. Hopefully, the council will be formalized and recognized by the local governments.

Serving his last term as mayor of Damulog (2013-2016), Mayor Tiongco hoped that a member of his core group would run for the local executive position after him. Again, he could only hope that the other members of his team would be retained by the next administration to ensure the continuity

\textsuperscript{17} Patterned after the conditional cash transfer scheme implemented in other developing countries, the Pantawid Pamilya provides cash grants to beneficiaries provided that they comply with the set of conditions required by the program. (From the DSWD website, http://pantawid.dswd.gov.ph/index.php/about-us)

\textsuperscript{18} The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) is a government-owned and -controlled corporation created in 1995, which provides universal health insurance for Filipinos.
of present programs and projects. "If the municipality kept our vision and
needed assistance with implementation, my core group and I could still act
as their consultants," the mayor said.

Seeking continuity in the programs initiated by his administration, Mayor
Tiongco said, "Sustained peace and order in Damulog will encourage the
farmers to invest in their farms and increase their productivity. Businesses
will flourish in the town proper and promote peace and development.

“But the real harvest will come in five to six years when our rubber trees
will be ready to be tapped for sap... It would be a posthumous award,” the
mayor ended with a laugh.

References


National Statistics Coordinating Board, (2013). Bukidnon and Lanao del Norte were among the poorest provinces of the country in the first semester of 2012 (RD-10-FS).


Provision of Livelihood & Economic Opportunities

Livelihood and access to economic opportunities secure people of a better future. In some areas, however, employment is scarce, leaving residents with no means to earn a living. Capacity-building programs are one way to create economic opportunities. These programs allow people to generate higher income, encourage entrepreneurship, and strengthen relationships amongst local government and other governing sectors that promote development and peace.
Letting Go and Letting Come: Growing Oneself with the Community

Some years prior to joining the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) in 2011, Ruby Andong experienced a life transformation.

Born in 1966 to a traditional Muslim family in Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat, Ruby describes her early life as that of a typical Muslim from Mindanao: “I was once like any other Bangsamoro Muslim who will strongly fight for his identity as a Muslim but lived a life very far from an ideal Muslim life.”

Her father was a datu, a local leader, with family ties in Maguindanao politics. Ruby remembers him as having been a kind man and a good leader. During martial law years, when she was six years old, he was imprisoned, accused of being a supporter of Muslim separatists. Hundreds had been detained in prison at the time, and her father managed to organize jail guards and other detainees, earning the respect of many. Ruby was among those who looked up to him. “I was inspired by his actions of helping the poor and people in need and in his leadership,” she says of her father. He died in 1987, when Ruby was 20 years old.

Ruby describes herself then as living a life inconsistent with her Islamic faith. “I found it very difficult to practice Islam as a way of life. I did not follow the Islamic dress code. Instead, I followed the dressing styles dictated by the Western ‘un-Islamic’ fashion world. I prayed at my own comfort, without bothering myself to perform the five obligatory prayers. I valued and loved to do things, which were inconsistent with my Islamic faith.”

These aspects of her lifestyle left her feeling personally unfulfilled. “With all the freedom of doing things the way I wanted to, I should have felt fulfillment and true happiness as others would expect me to feel. But it seemed something was still lacking deep inside me,” says Ruby.

One day, a friend invited her to join a group conducting study circles on Islamic teaching. She recalls this as the day that changed her life. From what she describes as a typical Bangsamoro Muslim, Ruby became transformed. She experienced a spiritual revival that allowed her to find meaning and

Ruby Andong
Senior Technical Education and Skills Development Specialist, TESDA-ARMM/TESDA Representative, Sajahatra Technical Assistance Team (TAT)

Written by Regina S. Abesamis, under the supervision of Professor Nieves R. Confesor of the AIM TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership

1 “Bangsamoro” refers to the Moro people living in the areas covered by the present Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and other contiguous areas, including some parts of the Palawan archipelago. Etymologically, the word means “Moro Nation.”

2 Her father, Datu Ito Andong, was a cousin of Cotabato’s Representative to the 2nd Congress of the Philippines in 1949, Datu Blah T. Sinsuat.
fulfillment in her life. “My life started to change significantly when I attended study circles of women. This time, a change with true happiness inside and out, Alhamdulillah. I started practicing Islam as a way of life and started it by covering my awrat and praying obligatory and voluntary prayers.”

Ruby committed her life to a strict practice of Islam. “I sold my jewelry, stopped going out at night to videoke bars, started involving myself with charity works and the struggle for the Bangsamoro people, started reading Islamic books instead of entertainment magazines,” says Ruby.

Her spiritual transformation gave her a new perspective on the problems faced in Mindanao. She viewed problems in Mindanao as attendant to a decline in moral values. “People had lost faith in their leaders and in themselves. The values of faith, trust, dignity and morality, and other Islamic values have been weakened and distorted, resulting in social decline.”

At the root of her conviction was that spiritual formation is the basis for a truly sustainable development. According to Ruby, “while you may have assistance through development projects, these would not be sustainable without spiritual change or transformation.” Forms of assistance to address poverty, she observed, sometimes worsened the situation. “It weakens the beneficiaries’ capacity to help themselves and reinforces a mentality of dependency and weakens their dignity.”

Ruby committed herself to working towards change in Mindanao. She had strong credentials as a graduate of Civil Engineering with a Master’s Degree in Public Administration. In 2002, she volunteered for the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) simultaneous with her work as a Training Specialist at the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority-Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (TESDA-ARMM).

The BDA holds credibility and trust from various sectors, including the MILF and the government. Within the BDA, Ruby found like-minded people who shared her values and vision for peace and development in Mindanao.

As a volunteer, Ruby pioneered programs geared toward community development through skills-building and training. Bringing in her expertise from TESDA, she initiated the Community-Based Human Resource Training and Development Program, organizing local-level “Development Catalysts” who became focal persons in conflict-affected areas and who provided coordination to the BDA and stakeholders on the ground. The program greatly increased the efficiency of projects and activities implemented by the BDA at the community level.

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3 In Islam, parts of the body that must be covered
4 The BDA is the development arm of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the largest guerilla separatist movement in the Philippines and one of the main proponents for the creation of a new Muslim autonomous political entity (Bangsamoro) in Mindanao. The BDA was created on June 22, 2001 by virtue of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines-Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GRP-MILF) Tripoli Agreement on Peace. As agreed by both parties, the MILF created the BDA and assigned the officers of the Bangsamoro Development Council, a civil society organization, to run it. It is mandated to determine, lead, and manage relief, rehabilitation, and development programs in conflict-affected areas in the Mindanao. The BDA is made up of professionals—initially comprised mostly of medical doctors—recommended by the MILF.
It was also with the BDA that she started developing the concept of a Values Transformation Training (VTT). The VTT was envisioned to be a key component in changing attitudes and practices of key players in community development. Discussing real-life experiences of exemplary Muslims, the program hoped to focus on Islamic faith catalyzing social change. “The application of Islamic values initiates significant social change and is very effective in arresting moral decline and the culture of corruption and other social ills,” according to the VTT’s program design. In order to address social problems, the “massive observance and practice of Islamic values” are seen as “the most wise and practical approach in paving the way for development in war-affected areas.”

At the time of her admission into the Mindanao Bridging Leaders’ Program (MBLP), Ruby was a Senior Specialist at the TESDA-ARMM Maguindanao, 1st District Provincial Office, based in Cotabato City. She was nominated to the MBLP Fellowship by Dr. Danda Juanday, who was the former Executive Director of the BDA and also a BL fellow. Ruby describes Dr. Juanday as one of her mentors and a person with whom she shared a similar vision for change in Mindanao.

Table 1. VTT Modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module I: Understanding Islamic Values and Development</th>
<th>Module II: Role of Imaan (Islamic Faith) in Developing and Sustaining Islamic Values</th>
<th>Module III: Role of Ibaadat (Islamic Worship) in Developing Islamic Values</th>
<th>Module IV: Applying Islamic Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Concept of Development</td>
<td>1. Definition of Islamic Faith</td>
<td>1. Definition of Ibaadat in Islam</td>
<td>1. Islamic Values in Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Definition of Values</td>
<td>2. Articles of Islamic Faith</td>
<td>2. Some Ibaadat in Islam</td>
<td>2. Islamic Values in Dealing with Other Community Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal Values Clarification</td>
<td>2.1 Belief in Allah</td>
<td>2.1. Shahadatay (Testifying the Oneness of Allah (S.W.T) and the Messengership of Muhammad (S.A.W.))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Islamic Values and Their Sources</td>
<td>2.2 Belief in His Angels</td>
<td>2.2. Taharaah and Salaah (Purification and Performing Five Times Daily Prayer) - demonstration of performing ablution and prayer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Some Islamic Values</td>
<td>2.3 Belief in His Books</td>
<td>2.3. Zakaah (Obligatory charity)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Sincerity, Honesty, and Truthfulness</td>
<td>2.4 Belief in His Messengers</td>
<td>2.4. Sawm (Fasting during the Month of Ramadhan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Ihsaan, Itqaan</td>
<td>2.5 Belief in Hereafter</td>
<td>2.5 Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Patience and Perseverance</td>
<td>2.6 Belief in Qadar (Divine Preordainment)</td>
<td>3. Conclusion: Islamic Worships and Developing Islamic Values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Knowledge</td>
<td>3. Conclusion: Islamic Faith and Its Role in Applying Islamic Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Justice, Fairness, and Equity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Unity and Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Kindness, Generosity, and Selflessness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 Sense of Responsibility and Accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5 Taken from the VTT training design submitted by Ruby Andong.
She was also strongly supported by her husband, Muhammad Abubakar. An Arabic teacher by profession, Muhammad was among the biggest influences in Ruby’s personal formation. “It was my husband who strengthened my love for Islam,” Ruby says. “It was he who gave me the opportunity to be of service to the poor.” Muhammad later became a member of Ruby’s Core Group that carried out her change project for the MBLP. He was instrumental in her values formation as she learned from him the “value of patience and being passionate for the poor.”

A Need for Collaboration

Ruby explained her motivation for joining the MBLP: “It is my fervent dream that more Bangsamoro people would go through the same self-transformation that I have gone through to prepare for the coming of the Bangsamoro government.”

As a TESDA specialist, Ruby had been working to provide technical-vocational education and training to indigents for many years. TESDA offers capacity-building in trade areas such as auto-servicing, plumbing, welding, electrical installation and maintenance, and computer and electronics hardware servicing, providing out-of-school youths, indigent men and women livelihood opportunities.

Training programs typically take three to four months duration in some programs and, while these are provided free of charge, living and transportation costs are left to be shouldered by beneficiaries. In order to improve access to these services, the concept of Community-Based Skills Training was employed, taking the training programs to the communities themselves. According to Ruby, “We have other schools offering other trade areas but, just the same, constituents in far-flung areas cannot afford to avail of this opportunity because of poverty.”

To ensure the survival of the program and to sustain community-based work, much of it needed to be hinged upon the ability to collaborate and develop networks. At the beginning of the MBLP, Ruby surmised, “One major challenge that I will need to hurdle will be our partnerships because, without our partners, we cannot implement the community-based skills training program due to our very limited budget and the difficulty in getting training beneficiaries.”

Coming into the MBLP, Ruby was clear on her goal—to develop her leadership skills so she could accomplish collaborative partnerships to sustain the training programs.

Ruby recognized her difficulty in this area. She describes her dilemma: “The transformation I experienced brought in me some degree of idealism that I sometimes isolated myself from others who were like me, as I used to be in the past.” Ruby describes that as she became more idealistic, she also began to be critical of other Muslims who did not practice Islam in the same way she did. “I was especially critical of Muslim women who did not follow the Islamic dress code,” says Ruby.
She felt strongly that “the things you do must be in accordance to your faith because, if you are in conflict with your faith, you lose your credibility.” She felt a special disdain for government leaders who were linked to corrupt practices. “I critiqued Bangsamoro Muslims with ‘un-Islamic’ lifestyles, especially our leaders. I never would want to engage with them,” says Ruby.

Ruby had wanted to initiate her change project, however she found that, in order to succeed, she needed to be open to forms of engagement she hitherto shunned. She needed to overcome her hesitations in order to see her project come to life. “My engagement with multi-stakeholders was the biggest challenge of my journey. Applying the Bridging Leadership lessons, I really had to force myself to come out from my shell and start forming my core group and my trust circle.”

Navigating a Delicate Terrain

Northern Kabuntalan and Mother Kabuntalan are sixth class municipalities located in the province of Maguindanao. According to the National Statistical Coordination Board, the municipalities have a total population of 31,045 and a combined land area of 47,785 hectares. Most of this area is comprised of vast plains crisscrossed by bodies of water such as the Rio Grande de Mindanao, the Tamontaka and Butilen rivers, and the Labas Creek. The area is heavily affected by frequent flooding and land capability is defined by the seasonal overflowing of rivers. There is very low productivity in farming and fishing. The high incidence of internally displaced people (IDPs) is chronic due to natural calamities and decades of armed conflict.

The whole of Kabuntalan was formerly known as Tumbao and the municipal seat was located in Barangay Bagumbayan. Access to it required hours of travel from villages isolated from the center in far-flung areas. The situation prompted division into two separate municipalities and the creation of Northern Kabuntalan by virtue of Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 205 on December 30, 2006.

Ruby had chosen Kabuntalan to locate her project because she felt that it was the place where her change project could make the most difference: Kabuntalan has the most marginalized constituents and constituents most affected by conflict and flooding in Maguindanao. There was an unstable peace and order situation in the area brought by the armed conflicts between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF). The worst was the conflict in 2008, which produced almost 30,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), left 37 houses destroyed and 1 Masjid hit by a grenade launcher.

This unstable peace and order situation contributed a lot to the moral decline of the Bangsamoro people. They were vulnerable to

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6 Based on official data (NSCB) as of May 2010
7 The barangay is the smallest local unit of government in the Philippines. A city or municipality is composed of barangays.
illegal activities. Also, out-migration to other countries and nearby areas to land undignified work increased. This situation contributed to Kabuntalan’s very low productivity and limited economic activity. Poverty incidence increased because of dwindling opportunities for livelihood activities; there was less skilled manpower because of lower access to skills training programs in the area.

Our local government units (LGUs) became less supportive of skills-building programs, because they had other priorities. LGUs had no revenue generation. The Northern Kabuntalan LGU did not receive its internal revenue allotment, thus skills-building programs were not prioritized resulting to communities that were not producing skilled manpower.

Ruby felt the need to address issues of good governance and what she felt was an attendant moral decline:

> Local government units in these areas are weak and cannot provide expected services for their constituents. This weak local governance in the area contributed to the people’s lost of trust in the local leadership and, thus brought the people to engage in [any activity] just to earn a living. Majority of the people have looked for opportunities outside of Kabuntalan, going abroad as domestic helpers, or going to Cotabato City and other neighboring areas to work as laborers, sidewalk vendors. Others were recruited to illegal and unlawful activities. The values of faith, trust, dignity, morality, and other Islamic values are weakened, and people’s distorted values affected the peace and order situation in the area.

Kabuntalan had what Ruby referred to as “double structures” of governance. In order to operate in Kabuntalan, she had to get the support of both the local government and the MILF which had strong presence in the area.

According to Ruby, “Involving these conflict-affected areas in my project would necessarily mean the need to engage with the MILF thru their political committees. MILF is considered a major stakeholder of the project because they had a very strong influence with my project beneficiaries. If I don’t get MILF support I cannot pursue working with my project without changing my project beneficiaries.”

The relationship within the community is described as such: “The MILF Political Committees operate separately but within the area of responsibility of the local government. They have their own distinct system of governance, anchored primarily within the teachings of Islam, and they don’t engage with government agencies and LGUs. However, there are some barangay

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8 The internal revenue allotment (IRA) is the local government units’ share in the national revenue. The determination of the IRA share is based on the type or level of government unit (i.e. provincial, city, municipal, or barangay, which is the smallest unit of government in the Philippines), population based on most recent census, and land area, with a certain percentage equally shared.

9 The Political Committees are the administrative structures of MILF in their respective communities from the provincial to barangay level.
LGUs which respect the MILF's existence and maintain a good relationship with them. But they do not work as one.”

Ruby decided that she needed to engage the MILF in her project. “I just know that they have people who believe in them and who will do whatever is necessary for the sake of MILF. The very reason why I chose to engage with them is because winning their support is winning the hearts of my beneficiaries.”

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**Internal Displacement in Mindanao**

In July 2013, it is estimated that 904,761 people remained displaced in Mindanao due to conflict and natural disasters. This included people displaced by the December 2012 typhoon Bopha/Pablo who represented the majority of the displaced (827,553), people displaced by other natural disasters that had occurred in the first half of 2013 (61,462), and people displaced by conflict and violence (15,746).

Of the last group, 9,369 were displaced due to “crime and violence” (mainly in the ARMM region where Maguindanao belongs), 6,120 by “armed conflict” (mainly in Region XII), and 257 by “clan feuds” (also in Region XII).

**Cumulative displacement figures:** Since January 2012, it is believed that a total of 2,559,736 have been displaced, 1,654,736 have found solutions, leaving 904,761 people still displaced.

**Typhoon Bopha/Pablo displacement:** In June 2013, based on April 2013 figures from the DSWD-DROMIC, a total of 933,146 people remained displaced due to typhoon Bopha/Pablo, including 11,700 in evacuation centers.

Of the six regions in Mindanao, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has tended to be most affected by conflict-induced displacement.

Between August 2008 and July 2009, fighting between the Muslim rebels of the MILF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in several provinces of Mindanao. In total, at least 750,000 people were displaced.

When fighting stopped in July 2009, hundreds of thousands of people were still living collective centers and camps known by the government as “evacuation centres,” relocation sites and with host communities. The majority of the displaced were located in Maguindanao province. From 130,000 in early 2010, the number of people in camps in Maguindanao is thought to have dropped to approximately 12,000 a year later with another 5,000 people living in relocation sites or with host communities.

*Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2013*
Values Transformation Training

For the MBLP fellowship, Ruby envisioned a capacity-building program that would produce genuine and sustainable results and bring about internal transformation among its beneficiaries. The project was entitled “Promoting Community Good Governance and Peace Through Values Transformation and Livelihood Skills-Building Program.” It aimed to reinforce Islamic values through the Values Transformation Training (VTT) program and to provide capacity-building in various livelihood areas.

The program centered on three basic interventions:

1. Values Transformation Training and study circles for Islamic values – Eighteen (18) VTTs were conducted with a total of 604 beneficiaries (64 male and 540 female);

2. Skills-building for livelihood and partnership-building – Eighteen (18) skills-training on small engine mechanics, welding, hyacinth handicraft, dressmaking, and food processing were conducted with over 600 beneficiaries; and

3. Partnership Building – The training programs provided a neutral space for collaboration among stakeholders to plan sharing of counterpart contributions for short-term interventions, on-site training visitations, and other training programs.

Engaging the Kabuntalan Local Governments

Ruby’s change project was adopted by both the Kabuntalan local government and the MILF through the bridging role of the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA). Among the first members of her project’s Core Group was her husband and volunteers from the BDA who helped her to liaise with the MILF political committees in Kabuntalan. “When I did my volunteer work [at the] Bangsamoro Development Agency, I got the chance to meet people from the MILF—but mostly women, not much from the political committees,” Ruby relates.

Her exposure provided her opportunities to better understand and sympathize with issues faced in conflict-affected communities. “When I had to implement my change project, I personally chose the two municipalities of Kabuntalan (Mother and Northern Kabuntalan) to be the venue for my change project because they were the most affected both by conflict and by flood, and I personally preferred MILF communities of Kabuntalan because mas sila ang nangangailangan (they are those most in need of help).”

Though she recognized that there would be challenges in getting together both the LGU and the MILF to cooperate on a single project, she persisted. “I can actually partner with LGU only para mas madali but I know kasi mas kailangan ng tulong ng ating MILF communities. Kaya kahit alam kong mahirap, sila tinarget ko sa change project ko. Mahirap man silang pagsamahin in one
## General Information

**Project Title:** Promoting Community Good Governance and Peace Through Values Transformation and Livelihood Skills-Building Program  
**Training Venue:** Kabuntalan (Northern and Mother), Maguindanao  
**Beneficiaries:** 125  
**Date:** September 2011 to June 2012  
**Duration:** 10 months  
**Est. Project Cost:** Php 1,792,623.00

### Mission

To produce skilled manpower with positive work values responding to the local needs for technical services and enterprises

### Components

1. **Values Transformation Program**  
   1.1 Conduct of Values Transformation Training (VTT)  
   1.2 Formation of Study Circle Groups

2. **Productivity Improvement Program**  
   2.1 Conduct of Livelihood Skills Training  
      2.1.1 Small Engine Mechanic NC II  
      2.1.2 Shielded Metal Arc Welding NC II  
      2.1.3 Dressmaking NC II  
      2.1.4 Water Hyacinth Handicraft  
      2.1.5 Food Processing  
      2.1.6 Entrepreneurship  
      2.1.7 Cooperative Development  
   2.2 Conduct of Assessment on  
      2.2.1 Small Engine Mechanic NC II  
      2.2.2 Shielded Metal Arc Welding NC II  
      2.2.3 Dressmaking NC II  
   2.3 Provision of starter kits to the following enterprises  
      2.3.1 Small Engine Shop  
      2.3.2 Welding Shop  
      2.3.3 Dressmaking Shop  
      2.3.4 Water Hyacinth Based-Handicraft Shop  
      2.3.5 Fresh Water Fish Processed Products Shops  
   2.4 Conduct of Product Exhibit

3. **Partnership Building with the following stakeholders**  
   3.1 Local government units (provincial to barangay)  
   3.2 Line agencies  
   3.3 INGOs and local NGOs  
   3.4 Academe  
   3.5 Community

4. **Provision of Land and Water Transport Assistance**  
5. **Exposure/Study Trip to Indonesia**  
6. **Monitoring**
She approached the wife of the mayor of Northern Kabuntalan with whom she was already acquainted through past projects with the World Food Programme. Northern Kabuntalan immediately supported the project, given the past working relationship between Ruby and the mayor’s wife. The mayor’s wife in turn became Ruby’s bridge to Mother Kabuntalan, also through the wife of the mayor of that municipality. Hence, Ruby opened the door to the LGUs through their ‘First Ladies.’

Ruby describes the LGUs reception, “Kahit na alam nilang MILF political committees ang pipili ng project beneficiaries, constituents pa rin naman daw nila ang magbenefit. It was actually an advantage pa nga daw na di sila ang pipili kasi mahirap pumili ng participants para sa training na matagal ang duration at walang allowance na maibibigay na malaki.” (While they knew that the choice of project beneficiaries was under the discretion of the MILF political committees, [the LGUs] acknowledged that [regardless of the chosen beneficiary] it will still be their constituents. They even deemed it was advantageous for them not to select the participants, because the training will cover a long period and they do not have enough monetary allowances to give.)

The LGUs through the mayors’ wives committed to provide resources for the project. In Mother Kabuntalan, for example, the first lady committed the LGU bus to transport participants from Kabuntalan to the training venue in Simuay, Sultan Kudarat (around an hour’s ride) every Monday and back every Friday for seven weeks.

Ruby preferred to approach the LGUs through the mayors’ wives because she felt better at ease working with them. In time however, she was required to expand her network of contacts. “At first, sa kanya (mayor’s wife) ako nakikipag-usap talaga pero later on I had to look for others na pwede kong contact person kasi she was busy with other things. (I used to communicate with the mayor’s wife, but later on I had to look for other prospective contact persons, because she had other things to address.) I had to force myself to engage with others and I chose to engage with the Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (MPDC) and the vice mayor. Fortunately, this was the right move. They were very supportive of my project.”
Meeting with the MILF

Through some contacts within the BDA, Ruby was able to arrange a meeting with an MILF official in order to present her project. Having arrived at the meeting, she was informed by the official that all government projects for MILF beneficiaries were deemed anti-insurgency activities and, for this reason, they would not be involved. It was not the introduction she had hoped for. "With that entry discussion, medyo bumaba level of confidence ko to win them. But I was reminded of my true intention of helping them in whatever legal way I can. Deadma na lang ako [sa sinabi niya]. Hinayaan ko lang siyang mailabas mga saloobin nya." (With that entry discussion, my level of confidence to win them dropped. But I was reminded of my true intention of helping them in whatever legal way I can. I simply ignored what the official said. I just let him vent out his sentiments.)

Ruby listened patiently to what the MILF official had to say. "I took down notes on his concerns on the project. I even agreed with some of his concerns, until such time na medyo na open na mind niya at saka siya nagtanong, ‘Ano pala talaga ‘yang project mo?’ (until he became more open and began to ask, ‘What was that project of yours really about again?’)"

Ruby relates, “With that gesture of openness, I got the chance to present my project with all my sincerity emphasizing on the need for us, Bangsamoro people, to transform ourselves into being true Muslims, applying Islam in all aspects of our lives. I continued with the importance of skills-building as one way to help Bangsamoro people improve their lives.”

Ruby asked for his support and invited him to become a partner, saying that he could make any suggestions on improving the project’s design. She invited him to select the rightful project beneficiaries and to become a member of her Core Group so that he could participate in the planning, project management, and implementation of the project. As she persisted, he said he would consider it but that Ruby would have to present her project to a larger group composed of the MILF Political Committees from the provincial, municipal, and barangay levels.

Ruby was nervous about presenting her project to this larger group and requested to be accompanied by her husband and other members of her Core Group. On the fateful day, due to unforeseen circumstances, no one was able to accompany her and she met with the MILF Political Committee alone—a sole female government employee among a group of 20 men of the MILF.

Her biggest worry was how to convince them that she was sincere with her intentions. She knew that without their buy-in, it would be very difficult for her. "I knew that if I could not win their trust, it would be very risky working in their communities."

She relates her experience meeting with the Political Committee:

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11 Written communication from Ruby Andong, June 9, 2013.
I formally started my discussion with some verses from the Holy Qur’an about social change, and I quoted: “God will never change the condition of a people until they themselves change.” I continued by relating this verse with my project. I discussed in brief the worsening situation of the Bangsamoro people, which I said was the very reason for a need to change, a change that will emanate from within ourselves guided by the teachings of Islam. I continued by discussing my personal vision for an “enlightened and productive Bangsamoro communities working together for peace and development” and asked them if they share that same vision for our Bangsamoro communities.

She reassured them on their apprehensions about her background as a government employee and clarified some of their concerns about the project and the involvement of LGUs.

I explained to them that my change project is not a government project but a personal project of mine which, fortunately, I could work on through the MBLP. I discussed what AIM-MBLP was and how the selection of fellows was done. I also explained that my being a government employee doesn't necessarily mean my project was a government project or that they might consider it an anti-insurgency program of the government, though some funds for my project were sourced out from the government line agencies and local government units.

Some of the concerns raised were the extent of LGU’s involvement with the project, identification of project beneficiaries, and details of skills training, such as the training duration, what skill training to be provided, and the location of the training. I responded that the LGU’s involvement in the project was limited to what support we would be requesting from them and that I told them that LGUs won’t be in control of the project.

"With an open heart and sincerity," Ruby says, “I deliberately presented my change project and we had a very fruitful discussion.” They discussed the rightful selection of beneficiaries, the schedule of activities, and their roles in the implementation of the project. In the end, the MILF committee agreed to become involved and committed to share and manage the preparation of food for the participants for the duration of the training. They also appointed three of their members to escort Ruby during her site visits.

Ruby relates: “I was really very happy after our very fruitful meeting, I was thinking kasi na ‘di magiging effective convincing powers ko with them especially na babae lang ako. I was wrong with my perception na mababa tingin nila sa mga babae. They were actually inspired by me, it was the first time daw kasi na may government employee na babae pa man din ang makikipag-usap sa kanila about the present situation of the Bangsamoro people na palihis na from the straight path of Islam and who would present one good strategy for us to transform." (I was very happy after our very fruitful meeting. I feared
that I would not be able to convince them because I am a woman. But I was wrong about my perception that they had a low esteem of women. They were actually inspired by me. It was the first time a government employee, a female one at that, approached them and discussed the situation of the Bangsamoro people, straying away from the straight path of Islam and presenting a good strategy for transformation.

**Coming into Her Own**

After this, her engagement with other stakeholders, especially with government agencies, was easier for her to accomplish. The experience was a significant victory for Ruby. She explains, "I was a very silent and shy type of person. I was actually selective of persons I try to get along with, especially when I started practicing Islam as a way of life. I only engaged with partners with whom I believe I shared the same principles in life."

Coalition-building was a huge challenge for Ruby. "My engagement with multi-stakeholders was very difficult at first that I almost gave up my fellowship. Just thinking of the need for me to engage in not just one stakeholder but many made me feel very uncomfortable."

At a later point in her coalition-building, she met a government official, a former beauty queen, who was working with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). While she had misgivings about a partnership, the contact was one she needed in order to sustain a significant portion of the program. "When I first met Lea Sagan, who was introduced to me as the PAMANA Maguindanao focal person, I knew then that she can be of great help to my project. But knowing she was a former Cotabato City beauty queen and had a very modern lifestyle—smoking and wearing sleeveless dresses—I hesitated to talk with her. I thought then we couldn't get along well with each other."

At first she tried to shy away from the acquaintance because of her misgivings. "When I requested some assistance from OPAPP-PAMANA for my project, I was referred to Ms. Lea Sagan again. I didn't have a choice but to engage with her, but again I found it very hard to convince myself. I had to force myself, and our MBLP sessions helped me make up my mind and made it easier for me to approach her. When I finally met her and discussed with her my project, I was surprised. We got along well easily. I found her very nice and immediately got her support for my project. Because of this, I got another commitment of funds from PAMANA Maguindanao for the sustainability measures of our change project."

Ruby walked away with valuable learning. "With that experience, I have learned my great lesson. When engaged in peace and development work, I can't be selective of stakeholders to engage with. The more that I should engage with all the stakeholders regardless of what I think of them, as long

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12 Through the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), PAMANA (PAyapa at MASaganang PamayaNAn) is a government fund implemented in areas affected by conflict.
as I don't compromise my faith in Allah and I don't get lost from the guidance of Islam."

In order to bring to life her project, Ruby had to engage with actors with whom, prior to her Bridging Leaders experience, she would not have imagined she could enter into partnership. According to Ruby, she had to go through a personal transformation a second time. "My idealism should always remain in me whatever happens but it should not hinder me from engaging with whomever it is that can help my goal of community development. Indeed, all the more I should engage with leaders who are not doing what are expected of them as Muslims. Baka maka-influence ako. (I might even influence them [positively])," she says.

Lessons learned from her leadership journey prove valuable even as Ruby was set to become appointed, subsequent to her MBLP fellowship, to a new position as TESDA National Program Coordinator for President Aquino’s Sajahatra Bangsamoro Program. "I realized, despite my being so [timid], I can do the Bridging Leaders’ work [as well]. I became more aware of my social capital, which I had come to recognize only when I started connecting with them for my project. I learned to [understand and] practice ‘letting go and letting come,’ which helped me in my process of connecting for allies. I realized, in the end, I can make a difference in the lives of my people.”

She looks forward to putting these lessons to good use, in the future. “This transformation will greatly help me as I continue to work for our communities’ social transformation, especially so with the signing of the Bangsamoro framework where we expect the coming of the Bangsamoro Government, in shaa Allah.”

**Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships**

Ruby’s first Core Group was comprised of volunteers from the BDA Central Mindanao Regional Management Office and her husband. Through the BDA, she was able to get a meeting with the Barangay Political Committees of the MILF. This led to an invitation to one of their meetings and, later, their inclusion into the Core Group.

Her Guiding Coalition included Mr. Bajunaid Kamaludin, Provincial Director of ARMM-TESDA, who allotted Php 250,000 of the PAMANA budget to the project. She also partnered with the two municipalities of Kabuntalan, bringing the mayors’ wives into her Guiding Coalition and borrowing their influence to ensure support of the mayors and the LGUs for her project. Mr. Mike Argonza, the Head of World Food Programme, Cotabato City Sub-Office, contributed food for training (FFT) support for the trainees (355 sacks of rice for graduates during the closing programs). He also became one of Ruby’s mentors and hosted their first multi-stakeholders meeting to organize an alliance for Kabuntalan peace and development initiatives. The Cotabato City LGU, through Dr. Danda Juanday of Mantana Development Program, Inc. and an Islamic Leadership Development Program fellow of AIM’s

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13 Referring to Dr. Juan Kanapi’s discussion on The Deep Dive, a component of the MBLP.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Office</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Roles and Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dir. Bajunaid P. Kamaludin, TESDA 1st District Maguindanao</td>
<td>Provincial Director</td>
<td>Authority of TESDA Provincial Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engr. Bangon Sumonsang, TESDA-ARMM Regional Office</td>
<td>Chief, Regional Manpower Development Center (RMDC)</td>
<td>• Provision of Trainees • Assessment of Trainees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Jane C. Bayam, Northern Kabuntalan LGU</td>
<td>• First Lady of Northern Kabuntalan • First Councilor • Committee Head, Finance and Appropriation, Social Services, Rules, Women, Children, and Family Services</td>
<td>• Authority of the Municipal LGU • Support and assistance from the barangay LGUs • Provided water transportation and food through the barangay chairmen during the stakeholders’ training sites visitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amnambai D. Diocolano, Mother Kabuntalan LGU</td>
<td>• First Lady of M. Kabuntalan • Municipal GAD Focal Person</td>
<td>• Authority of the Municipal LGU • Support and assistance from the barangay LGUs • Provided transportation for dressmaking participants from Kabuntalan to training site in Sultan Kudarat through the duration of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hashim B. Mantikayan, Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA)</td>
<td>Regional Manager for Central Mindanao</td>
<td>• Provided trainers for the Values Transformation Training • Authority of MILF in coordinating with the community • Assisted in organizing Target Beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie O. Maliga, Ittihadun-Nisa’ Foundation-Bangsamoro Women Skills Training Center (INFo-BWSTC)</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>• Use of INFo-BWSTC in the dressmaking training • Provided the training center and free accommodation for the dressmaking training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnain S. Mamalangkas, Makamangon Multi-Purpose Cooperative</td>
<td>• General Manager • Community Organizer</td>
<td>Assisted in organizing the target participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Argonza</td>
<td>• Head, World Food Programme, Cotabato City</td>
<td>• Provision of food for training for the training participants while on training (355 sacks of rice for graduates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsia U. Ibrahim</td>
<td>Cooperative Development Specialist II of CDA 1st District Maguindanao</td>
<td>Facilitated orientation on cooperative development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Danda N. Juanday, Mantana Development Program, Inc.</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monina Macarongon, Provincial Planning and Development Office, Province of Maguindanao</td>
<td>• Program and Project Officer • Provincial Youth and Employment Migration (YEM)</td>
<td>Support and assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Datu Khalikuzzaman Baraguir, DTI-Maguindanao</td>
<td>Provincial Director</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship Training by Abdullah M. Sumael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdulmasa K. Pangilan, DOST-Maguindanao</td>
<td>Provincial Head</td>
<td>Packaging Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Center for Bridging Leadership, provided a dump truck for the transport of the 355 sacks of rice.

Several members of the Guiding Coalition helped in the training programs: Hashim Mantikayan Manager of the BDA-RMO Central Mindanao helped in the Values Transformation Training. Julie Maliga, President of Ittihadun-Nisa’ Foundation (INFo) provided a training center; Abdullah M. Sumael of DTI-Maguindanao did the entrepreneurship training; and Samcia U. Ibrahim, CDA-ARMM Maguindanao Coordinator, did the training for the organization of the cooperatives.

As collaboration grew stronger, the alliance grew and contributions poured in: the Community and Family Services International (CFSI) staff, through Naidz Abdullah Karim (an MBLP co-fellow), assisted in the distribution of rice to the training graduates; the Mother Kabuntalan LGU allowed the use of the LGU bus for the weekly transport of the 30 dressmaking trainees from Kabuntalan to INFo-BWSTC in Simuay, Sultan Kudarat; INFo Bangsamoro Women Skills Training Center (BWSTC), through Madam Julie Maliga, provided the training venue and a 35-day free accommodation for dressmaking trainees and also provided snacks during the partners’ training site visitation; barangay LGUs of Tumaguinting and Libungan in Northern Kabuntalan provided meals during the visitation; the MILF Political Committee Chairs provided counterpart meals at lunch and accommodated the trainers for the whole duration of the training; Northern Kabuntalan LGU through Barangay Balong provided the boat during our on-site training visitation at training sites along Kabuntalan river; a representative from the Office of Congresswoman Bai Sandra Sema joined the training sites visitation and gave the Barangay LGUs the opportunity to raise and follow up their requests to the Congresswoman; municipal LGUs and the training graduates facilitated transport of rice from the BDA to the training sites and shared in the budget of food processing training supplies and materials.

Table 3. The Core Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hashim Mantikayan</td>
<td>Regional Manager</td>
<td>Bangsamoro Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasim Iskak</td>
<td>Institutional Development Head</td>
<td>Bangsamoro Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pindaulan Balambag</td>
<td>Provincial Female ‘Development Catalyst’</td>
<td>Bangsamoro Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnain Mamalangkas</td>
<td>Programs Coordinator Head</td>
<td>Bangsamoro Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alimuden Salik</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>MBDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Abubakar (husband of Ruby)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lea Sagan</td>
<td>Point Person</td>
<td>Office of the President Adviser on Peace Process (OPAPP) PAMANA Maguindanao</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members of the Kabuntalan MILF Political Committee
According to Ruby, the short-term interventions produced good indicators of transformation.

The values transformation training produced some good indicators that we believe can contribute to our peace-building efforts. One indicator of change was the transformation of the training graduates; almost 50 percent of the female trainees who were not covering their awrat started covering themselves; there were some participants who were not performing their 5-time daily obligatory prayers requested the VTT Trainers to teach them how to pray; participants who did not really understand what Islam was cried during our study circle upon realizing the many wrong-doings they had done before and recognized the importance of the VTT for Islam enlightenment.

Another indicator was that the VTT was able to clear some misconceptions about Islam and the struggle of the Bangsamoro people. One of our VTTs in Gayonga, Northern Kabuntalan had mixed participants, Christians and Muslims. During their testimonies, the Christian participants expressed their apologies to our Muslim participants for the negative perceptions they had of them and further expressed their appreciation on the teachings of Islam.

Also, another outcome is the BDA institutionalization of VTT and study circles in all of their projects. Now, before any project can be started, beneficiaries need to undergo VTT first and then shall make the study circle a regular activity.
The training programs provided beneficiaries with technical knowledge and skills that they can use to earn an income. For example, some graduates of dressmaking had begun earning an income by renting a sewing machine in the neighborhood. To support self-employment, a proposal for training on entrepreneurship, cooperative development, and starting tools, equipment, supplies, and materials was submitted. The proposal was approved, in principle, through the OPAPP.

Ruby adds, “Another outcome of the skills training conducted is the recognition of the LGU and the Political Committees that, with the right support, skills-building programs can indeed help their constituents to be productive.” Because of this recognition, she was able to convince the Mother Kabuntalan municipal government, through the Vice Mayor, to support our P1M Sustainability Project for the Skills Training Graduates through a Sangguniang Bayan Resolution. The Php 1 million budget has been earmarked from the LGU’s Php 6 million PAMANA budget allocation.

Ruby says of the final outcome of her change project, “I have bridged friendships to persons unlikely to become my friends, have bridged my network of support and assistance for my future projects, and have made my life very fulfilling as I have touched the lives of my project beneficiaries, especially the women beneficiaries, and saw their happy smiles as we planned together for their skills-based livelihood activities. My community was granted financial assistance through our joint efforts and started enjoying some source of income.

“My community has grown as I have grown myself.”

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Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Refugee Council (2009). Philippines: Cycle of conflict and neglect: Mindanao’s displacement and


Healing the Unhealed Wounds through Micro-Enterprise Development

Nonoy Casiple was in his UNFPA office in RCBC Plaza in Makati City, thousand miles away from South Cotabato, his hometown. He looked out of the window and thought of what else to do and how best to contribute in developing microenterprises in his beloved province. Ever since he concluded his engagement with the Provincial Branch of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in February 2012, he had very little to do with the implementation of the microenterprise program that he headed as DTI Program Officer. But he was committed to contributing to the program through sharing the knowledge and skills he acquired from the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) to the key officers left at the Provincial DTI of South Cotabato.

The Making of a Professional Advocate

Nonoy sunk back into his chair as he entered the last word in his newest blog entry. He realized it has been a while since he last featured an article on his blog. Events have been piling up on him lately and he felt he didn’t have enough leisure time for himself anymore. But, rather than a feeling of regret, a series of images as a Bridging Leadership Fellow came into mind and a feeling of satisfaction enveloped him. He smiled, thinking of his life of advocacy.

Nonoy discovered his passion for social development when he volunteered for a children’s welfare advocacy group at the age of ten. He entered his teens with his first community-based work with adolescents at the age of 13. He later volunteered as a peace advocate at age 17. Eventually, he moved on to the complex social issues of family planning and HIV/AIDS, on which the Teen Support Group he founded was focused on. He was investing time as a volunteer in various NGOs even when he was already employed. With colleagues and friends, he co-founded advocacy groups such as the Tri-Youth Movement and the Circle of Peace Builders in SOCCSKSARGEN.

Ernesto “Nonoy” Casiple is a native of General Santos City, born on March 3, 1983 to a Roman Catholic family. He completed a degree in Political Science at the Mindanao State University (MSU) in 2004. He followed through with advanced studies in the same university and completed academic requirements for a Master’s degree in Public Administration and, after that, a

1 Shorthand for the provinces of South Cotabato, (North) Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and the city of General Santos
Certificate Program on Governmental Management in 2007, while serving an administrative function for MSU. From 2007 to 2009, Nonoy was peace program coordinator of Kalinaw Sarangani, a peace-building program of the Provincial Government of Sarangani.

In 2009, Nonoy was hired on a project basis as Provincial Officer of the Rural Micro-Enterprise Promotion Program (RuMEPP) being implemented by the South Cotabato Provincial Office of DTI. Funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), RuMEPP was to be implemented from 2007 until 2013 (see Annex 1 for a background on RuMEPP).

**South Cotabato**

South Cotabato is a province of diverse cultural heritage and ethnicity. Residing with local indigenous groups—Muslim Maguindanaoans, the B’laan, and the T’bolis—were the Ilocanos and Ilonggos who came all the way from Northern Luzon and the Visayas, respectively.

Poverty data for 2009 showed South Cotabato with the lowest poverty incidence at 23.6 percent in Southern Mindanao. However, the province registered the most number of poor families with a total of 78,304 or about 34.8 percent of the region’s poor, an increase of about 17,268 families from 2006.

**The Divide**

In a 2006 Philippine survey on entrepreneurship conducted by the Global Economic Monitor (GEM), Filipino women owned 45 percent of business enterprises; in Mindanao, more women owned enterprises at 52 percent. Start-up businesses were owned mostly by women (69 percent) who were seen as more active in starting new enterprises. More than half of women managed their business within the first 3.5 years. Through the years of managing their business, women tend to lose entirely ownership or control.

![Figure 1. Ownership of Micro-enterprises in the Philippines (Source: Global Enterprise Monitor, 2006-2007)](image)

*The test of leadership is not always leading the management of projects, but making yourself invisible in many times... so that others may also see their own individual contribution to the task at hand.*
with only 34 percent of them owning established businesses (see Figure 1).

According to Nonoy, these statistics were also true in Mindanao where women build and manage microenterprises until their husband take over once the businesses successfully take off.

Being a native of the province, Nonoy knew that while South Cotabato and the whole of Mindanao had a rich cultural heritage, it was also the region's cultural diversity that had been a source of long-standing conflict and distrust among the people. He observed that the lack of peace and development in Mindanao was mainly due to what he termed as an “unhealed woundedness” of the people. It had been a result of a cycle of distrust and very little willingness to communicate and even less motivation to cooperate.

Nonoy felt that the cultural rifts and prejudices might be possibly healed through dialogue and communication, if there was ever any willingness by individuals or groups to try to understand each other. But given that the distrust outweighed openness to dialogue, Nonoy conceded that economic cooperation would be far from coming in South Cotabato and neither would peace and development. He summed up his thoughts on attaining peace in Mindanao.

“Peace is kung may pagkain ang tao (Peace is when there is food for everyone)... Peace is beyond feelings and passion. We have to work on realities, on poverty.”

Ownership: Living through the Divide

Nonoy recognized that while conflict in Mindanao was a socio-cultural issue experienced by a community, it was also very much a personal level of suffering experienced by individuals. Growing up from a poor family, Nonoy’s current efforts at poverty alleviation and passion for social development work stemmed from his own experience to provide for himself.

Nonoy remembered how when he was younger, he came home to see his mother wiping off the rainwater that dripped from their roof. She had just come home from a day’s work of laundering for some households in the neighboring villages. His father was already close to drunk; having had his fill of alcohol soon after hours spent working in the rice and wheat mill across the street. They had a sari-sari (variety) store back then. But, it had to be closed down because his father was not pleased that his mother was earning more than him. Nonoy right there and then realized that women in his hometown were gravely marginalized.

The same thing was happening to other women micro-entrepreneurs in Mindanao. Wives would be compelled by their husbands to turn over their business once it begins to turn a profit.

Nonoy realized that women were never more economically and culturally marginalized than in Mindanao. Even more disadvantaged were females who were unmarried but with children. The disabling effect of lack of re-
sources and opportunities brought him back to the memories of his older sister, Nene. In 2002, Nene lost her baby girl to heart failure one month after being born. In 2006, it was Nene who lost her life after giving birth to her second child. Sometime after these tragedies, a close friend gifted Nonoy a notebook with the inscription “No woman should die giving life.” Such life experiences made his crucial involvement in improving the plight of women in Mindanao all the more personal to him. He wanted to work towards increasing women’s access to basic services and economic resources.

**The Change Project: Peace Enterprise Project**

Nonoy started his work as the RuMEPP Provincial Officer on July 16, 2009. When he came in, there was no fund in the project’s bank account, therefore there was no fund to implement the activities of the project, and even worse, there was no salary for him. He had no choice but to access the funds by preparing, submitting, and defending project proposals. He immediately started work and planned the project’s activities with advice from his supervisor, the DTI South Cotabato Provincial Director.

For his change project, Nonoy focused on the Upscaling Barangay-Level Processing Project, also coined the Peace Enterprise Project. It was largely based on one of the components of the seven-year RuMEPP. The other components focused on coco sugar, bamboo, and pottery sector development. Nonoy wanted to focus on enterprise development by providing women micro-entrepreneurs access to microfinance services, business development services, capacity-building for market linkage, and product development.

The Peace Enterprise Project was guided by the strategic principle of “peace-based community-enterprise development” and the strategic themes of (1)
gender-responsive microenterprise development, (2) responsible use of environmental resources, (3) rural poor and culturally friendly micro-financing, (4) market-oriented industry development, and (5) communal cohesion and economic ownership (see Annex 2).

Nonoy started the project with 50 or more Maguindanaoans and women entrepreneurs as stakeholder-beneficiaries. The micro-entrepreneurs were situated in the capital city of Koronadal and the peace and development communities of Sumbakil and Polomolok. These target areas were conflict-affected—the main reason the change project was linked with peace initiatives and focused on single mothers. It had the main purpose of nurturing the disadvantaged women (the Moro, Christian, and indigenous peoples) in these areas.

The women in the target areas were already producing different products known as their local delicacies. Several producers from various towns in the province made the local delicacies mostly for family consumption and special gatherings, like birthdays, wedding ceremonies, anniversaries, and others. It was fairly known that South Cotabato produced a wide array of local products that included "atsara" (pickled papaya), "palapa" (a spicy condiment made from ginger and chili pepper), banana chips, "bagoong alamang" (shrimp paste), "tinagtag" (rice fritter), coco delight, "polvoron" (powdered milk candy), chocolate, turmeric tea, fried corn, coco sugar, herbal and food products, mangosteen tonic, and papaya cider. Through the project, four branching projects were to be developed for local mass consumption, while another four products were to be identified as culture-based products to be positioned for the "pasalubong" (souvenir) market. The primary goal was to produce quality and saleable products that would compete in the markets, within and outside South Cotabato. Nonoy believed in this project and its potential to contribute to peace-building in South Cotabato:

"This (project) is responsive to poverty alleviation since an entrepreneur with quality products will be competitive enough to get more market outlets resulting to additional income. Poverty is also known as one of the root causes of conflict. With additional income, it will keep people busy with their livelihood, thus contributing to peace and development in the area. The focused beneficiaries are the single mothers (Moro, IPs, and Christians); this will respond to gender and development especially that they belong to the disadvantaged group."

Local organizations were also key stakeholders of the project. The Association of Women in the Koronadal City Proper and the Single Parents Association were the primary stakeholders, and their members were organized for capacity-building activities initially centered on food production and marketing. There was also the South Cotabato Foods and Crafts Association Inc., formerly UPPSCO. The association was instrumental in operationalizing the Big Sister, Big Brother approach, where knowledge, network, and marketing sharing among micro-entrepreneurs are promoted instead of market competition.
Initial Challenges with Project Beneficiaries

In dealing with the micro-entrepreneurs and their organizations, Nonoy was aware of the importance of establishing trust with the stakeholders given that not only was he an outsider, but he also worked for the government, which the community dealt with reluctantly.

There was also the issue of establishing project ownership among stakeholders. He observed a strong sense of entitlement among project stakeholder-beneficiaries. At some point, Nonoy decided to call the beneficiaries “partners” to effect a change in mindsets towards self-sufficiency and co-ownership. He believed that the idea of sustainability and self-sufficiency should be established in the minds of partners at the onset. Project stakeholders should ultimately understand the need for an “exit point” where they transition from dependency to self-sufficiency. Nonoy explained in combination of Tagalog and English:

“Building relationship with the people is important, because we could not be in the community all the time. We are external so we are not often there. We just share. Their relationship with each other is also very crucial, because we will eventually have to leave and it will be them who will be left behind. There was even a planning session where we allowed them to be on their own so that the plan will be their own. Just like in the coco sugar project, there was no report, but even if they did not have one, they came up with an output on their own, which is more true. The plan was more realistic, and they came back to us to seek help and we did help them).”

It was on the principles of partner independence and co-ownership that Nonoy was able to get the support of the Provincial Director of DTI against co-branding the project. It was agreed on that a sense of co-ownership would be more effectively created among the partner-communities if projects, activities, or outputs were not visibly associated with DTI.

It was also this perspective towards instilling co-ownership that the project was able to generate a significant increase in partner-microentrepreneurs. The RuMEP Program of DTI began with only 50 assisted microentrepreneurs in 2009. Since serving as point-person, Nonoy was able to assist the agency in extending the project to 256 microentrepreneurs by 2010. By 2011, the project saw a surge of 600 assisted microentrepreneurs.

The project was initially launched with Koronadal City as the primary project site, but activities ultimately extended to other parts of South Cotabato. It elicited the participation of individual producers in the municipalities of Polomolok, Banga, Tampakan, Lake Sebu, Surallah, T’boli, and Tupi. The change project also transitioned from partner-stakeholders under the women’s organizations to individual producers. Despite the stakeholder changes, the project facilitated the creation of networks of producers that served as cohesive units for microenterprise promotion and elevation. An effort at collaboration was ultimately developed as members of the net-
work shared knowledge and helped promote another member’s products, not only in Koronadal City, but also even beyond South Cotabato province.

**Co-ownership: Collaborating on mainstreaming microenterprise products onto wider markets**

In the course of implementing the project, the DTI-RuMEPP team, with the assistance of the Productivity and Technology Center of South Cotabato, organized bimonthly inter-agency cluster meetings participated in by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Philippine Coconut Authority, Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Department of Health-Bureau of Food and Drug Administration (BFAD). The members of this cluster eventually became members of Nonoy’s guiding coalition and core group for his change project under the MBLP (see Annex 3).

In the meetings with other government agencies, Nonoy worked towards transforming the sessions from high-time, low-value “showcasing” of projects and activities to “knowledge-sharing sessions.” With the nod of the DTI Provincial Director, Nonoy facilitated discussions towards an alignment of the different agencies’ goals and mandates. The sessions resulted in the better use of agency resources, since redundancy of target beneficiaries and activities were avoided. Increased awareness of projects by other agencies also presented opportunities to collaborate and to complement expertise and resources.

Nonoy also ensured that partner agencies were aware of the condition of women micro-entrepreneurs, so they could assist them more. For instance, he invited the officers in charge of issuing certification in product labeling/packaging from the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) to visit the production areas of their women beneficiaries. He encouraged them to get to know more the reasons for the women micro-entrepreneurs’ inability to complete FDA’s requirements for certification. As a result, the FDA agreed to assist the women micro-entrepreneurs in the process of obtaining the certification instead of simply telling them that they did not meet the requirements and thus could not be granted any certification.

Within the DTI Team, there was a renewed recognition for the need to conduct regular, informal dialogues. Thus, there was a shift towards purposeful cluster meetings. A “World Café” approach was soon adopted where the DTI provincial staff discussed issues on administration or service delivery with possible solutions explored. These initiatives changed the internal leadership and management style within DTI.

**Initial Outcomes: Growth in the number and scale of microenterprises**

Committed efforts to conduct dialogues with LGU officials resulted in transforming some politically partisan and insular localities into more cooperative markets for the entrepreneurs’ products. The local government of Polo-
molok invested Php 60,000 as counterpart funds for the micro-financing scheme that benefitted women members of the Single Parents’ Association. The LGU of Polomolok also supported the participation of Mommy Juling’s Atsara to the 2010 International Food Expo. In addition, the LGU of Tupi supported the participation of Xantonic and Sweet Peace Coco Sugar to the 2010 International Food Expo.

In November 2011, the South Cotabato Pasalubong and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Center was established in Koronadal City. It showcased the wide range of products of the local women entrepreneurs—handicrafts, coffee, pineapple products, and other unique delicacies. The center was operated as a community enterprise, managed by youth and women volunteers with support from partners in the public and private sector.

The project attained actual distribution of products, extending beyond the South Cotabato market. Notably, trade fair sales by partner microentrepreneurs significantly increased from Php 517,000 in 2010 to Php 4.5 million by 2011. By February 2012, trade fair sales by partners increased to Php 8 million (see Table 1).

### The Unintended Outcomes

As the project yielded positive results on the conventional indicators of income and sales, Nonoy’s involvement in the Bridging Leaders Program prompted him to delve further into what value was being delivered to the project’s partner-microentrepreneurs. He realized that microenterprise development was an effort towards securing and peace and development in Mindanao communities. Still, the question remained whether or not peace was being established within the microenterprise household and the community at large.

Nonoy believed that if they were able to respond to this, then they could...
News Feature:

Coco sugar “Sweet Peace” gaining global market attention
by Aida C. Agad

KORONADAL CITY, Dec. 29, 2011 (PIA) -- “We witnessed how “Sweet Peace” had its simple beginnings,” recalled Flora Gabunales, provincial director of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) – South Cotabato.

What started to be a small focus-discussion-group of former members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)-turned Peace and Development Advocates (PDAs) in South Central Mindanao is now making names in the international market with their coco sugar product labeled as ‘Sweet Peace’, relates Gabunales, a member of the project advisory group.

In 2010, the former rebels formed the Mindanawan Coco Sugar Corporation (MCSC) and ventured on coco sugar production making use of raw materials that abound in their community. The group chose Mr. Johnny Akbar to lead them as the President of the corporation.

MCSC also sought the assistance of a project advisory group led by the DTI-South Cotabato.

Initial support also came in during this time from the United Nations Development Programme-ACT for Peace Programme especially in developing their product and in capacitating their organization in business development.

Massive market exposure and business development services were also provided to the MCSC by DTI-Rural Micro-enterprise Promotion Programme (RuMEPP). These Gabunales recalled had resulted to an increased demand of their product.

Its participation to the International Food Expo on May 2011 resulted to a P 2.6 million worth of sales, that’s why MCSC officers now agree that “Peace is sweeter with coco sugar.”

Mindanawan Coco Sugar Corporation is designed as big brother Micro-enterprise (Level 3) of about 43 coco sap producers (Level 1 MEs) at the community level.

Using this approach RuMEPP South Cotabato provided entrepreneurial training, quality coco sap production, GMP, hygiene and sanitation to coco sap producers. On the other hand, using firm level needs assistance, MCSC is also being capacitated on corporate management, marketing skills, and exposures to different types of market.

RuMEPP is a DTI arm which seeks to reduce rural poverty through increased economic development, job creation, and better incomes for poor rural households by promoting profitable and sustainable micro enterprises (MEs).
claim to have served their partner-microentrepreneurs well. With this, Nonoy made a strong effort to engage the support of the DTI Provincial Office. It was a challenge for Nonoy to shift the Program Director’s view of success from economic viability and market value to a peace-building perspective. He presented a view that microenterprises are more likely to fold if there was brewing conflict within the microentrepreneur’s household or family. Nonoy proposed that they also look into addressing the women micro-entrepreneurs’ “relationship problems,” not just helping them earn more money. This gained the support of the DTI Provincial Director and other government agencies in the project. Henceforth, the agency employed a “peace lens” approach, adopted from the Stages of Peace and Peace and Conflict Assessment Tool developed by the UN Development Programme, in assessing the quality and value of its activities. Assistance projects now have a guidepost: “Are we creating peace or more conflict?”

This new paradigm was later supplemented by the use of the gender-responsive value chain analysis tool adapted from international donor GIZ. This helped ensure that the women as microentrepreneurs were able to operate their business and market it through the most effective channels, as well as retain management of their enterprise.

Amid the continuing application for RuMEPP support by aspiring microentrepreneurs, Nonoy and his Core Group within DTI opted to work even more towards qualitative value. They not only worked towards increasing partner-microentrepreneurs’ income level, but they also pushed towards building the capacity of the women micro-entrepreneurs so they could manage trade fairs, mentor other micro-entrepreneurs, and assist other smaller partner-microenterprises (big brother-big sister approach).

**Sustained Stakeholder Collaboration**

Commitment to scale-up and sustain the initiatives started through the RuMEPP was signified by the approval of the DTI Regional Office of the development of a barangay-level processing project, which was estimated to cost Php 245,000.

The relative success of the RuMEPP, which was mainly born out of multi-sectoral collaboration has earned the commendation of IFAD. The gains of the program in Mindanao have borne a model for other developing economies seeking to enhance their microenterprise development strategies. In April 2013, a 26-person Sri Lankan delegation arrived in Sarangani for a three-day tour and exchange of experiences on the implementation of RuMEPP. Delegation head Prathapa Singhe explained that they wanted to learn from the various microenterprises implemented in the province and apply the knowledge they get here in building “very good sustainable development.” Sri Lanka was also an IFAD grantee.

Joint activities of DTI-RuMEPP, Provincial Environment Management Officer (PEMO), Productivity and Technology Center (ProTech), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Allah Valley Land-
scape Development Alliance (AVLDA), DOST, DOLE, among others resulted in the consolidation of Php 9.5 million worth of project funds from various members of the South Cotabato Bamboo Industry Development Council (SCBIDC). The funds were used for production of IEC materials (Information, Education, and Communication), and other Business Development Services trainings that have benefited more than 25 bamboo furniture makers, three associations, including the South Cotabato Bamboo Crafter’s Association, and more than 300 bamboo farmers.

The DTI Provincial Office has since continued to spearhead collaborative initiatives with both the public and private sectors. One of these was the local and regional economic development program (LRED) that was launched in September 2012. This initiative mobilized stakeholders from both public and private sectors to become partners in a joint effort to improve the economy of a defined subnational territory with the aim of increasing competitiveness in the business community.

Other significant stakeholder collaboration strategies identified by Nonoy are the following:

- Turnover of leadership role of Bamboo Industry Development Project to the Provincial Government of South Cotabato. This resulted to increase of interest among other agencies like PENRO, DENR, DOLE, DOST, and even the multinational fruits and vegetables producer, DOLE Philippines, which has plantations in Mindanao.

- Collaboration on making former MNLF combatants to become businessmen/women, with the different agencies led by DTI supporting the production, marketing, and distribution of coco-sugar. The project yielded more than Php 5 million support, aside from the Php 945,000.00 support of RuMEPP.

- The sidewalk potters of Tantangan and the tri-people women of Danlag in Tampakan have received more support from DTI National Office’s community service facility project (provision of production equipment) after the RuMEPP’s intervention and partnership with other agencies became successful. This national support was an indication that the community-beneficiaries were ready to move to a higher level of business development.

Reflections of a Bridging Leader

Nonoy acknowledged that his experience with the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program, combined with his interaction with the technical experts of DTI and LGU leaders, developed in him skills that allowed him to be more strategic and creative in his approach. The program also fostered a greater appreciation of the importance of building strong relationships and linkages to expand the reach of whatever successes that were accomplished. The

2 Allah Valley Landscape Development Alliance (AVLDA) was a project led by the Local Government Support Program (LGSP) to protect and manage the land area drained by the Allah and Banga Rivers and their tributaries.
experience reinforced his belief that a shared vision must be established to ensure better success. But, to create this, there should be the conduct of dialogues and a strong effort at communicating.

Nonoy also believed that donors and development institutions in Mindanao should strive to create a mindset of economic independence among the people of communities they serve. Individuals should eventually be educated towards thinking of “contributing” rather than “receiving.” He opined, “The issue of exit is the reason why peace fails and why the problems persist.”

Ever since he concluded his engagement with DTI in February 2012 to join UNFPA, Nonoy had very little to do with the actual implementation of the RuMEP Program. But he was pleased that he was able to continue providing inputs to the project every time the DTI Provincial Director for South Cotabato and the new RuMEPP Provincial Officer contacted him for advice. They were committed to continue the successes of the program, and their informal brainstorming and mentoring sessions helped in sustaining the strategic direction of the activities. Nonoy continued to share the knowledge and skills he acquired from the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program.

In his room, Nonoy looked out of the window and thought of what else there was to do. His love for advocacy and affection for his province of South Cotabato provided him the drive to establish collaboration and trust among some microentrepreneurs, local government officials, and some government agencies in South Cotabato. But the communities in Mindanao are many; the conflict in the region is rooted deep and the ripple of economic development remain slow. His involvement with various projects and organizations had given him the breadth of understanding of issues in the region. He knew he had influenced individuals and institutions with his work. But how to make peace and development in Mindanao mainstream remained to be a challenge.

References


Annex 1: The Rural Micro-enterprise Promotion Program

The Rural Micro-enterprise Promotion Program (RuMEPP) is a seven-year project funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), with the Department of the Trade and Industry as lead implementing agency.

RuMEPP aims to reduce rural poverty through increased economic development, job creation, and better incomes for poor rural households by promoting profitable and sustainable micro enterprises (MEs).

Program Goal: Rural poverty reduction through increased economic development, job creation, and rural incomes for 200,000 poor rural households

Program Objective: Increase the number of new and existing rural micro-enterprises that expand and operate profitably and sustainably

Program Components: The main government agency or department to be in charge of the technical oversight for the program is likely to be DTI, but with the involvement of a number of other departments and corporations. Under DTI’s guidance, RuMEPP will work in close collaboration with other institutions involved in micro-enterprise development, the exact nature of which needs to be determined during formulation.

1. Rural micro-financial services consolidation: involves promotion, training, and sustaining MFIs into effective, efficient, professional and viable rural finance organizations with mobilization of savings for long-term sustainability; skills and financial management training, acceptance of training certificate and group liability as substitute collaterals

2. Non-financial services: provision of rural technology and service centers (RTSC) and/or creation of Business Advisory and Training Centers (BATC), and the development, promotion and transfer of appropriate technologies and livelihood models.

3. Market linkage development: matching of productivity and output of small enterprises, diversification of type of livelihood promoted, improving efficiency of market and market intermediaries; support training of market intermediaries (small traders and other small-scale market intermediaries) on small business accounting, correct storage of input and produce, etc.; small entrepreneurs/market intermediary for a, code of conduct/best practices for the main market intermediaries which work with small entrepreneurs, and the like.

4. Policy/legislation review and reform: provision of policy and legislative support that will eventually re preparation of draft legislation and regulations, and training of senior policy makers in the implications of policies and regulations

5. Program management

Source: Department of Trade and Industry

Annex 2: Peace Enterprise Project Framework

Core Concept: Developing peace friendly business space for conflict-vulnerable rural communities of South Cotabato

Strategic themes:
1. Gender-responsive microenterprise development
2. Responsible use of environmental resources
3. Rural poor and cultural friendly micro-financing
4. Market-oriented industry development efforts
5. Communal cohesion and economic ownership

Expected Results:
1. The RuMEPP selected beneficiaries will have stable income, which is expected to increase by 15 percent starting 2012.
2. There will be sustained communal enterprise shared by the Maguindanaon women in the identified barangays that is also participated by women of other tribes as the production requirements increases.

Immediate results:
1. There is a considerable number of available products that the beneficiaries made in at least two local markets in Polomolok or South Cotabato.
2. The beneficiaries are capacitated with business and financial management.
3. The products are improved and value added and in compliance with food related regulations and trade and industry regulations.
4. The microentrepreneurs are channelled towards marketing opportunities.
Annex 3: Guiding Coalition and Core Group Members

The original members of the Guiding Coalition (GC):
- Flora Gabunales – Provincial Director, DTI South Cotabato
- Waren Nantes – Project Officer, DTI-SC
- Edna Felipanala – UPPSCO
- Elaine Ferolino – Planning, DTI-SC
- Marie de Leon – SPA

The new members or extended Guiding Coalition:
- Danny Peliar – LGU Polomolok
- Manny Jumilla – ProTech
- Jun Pantua – Kablan

The Core Group (CG) Members:
- Flora Gabunales – Provincial Director, DTI-SC
- Waren Nantes – Project Officer, DTI-SC
- Elaine Ferolino – Planning, DTI-SC

GC and CG Members, or extended core group members:
- Jerry Clavesillas – Director of Bureau of Micro-Small Enterprise Development (DTI National Office)
- Franklin Bonifacio – RuMEPP Microenterprise Specialist
- Rey Guanzon – RuMEPP Finance Officer
- Manny Jumilla – former ProTech Manager/now Provincial Planning and Development Officer of LGU South Cotabato
- Lilian Machong – BFAD Provincial Officer
- Jun Pantua – Manager of Kablon Farms Inc.
- Elizabeth Rafal – big sister, owner of Ninos Food Products
- Dr. Prescillano Campado – Mindanao State University
- Dr. Wilfred Bidad – Mindanao State University
- Prof. Czarina Saikol – Mindanao State University
- Some staff from the LGUs of Polomolok, Banga, Tampakan, and Tupi

Note: The members of the GC do not meet regularly. Most meetings were informal but the GC members were always consulted through cellphones and emails. The CG, however, met regularly, two to three times a month. The GC and CG members mostly discussed product quality and helped identify additional market outlets for the women micro-entrepreneurs.

Annex 4: Some women micro-entrepreneurs of RuMEPP and their products
From the Hills to the Halls: Cultivating Dumingag Out of Poverty

The leadership of Mayor Nacianceno Pacalioga, Jr. was a journey from armed struggle in the hinterlands of Western Mindanao to public service in the municipal office of Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur. Mayor Jun, as he is popularly known, recounted:

“It happened that the people I went around with had connections with the militant groups. In fact, the house of my friend who was in medical school at that time was used as a command post by the New People’s Army (NPA)\(^1\). When he joined the movement, I went along with him.

My friend came from a rich family. That was how things were. The rich had a strong influence on others.

This happened in February 1981.”

The mayor shared some experiences from his life in the movement, and how he learned the importance of community organizing:

“I experienced poverty in the mountains. I did not just see or hear about poverty, I lived it in the real sense. I did not have anything to myself, not money, not even a family.

I saw comrades who offered their lives fighting for their principles. The people are the real heroes and makers of history.

I learned about genuine people organizing [for what they believed in] when I lived in the mountains. I learned how to read and analyze the situation in leading people.”

Many of our leaders today, according to Mayor Jun, do not have a deep understanding of poverty. That is why they lack the capacity to serve the people well. There is no need to live in the mountains, though. It is the mayor’s conviction that local development through people empowerment is enough to fight poverty.

After 13 years as cadre of the New People’s Army (NPA), Mayor Jun witnessed the internal conflicts within the communist movement. The leaders became polarized and the group split into factions. The mayor knew

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1 The NPA is the armed wing of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).
that the NPA would not win its cause in such a state. The turn of events led Mayor Jun to return to the fold of the law and continue the revolution in a more socially acceptable form.

Mayor Jun was first a Sangguniang Bayan Member (1995-1998) then a three-term vice-mayor (1998-2007) before he became the mayor of Dumingag (2007 to present).

A Peninsula of Diverse Cultures

Region IX or the Zamboanga Peninsula is bounded by the Moro Gulf and the Celebes Sea to the south and the Sulu Sea to the north and west. The eastern side connects the peninsula to the rest of Mindanao, the second largest island in the Philippines that lies south of the archipelago.

The region has three provinces, namely Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, and Zamboanga Sibugay. It has a population of 3,407,353. Its poverty incidence of 30.9 percent in 2009 is relatively high against the national average of 26.5 percent and the National Capital Region's 4 percent.

The mountainous and coastal areas of the Zamboanga Peninsula are home to the Lumad, a generic reference to the indigenous peoples of Mindanao. A major Lumad group in the peninsula are the Subanen (or Subanon), who are mainly agriculturists. They lived in the coastal areas but have moved upland due to historical attacks from Muslim groups.

According to Mayor Jun, the Lumad, Muslims, and Christians have coexisted in Mindanao for a long time. Yet, the issue of discrimination, at least against the Lumad, has never been addressed by the government.

“The government failed to deliver [the full range of basic services] to the people. It did not empower the people to rise from poverty. Empowerment is only a slogan [if] it is not lived in the real sense.

If the Lumad, Muslims, and Christians will be given the opportunity for self-governance while remaining accountable to one central government, development will be appropriately planned, and respect for culture will be maintained.

I think this will work. Participation in governance will be increased. Poverty will be alleviated.”

Agriculture in Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur

At the center of the peninsula is the landlocked town of Dumingag in Zamboanga del Sur, a second-income class agricultural municipality with a population of 46,500. About 37 percent of Dumingag are the Lumad, ac-

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2 The Sangguniang Bayan (or Municipal Council) is the municipal-level legislative body, presided by the vice mayor.
3 National Statistics Office, 2010
4 National Statistics Office, 2012
5 A second-class municipality has an annual income between Php 45 and 55 million.
Farming is the only means of livelihood in the 44 barangays spread across a terrain characterized as 75 percent upland and 25 percent lowland. According to Mayor Jun, having an agricultural economy, all the issues and concerns the people in Dumingag are facing revolve around the utilization and maximization of their land resources.

But unsustainable farming methods have since been adopted and have adversely affected agriculture in Dumingag. The use of chemical fertilizers has been tied to conventional farming systems. Farms have been dependent on pesticides and herbicides, degrading soil fertility and killing natural agents such as earthworms. Low-level method of slash-and-burn used by farmers further damaged the land. Consequently, 30 percent of Dumingag has been rendered unsuitable for farming.

The trading system of agricultural produce was oppressive to the farmers of Dumingag. Mayor Jun believed that if the system could be changed to give the farmers a fair share of the livelihood, poverty in the municipality would be effectively addressed.

The mayor was concerned that 84 percent of Dumingagnons lacked knowledge and tools resulting to low farm production, bringing household income to below Php 3,000 per month. With their meager income, the family could hardly afford to buy their basic necessities, send their children to school, and pay for health services.

It worried the mayor that the younger generation was beginning to lose interest in and love for the major growth asset of their municipality—their farmlands—in favor of skilled employment outside of Dumingag.

The Genuine People’s Agenda

During his first term as mayor, Mayor Jun invited representatives from provincial offices of government agencies (Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Agriculture, Fiber Industry Development Authority, and Department of Education) to give them a report on the situation of the municipality. In the same meeting, he presented to them the municipal government’s program of development for Dumingag.

In 2007, Mayor Jun, together with the vice mayor and the Sangguniang Bayan, drafted an eight-point agenda as key responses to the development issues of Dumingag. Later, this eight-point agenda was enhanced into a 15-point Genuine People’s Agenda (GPA).

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6 Based on the transcription of the July 11, 2011 interview with Mayor Jun at AIM
7 The average annual income in the National Capital Region in 2009 is about Php 356,000, or Php 29,554 per month. In Region IX, the average is around Php 12,000 per month. (NSO, 2009)
8 Among the basic sectors in the Philippines, those employed in agriculture and fisheries are found to register the highest levels of poverty incidence. About 2 out of 5 farmers (36.7%) and fishermen in the country fall below the poverty line in 2009. Region IX posted the highest incidence of poverty among farmers in 2009 at 54 percent, meaning one of two farmers have incomes below the threshold. (NSCB, 2013)
“Before the end of my first term in 2010, I realized that some issues and concerns were not yet addressed by this program of government and that some subparts in the [eight-point agenda] had to be raised as main components in the GPA because they evolved as major concerns, like sustainable agriculture, education, and health,” the mayor said. The GPA developed from a collective discussion with sector representatives including the Lumad, farmers, youth, and women of Dumingag.

Mayor Jun believes that the 15 components of the GPA can only be achieved if the people will understand and participate—and they can only understand and participate if they are capacitated. “Education is a very crucial strategy to make people participate in translating into reality the visions and goals of the GPA,” he said.

Transformative Education was the means by which the agenda was implemented. It was a comprehensive education program that aimed to teach a system of sustainable organic agriculture to be able to change the current system that is oppressive to the farmers. The local government tapped different learning systems, including school-based, center-based, community-based, farm-based, enterprise-based, web-based, and home-based study to facilitate transformative education.

The purpose of Transformative Education, as explained by the mayor, was to bring back the Dumingagnons’ love for their land so that, through sustainable organic agriculture, the people of Dumingag could hope for a better life with a strong, sustainable economy.

According to Mayor Jun, “Our programs on agriculture and education go hand-in-hand since it is livelihood that provides the financial resources to give the people the means to education.”

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**The 15-Point Genuine People’s Agenda**

1. Advancing local economic system
2. Institutionalizing sustainable organic agriculture
3. Stabilizing people’s participation in governance and development
4. Installing local education system and advocacy
5. Adopting a responsive health care system and integrative medicine
6. Sports development and recreation
7. Providing basic shelter and other social services
8. Valuing historical origin and remolding the distinct culture of the Dumingagnons
9. Environment and climate change
10. Expanding infrastructure services
11. Achieving genuine peace and security
12. Developing tourism potentials
13. Building local and international solidarity relations
14. Strengthening the municipality’s political domain
15. Forming a strong municipal-wide organization

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**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Transformative Education**
Laying the Ground for Sustainable Organic Agriculture

School teachers, barangay officials, and community organizers were at the frontline in the implementation of Transformative Education. Nevertheless, even the mayor and the vice-mayor were trained to teach the program.

One of the challenges of Transformative Education was that it did not categorically fit into the Department of Education’s (DepEd) structure of formal education. Based on initial consultations, DepEd officials did not consider training in organic farming system as a form of education. “I hope to be able to present to them my holistic view of education for Dumingag,” Mayor Jun said.

He added, “It was a fierce battle with the DepEd, very much like former battles [I fought]. They asked why I was intruding [into the matter of education] when it was not the work of a mayor. I told them that education was the work of a leader.”

This prompted the DepEd to form an independent committee to review the alternative curriculum implemented in schools in Dumingag. Soon, according the Mayor Jun, “Sustainable organic agriculture (SOA) was mainstreamed into our school curriculum from kindergarten to college level.”

The mayor considered the teachers as his critical stakeholders. Their significant contributions to Transformative Education included teaching sustainable agriculture in the classrooms and in the communities, enhancing the knowledge and skills of the people in alternative medicine, drafting and finalizing a curriculum for the Indigenous People (IP), and setting up nurseries in schools and communities.

Since 2007, a multitude of training programs were given to teachers. In alternative medicine, a field where organic agriculture and tradition intersect, trainees continued to produce herbal medicines for family and community use.

Through Transformative Education, Dumingag teachers were able to develop an IP curriculum responsive to the needs of Subanen cultural communities in the municipality. The objectives of the IP curriculum included the preservation of the Subanen culture and the transformation of Dumingag into an organic farming-based municipality.

Community dialogues on sustainable organic farming were continuously held with the 44 barangays of Dumingag as part of the continuing education program. Training in organic agriculture capacitated farming communities in crafting community plans for production of crops with high income potentials.

Good Land Stewardship through Organic Farming

Returning from his life on the hills as a rebel leader, Mayor Jun tended his family’s three-hectare farm, while serving in the municipal council. It was in 1995 when he was first introduced to organic farming by his former NPA
comrades. But it was a seminar on sustainable agriculture in 2000 that led to his change of mindset. He was impressed by the natural fertility of the soil in the farms of his former comrades in Calinan, Davao City. Seeing positive results from his own practice, he was inspired to make sustainable agriculture a cornerstone of development programs in Dumingag.

The Genuine People’s Agenda website refers to conventional farming as chemical-based farming that destroys the micro-organisms and natural food (nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium) in land, turning parts of the land into gypsum rock that is acidic and infertile.

On the other hand, sustainable organic agriculture is diversified (in terms of farm produce), integrated (the farm is seen as an ecosystem), and sustainable (not compromising future generations). Organic farmers plant crops on a rotating basis from field to field to replicate the ecology of the environment. An organic farm is also free of toxins from chemical pesticides and fertilizers. It utilizes materials readily available to farmers for natural plant fertilization and natural pest management, such as cover crops and animal manure.9

Through the sustainable organic farming system, Mayor Jun sought to attain food sufficiency, rural development, and sustainable livelihood for his locality, while heeding to the global call to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

There were times his conviction was tested. Mayor Jun recounted the incident in 2008 when the Regional Office of the Department of Agriculture (DA) wanted to deliver Php 2 million worth of chemical fertilizers to Dumingag as subsidy to farmers. He shared, “We did not accept the fertilizers and had them delivered back to the DA, since the use of them would contradict our program that is founded on organic agriculture. We knew that we were going against the national policy of the DA, but we have to stand on our ground and defend our pro-people program of government.”

Sustainable organic agriculture is not an enterprise for capitalists, according to Mayor Jun. It is a means of livelihood for the ordinary farmer. He shared a story about a Subanen farmer from his municipality:

“A Subanen from Dumingag sold half of his land to buy a sikad-sikad (a tricycle propelled by pedalling) and earn roughly 100 pesos a day. After attending a seminar on sustainable organic agriculture, he went back to work on his land. He now has two hectares of coconuts, three hectares of rubber plantation, two hectares of rice land, and some fruit land. He has enough supply of staple food for his family.

In Dumingag, a regular wage earner would take home Php 7,000 per month. This Subanen farmer earns Php 15,000 per month, so much more than the standard wage [in the local-

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9 Organic farming includes traditional, biodynamic, and natural farming methods.
"Empowerment is the only way out of poverty," said the mayor. While it is the leaders’ role to educate their followers in understanding their situation, it is in the hands of the people to help themselves out of their current low standard of living and into a desired state of life.

In the mayor’s opinion, the millions that were poured by funding agencies only created a culture of dependence, giving rise to more problems than solutions in society. Cash transfers, according to him, bred millions of beggars. The money put in these strategies was better allotted to a comprehensive system of education that led to better lives.

According to the mayor, our government kept an eye on the outside world while the solution really was to be found within our own society.

**Partners in Transformative Education**

In 2012, Mayor Jun became a fellow of the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM). "I was honored to be selected as a fellow in a prestigious institution. To think that I was not even a college graduate," according to the mayor.10

Mayor Jun first broke the good news to his staff and representatives of partner agencies, the Assisi Development Foundation and Xavier University. In the vernacular, he said, "They will put our plans into writing. They are my consultative partners in the implementation [of these plans]. They are trained in governance."

In an interview at the beginning of the MBLP, Mayor Jun said, "I would like a comprehensive education program to be implemented in Dumingag."

In a presentation during the program, the mayor reported that the MBLP helped him focus and further define the concept of Transformative Education so that it could, on one hand, be integrated into the mainstream school curriculum and, on the other, go beyond the boundaries of school-based learning.

During the MBLP, Fellow Mayor Jun formed his Guiding Coalition (GC) of 41 members, from which he chose his 16-member Core Group to support him in his change project (see Annex 1). The mayor shared with his GC the vision of a peaceful, equitable, abundant, healthy, and ecologically-sound Dumingag through a shared and continuing effort to free the people from the bondage of poverty.

Besides AIM, Mayor Jun formed other alliances to support Dumingag in the advocacy and education on sustainable organic agriculture. The collaboration with Xavier University for knowledge and skills in organic farming gave the local executives the capacity to give technical assistance to farmers. In addition, increased capacity was provided by the International Fed-

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10 Mayor Jun Pacalioga was a second-year college student of Electrical Engineering at the University of Visayas in Cebu City when he dropped out of school in 1981.
eration on Organic Agriculture (IFAO) with continuous training in the past two years.

Because Dumingag was a landlocked area, the municipality partnered with the Mindanao State University-Nawaan Campus School of Fisheries for an inland fisheries program through a Memorandum of Agreement signed in 2007.

The Assisi Development Foundation\(^{11}\) was another partner in the development of Dumingag. It funded training programs and helped integrate Sustainable Organic Agriculture and lumad education in school curricula. The NGO also gave assistance in building schools for the Subanen children.

After four years in office, Mayor Jun invited once again representatives from local government agencies. “I showed them how far we have gone with our programs and I expressed my gratitude for their support. Our communication and mutual support remained open.”

**An Abundant Yield**

In 2012, Mayor Jun reported, “We have already changed our production process from conventional to organic farming. We have also formed a cooperative system that put marketing of farm products in the hands of the farmers and out of the control of profiteering tradesmen.”

The Dumingag Organic Farmers Credit and Savings Cooperative was set up and eventually reorganized into the Dumingag Organic Farmers Association (DOFA), as the production arm, and the Dumingag Organic Farmers Cooperative (DOFC), as the marketing arm, for the local organic produce. The cooperative bought and sold organic products from the farming communities. The DOFA and DOFC are recognized by the Department of Agriculture and, thus, have received tractors, drying facilities, and freezers from the government.

Moreover, the farmers of Dumingag produced 102 organic varieties of rice in a demonstration farm, ensuring a stable seed bank and effectively eroding their dependence on private seed distributors. By 2013, seven varieties were doing well in the local markets of Dumingag, as well as those in Pagadian City in Zamboanga del Sur and Ozamiz City in Misamis Occidental. Five varieties were brought to Nueva Vizcaya in the northern island of Luzon for laboratory testing for a bigger market.

Initially, those who shifted to organic farming grappled with a steep reduction in yield, although this was cushioned by the radical decrease in cost. Several croppings later, as natural soil fertility improved, output went up. For rice, yield per hectare was at par with farms still applying agrichemicals at 95 65-kilo bags during the dry season, and 70 to 80 bags during the wet season. But net earnings are higher with organic farming because cost

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\(^{11}\) The Assisi Development Foundation (ADF) is a non-profit organization established in 1975 that plans and undertakes interventions that empower the poor and the marginalized. (www.assisi-foundation.org/aboutus.htm)
has been reduced by at least a third.\textsuperscript{12}

The program was challenged by big rice traders from the neighboring municipalities and cities, who brought down the prices of their rice produce to “kill” the Dumingag rice market. In response, “we raised the level of awareness of the people from Dumingag,” according to Mayor Jun. The farmer-led production of the 102 seed varieties of rice freed the farmers of Dumingag from the control of big agrichemical firms. Interestingly, only 2 of formerly 10 local pesticide traders are still in business.

Vermicomposting expanded from the household to the school and barangay levels, and even enjoined the police and the military. A vermicomposting facility was established in the military outpost in Barangay Upper Landing. Military personnel from the 101st Brigade were given training in a two-week modular course on Sustainable Organic Agriculture, Integrative Medicine, and Community Organizing.

The municipality of Dumingag has set up an Organic Culture Village to showcase the indigenous culture and organic produce of the locality. The complex included a cultural center, an organic market, an organic restaurant, as well as a wellness center.

Organic products of Dumingag farms were in the final stage of acquiring second-party certification through the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), which is widely used in the Asian and European organic markets.

The PGS designated the farmers as the first party certifier, and their neighbors as the second in certifying any product as organic. The Catholic church stood as an independent Dumingag organic watcher. If any farmer participant was found “cheating,” all the other farmers in the system were disqualified from the certification system.

The trading cooperative of the women of Dumingag also grew from a startup capital of Php 9,600 to a running capital of Php 140,000. Cooperative membership grew from 28 to over a hundred women. Sinamay weaving also expanded to abaca industry with over sixty laborers from the initial four handicraft workers.

Lowland barangays of rice plantations have more active participation in organic agriculture. Upland corn plantations remained challenged by land erosion due to heavy rains. This necessitated contour farming in upland Dumingag.

Meanwhile, the Dumingag Technological Training Schools have already produced more than a thousand graduates from its curricular offering of 11 vocational-technical courses.

The Dumingag Institute of Sustainable Organic Agriculture gave a two-week intensive training on organic agriculture to Livelihood Development

Coordinators, municipal community organizers and barangay-based farmers-organizers. In March 2011, the Municipality of Dumingag was among the ten recipients of the Galing Pook Award for Outstanding Local Governance Programs for 2010.¹³

In February 2012, Dumingag hosted the 1st Mindanao-wide Congress on Sustainable Organic Agriculture Network to gather and strengthen around 400 organic practitioners in Mindanao for the first time. The five-day gathering featured presentations, workshops, and a tour on best organic practices.

The congress [was] organized by the Mindanao Network for Sustainable Organic Farming Systems (MINSOFS) with support from the South Korean-based Asian Food and Agriculture Cooperation Initiative (AFACI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA)-Region IX Office.¹⁴

MINSOF Chair Vic Tagupa said it was only apt for Dumingag to host the historic event since Dumingag has successfully applied organic agriculture as a development framework. The Dumingag local government unit (LGU) has since adopted organic agriculture as a foundation in achieving rural development, and it can now show some positive results and impact. ("Genuine people's agenda," 2012)

It was also in 2012 that Mayor Nacianceno Pacalioga, Jr. was awarded as one of the recipients of the One World Award (OWA), a prestigious international competition for organic best practices, economy and social aspect. A jury of OWA had the following to say about the work of the mayor: "Sustainable organic agriculture is not just a technology; it is a way of life. It is a way of thinking. It's a worldview."

**Peace on the Land**

Mayor Jun equated peace to poverty alleviation and shared governance. He believed that peace was attainable with improved living conditions. "A man whose needs are met will not create trouble," said the mayor as he spoke of attaining peace in Mindanao.

"The roots of the peace problem in Mindanao is basically economic," he said. "The people wage war because they wallow in poverty and do not have food to eat. Through organic agriculture, alternative medicine, and the planting of permanent crops with high income potential, the people of Dumingag can attain food sufficiency and liberate themselves from poverty."

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¹³ The municipality’s entry was entitled “Steering Local Development thru People Empowerment.” Mayor Jun received the award from President Benigno Aquino III and gave special thanks to the farmers because the increase in the farm production of Dumingag was a big factor in the criteria for recognition. The Galing Pook Award recognizes best local governance programs in the country.

¹⁴ The MINSOFS was established in response to the Philippine Bureau of Soils and Water Management’s (BSWM) 2011-2016 Medium-Term Development Plan that aims to develop and promote sustainable farming technologies to maximize yield from agricultural activities. It is part of an Asian network called the Asian Network for Sustainable Organic Farming Technology (ANSOFT), a project of AFACI.
Table 1. Progress in Organic Farming in Dumingag

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Organic Farming Practitioners and Plantations</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organic farming practitioners</td>
<td>&lt; 20</td>
<td>532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abaca plantation</td>
<td>5 hectares</td>
<td>460 hectares</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abaca plantation owners</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber plantation</td>
<td>10 hectares</td>
<td>1,100 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falcata plantation</td>
<td>5 hectares</td>
<td>200 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassava plantation</td>
<td>350 hectares</td>
<td>2,000 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicraft workers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mayor was happy with the economic gains of the Genuine People’s Agenda as seen in the increase in the number of organic farming practitioners and plantations (see Table 1).

The change project of Fellow Mayor Jun was also responsive to the Mindanao 2020 Peace and Development Framework Plan 2011-2030 in varied respects (see Annex 2).

Transformative Education improved access to education with a culture-sensitive IP curriculum. It also tapped the formal, informal and alternative learning systems to be able to reach the far-flung and marginalized communities, such as the Lumad, in Dumingag.

Poverty alleviation was addressed with the implementation of the organic farming system that improved the soil quality and consequently increased the yield of the farmers. System changes in the production, storage, and marketing of farm products also improved the income of the farmers.

Sowing the Seeds Far and Wide

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) cited the road map of governance of the municipality of Dumingag as an example to other LGUs. With the support of DILG, the mayor became a bridging leader echoing the gains of Transformative Education to increasing numbers of LGUs in Luzon, Visayas, and soon in Mindanao.

DepEd Secretary Armin Luistro also suggested the replication of the IP curriculum developed by the teachers of Dumingag in schools with IP populations across the regions. Thus far, only Dumingag has been able to integrate sustainable organic agriculture and indigenous culture into the school curricula. Moreover, a book on sustainable organic agriculture has been finished that will be out by the fourth quarter of 2013, said the mayor.

Organic farming became a way of life to most Dumingagnons. Networks and

---

15 According to the 2009 City and Municipal Level Poverty Estimates released by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) in 2012, poverty incidence in Dumingag is at 42.8%. Although the figure is still high, poverty in the municipality has dropped significantly compared to the 63.66% data registered in 2003.
A complete farmer
by Julius M. Breva, Posted on January 19, 2012
on http://dumingaggpa.wordpress.com/

It was around 9 o'clock in the morning when I arrived at Rogelio Maata's farm with my motorcycle to buy vinegar from him. When I came into his driveway, I saw him shaving his moustache. He was smiling, and I could immediately sense that he was feeling relaxed.

We greeted each other, and I immediately asked him if he had vinegar from his dwarf coconut trees. He nodded his head, as he offered me a glass of tuba, a coconut wine. I thought that this was his way of assuring me that his vinegar, a kind of coconut wine fermented for several weeks, really came from his own produce. However, he then informed me that he had just entertained around two-dozen visitors from Butuan City who came to Dumingag to have a study tour on organic agriculture.

They came to Rogelio because he is one of the model farmers in Dumingag who consistently practices organic agriculture. He was a recipient of a regional-level Gawad Saka Award 2011 in the farming family category. Since his farm is just around his house, farming including inland fish culture is part of the day-to-day life of his family. For more than a decade, they have been practicing diversified and integrated organic farming system (DIOFS). His house farm, which is around 7 hectares, has rice paddies, fishpond, fish hatchery, poultry house, fruit trees, vegetables and root crops. He also has a few heads of livestock.

As I drank the glass of tuba, he took a cup and filled it with fish feeds. He walked towards his fishpond, and I followed him. As he explained to me how he raised African hito and tilapia in his fishpond and how much it cost him, he kept on throwing floater feeds to several schools of fish. I thought that he was just repeating to me what he had just done to his visitors a while ago.

Rogelio said that practicing DIOFS is not easy, but it is an enjoyable and fulfilling endeavor. One has to sweat it out, especially in setting up the diversified and integrated farm. At first, he designed a plan for his farm, and he implemented his plan with his family. Together with his family, he invested time, energy, and money in order to make his planned complete farm come true.

Even when his complete farm has already been established, he still keeps on investing time, energy and money. He said that a farmer should be like a scientist, who keeps on experimenting in order to discover the solutions for his problem. The main problem of the farmer is how to keep the level of his productivity high and to keep his production cost low.

Finding solutions to this main problem has since become a way of life for Rogelio. He has since adopted a positive attitude to this problem, making it light to carry. He enjoys experimenting continuously in his farm, discovering new techniques and seed varieties appropriate in a given time and weather condition. He enjoys finding ways how [to] make his farm more productive and his production cost low.

No wonder that when I left his house, I still could sense a relaxed Rogelio. With his kind of attitude in farming, I would not doubt that sufficient food is always in his table.
systems were put in place to empower them against the oppressing suppliers and traders. With the common aspiration to be liberated from poverty, the sustainability of the project was well in place, according to the mayor.

The most valuable resources in this project were the human resources and their technical capabilities. The devotion and commitment put by partner organizations into project would amount to a big sum if the initiatives of each stakeholder were computed, said Mayor Jun.

**Cementing Changes in the Halls of Government**

According to Mayor Jun, “Before the end of my term in 2016, I need to lift my town mates out of poverty and raise the level of development in Dumingag. We, as municipal leaders, are passionate about good governance. If anyone has a good idea, s/he can give us a call even late at night. We are ready for meetings anytime of the day.”

The strong political will and collective leadership of Fellow Mayor Jun hastened the smooth and effective implementation of the Genuine People's Agenda through Transformative Education in the municipality of Dumingag. The mayor understood the need to develop a succession line of implementers to ensure that the project was carried out beyond his term.

Explaining his style of governance, the mayor said, “Collective leadership is my style. My level of understanding [on the situation of Dumingag] should be on the same level as the other [municipal officials and workers].”

Mayor Jun created teams of implementers in all 44 barangays of Dumingag. Each team was composed of a barangay councilor, a municipal councilor, and a sector/program representative from the barangay. The end goal of the program, according to Mayor Jun, was social enterprise.

Much remained to be done. As of 2013, of a total of 5,000 farmers, only around 500 or ten percent are into sustainable organic agriculture. Total conversion to organic farming is a challenge, according to the mayor. It takes painstaking education and collaboration to fulfill.

“Still,” said Mayor Jun, “We never tire. As long as we are alive, we will strain forward and relentlessly inspire the people to rise up from the bondage of poverty, sickness, and hunger.”
References


Genuine People’s Agenda Website. Retrieved from http://dumingaggpa.wordpress.com/2013/04/18/putting-learnings-into-action/


### Members of Guiding Coalition (GC) and Core Group (CG)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Juliet P. Agustin</td>
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## Annex 2

### Alignment of the Dumagag Genuine People’s Agenda with the Mindanao 2020 Peace and Development Framework Plan

1. The renewed vision of Mindanao 2020 includes in its overall goals and objectives the “widest access, especially for the young and the marginalized, to quality formal, non-formal, alternative, and indigenous education.”

2. Mindanao 2020 espouses an ecosystem-based approach in planning the development and economic activities of the island. “Organic farming and Halal food production will be an expanding component of Mindanao’s farm sector, given its natural suitability for these specialty niche segments of the market.”

3. Overall targets for 2016 include bringing down the income poverty incidence in Mindanao to 30 percent. By 2020, the target is down to an income poverty incidence of 25 percent. By 2030, poverty incidence target is 15 percent.
Educating individuals about their rights as citizens is one way of enhancing social capital. At the same time, social cohesion can be empowered by encouraging people to participate in community gatherings and discussions to defend and protect their fellowmen as well as their natural resources.
There is not only one road to peace. To Yusop Alano, Provincial Board Member of the 1st District of Basilan, inter-faith assemblies, where cultural differences are discussed, also pave the way to peace and development in Muslim and Lumad\(^1\) Mindanao.

The fragile peace and order situation in his hometown of Lantawan in Basilan is multifaceted, brought about by historical clan wars (rido) and socio-cultural divides. Yusop understands the road to peace would need an approach that is built on mutual understanding and respect.

Interfaith dialogues became one means to bring together people from different sectors to lay down their defenses and listen to one another. It was through the initiative of representatives from the Catholic Church and Muslim faith that started a dialogue in order to address the community’s concerns as well as the municipality’s issues on peace and order.

In order to realize its effectiveness, dialogues need to be done on a regular basis, according to Yusop. Otherwise, they only happen as needs become imminent. Moreover, these lines of communication need not only cut across various sectors of the community, but also across ages—especially among youth, who will sustain the groundwork laid down by their elders.

Values formation began in the confines of the home with Yusop’s father, a former barangay kagawad\(^2\), as the true disciplinarian. Education in the school and the mosque further developed his character. He grew up to have grounded principles and values which would later help him in his role as a public servant.

Yusop’s sphere of leadership grew from his days as a student leader and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK)\(^3\) leader to public service at the provincial government of Basilan. He was the SK president from 1993 to 1998, advancing the concerns of the youth in the Lantawan Municipal Council. In 2007, he returned to the legislature and served his first term as a provincial board member of the 1st district of Basilan.

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1. Lumad is a generic reference to the indigenous peoples of Mindanao.
2. The barangay is the smallest unit of government in the Philippines. Barangays constitute municipalities and cities and are meant to make the government more localized and accessible. The barangay kagawad, or barangay councilor, is an elected official mandated to pass barangay-level resolutions and ordinances.
3. The Sangguniang Kabataan, or youth council, is an elected body of youth leaders from 15 to 17 years old that serve as the youth legislature in every barangay.
Both a staunch follower of Islam and a committed civil servant, Yusop still hoped for peace, when Mindanao can live fearlessly during the day and sleep soundly through the night.

When Yusop was asked "What do you think is your purpose in life?" He replied, “To serve God the Almighty above all, to be a productive citizen, and to be an instrument of peace and unity to the people.” He envisioned a community without divides, of people with access to basic needs, and where Muslims and Christians work together for a greater future for Lantawan.

**Lantawan, Basilan**

Basilan is an island province in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). It is the largest and northernmost of the major islands of the Sulu Archipelago and is located just off the southern tip of the Zamboanga Peninsula.

Basilan is a third-income class province with a population of 293,322 and a poverty incidence rate of 32.5 percent. Excluding its capital Isabela City, which is still administered as part of the Zamboanga Peninsula, the province has twelve towns, namely Lamitan, Tuburan, Tipo-Tipo, Sumisip, Maluso, Akbar, Al-Barka, Hadji Mohammad Ajul, Ungkaya Pukan, the island municipalities of Hadji Muhtamad and Tabuan-Lasa, and Lantawan.

Overlooking the vast Sulu Sea, Lantawan sits on a gentle hill atop its surrounding areas. Statistics show that more than half of its population are youth and largely Muslim, with ethnic groups like the Yakan and Tausog leading the census (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of barangays</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Population (NSO, 2007)</td>
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<td>Youth Population, 15-39 years old (% of the total population)</td>
<td>16,228 (56%)</td>
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<td>Ethnic Population (% of the total population)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samal/Tausug</td>
<td>13,040 (45%)</td>
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<td>Yakan</td>
<td>8,693 (30%)</td>
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<td>2,609 (9%)</td>
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<td>Bisaya</td>
<td>2,318 (8%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2,318 (8%)</td>
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</table>

Source: Yusop Alano Presentation, MBLP Workshop 3

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4 A third-class province has an average annual income of 15 million pesos or more but less than 20 million pesos.

5 National Statistics Office, 2010

6 First Semester 2012 Poverty incidence among families (%) in ARMM: Basilan (32.5), Lanao del Sur (68.9), Maguindanao (57.8), Sulu (30.3) and Tawi-Tawi (20.8). National poverty incidence is at 22.3 percent.

7 Before September 2001, Basilan, including Isabela City, was under Region IX (Western Mindanao, or the Zamboanga Peninsula). In a plebiscite on the reorganization of the administrative regions in Mindanao, Basilan has opted to join the ARMM, but the residents of Isabela City voted to stay with Region IX.
A Land Divided by Its Narratives

“Basilan is fraught with social divides, the likes of which have been likened to many failed states around the globe,” describes Yusop of the context of his divide. “Aside from the usual culprits—the economic gaps, the educational differences, and problems of governance—we are more markedly divided by vast cultural chasms, thus resulting for the most part in religio-ethnic self-segregation, and leading therefore to mutual misunderstanding, distrust, and fear.”

The landscape of Basilan is blood-stained from a history of armed conflicts that it shares with the rest of Mindanao (see Annex 1). Ancestral domains and historic rights are at the roots of lamentable violence between the Muslim Filipinos and the predominantly Christian population and state.

An island paradise blessed with natural bounties, it is also the setting for gun battles, armed ambushes and clashes, bomb and grenade attacks, and kidnapping that have led to personal woes and community degradation.

The displacement of peoples and the deterioration of socioeconomic conditions have led conflict victims to flee and find refuge in fundamentalist movements. The Moro National Liberation Front, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and Abu Sayyaf, in fact, have built their support base from radical and dissatisfied Muslim youth who have been disadvantaged by war and excluded from mainstream society.

The inhumane activities of the Abu Sayyaf, which made Lantawan their haven, heightened in 2001 with a series of kidnapping and beheading of innocent civilians. These acts committed by one group have deepened the estrangement between Muslims and Christians.

Other forms of conflict have exacerbated the rift within the communities in Basilan. Rido, or clan conflict, has widened the gap among the ethnic groups in most barangays of Lantawan. Disagreements on matters of ancestral domain and resources result from the differing narratives of Muslims and Christians, tracing back to the time of colonization. According to Yusop, “Cultural differences are the existing divides in Mindanao.”

Youth for Peace

Yusop contemplated on two problems: first, how to unify the people of Lantawan, especially the youth; second, what strategy would be effective to initially break through the social divide. He hopes to transform the ideology of the community from discriminating each other based on their religious backgrounds to realizing that religious orientations should instead be appreciated. The idea of creating a peaceful Lantawan would be based on understanding the common concern and issues of all parties.

In 2011, Yusop Alano joined the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM). Through the skills and network he sought to develop during the program, Yusop hoped to achieve
his life mission of contributing to peace and development in Mindanao by empowering the youth and promoting their involvement in religious and cultural dialogues towards understanding and unity. Traditionally, participation was concentrated among community elders.

Observations of the increasing number of Muslim out-of-school-youth (30 percent of the youth population in Lantawan) disturbed Yusop. Many of them were jobless, some were lured into the use of prohibited drugs to while away their idleness.

He noticed that the SK was being politicized, because being in the council grants access to “exclusive advantages.” In effect, the interests of the youth, the sector for which the SK was created for, have been pushed aside.

To get a grasp of the realities and challenges in Lantawan, Yusop started with a survey of the youth councils in the municipality. Initial data-gathering in the 25 barangays showed that there were no initiatives to unite the Muslim and Christian youth (see Annex 2 for survey results).

The survey revealed that only four out of 25 barangay SKs implemented projects. Student governments, on the other hand, implemented only seven projects, mostly confined to sports fests and the construction of signages.

The change project of Yusop envisioned unity and cooperation among the youth in Lantawan by fostering understanding for and appreciation of different faiths, customs, and traditions among the youth towards community development and peace-building.

During the MBLP, Fellow Yusop formed his Guiding Coalition and Core Group (see Table 2 and 3) to assist him in organizing the 25 barangays of Lantawan for the facilitation of his change project for the youth. The creation of a Guiding allowed Yusop to tap into all sectors and faiths establishing a fundamental alliance that would bridge the social gaps.

**Basilan Youth Assemblies**

Yusop’s change project for the MBLP Fellowship centered on youth assemblies that sought to address the need for local policies and programs to promote the development of the youth, initially in the municipality of Lantawan, and foster appreciation and cooperation among Muslim and Christian youth in Basilan. According to Yusop, barangay projects failed to meet objectives in youth development.

He pointed out how his change project was aligned with the Mindanao 2020 Peace and Development Framework Plan 2011-2030:\(^8\) (1) Inter-barangay youth gatherings encouraged participatory decision-making and strengthened social cohesion, with gender equality integrated in all youth activities; (2) Youth development was enhanced through the capacitization for leader-

\(^8\) One of the guiding principles in Mindanao 2020 is the “participation of women and youth as essential elements for the success of various peace and development interventions. One of the thrusts is to “provide meaningful roles for children and youth...that fully recognize and harness their potential intellectual and creative contributions.”
ship and organization; and (3) Poverty alleviation was addressed through livelihood training.

Following a series of meetings and consultation with key youth leaders, the 1st Lantawan Youth Assembly (LaYA) was held in Isabela City on January 21 and 22. The assembly was well-represented by the different groups, represented by 45 youth leaders, in the municipality including the following: SK Chairmen and officers; presidents of the student governments of Lantawan’s three national high schools namely, Concepcion, Tairan, and Atong-Atong; youth leaders of church-based organizations; and leaders of Muslim youth groups.

Respected trainers from the academe, local government offices, and civic organizations contributed their expertise in giving the participants an orientation on frameworks, tools, and strategies for leadership. Dr. Socorro Rebecca B. Felonia and Dr. Marcelina Carpizo of the Western Mindanao State University facilitated a session on Leadership Concepts, Capital and Lifeline, and the Bridging Leader’s Framework, respectively.
Ms. Miriam L. Suacito, Executive Director of the Nagdilaab Foundation Inc., a non-government organization based in Basilan, facilitated a planning seminar aimed at harmonizing the strategies for youth development and cooperation for the year.

Mr. Pablan N. Alih, MLGOO of DILG-Lantawan, gave a basic course on municipal operations and protocols, which concluded with an animated forum on the issues of the youth sector as grasped by the local government unit.

Team-building exercises were conducted by Mr. Jaime A. Rivera, Regional Director of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry-Western Mindanao and ARMM and Project Manager of the 1st LaYA.

The youth leaders were formally organized and inducted during the assembly. The chosen Core Youth Leaders (see Table 5) represent different sectors and religious communities in Lantawan. These youth champions were pivotal to the formation of the first youth assembly.

According to Councilor Al Qaid Akbar, guest speaker during the event, “LaYA is the progenitor of the soon-to-be established Isabela City Youth Assembly, which when federated with the youth assemblies of [the] different cities and municipalities, will eventually form the Basilan Youth Assembly.”

LaYA continued to function under the guidance and support of the offices of the Provincial Governor Jum J. Akbar and of Board Member Yusop T. Alano, the Lantawan Local Government Unit, DILG-Lantawan, SK Municipal Federation of Lantawan, and the Nagdilaab Foundation, Inc.

On May 2 to 8, 2012, at least 150 young people from the different barangays of Lantawan gathered, this time for a seven-day Bridging Leaders’ Summit Youth Camp, dubbed Kabataan Summer Fun in Lantawan.”

The program of activities included inputs on inter-faith understanding, values transformation, livelihood development, leadership, health and the environment.
Ustadz Melvin Daud, a member of the Basilan Ulama Supreme Council, shared the ethno-history of Islamic Teaching and Christian Teaching.

Ms. Jocelyn Zabala of the Nagdilaab Foundation Inc. talked about Human Sexuality and Environmental Awareness. Mr. Rene Carbayas of the Philippine Information Agency advocated environmental care with topics on climate change and rubber and mangrove planting.

The youth participants were given livelihood skills with hands-on activities on food processing, labelling and packaging by Ms. Myra Alih, also an MBLP fellow, of the DOST-Lantawan. Public leadership was tackled by Yusop through an orientation on parliamentary procedures, ordinances and resolutions preparation.

Interactive sports, katutubong laro (native games) and a solidarity night were held in order to develop camaraderie among the participants.

**Local Resolutions for the Youth**

The youth assembly and summit were capped by two resolutions: (1) the ratification and adoption of the Lantawan Youth Agenda, and (2) the integration of LaYA into the Municipal Youth Development Plan of Lantawan.

Municipal Ordinance No. 04 series of 2012, *An Ordinance Creating the Lantawan Youth Development Council Providing Funds Therefore and For Other Purposes*, was authored by Hon. Jemar Ansaluddin, SK Municipal Federation President.

Sangguniang Bayan Resolution No. 16 series of 2012, *A Resolution Adopting the Lantawan Youth Agenda and To Integrate The Same Into the Youth Development Plan of the Municipality*, was presented to the body by Hon. Jemar Ansaluddin.
The highlights of the Lantawan Youth Agenda were as follows:

1. Local Government Policy Formulation and Strengthening
   - Creation of the Lantawan Youth Development Council

2. Education of Leaders and Capacitation of Organizations
   - Establishment of the Lantawan Youth Leadership Institute
   - Establishment of the Lantawan Scholarship Fund
   - Establishment of a Mindanao State University-College of Agriculture and Fisheries Annex in Lantawan Municipality, and

3. Livelihood Development for Youth Empowerment
   - Institutionalization of the Lantawan Youth Entrepreneurship Program

**Leading the Youth**

Stakeholder support and participation were evident in the pool of technical and financial resources for the two youth events held in Lantawan. Yusop’s Guiding Coalition supported the participatory planning among the youth in drafting the Youth Development Agenda and lobbying to the Sangguniang Bayan (Municipal Council) for the adoption of the agenda to the Municipal Youth Development Plan. Assistance in writing the project proposal for the youth assemblies and facilitating resource mobilization for these activities could also be credited to the Guiding Coalition.

The youth leadership camp was successfully conducted with the full support of the Municipal Government of Lantawan, the 4th Special Forces Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Nagdilaab Foundation Inc., the Liga ng mga Barangay (League of Barangays), and the Sangguniang Kabataan Federation of Lantawan.

Financial assistance to the project was given by the local government units in the following amounts: Php 75,000.00 from the 25 barangays; Php 50,000.00 from the municipal government; and Php 50,000 from the provincial government. Fellow Yusop Alano sourced out resources in the amount of Php 150,000.00 for pre-event organizing and meetings.

The community, for its part, provided the labor of 20 people during the youth assembly and summit. Transportation logistics was shouldered by the military and the municipal office. The Nagdilaab Foundation Inc. and the Department of Science and Technology-Basilan provided training materials and food during the events.

“I think what is really inspiring is when they see the youth taking action to unite and empower themselves. It is inspiring to see the youth engage in activities that would contribute to peace and order and development of the Municipality,” shared Yusop.
Peace Talks

Despite the success of the Lantawan youth events and activities, challenges in achieving peace through dialogues included unresponsiveness among those involved, according to Yusop. Changes were needed in peoples’ perception on the effectiveness of intercultural meets. Even in the Ulama Council, there were those who were not convinced of the impact of these activities, he added.

For Yusop, the best way to facilitate a collective response when the stakeholders are well-informed and that they understand the problem at hand. “If they do not know, they will not respond,” he stated. Key to getting their interest are a shared vision—one that is clear and realistic—and a series of consultative meetings.

Yusop’s change project has contributed to the increased interaction between Christian and Muslim children. Community activities, like basketball leagues and fiestas, are slowly gaining participation from Christians, Lumads, and Muslims. This newly developed relationship has slowly influenced their parents and families as well such that the family began attending meetings/gatherings to participate in solving community problems.

“[The youth assemblies] incurred burdens on my personal and family time, and even on my resources,” according to Yusop. ‘[Still,] being a Muslim who worships Allah I am called to do good to all.”

In the face of challenges and sacrifices, Yusop knew that the AIM Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership and his MBLP co-fellows were always behind him in his desire to contribute to the continuous development of his province. He knew he will never be alone.

References


Annex 1
Chronology for Moros in the Philippines

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 1993</td>
<td>A Philippine marine patrol was ambushed on the southern Mindanao island of Basilan. Twenty-five marines were killed, making this the worst ambush in the corp’s history. The event has prompted a renewed military crackdown on elements of the MNLF. The ambush was reported to be in retaliation for the rape of a Muslim woman.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun 1995</td>
<td>A gun battle between members of the Abu Sayyaf group and security forces on Basilan Island resulted in the deaths of 15 rebels and 7 soldiers. The government states that the Sayyaf group has links with Ramzi Ahmed Yousef who is on trial in New York in connection with the World Trade Center bombing (Reuters, 06/07/95).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1995</td>
<td>A breakaway faction of the MNLF killed six soldiers and then released seven teachers that they had abducted on Basilan island (Reuters, 10/01/95).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 1995</td>
<td>Clashes between government soldiers and MNLF members on Basilan island have broken a ceasefire between the two sides. The incident occurred when troops entered a rebel camp. Both sides suffered casualties (Reuters, 11/16/95).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 12, 1998</td>
<td>President Fidel Ramos reportedly cancels a visit to Basilan province following threats by Abu Sayyaf to disrupt his arrival and bomb an oil depot. Government officials just state that the visit has been postponed until February (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 01/12/98).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 13, 1998</td>
<td>Abu Sayyaf members are reported to be responsible for the killings of four fishermen on Basilan island. The four did not allegedly pay the organization “revolutionary taxes” (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 01/13/98).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 17, 1998</td>
<td>Three people are injured following a bomb explosion in Isabela, the capital of Basilan province. This is the stronghold of Abu Sayyaf. This is the 5th bomb attack in the past 5 weeks. President Ramos has rejected talks with Abu Sayyaf, arguing that the rebels are criminals (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 03/17/98).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19, 1998</td>
<td>Soldiers overran a suspected Abu Sayyaf camp in Basilan province after an ambush results in the death of one soldier. Abu Sayyaf blames the MILF for the ambush. Meanwhile, the MILF and government representatives are set to meet May 27-28 to develop an agenda for peace talks (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 05/19/98).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 6, 1998</td>
<td>The military suspends offensives only against Abu Sayyaf in order to pave the way for peace talks between the rebel organization and the Basilan provincial government. Last month, Abu Sayyaf indicated that it was willing to hold talks with the new administration of Joseph Estrada (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 06/06/98).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul 24, 1998</td>
<td>Officials state that two Abu Sayyaf members were arrested when their base was raided and another member was killed in an encounter in Basilan province (Agence France Presse, 07/24/98).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 25, 1998</td>
<td>Abu Sayyaf threatens to blow up two oil depots and a power barge. The group has reportedly carried out 11 bomb and rocket attacks in Basilan province this year (Agence France Presse, 10/25/98).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 18, 1998</td>
<td>The leader of Abu Sayyaf, Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, is killed in a clash with security forces near Isabela, the capital of Basilan province. The Libyan-trained rebel was the most wanted man in the Philippines. Two other Abu Sayyaf members and two policemen also died in the incident. Observers believe that Janjalani’s death could be a severe blow to the organization which is made up of some 200 rebels. Abu Sayyaf is reported to be behind a bombing of a shopping mall in Zamboanga city in the past week. More than 60 people were injured (Agence France Presse, 12/18/98).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 18, 1999</td>
<td>Authorities state that the MILF attacked three army detachments in Maguindanao and Basilan provinces. ARMM Governor Nur Misuari warns that thousands of former MNLF rebels will rejoin the armed struggle if the MNLF is not granted a provisional government over a larger area of the south. He also discusses the issue with a representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which helped broker the 1996 agreement (Agence France Presse, 01/18/99).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 25, 1999</td>
<td>Seven people are injured in a grenade attack on a police headquarters in Isabela, Basilan. Authorities believe Abu Sayyaf, which has vowed to avenge the death of its leader, is responsible (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 01/25/99).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 14, 1999</td>
<td>Officials state that at least five people are dead following an Abu Sayyaf ambush in Basilan. They also report MILF attacks on an army detachment in Bukidnon province. A face-to-face meeting between President Estrada and MILF chairman Salamat is expected during the President’s visit to Mindanao later this month (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 02/14/99).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 18, 1999</td>
<td>Officials state that Abu Sayyaf killed two Christian militiamen in Basilan province. The organization is also blamed for three bomb blasts in the region. A renewed military offensive against the group began earlier this year (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 03/18/99).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun 1, 1999</td>
<td>It is reported that Abu Sayyaf killed two Christian businessmen in Isabela, Basilan province (Agence France Presse, 06/01/99).</td>
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Source: University of Maryland Center for International Development and Conflict Management, retrieved from http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/chronology.asp?groupId=84003
Annex 2
Survey Results

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<th>Barangay Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Council)</th>
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<th># of Projects w/ Other Organizations</th>
<th># of Projects between Christian &amp; Muslim Youth</th>
<th># of Projects w/ NGOs, CSOs, POs</th>
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* Absent during the survey
### Annex 2 (continuation)

#### Survey Results

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Strengthening Electoral Reforms: A Building Block for Good Governance in Marawi City

Three days after the May 2013 elections, Major General Daniel A. Lucero was in his camp in Zamboanga del Sur closely monitoring the election results in Marawi City. Although he has already been commissioned to head the Philippine Army’s 1st Infantry Division in Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur, he still closely followed the election situation in Marawi City and Lanao del Sur where he used to be the commanding officer of the Army’s 103rd Brigade. He was elated when good news arrived in a newspaper article:

*Lanao del Sur makes history: No failure of elections*

“The history of Lanao del Sur since 1987, there had always been... a failure of elections. For the very first time, there is no failure of elections in the entire province of Lanao del Sur,” [Commission on Elections Chairman Sixto] Brillantes told reporters.

He remembered his men who, in their duty to protect the registration of voters in Marawi, lost their lives in an ambush. He knew that, with this feat in the last elections, their death and the untiring efforts of all those who shared his dream for Marawi City and Lanao del Sur have not become meaningless.

**The Fellow**

Dan Lucero was born on November 13, 1959 in Puerto Princesa, Palawan and was raised a Roman Catholic. He entered the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) in 1979 and graduated in 1983. In 1996, he took his first postgraduate studies in International Studies at the University of the Philippines, having accepted a scholarship grant from the 22K National Defense Act Scholarship Program. He took his second masteral course in International Relations in 1999 with specialization on International Security from the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. His thesis focused on “The Role of Culture in One’s Perspective on Security,” which earned him an award of distinction from the ANU.

In 2004, Dan was among the pioneering scholars of the United Nations Leadership Training for Peacekeeping in Bangkok, an international defense training program supported by the Australian and Royal Thai Army. He was also part of the International Visitors Leadership Program in Washington.
ton D.C. in 2008 initiated by the US State Department. Dan was grateful for these educational opportunities which motivated him to adopt a personal advocacy of serving and making a difference in the lives of his countrymen.

“It is more a personal motivation. I want to make a difference and repay the government for the opportunities I was given. I was educated, allowed to go overseas, used a lot of government funds [in the process], and I think I have to repay the people.”

From 2000 to 2002, then Lieutenant Colonel Dan Lucero was the commander of the 18th Infantry Battalion (IB) in Basilan, an island province south of the Philippines ensnared in a long history of conflict between guerilla groups and the government. During this time, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) sought to integrate former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) combatants into the Philippine Army under a peace agreement.

His predominantly Christian battalion was composed of Muslim Tausugs, which accounted for about 30 percent of the group. As part of his efforts to build loyalty among the Muslim “integrees,” he promoted qualified ex-MNLF combatants who showed exemplary performance in the army.

Under Dan’s leadership, the battalion received the most-coveted Commanding General-Philippine Army Streamer Award, recognizing the 18th IB was the “best infantry battalion” in the AFP in 2002. The following year, on top of his role as battalion commander, Dan was appointed spokesperson of the AFP’s Southern Command based in Zamboanga City.

In April 2003, he was chosen to simultaneously serve as the Chief of the Public Information Office and overall Spokesperson of the AFP. He held these posts until October 2004, with a clear mission to change the public’s negative perception of the AFP to “reliable protectors of democracy and human rights.”

The period between 2003-2004 was considered tumultuous for the AFP. The country was rocked by a series of violent incidents which included a spate of bombings in the major cities of Mindanao, namely Zamboanga, Davao, Cotabato, and Tacurong perpetrated by terroristic elements. Scandals exposing the ill-gotten wealth of some military generals came out alongside rumors of destabilization.

In July 2003, an attempted coup was staged by more than 300 soldiers who took over the Oakwood Premiere Hotel in Makati City, demanding the resignation of high government officials. Then Colonel Dan Lucero helped allay the fears of the general public during the siege by outmaneuvering the mutineers in the media during and after the incident, preventing them from gaining public support and sympathy.

He always stood by the guidepost that “the AFP has the duty to inform the public and the public has the right to know how their armed forces is secur-
ing them.” As AFP’s Spokesperson, Dan Lucero registered an unprecedented 1,104 television and radio interviews, 94 TV appearances in talk shows, 29 press conferences including foreign media, 27 speaking engagements as resource person in various fora, and 591 press releases cascaded through print, broadcast, and wire media services.

His hard work was not left unnoticed. In 2011, he was named as one of the Ten Outstanding Philippine Soldiers (TOPS) by the Metrobank Foundation and the Rotary Club of Makati, an annual distinction bestowed to exceptional AFP personnel. Dan’s award citation read:

“A military man has long been seen as stoic and content to let his actions speak for him, but what differentiates a man who has been appointed to speak for his peers? This was a challenge faced by (then) Col. Daniel A. Lucero, who was appointed as spokesperson of Southern Command in Zamboanga City in 2002, and as Chief of the Public Information Office of the AFP and concurrent Spokesperson in 2003. His 24/7 availability to the media, along with his skillful handling, allowed him to effectively respond to the negative feedback thrown against the AFP during his assignment as Spokesperson.”

In January 2011, Dan Lucero was appointed commanding officer of the Army’s 103rd Brigade based in Marawi City in Lanao del Sur. In leading the brigade, his mission was clear:

“From my first day as commander of this brigade up until today, my mission has been clear and consistent, to protect the rights of everyone—that everybody’s right to life, right to speak, right of suffrage to name a few are protected. That if in case any individual or group denies the people of these rights, your army will be there to bring justice to these individuals.”

Lanao del Sur and Marawi City

Lanao del Sur is one of five provinces of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), a region in southern Philippines. It is comprised of one city, its capital Marawi, and 39 municipalities. Lanao del Sur is inhabited by a predominantly Muslim indigenous group, known as the Maranaos or “People of the Lake”.

Lanao was a single province until it was divided, creating the provinces of Lanao del Sur (south) and Lanao del Norte (north) through Republic Act No. 2228 of 1959. The splitting of Lanao was seen to have transpired from the increasing influx of Christians from the islands of Visayas into the northern municipalities of Lanao, leaving the southern region still predominantly Muslim.

Despite its being a first-income class province1, poverty has been rampant in Lanao del Sur. At the start of 2012, 68.9 percent of the households were

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1 A first-income class province has an average annual income of at least Php 450 million.
living below poverty line, thrice the national average (22.3 percent). This has worsened from the recorded poverty incidence of 51.4 percent in the same period in 2009. Lanao del Sur is among the ten poorest provinces in the Philippines.

The low economic development in the province is seen to be caused by prevalent violence. According to a 2007 study supported by the USAID and The Asia Foundation, among the 11 provinces covered, Lanao del Sur topped the cases of *rido* (clan conflict) from the 1930s to 2005. Of the total 1,266 incidences reported, 637 (50 percent) *rido* incidences had occurred only in the last five years (2000-2004) and 377 (30 percent) were in Lanao del Sur.

**Marawi City: “Cheating Capital of the Philippines”**

The intense political rivalry and electoral fraud in Marawi City had so marred its political landscape and earned it the stigma of being the “cheating capital of the country.” Historically, every national and local election held in the city had been declared a failure by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC). Every campaign period and polling event had been accompanied by violence, fraud, vote-buying, and consequently negative media coverage.

Police and military authorities estimated that 25,000 loose firearms were in the possession of political candidates and criminals in Lanao del Sur. With politicians backed by private armies and illegal weapons, peace and security remained elusive to the citizens.

The city was mired in an internal divide wrought by a clannish culture that rendered the city vulnerable to political warlordism and relentless clan feuds. Small conflicts between families, often stemming from political and land issues, have been known to escalate into violent confrontations, claiming innocent lives and displacing families.

But Marawi City was not like this before. During the Spanish colonial times, the city, known then as Dansalan², was the center of trade and tourism in Mindanao. The Maranaos, who descended from tribes of Malay-Arabic origin, settled in the area long before the arrival of the Spaniards. They successfully foiled several Spanish and American attempts at colonization. This fierce resistance by the early Maranaos has kept it as much a stronghold of Islam culture as it is today. Marawi is referred to as the “Only Islamic city in the Philippines.”

Primary to the socio-political situation in Marawi is the power play among the Maranao ruling class typically composed of sultans, datus, and their closest relatives. Several of these families were able to maintain their elite status in the political or economic arena because of their lineage to the Sul-

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² In the Maranao dialect, Dansalan means “port of entry.” It was in June 1956 that the name of the town was changed to “Marawi” through a Congressional Amendment of the Charter through Republic Act 1552. The change was said to be in honor of the Marawi Sultanate Confederation. In June 1980, a City Council Resolution was passed renaming Marawi as “Islamic City of Marawi.” Today, the city remains the only chartered city in the Philippines with a predominantly Muslim population.
tans of Lanao. This stronghold over resources has resulted in economic inequality not only in the city but the entire province where the elite wielded control over the key businesses and key local government positions.

**Ownership: A Commander’s Sense of Duty to the Country**

As commander of all military troops in the entire province of Lanao del Sur, Dan made efforts to study the political, historical, and cultural peculiarities of his new assignment, especially of Marawi City. He read books and documents about the customs, traditions, religion, and social system of Marawi City. He also learned the Maranao language.

In studying the history and culture of the city, Dan discovered that, in its heyday, Marawi was the economic, political, and cultural hub of Mindanao. He learned that the city was once so vital to Mindanao that it carried the zero-kilometer marker that served as the distance reference for all roads in Mindanao. It was the envy of nearby cities, particularly of Iligan and Cagayan de Oro. Dan did all of these studies about Marawi because he knew that understanding the culture and politics of the Maranao people would be key to understanding the conflicts that debilitated the city and the entire province of Lanao del Sur.

To instill in all his soldiers an appreciation and respect for the Maranao culture, Brigadier General Dan Lucero required them to undergo a sensitivity seminar conducted by Muslim professors from the Mindanao State University (MSU). The lectures focused on respecting Maranao women. Dan barred the soldiers from having any romantic relationship with a Maranao woman because of the peculiarity of the culture. He also ordered them not to wear inappropriate attires, such as short pants or sandos, when in the presence of Maranao ladies. For Dan, these were the Brigade’s response to the Maranaos’ collective sense of propriety and value that they put on women.

As a result of the various trainings on Maranao culture, the soldiers gained a deeper understanding of the Maranaos and how their history and religion shaped their present psyche. Since then, there was no complaint filed against any of his soldiers, unlike in previous brigades where violations by soldiers caused violent repercussions.

Dan also accepted more Maranao officers into his brigade. Out of the 11 staff of the brigade, six were Maranao officers. This was followed by the recruitment of seven more Maranao personnel from the 4th Infantry Division. This was done to strengthen people’s trust in the brigade by showing that it was working for the security of the Maranaos.

In talking with the people, BGen. Dan Lucero discovered that the Maranaos continued to be partial against Christians. The Maranao Muslims looked down on Christians since the latter allowed themselves to be converted by Spanish colonizers and, later, collaborated in the invasion of Muslim provinces. Sharing the sentiment of other Muslims in the country, the Maranaos considered themselves more Muslim than Filipino. At times, Dan would
hear the term “Filipino” being used derogatorily. He related:

“Hanggang ngayon, yung mga matatanda sasabihin sa mga bata kapag may hindi magandang nagawa, ‘Pilipino ka talaga!’” (Until now, the adults would reprimand children when they do something improper by saying, ‘You really are Filipino!’)

To bridge this misunderstanding and prejudice, Dan worked towards building people’s trust in the military. BGen. Dan Lucero installed a hotline that served as the people’s link to the military. The hotline allowed concerned citizens to provide feedback, information, and comments to the brigade.

He also signed up to connect to a number of two-way radio groups in Lanao del Sur. In Marawi City and Lanao del Sur, the two-way radios were the most commonly used medium in spreading information to the general public. Being a member of radio groups allowed Dan to regularly exchange views and respond to questions raised by members of these radio groups. This surprised many members of these groups: Unprecedentedly, a brigade commander allowed himself to be questioned openly by the public. He explained the rationale for making himself and the brigade open to the public:

“With this, even if it meant some risk, I personally made sure that we, your soldiers, listened to you more, conversed with you more, walked among you more so that we would know what your needs are and find out how we can solve this together...

The most effective tool of the brigade is not our rifles, not our tanks, not our howitzers, but rather our telephone hotline where people can interact directly with the soldiers which satisfies an effective need-based approach where we tailor fit our actions to directly respond to the aspirations of the people.”

Dan Lucero also made sure that his brigade worked hand-in-hand with various groups and entities, and supported them in accomplishing their mandates (see Annex 1).

**The Change Project: Working towards Electoral Reforms**

Learning about their history and culture, Dan was fueled with the desire to help Marawi City recover from being mired in political chaos, slow economic growth, clan feuds, unabated criminality, and from an overall feeling of helplessness among Marawians. Dan further explained the Marawi City he found upon his assumption as Commander of the 103rd Brigade:

“First, there was tolerated terrorism. The government could not even do its way because it was being controlled by thugs and gangs. There was unabated criminality; name it they have it—[it was] a hub [for] drug-pushing, you can find kidnap for ransom for-hire [groups], illegal logging, and so forth and so on. Residents live under an environment of fear, there was a breakdown of the justice system, there was impunity... there was feeling of despair and helplessness.”
Dan wanted to contribute to rebuilding Marawi City to its former glory as the model city of Mindanao. To achieve these goals, he knew that the local government institutions would have to be geared towards effectively serving the basic needs of the citizenry. Key to this would be implementing electoral reforms that would allow citizens to practice their right to vote and install legitimate leaders into public office. Thus, Dan's first goal was to work towards taking Marawi City off the list of "cheating capitals" of the country.

In pursuit of this mandate, he resolved to approach the divide as culturally sensitive, politically neutral, and as well-knowledgeable of area's history as possible. It was clear in his mind that to achieve change in Marawi, he needed to establish relationships with key players in the community by aligning his interests with theirs. Dan Lucero explained his mandate as commander, leader, and member of the government:

“I believe that my role is beyond winning battles. As protector of the people, I cannot afford to be a passive watcher, seeing the rights of the Maranaos being violated. As a commander, I subscribe to the belief that if you want to understand how the Maranaos think, use their lens; they have specific and peculiar views on the world, particularly in Lanao del Sur and Marawi City. So I believe that as a commander, I have to be culturally-sensitive, I have to be politically-neutral and mature, and I have to be savvy about their history, about the history of the Maranaos.”

**Co-ownership: Bridging the Divide through Communication**

To achieve his goal of taking Marawi City off the list of "cheating capitals" of the country, Dan knew he could not and should not work alone. However, the task of creating a coalition to help him in implementing electoral reforms in Marawi City was not an easy job. Plus, he had to form this coalition soon. The next national election was fast-approaching (in May 2013). Dan initially doubted that he'd be able to achieve his goal in time.

Fortunately, opportunities snowballed for him on June 11, 2012 when the Philippine Congress approved Congressional Joint Resolution No. 03, which annulled the Book of Registered Voters in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The ARMM voters list was deemed fraudulent, said to contain “hundreds of thousands of fictitious voters,” and identified as instrument for electoral cheating in the region.

The Resolution provided for the conduct of a General Registration from July 9 to 18, 2012 to clean up the voters list. Soon the COMELEC-issued Resolution No. 9445, which deputized the 103rd Brigade and its operationally controlled units, to take charge of the security concerns that could arise in the General Voters' Registration. This was the platform that Dan Lucero was waiting for—a platform that could get all major stakeholders to work together.
Dan spurred into action. First, he collaborated with Radio Forum, a network of 28 groups with an estimated 700 members each that utilized two-way CB radios as their source of information on current events in the province. With the people’s limited access to TV and radio, the Radio Forum had a bigger following than the latter combined. He sought the help of the Radio Forum to invite various individuals and organizations to his planned Registration Summit. The summit was to be a venue where people can express what they want accomplished in the forthcoming General Registration. He immediately prepared for the conduct of a summit that would convene citizens and local leaders for a consultative activity on how to conduct the mandated General Registration in a peaceful manner.

In disseminating information about the General Registration, BGen. Lucero utilized the hotline number that he directly managed and established upon his assumption as Brigade Commander. It became the means to report registration atrocities and election-related problems. The hotline allowed Dan and his brigade to immediately respond to feedback and install preventive measures, while maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality to those who reported.

He also prepared his soldiers for the conduct of the General Registration by letting them undergo a training on how to be culturally sensitive, particularly in dealing with Maranao women during the registration. He asked Maranao professors from MSU to develop a module to train his soldiers.

On June 29, 2012, the 103rd Infantry Brigade, in partnership with the provincial office of the COMELEC, the ARMM Regional Government, and the Lanao del Sur Peoples’ Council, held a registration summit in Marawi City entitled “Forum on Partnership Building for Lanao del Sur Electoral Reform Initiatives.” It was the first summit of its kind to be held in the province, attracting hundreds of citizens and local leaders, including COMELEC Commissioner Armando Velasco who came all the way from Manila. Through the summit, the role of and expectations from the 103rd Brigade soldiers in the upcoming General Registration became clear:

- To escort the vehicles ferrying the biometric machines and trained election officers from Iligan to the Lanao del Sur to prevent any elements from interfering in the registration process;
- To deploy and train female soldiers who were tasked to conduct frisking or body searches of Maranao women registrants;
- To set up checkpoints (manned by the police and 103rd Brigade soldiers) at strategic entry points to the province and the city to discourage the “flying registrants” paid by politicians; and
- To import additional troops from Lanao del Norte to secure the ten-day voters’ registration and allocate more troops in known hotspots.

After the summit, BGen. Lucero capitalized on the Maranao “tarpaulin culture” to create awareness among citizens on the need to participate in the General Registration and to promote a Kontra-Salimbut (anti-cheating)
Tarpaulins were posted all throughout the city and the province carrying encouraging messages such as “Let us make elections something we can be proud of.” Some tarpaulins provided information on penalties imposed on violators, others reminded that “cheating is against Islam.” Dan observed that the signs on the penalties served as effective deterrents. For one, people did not want to lose their eligibility in getting a passport, and violating election policies will incur them a criminal record that will be reviewed in passport applications. Without a passport, they will not be able to travel to Mecca, a religious aspiration among all Muslims.

Through the media, Dan was able to get publicly announced commitments from local government officials to invest in CCTV (closed circuit television) cameras for the forthcoming General Registration. The CCTVs were to guard the elections against anomalies. As public officials donated the security cameras, it was Dan’s soldiers who installed them in polling precincts around the province. Also, given an environment of impunity, the cameras were to provide proof for proper convictions should there be electoral violations committed in the province. As a result, Lanao del Sur is the first province to install 100 security cameras in its polling precincts.

Dan also took the opportunity to relate to local leaders, the sultans and datus of the province. His extensive study of the Maranao culture enabled him to establish rapport with them and also earn their trust. He sought the cooperation of the academe, particularly MSU, which is housed in Marawi City. As an outsider and Christian, he needed to earn the respect of members of the academe. Through occasional lectures at the university, he engaged faculty members and students in discourse.

As events succeeded the General Registration, Dan increasingly became aware that he was not alone in his vision of rebuilding Marawi’s reputation as a model city. He discovered that many shared his desire to promote good governance, not only in Marawi, but also in the entire province of Lanao del Sur. Other individuals and groups also saw the value of institutionalizing political changes through electoral reform. On July 5, less than a week before the General Registration, hundreds of individual advocates and community social organizations (CSOs) converged at Plaza Cabili, Marawi City to rally against cheating or “salimbut.” This was followed by a motorcade or caravan participated by an estimated 500 motorists.

The General Registration, conducted from July 9 to 18, 2012, was hailed a relative success by COMELEC. It was successful in terms of reducing the number of ghost or flying voters in Marawi City. From 66,988 registered voters in the old voters list, the number went down to 33,718. The General Registration also yielded significant variances in Lanao del Sur, which posted the highest reduction in number of voters among five provinces in ARMM—from 521,969 to 350,268. The average decrease among the five provinces was at 23.8 percent (see Table 1).

The media also hailed the General Registration a success due to the cooperation shown by various sectors—the military, local government units,
media, and civil society. In a July 16 release of an interview by the Philippine Star, a major daily, Dan was quoted for having called this rare show of collaboration among CSOs, Moro groups, students, and religious leaders, termed as “Bangsamoro Spring,” in preventing registration anomalies. For his efforts in cleaning up the voters registration, BGen. Dan Lucero, together with Lanao del Sur PNP Provincial Director Romeo Magsalos, was awarded a certificate of recognition by the COMELEC.

The General Registration, however, was not without its conflicts and losses. During the 10-day registration, the AFP caught 30 MSU students who were non-residents of Marawi trying to register as voters. They claimed to have been coerced by their apartment owner to register or face being evicted from their apartments. The landlord was reported to be close to a local politician. Truckloads of flying registrants were also intercepted in other areas such as the municipalities of Saguiaran and Malabang. People caught trying to register as Marawi voters came all the way from the nearby provinces of Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, and Iligan City.

On August 8, 2012, three of Dan Lucero’s soldiers were killed while ten others were wounded after unidentified and heavily armed men fired upon them while conducting security patrol around the 433-hectare MSU campus. These soldiers helped in the last general voters’ registration and were also active in running after drug syndicate and illegal loggers in the city.

His intentions to reform the electoral process also garnered for Dan Lucero enemies out of politically powerful individuals (see box in the next page). Efforts were made to either threaten him or discredit him. A petition was even filed with the highest official of the AFP calling for his relief service, but this was later withdrawn. To defend BGen. Lucero, other groups who believed in him countered this and sent letters calling for his retention as commander in Lanao del Sur. Their petitions were addressed to the head of the AFP (see Annex 3) and to the Philippine President.

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3 The term was a reference to the Arab Spring, the series anti-government protests, armed rebellion and civil uprising that happened in the Middle East in 2011. The protests were said to be an expression of deep-seated resentment of the citizens at the ageing Arab dictatorships.
Co-Creation: Sustained Stakeholder Collaboration

Dan initiated the formation of the Multi-Sectoral Advisory Board (MSAB), composed of 21 members from seven key sectors (media, academe, business, local government, youth, religious groups, and civil society) of Maranao Society. The MSAB served as a platform for sharing views and generating solutions towards improved governance in the province. Subsequently, the Board also increased the credibility of the AFP’s 103rd Brigade in settling incidences of *rido*. It was MSAB’s recommendation to convene the Depart-

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**Conflict and Reconciliation of BGen. Dan Lucero and Mayor Fahad Salic of Marawi City**

One of the prominent people whom Dan Lucero found himself in conflict with was Marawi City Mayor Fahad Salic. The conflict was said to have emanated from the 103rd Brigade’s involvement in the anti-logging campaign of the DENR after Typhoon Sendong devastated most of Mindanao and when the brigade joined the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in raids against drug dealers who were reported to be close to, or alleged to be relatives of, the mayor.

The conflict escalated when unidentified armed men ambushed a unit of the Brigade patrolling around the Mindanao State University (MSU) campus, resulting to the loss of the lives of three soldiers and a child. Army officers said that the ambush was led by members of a criminal syndicate allegedly associated with Mayor Salic. After all these incidents, Dan Lucero stopped receiving invitations to attend the Marawi City Peace and Order Council meetings, and the Mayor also stopped attending events organized by the military.

The conflict further escalated when the city government filed a petition to General Dellosa of the AFP requesting for the relief from service of BGen. Dan Lucero, who according to the letter was “the worst slaughterer of the Maranaos.” The petition was signed by nine out of 90 barangay captains in Marawi City.

Later, it was Mayor Salic who made the move to be reconciled with Dan Lucero. He contacted his brother, former mayor of Marawi City Omar Ali Solitario, who then contacted his close friend Ting-Ting Cojuangco, adopted classmate of Philippine Military Academy (PMA) 1983, Dan Lucero’s class in the PMA. Ms. Cojuangco became the mediator when she hosted a meeting between Mayor Salic and BGen. Lucero in the Philippine National Police camp in Cagayan de Oro City.

In that meeting, the two agreed to work together and signed a covenant to promote peace and development in Marawi City. Since then, the Mayor started inviting Dan Lucero again to the meetings of the Peace and Order Council, and graced the events organized by the Brigade. Also a positive sign was when Dan proposed a talk on the Bridging Leadership Program, which the mayor accepted. On September 5, 2012, the Marawi City Government led by its mayor initiated a workshop on Good Governance, held at the MSU.
ment of Education (DepEd), COMELEC, and CSOs to get feedback on what transpired during the previous elections. The session was also to bridge years of distrust and blame that had kept any solutions to address electoral problems from being proposed, much less enacted.

There were signs of change that emanated from the efforts of Dan and the MSAB. In the months leading to the May 2013 elections, pocket meetings were organized by different groups to discuss anti-salimbut. Dialogues on electoral anomalies and poll-related violence were conducted. With a more open discussion of the problems, preventive solutions were explored.

Another summit was held on January 23, 2013, which advocated against electoral cheating especially on the forthcoming May 13 elections. Dubbed “Kasalimbago sa Elections 2013,” this event brought together an estimated 500 participants from government agencies such as the COMELEC, DepEd, the AFP, the Philippine National Police (PNP), and local partners and stakeholders such as the local chief executives of ARMM and Lanao del Sur, municipal governments under the province, and CSOs.

Dan was able to solicit the participation of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), two major separatist movements in Mindanao, in supporting the electoral process. In a Philippine Information Agency (PIA) press release, Dan was quoted as saying, “This year’s election became a tool for building confidence with our MILF and MNLF brothers. They joined us with our appeal to local candidates to observe fair, clean, honest, and peaceful elections.”

From April 2013 until the eve of the May 2013 midterm elections, various stakeholders initiated peace covenant signings involving local candidates in Marawi City and in other municipalities in Lanao del Sur. During these events, most of which were attended by Dan, local candidates were asked to publicly swear before the Qur’an to work for an honest election and disavow violent means for winning and to abide and honor the covenant that they signed. Various NGOs and CSOs, including groups of Ulamas and Imams, actively supported this effort. Notably, even the International Monitoring Team to the Government of Republic of the Philippines-Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GRP-MILF) Peace Process participated in some of the peace covenant signing events.

**Relinquishing His Post**

In April 2013, Dan Lucero was promoted to Division Commander of the Army’s 1st Infantry Division based in Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur. While he has been commissioned to another post, he ventured several visits to Marawi City. What he observed was the makings of a city on its second step closer to better governance. It was a city of people more open to challenging perceived realities, unafraid to take the steps in making changes happen albeit slowly, but nevertheless, surely. Dan Lucero mused:
“In my daily dealings with the ordinary Maranao, the men and women I meet everyday, I cannot but be touched by their desire for good governance and a better life.”

He believed that Marawi City will soon be a strong model to its neighbors of the benefit of divesting biases, setting aside fear, and being open to dialogue. If it is any indication of things to come, the Lanao del Sur People’s Council (LDSPC), a convergence of 63 NGOs and People’s Organizations, vowed to continue pushing for electoral reforms and good governance in Marawi City and in the entire province of Lanao del Sur. Dr. Noni Lao, Executive Director of the LDSPC, said that after spearheading the Kasalimbago (Reform) sa 2013 Elections Summit held in Marawi City, the LDSPC will not stop in helping erase the stigma attached to Lanao del Sur: the “cheating capital” of ARMM. Dan only knew too well how important this commitment is for, after all, the real challenge lies in sustaining all these change efforts now that he was no longer based in Marawi.

It was the first time in the 23 years of ARMM that local and national elections were synchronized. Relative peace was observed during the May 2013 elections, finally allowing the people of Marawi to exercise their right to suffrage and choose their own leaders. However, the tenure of these elected officials will be short-lived. The Bangsamoro Framework Agreement between the Philippine Government and the MILF will entail the creation of a new political entity to replace ARMM, and a Bangsamoro Transition Authority is planned to be set up by 2015.

Interestingly, 2015 would also be about the same time as Dan’s retirement from service and he acknowledged the forthcoming change. Like all changes in his life, he looked forward to the risks he had to take and the challenges that accompany his ever-expanding understanding of the world. He knew it would not stop him from always trying to do what needs to be done, to make wherever he was assigned a better place.

On April 24, 2013, during his Relinquishment of Command Speech in Marawi City before moving on to his new post in Pagadian City, he spent some 15 minutes acknowledging all leaders and officials in attendance. Some people, including Samira Gutoc-Tomawis of the ARMM Regional Government, were surprised that he knew the name of every leader and official in that ceremony.

“The general named every one in the crowd one by one by their name showing how he had endeared himself to many of the Maranaos who have had a traumatic view of the army in the past. An MILF ceasefire leader, a priest, civil society, mayors, governors can only come together in Marawi City and Lanao because of one person who bridged when many local leaders could not.”

Most part of BGen. Lucero’s speech was spent thanking all those who helped him during his two-year assignment as commander of the 103rd Brigade.

“As I move on to my next assignment, I cannot but thank you...
enough for the support you have extended to me during my stay here in Marawi. Special mention goes to the governor and other officials of the province, the local chief executives of the various municipalities, the NGOs, CSOs, radio groups, leaders from the academe, traditional and religious leaders, the young people of Lanao del Sur, the media, MSAB and Kasalimbago members, the PNP, PDEA and my comrades in the MILF, you are all part of my success. My success could not have happened without your support, trust and contribution.”

Epilogue

Unfortunately, Dan Lucero did not live to his retirement nor witness the transitions in the political landscape of ARMM. Dan passed away on June 2, 2013 from a heart attack following a dive in Tabak Beach in Tukuran, a marine sanctuary near the 1st Infantry Division in Zamboanga del Sur. The dive was part of a reception outing for second lieutenants who were newly assigned in Zamboanga. The week before this tragic event, Dan was among the honorees commended by Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin at a ceremony for peacekeepers during the International Day of UN Peacekeepers in Camp Aguinaldo.

During his necrological services, Dan was given a 21-gun salute and military honors befitting his rank and exemplary service to the military. Close friends, family members, colleagues expressed loss and regret over his passing. Journalists hailed Dan as one of the “good guys in the military.” Major General Benito de Leon, commanding general of Training and Doctrine Command of the 103rd Brigade, remembered him as a “refined, soft-spoken, and highly respected officer.” Samira Gutoc-Tomawis, sectoral representative to the legislative assembly of the ARMM, summarized Dan Lucero’s unique contribution to peace-building in Mindanao:

“He showed us that true friendship between Christians and Muslims is possible.”

References


Annex 1
103rd Infantry Battalion’s Collaboration with Various Agencies

The 103rd Infantry Brigade, including its operationally controlled battalions (51st, 64th and 65th Infantry Battalion), assisted the Philippine National Police, local government units, and other national government agencies in maintaining peace and order in their respective areas and in implementing their mandates.

- **Peace and Order Council (POC)** – The Brigade had strong presence in the provincial, city, and municipal-level POCs. These POCs included the Local Chief Executives, PNP Chiefs, Sangguniang Bayan (Municipal Council) members, among others.

- **Philippine National Police** – In his report to the Lanao del Sur Provincial POC, Police SSUPT Romeo Magsalos, the Provincial Director of Lanao del Sur stated that there has been a significant decrease (by 41 percent) in the index crimes (physically pursued crimes) committed in Lanao del Sur from July 2011 to July 2012. He personally acknowledged the contribution of the army—as a supporting agency to law enforcement—in the improvement of the security situation in Lanao del Sur.

- **Land Transportation Office (LTO)** – Since 2010, the LTO issued a deputation order, which mandated the Brigade to support the LTO in implementing land transportation laws. With the help of the Brigade, the LTO serving Iligan City and Marawi City was able to increase its revenues by 30 million pesos and one million pesos respectively for CY 2011.

- **Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)** – The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the PDEA and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has been the basis of the partnership between PDEA-ARMM and the 103rd Infantry Brigade. Working together, the two entities were able to apprehend ten drug pushers, including two local policemen. In 2011, the PDEA conducted two buy-bust operations where the Army in Lanao del Sur provided security support.

- **Mindanao State University (MSU)** – The Army in the province was a partner of MSU in protecting the students and professors at the university against kidnapping and other criminalities. Very recently, the brigade, in response to the request of ARMM, sent a small contingent to MSU to secure students who have been threatened by their landlord when they refused to register under fictitious names during the last voters’ registration.

- **Department of Environment and Natural Resources** – In line with the campaign of the national government through the DENR and the ARMM against illegal logging, the brigade, as mandated by Executive Order No. 23 and as a member of the Provincial Task Force prescribed by ARMM Executive Order No. 4, supported the Developmental, Environmental Protection, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, and Law Enforcement Operations.

From 15 January 2011 to 28 August 2012, through the conduct of checkpoint operations, mobile patrols and visits to the different “hotspot” logging areas, the brigade confiscated around 200,000 board feet of round logs and flitches in Lanao del Sur. It also confiscated a number of cutting tools and the closure of 12 sawmills in Maguing, Bubong, and Kapai, all in Lanao del Sur. Around 20,000 seedlings of different kinds of trees were also planted by the brigade in different municipalities in the province with the cooperation of different local government units and civic service organizations.
### Annex 2

**Project Milestones of BGen. Dan Lucero**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Trigger Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 14, 2007</td>
<td>Failure of elections declared in at least eleven (11) towns in Marawi, Lanao del Sur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10, 2010</td>
<td>National and Local Elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 2011</td>
<td>Signing of Republic Act 10153 or “An Act Providing for the Synchronization of the Elections in ARMM with National and Local Elections”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 11, 2012</td>
<td>Congressional Joint Resolution Annulling the ARMM Book of Voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 29, 2012</td>
<td>Registration Summit • 103rd Multi-Sectoral Advisory Board (MSAB) was organized • Hotline, managed by BGen. Dan Lucero, was launched to generate reports on electoral violations and election-related crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 5, 2012</td>
<td>Anti-Cheating (<em>Salimbut</em>) Rally at Plaza Cabili, Marawi City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 9 to 18, 2012</td>
<td>General Registration of Voters in ARMM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11, 2012</td>
<td>Thirty (30) non-Maranao students of Mindanao State University caught attempted to falsify registration, coerced by landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 5, 2012</td>
<td>Marawi City-initiated Workshop on Good Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1-5, 2012</td>
<td>Filing of the Certificate of Candidacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 8, 2012</td>
<td>Dan Lucero conferred the AFP Bayanihan Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 19, 2012</td>
<td>Peace Covenant signed between intense political rivals Butig Mayor Ibrahim R. Macadato and former mayor Atty. Dimnatang P. Pansar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 23, 2013</td>
<td>Conduct of Electoral Summit themed “Kasalimbago sa Election 2013”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 5, 2013</td>
<td>Four (4) Mayoralty candidates sign Peace Covenant; also present were five (5) mayoral candidates that earlier signed a peace covenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13, 2013</td>
<td>National and local elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15, 2013</td>
<td>COMELEC Chairman Sixto Brillantes Jr. announces Lanao del Sur’s first declaration of ‘no failure in elections’ since 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 3

LASURECO and the Royal Sultanate of Tegaya petitions for the retention of BGeneral Dan Lucero

August 27, 2012

General JESSIE DELLOSA, AFP
Chief of Staff
Armed Forces of the Philippines
General Headquarters
Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City

Sir:
Greetings of peace!

In behalf of the good people of the Royal Sultanate of Tugaya, and the people of Lanao del Sur we are pleased to inform you that Colonel Daniel A. Lucero, our adopted son with the rank of Datu a Kalilintad (Prince of Peace), has been doing his job well in his area of responsibility. The recent incidents that shook the province of Lanao del Sur are tests to his statesmanship. Indeed, he is an officer and a gentleman. He has skillfully handled the situation to prevent the escalation of the conflict.

We need few good men like him. His sense of fairness is demonstrated when he visited the victims of the Incidents from Tugaya, Lanao del Sur in the hospital. He also led concerned citizens to extend financial assistance to the victims.

We are behind the efforts of Colonel Lucero to restore sanity in our province. He has the courage to stand by his conviction that peace and development should continue to gain momentum in spite of the unfortunate incidents.

We look forward to the continued performance of Colonel Lucero as Brigade Commander of the 103rd Brigade, 1st ID, Philippine Army in the interest of peace, justice, and development.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

SULTAN ASHARY P. MAONGCO
Sultan of Tugaya & General Manager, LASURECO

Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Malwangan, Marawi City, 9700, email add: teamlasureco@yahoo.com
Annex 4

Tribute to BGen. Dan Lucero

“I won’t forget the time when we met in Barangay Muh Buh, Tuburan town after my unit figured in a firefight with the Abu Sayyaf on February 25, 2002. I sensed that there might be more armed men from the MILF and MNL who could join the firefight unless we acted promptly. I needed some help from a larger force temporarily stationed just a kilometer away. When I requested for blocking forces, he promptly heeded my request. There was no pintakasi (sympathetic attack) from the other armed groups nearby because of his immediate response. I was able to evacuate my wounded men safely.”

“When the smoke of the battle was clear, I conducted link-up operation with his unit and I was surprised to see then Lt Col Dan Lucero leading his men in the frontline! … Amidst the volley of fires, I heard his calm voice directing his men to confront the Abu Sayyaf that would come their way. It was through his help that my unit killed Tuan Ben a.k.a. Abu Malaysia during a running gun battle that ended at 5:00pm that day.”

— Harold Cabunoc,
Leader, Scout Ranger
(http://www.rangercabunzky.blogspot.com)

“I can best describe my dear friend, partner and fellow environmentalist BGen Dan Lucero as ‘Lawrence of Ranao.’ Like Lawrence of Arabia, he showed the best example of a non-Muslim who worked for the cause of the Muslim community despite all the challenges and complexities.

Sir, you will be best remembered in your endeavors and public service to Lanao del Sur. You are not simply a General Lucero from Palawan, but General Lucero of Lanao. Your Youth Leadership Program (Youth for Peace – Lanao) that trained 300 young Maranaos all over the province is a seed of hope in our Lanao del Sur youth. I believe (that) those hopes, learning, realizations and dreams that sprout in every one of our trainees will not go in vain, but will prosper. In Sha Allah, and will transform their lives (no to drugs, values formed, save Mother Earth, Bayanihan, and love the country) as young leaders. If most of the military leaders of the country were like you, then I can say that you Philippine Army goal (e.g. world-class army in 2020) would be achieved.”

— Zobair Balindong Sidic,
Maranao youth

“I always value my friendship with BGen Dan Lucero which started in our first meeting in Australia in 1986. He is man word, he is a brother to everyone irrespective of religion and tribe. We will miss him so much especially with all the programs he left behind as former brigade commander of Lanao del Sur. May you rest in peace.”

— Macabangkit Ati,
Author of Regionalization for Local Autonomy and Development in the Philippines: A Study of Region XII, Central Mindanao

“This is sad news. Dan Lucero was a bright and thoughtful leader. He believed in curbing the insurgency by alleviating poverty at the grassroots, not just through bullets. We’ll miss you.”

— Marites Danguilan Vitug,
Journalist

“I met him while his military career was in the freezer because of his involvement in coup attempts against the late President Corazon Aquino. Interestingly, it was Mrs. Aquino’s son who finally promoted him from colonel to general last year and to a senior post this April.

It was Lucero who patiently explained to me what soldiers were fighting for. And he also showed to me how soldiers could be honorable.

I only knew him on a professional basis – as a valued source who gave me many deep backgrounds on rapidly unfolding political events that embroiled the military. And who patiently explained to me the soldier’s viewpoint on politics, the communist insurgency and the Muslim rebel conflict. He was also very humble. I didn’t know he was quite bemedalled. He was a soldier to the end. Godspeed, General Lucero.”

— Raisa Robles,
Investigative Journalist (www.raisarobles.com)

Cristobal Perez, Commanding Officer of the 18th Infantry Battalion, recalled how much he had learned from BGen Dan Lucero back when he was under the BGeneral’s command. After boasting of the number of MILF and MNLF soldiers that he had eliminated, Major Gen Perez was admonished by BGen Lucero:

“You can’t kill ideas by killing people, you can kill an idea by supplanting it with another idea.”
Zenaida Masong currently sits as the Station Manager of the public radio station DXSM Radyo Ng Bayan in Jolo, the capital of Sulu province.

“What is the first thing you think of,” she asks, “when you hear about Sulu?”

She provides you with a shortlist of possibilities: the sensational kidnapping of news anchorwoman Ces Drilon and members of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the bombings of churches, and other sensational news stories of armed conflict.

These snapshots are accurate—a good summation of the picture that would be impressed if one’s knowledge of the province of Sulu were based solely on news as reported in mass media.

Zenaida, a veteran in the world of broadcast journalism, has been working as a journalist for 35 years. She recalls that, in her work, she herself contributed sensationalized news stories about Sulu. She describes this kind of work as part of the course for media professionals working in the province. “Even foreigners come to Sulu to cover stories about conflict,” she says. “Ito ang hinahanap sa amin.” (This is what is expected from us [journalists].)

A deeper realization on her role as a journalist came to her when she was asked to do a change project for the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM). Zenaida explains, “The divide that I wanted to address was the negative perception created by sensational news reporting that makes our province look notorious to the world. And the truth is, in the past, I was a participant to this. I am a journalist. I participated in creating this problem and I came to realize that during my stint with AIM.”

Through her change project, she hoped to use her role as journalist “to bring back people’s confidence in the government by delivering news on government services provided.”

Critical Reflection Towards Self-Mastery

Zenaida was born in Jolo in 1955. Both her parents were Chinese-Tausug. Her father was an ex-military officer who she describes as very strict. Her
mother was a housewife. They had seven children, only one of whom was a boy. Zenaida was the youngest child.

While growing up a Muslim, Zenaida recalls also observing Chinese traditions such as bringing food and offerings to ancestors. She describes a close relationship with her parents. As a child, she used to accompany her father to military camps. Sometimes the whole family would make these trips when her father would be assigned to other provinces.

After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in education, Zenaida found work as an announcer at a radio station. It was there that she met her husband, a migrant from Cebu and a Catholic, who was working as a technician at the station. Soon after, they had three children, all of whom were raised Muslim, like herself.

From a young age, Zenaida recalls that she and her siblings were taught the value of honesty. Her father would talk of his role as a government employee as an honor. Zenaida looked up to her father for being a good provider for their family and remembers that he taught his children, most of whom ended working in government, to honor their role and preserve their integrity.

Strength and integrity would later become important values in Zenaida’s life. She became widowed early, at the age of 33. With three children to raise on her own, she describes her attitude as one that does not allow for grieving too long over negative things and events. This kind of fortitude would prove to be beneficial to her throughout her life.

When she became radio station manager, she decided to enhance her skills. She took up a Master’s Course in Public Administration in 1996 at the Sulu

News Feature:
Bandits Behead 2 in S. Philippines
by Zeny Masong (AP, August 22, 2002)

JOLO, Philippines (AP) - The heads of two Jehovah's Witnesses kidnapped in a Muslim extremist group's stronghold were found dumped in a public market Thursday in the southern Philippines. Four other members of the Christian sect remained captives.

The military and local police had blamed the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group for the Tuesday abductions, saying the nephew of a local Abu Sayyaf leader was among the armed kidnappers. But they backtracked Thursday, blaming a group of bandits headed by the nephew.

The incident, which bore all the hallmarks of an Abu Sayyaf attack, has been a huge embarrassment for the military and the government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who said just weeks ago that the Abu Sayyaf had been decimated and virtually defeated with the help of a six-month U.S. counterterrorism training exercise.
State College. Today, she takes pride in being a professional woman and sees herself in a position to help others, especially women.

Much of Zenaida’s personal strengths have been built through difficult situations and, at times, personal tragedy. She states that when she lost her husband, she had no choice but to be strong for her children. She took charge and provided for her brood of three as a single parent.

Being the station manager at the radio station where, sometimes, they would do “exposés” and give controversial opinions, she used to get death threats. But she remained unfazed by this and became trained in the use of a gun for protection.

She considers her upbringing and being a Muslim as critical in shaping her character and values formation. Her participation in civil society groups also helped in molding her. She started out as secretary for D’ALERT in Sulu, a radio club of communicators from different sectors, using radio to deliver information in Jolo, then later on rose to become its president. She considers this experience, as well as her experience working with Radyo Ng Bayan, as critical to her formation and personal development.

Nearing the age of retirement, she looked toward enhancing her skills yet again through the Bridging Leaders Program at AIM. She looks forward to the future and considers working with civil society groups after she retires from the radio station.

The Loss of Trust and Confidence

Zenaida’s life embodies the kind of fortitude that she would hope could be possessed by the people of Sulu.

When asked to describe what would be the greatest challenges in her province, she described the pessimistic attitude of people as a major hurdle on the road to recovery. “The attitude of people is pessimistic. It’s as if there is no hope anymore. Even those working in government think negatively and lack enthusiasm for their work. In the grassroots, the pessimism makes people more prone to recruitment by insurgents. I feel pity for them because they feel forced to join these groups, because they think they have no choice.”

She acknowledges the role of media in perpetuating this pessimistic feeling among the people of Sulu. Zenaida often used the words “insecure,” “lack of trust,” even “depression” to describe the mood of the people of Sulu. “The problem lies in the people’s lack of trust in the government. If only the government would do its job of providing services intended for the people, then people would be able to trust them again.”

Indeed, the last decade has proven to be particularly dark for the province. An escalation in sensational news of beheadings, kidnappings, and bombings has been the trend. Most of these will have been attributed to the Abu Sayyaf Group, a terrorist cell linked to Al Qaeda, even though facts on the
ground remain complex as inter-tribal and kinship-based rivalries have always been in existence in the province. To illustrate, during one of the more notorious kidnappings of aid workers in Sulu in 2009, the captors were reported to have asserted to their victims, "I can be Abu Sayyaf Group, I can be MNLF, I can be Lost Command."²

Other actors also use the conflict situation for other purposes. The central government in Manila has been accused, for example, of applying the Abu Sayyaf label to any conflict in the region, having learned, like many nations after 9/11, that this would be a good way to get support from American foreign policy.³

News agencies and the media industry in general would not be exempt from participating in an economy that grows around and is based upon situations of conflict. Sensational news sells. And the industry thrives on these stories. "I was a journalist. Everyone needs our report," Zenaida says.

During her Bridging Leadership Fellowship, she reflected on the role of media in peace and development. She came to a realization: her province was endowed with many gifts. There was, in fact, potential to achieve good governance. However, the media habitually ignored these stories in order to focus on sensationalized news about the province.

As a journalist and Sulu native, she recognized that her profession played a large role in creating this sense of pathos and hopelessness among people of her province. This gave her a unique recognition of herself, "I can now see that 'I' am a plus factor in installing change."

Challenged to design a change project, Zenaida realized that she was already in possession of a unique position to affect change in her surroundings. As a prominent member of the media, she was keenly aware that she had access to diverse groups of people. She felt she had the respect of leaders in Sulu and, at the same time, had a unique access to penetrate the grassroots.

If she wanted to contribute towards making a change, she understood that she could not work alone. Linkages with government agencies and civil society needed to be strengthened in order that she could disseminate information to the grassroots. "If we will only see that collaboration of all sectors is important then weak governance, which is a factor of inequity in Mindanao, may be resolved."

She was interested in relaying information about government projects. She was supportive of the present administration's efforts to curb corruption, and wanted to support the relaying of information on public services available on the ground so that people could benefit from them. "I planned to connect the beneficiaries with the service providers through media."

In so doing, she planned to bring the people closer to the government.

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³ Ibid
According to Zenaida, “Doing this will lead to the people reaching out more to the government. They will no longer be discouraged to rely on government.” Zenaida hoped that, through her change, project she could bring back people’s confidence.

**Media Bridging the Social Divide**

Zenaida wanted to provide access to important information that could benefit the lives of people. Her vision was a media that would provide relevant news.

As a veteran journalist, she wanted to influence change within her profession and be a proponent for responsible media reporting to promote peace and development in her home province of Sulu. Her goal was to “transform media in Sulu for development. So that we can work to remove the insecurity in the heart of our people.”

The change project she envisioned would have an impact on the behavior of media practitioners. It entailed the coming together and cooperation of media with government and civil society in order to come up with new ways of reporting information that was relevant and beneficial to the lives of people, rather than the common practice of reporting violence and controversial issues.

Her Guiding Coalition included her colleague and superior at the station Radio Ng Bayan, Director Tito Cruz; Governor Sakur Tan of Sulu Province; Engr. Abdel Jalani, President of D’ALERT; The Asia Foundation; Dave Malcampo; and members of the Sulu Communicator’s Network or SULCOMNET.

The shared vision for her Guiding Coalition was a multi-sector transformative media network in Sulu that is committed to inform, educate, and contribute to peace and development. “We would like to change the image of Sulu. We would like to make a change in the practices of journalists and government communicators.” They wanted to set up an infrastructure to support “new ways of information reporting” away from the common practice of reporting violence and controversial issues, “to inform people about development news.”

In order to achieve this, they planned to build upon an existing structure. They revitalized and re-organized the Sulu Communicator’s Network (SULCOMNET). They started with the participation of government information officers and networked with NGOs and civic groups from a broad cross-section of society.

Strengthened with the reach of the Radyo ng Bayan public radio station, the network’s aim was to produce a peace and development communication plan, produce a grassroots radio program, and provide training on media communication for peace-building and conflict transformation.

The civic group D’ALERT also provided critical support. This radio club of communicators, of which Zenaida was a member, was very active on the
ground, communicating via two-way radio, providing critical information during natural calamities and emergency situations in Sulu.

They began the project with a survey of all the listeners of DXSM Radyo Ng Bayan. The station provided an important resource as it had a powerful transmitter and had access to a large cross-section of people, reaching Tausugs all the way to Sabah, Malaysia.

A survey was conducted in five areas in Sulu, namely Pangutaran, Indanan, Talipao, Patikul, and Jolo to assess the reach of local media. Survey results showed the majority of the respondents depend on Radyo ng Bayan-Jolo as their source of information.

A two-day workshop was conducted with a broad coalition covering various sectors—government line agencies, civil society groups, students, and the military.

There was a need to build upon the capabilities of the network. Activities included training for professional journalism. They conducted a basic journalism seminar, supported by The Asia Foundation, in order to increase professionals’ understanding of their role as communicators of peace and development.

It was intended that the network, SULCOMNET, would serve as a platform to echo pertinent news and information to the people of Sulu, what the coalition termed a “force multiplier” for development news.

“This will be the force multiplier that will act as multiplier for us (actual journalists) to inform or become communicators of positive news and development.”

Zenaida describes the relationship between actors within the network as symbiotic. The civic groups and government agencies need the radio station for mass dissemination of information and news pertinent to their activities and interests. The radio station also now has a greater network of people on the ground. “Nagkaroon kami ng reporters sa lahat ng areas.” (Now we have reporters in all the areas.)

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**Table 1. Baseline Survey Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Pangutaran</th>
<th>Indanan</th>
<th>Talipao</th>
<th>Patikul</th>
<th>Jolo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio station available in the area</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio signal in the area</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio station they listen the most</td>
<td>DXSM</td>
<td>DXSM</td>
<td>FM</td>
<td>FM</td>
<td>FM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio station they listen the most often for news</td>
<td>DXSM</td>
<td>DXSM</td>
<td>DXSM</td>
<td>DXSM and DXM</td>
<td>DXSM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program in the radio they listen the most</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>News, business, livelihood, and leisure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An MOU was signed with the participants to communicate what their respective offices were doing so that people would know about projects being put in place by service-providers.

A weekly radio program would provide the venue hosted by the Radyo Ng Bayan, Jolo. The grassroots radio program featured Provincial Information Officers (PIOs) themselves communicating directly to listeners to relay and clarify information. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and the Department of Health signed a Memorandum of Agreement for this weekly radio program.

A system was set up so that listeners could provide feedback through text messages. The SULCOMNET News Text brigade for fast and convenient broadcasting was tested during the general registration of voters in the ARMM.

Today, the station receives about 50 text messages a day from Tausugs on issues such as the formation of cooperatives, availing of scholarships, and the like. The information is relayed to them through radio.

In support of the initiative are members from the military, civil society organizations, non-government organizations, editors-in-chief of school papers, MNLF, the Ulama and religious sector, the PNP, and the AFP.

The activities that were developed by the broad coalition are as follows:

- Production of a radio program called Amanat Sin SULCOMNET;
- A seminar-workshop on Media Communication on Peace-Building and Conflict Transformation conducted at the Governor’s Conference Hall in Sulu in June 2012;

### Table 2. Core Group, Guiding Coalition, and Key Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Group</th>
<th>Guiding Coalition</th>
<th>Key Stakeholders</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Jainab Abdulmajid</td>
<td>• Director Tito Cruz, the boss of Zenaida</td>
<td>• Governor Sakur Tan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Raymond de los Reyes, Coach</td>
<td>• Governor Sakur Tan, Sulu</td>
<td>• The Asia Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resty Cantar, Administrative Officer, Radyo ng Bayan</td>
<td>• Engr. Abdel Jalani, President, D’ALERT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eleanor Illustre, Assistant and Broadcast Production Supervisor, Radyo ng Bayan</td>
<td>• The Asia Foundation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Dr. Amildasa Ann, President, Philippine Information Agency</td>
<td>• Dave Malcampo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Zhendra T. Masong, Researcher</td>
<td>• SULCOMNET (Sulu Communicators’ Network)</td>
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</table>

The grassroots radio program, Amanat Sin SULCOMNET, one of the outputs of the coalition
Some feature programs on Amanat Sin SULCOMNET

- Cpt. Melever Bolacay, Sgt. Jelbert Banua of the 3rd Marine Brigade, and POI Alfrashkan Abdurajak of the Sulu PPO spoke about developments on the AFP’s Internal Peace and Security Plan (IPSP) and the readiness of police force to take over ISO responsibility.
- Farhaly Fernandez of the Provincial Prosecutor’s Office (Department of Justice) and Germalaine Marawi of the Department of Interior and Local Government spoke about the Judiciary and the supervision of LGUs.
- Engr. Abdel Jalani, President of the Alert Lupah Sug Radio Club, talked about how the radio club evolved into a civic organization.
- Ms. Radzhata Julkarmain, Manager of NFA Sulu, Ms. Madaria Kee of PIO, and Mr. Taha Jundam, President of Tausug Youth Club, discussed issues on Sulu’s preservation of arts and culture.
- Datu Yldon Kiram, President of Jaycees Inc., Jolo, spoke on community services of CSOs.

- Feature articles outlining the coalition’s work in print media and newspapers;
- A finalized SULCOMNET structure with elected and inducted officers;
- A Peace and Development Communication Planning Summit of SULCOMNET conducted in June of 2012;
- A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in which the Philippine Information Agency, the Provincial Information Agency, civil service organizations, and the academe, military, and PNP committed to file all development news and initiatives to Radyo ng Bayan for mass dissemination;
- A text brigade that was conducted during the registration of voters in ARMM (This test run established alternative ways to conduct information drive, when the dissemination of news and information need to be quick and accessible.); and
- The SULCOMNET later becoming the facilitator and moderator during the Framework Agreement on Bangsamoro Regional Summit in December 2012.

Sulu Communicators’ Network

Zenaida reflects that good governance plays a major influence in the successful delivery of basic social services. She has come to recognize that, in Sulu, infrastructure exists and delivery of basic social services can work depending on good governance.

She hoped that, by re-invigorating an existing platform (i.e. SULCOMNET), new forms of engagement can take place with diverse stakeholders to re-
sult in better accountability and delivery of social services. She used mass media as a tool to achieve this, taking from her background, expertise, and social capital.

When asked about trust-building among members, Zenaida commented that her being a woman and a native of Sulu helped in forming bridges among stakeholders. Her long tenure as a broadcast journalist also ensured that people on the ground trusted her and gave the project credibility.

After the initiation of her Change Project, the SULCOMNET was reorganized and strengthened, a Sulu Peace and Development Communication Plan was formulated and produced, information about government services are now being relayed to communities, and development journalism is being promoted.

Among the most significant realizations she takes away from her experience implementing her Change Project: majority of Tausugs want peace and development, and that, in order to achieve this, there is a need for constant collaboration.

As her Fellowship comes to completion, she continues to ensure the sustainability of her project. In the coming months, there will be a management conference in Palawan where Zenaida will present her project to 31 radio stations all over the Philippines.

The network will be replicating their efforts in other Radyo ng Bayan stations from Batanes to Tawi-Tawi, preparing for the expansion of the Guiding Coalition and partners and enhancing the SULCOMNET (including drafting a Code of ethics, reviewing the MOU, and training the members).

The vision is to create a communicator’s network and to multiply the activities they have begun—to replicate media collaboration with “force multipliers” of good news for development. She hopes that this will contribute to peace and development, especially in conflict areas.

References
Message for the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program:
Co-creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

by Teresita Quintos Deles
Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process
21 March 2013

There are many ways to show the paths to peace. What I like about the event today is its choice to tell stories. People in the villages and communities relate well to storytelling. I am happy that this program has succeeded, beyond academic research and papers, in showing instead of just telling what the experience of bridging leaders for peace is like. I believe that the insights and lessons which the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program will distill for us will not merely end up being filed away as reference materials in the library but will be as dynamic and as alive as the peace process is in our country is today.

All of us are aware of how the difficulties will grow more and more complex in the coming days as we try to break new grounds and push the limits of possibilities in peacemaking and peace-building. In addition to inspiration and support, we need to build capacities and skills that are responsive to our own specific realities. For instance, we need bridging leaders to help narrow the political and social divides as we embark to set new foundations for our collective vision of a peaceful future. We will need to build inclusive social and political institutions if development is to make a difference in the lives of people in Mindanao. This is an imperative that underlies all of our work.

I have always been interested in home-grown models and initiatives, and I will always welcome practitioners from among us who will bring their own take of what can be done based on what they know about our people's fears, struggles, and dreams. We have encountered a shallow bench for the past many years, as we stretch the limits of peace workers and peacemakers beyond their given abilities. I know first hand how those of you working in this field are overworked and oftentimes lacking in sleep and a quiet time for self-enrichment. But I believe that this will change soon as the work of our bridging leaders cohorts expand like a growing circle on a lake where a stone is thrown. There will be more of us, more learned, more skilled, more experienced in the ways of making and building peace. This is the reward and return for the collective investments we have made in the Bridging Leadership Program.

The stories that will be told today illustrate many valuable lessons. For one, they help show how the intertwined dimensions of peacemaking and peace-building happen in actual practice. They help show how building a peace constituency as we craft a peace agreement is very important and critical to our days ahead as a nation in search for peace. They help show how we can be all in this together whether one is a businessman, a teacher, an
NGO worker, a government employee, a farmer, a mother. I would like to believe that we are growing an appreciation for peacemaking and peace-building as a method and a science without losing sight of its soul and its art.

I congratulate the AIM TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership headed by Dr. Nieves Confesor, all of the BL fellows, and the support institutions and partners that have made this endeavor possible. By all means, let us keep trying and keep dreaming. Let us keep working together in finding solutions that will last and that will work for us. As always, we will need to depend on each other.

As always, we will need to have a resolve that will carry us through the challenging times, a spirit that allows us to imagine a future different from the past, and the courage to believe that peace is truly within our reach.

Maraming salamat po.
Daghang salamat.
Shukran.
About the writers

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