



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
IN THE PHILIPPINES

A SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE ASIA FOUNDATION
TO THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
01 JULY 2005 – 31 DECEMBER 2005

(AGREEMENT NO. 492-G-00-03-00026)

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
Towards Transforming Conflicts into Manageable Disputes
Semi-Annual Report 01 July to 31 December 2005

This semi-annual report covers activities from July 1, 2005 to December 31, 2005 under the Conflict Management in the Philippines (CMP) Program of The Asia Foundation through a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with grant number AID 492-G-00-03-00026. The grant covers the period from October 1, 2003 to September 30, 2006.

Background

In late 2002, The Asia Foundation supported a conflict survey in Mindanao on local residents' perceptions of conflict in the region. The results of the survey showed that while the Muslim-Christian conflict in Mindanao dominates the international and local press, clan violence (*rido*) is actually more pertinent in the daily life of the people. Citizens are more concerned about the prevalence of clan conflict and its negative impact on their communities than the conflict between the state and rebel groups in Mindanao. These findings illustrated the complexity of conflicts in Mindanao, and served as a take-off point for the Foundation's efforts towards a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics. Building upon this initial research and drawing upon the Foundation's wealth of experience in peace-building through its governance and legal reform programs, the Foundation's conflict management program was developed.

The Asia Foundation's USAID-funded Conflict Management in the Philippines program uses multiple approaches to address two distinct types of conflict affecting the Philippines: **Endemic Clan Conflict** and **Community Conflicts over Natural Resources**. Given that conflict is inherent in the process of change and development, the program's goal is not to eliminate but to transform conflicts into manageable disputes and debates. The program accomplishes this through better knowledge of the dynamics of the specific conflict; enhanced conflict resolution mechanisms; improved communication channels within the affected communities and between government and community groups; and policy-oriented substantive discussions with inputs from key stakeholders.

Addressing Endemic Clan Conflict

In order to address clan conflict (*rido*) in Mindanao, the Foundation has supported in-depth diagnostic activities to understand the dynamics of such conflicts. This will help design and support strategic interventions to enable communities and government to effectively prevent and manage clan conflicts. After successfully conducting the coordinated study on *rido* and disseminating the findings, the challenge that lies ahead is to bridge the research results into institutions, policies, and actions in a strategic manner.

Highlights (1 July – 31 December 2005)

- In the process of documenting celebrated cases of clan conflicts (*rido*) in North Cotabato, the United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) was able to establish trust and confidence among members of two feuding clans. Upon the request of the disputing parties, a series of dialogues was initiated to reconcile the families and put an end to the *rido*. Toward this end, a second grant was provided to UNYPAD to engage in the conflict resolution process. From August 3 to 7, 2005, a conflict management workshop was conducted by Sentro Para sa Ganap na Pamayanan, Inc. (SENTRO) for eleven UNYPAD staff to enhance their skills in conflict resolution. This was followed by a series of meetings in November and December with key clan personalities which resulted in the formation of a core group tasked to spearhead initiatives in organizing a council of elders to serve as panelists during the formal dialogues. As of December, one clan has already expressed willingness for a settlement. The core group is still doing legwork with the other clan. It is expected that the feuding families will reach a settlement agreement in the early part of 2006, which will culminate in a community celebration.
- On October 6, 2005, a special briefing was organized for the new batch of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) at the request of the Joint Coordinating Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) at Cotabato City in Mindanao. Fifty IMT members were present to hear the results of the *rido* research studies. The Asia Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development were publicly acknowledged by the IMT Head of Mission Major General Dato Soheimi bin Abbas and Mr. Von Al Haq, Chairman of the Moro International Liberation Front (MILF)-CCCH team for conducting the studies on *rido* that will help them in putting the Mindanao conflict into perspective.
- The Foundation for Communication Initiatives, in partnership with the Mindanao Committee of the House of Representatives organized a forum and photo exhibit on *rido* during the Mindanao week of peace celebration on November 21-25, 2005. Results of the research studies were presented in a special briefing for members and staff at the House of Representatives. The congressmen who attended were Congressman Mario Aguja of AKBAYAN and Congressman Joel Virador of BAYAN.
- Three institutions that participated in the coordinated studies on *rido* published their respective monographs on their research. On September 2005, the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) released a monograph entitled “Understanding Interethnic Conflict between Menvu and Maguindanaon.” This study describes the recurring conflict between Menvu families and Maguindanaon families inhabiting the boundaries of North Cotabato and Bukidnon. In the same month, the Research Institute for Mindanao Culture (RIMCU) and the Mindanao State University released a monograph of their joint study entitled “Choices of Response to Inter-kin Group Conflict in Northern Mindanao.” This is a comparative study of Moro and Lumad communities which examined the issue of inter-kin group conflict and the measures

employed to prevent further escalation of conflict in Bukidnon and Lanao del Sur. On December 2005, the Mindanao State University – Marawi released a monograph of their study which is an “Inventory of Existing *Rido* in Lanao del Sur.” This study provides baseline information on the prevalence of *rido* in Lanao del Sur, including Marawi City from 1992 to 2004, and asserts that all *rido* that were settled in the province went through the Meranao’s traditional way of settling conflicts.

- In November 27, Mr. Ryan D. Rosauero’s article on clan conflict was printed in the Philippine Daily Inquirer and was posted online through INQ7. Sun Star Cagayan de Oro carried the story in its online version on November 28. The article described local initiatives to curb clan conflict and the successful resolution of two warring clans in the province of Lanao del Norte. The article also mentioned that the study was jointly funded by the Asia Foundation and US Agency for International Development.
- The Foundation hired the services of a well-respected Filipino author, Charlson Ong, to thoroughly edit all the individual studies and articles on *rido* (clan and family conflict) and integrate these into single volume. The publication, scheduled to be completed by March 2006, will inform the general public about the results of the ground-breaking research. Moreover, the book will help increase awareness about these conflicts, distinguish them from other forms of conflict in Mindanao, and provide valuable information that will help policy makers and practitioners in designing strategic interventions.
- In response to the demand for more information about the coordinated studies on *rido* (clan conflict), on December 16, 2005 the Foundation has successfully uploaded the summaries of the research findings on *rido* to The Asia Foundation website (http://www.asiafoundation.org/Locations/philippines_conflict.html). This was in response to the growing demand for information on the subject, as well as an effort to disseminate the information to a wider audience (local and international), pending the release of the Foundation’s publication on *rido* in 2006.

Addressing Community Conflicts over Natural Resources

In the Philippines, natural resources conflicts not only divide and disrupt communities, they can also lead to violent confrontations with government. These conflicts hamper productivity, investment, economic growth, and may in some cases lead to armed insurgency. To address community conflicts over natural resources, the Foundation supports NGOs that assist in strengthening the capacity of the national government’s resource management departments, promote negotiation coaching among communities, and support conflict management strategies for multiple-stakeholder conflicts.

Highlights (1 July – 31 December 2005)

- A training manual on Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) and mediation has been produced by the Community Organizers-Multiversity (CO-Multiversity).

The manual draws from the experiences of CO-Multiversity in previous processes and from more recent trainings and cases under their project with The Asia Foundation. Actual case studies involving project-related conflicts and interventions through PCIA and mediation have been included in the manual to illustrate the experiences and initiatives in conflict resolution in selected project sites in Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, and Sultan Kudarat. The PCIA manual was published in December 2005. The manuals will be used as reference materials for future PCIA training sessions. The areas and projects assessed through PCIA are shown in the table below.

Peace Zones	People's Organization	Projects Assessed through PCIA
Makir, Datu Odin Sinsuat	Samahan ng Mamamayang Mahihirap sa Makir (SAMAMAMA)	Water Pump Project
Bayanga Notre, Matanog	Iranun Farmers' Association of Bayanga Norte (IFABN)	Electric and water system
Cagarawan, Tugaig, Barira	Cagarawan Taayon Farmers' Organization (CTFOI)	Consumer Store
Garigayan, Mataya, Buldon	Balasainged Movement for Peace and Development	Multi-Purpose Building
Barorao, Balabagan, Lanao del Sur	Barorao Unity Association (BUA)	Water System Project
Daguan, Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur	Illana Daguan Benito Malinday Farmers Association (IDBM)	Multi-Purpose Building
Chua, Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat	Daguma Range Tri-People Association	Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Farms

- In their efforts to address marine resource conflicts in Anda, Pangasinan, the University of the Philippines' Social Action for Research and Development (UPSARDF) has linked with experienced Asia Foundation partners to develop the local communities' skills on conflict management. From October to November 2005, UPSARDF tapped Tanggol Kalikasan and Community Organizer's Multiversity (CO-Multiversity) in a series of trainings on negotiation coaching and peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA). A total of 72 participants coming from people's organizations and local government units were trained. The PCIA training in particular helped the participants realize that they should be cognizant of the conflict and peace-creating aspects of their projects. Some of the barangay chairpersons who attended were able to evaluate their past projects and understand the reasons for their failures and successes.
- Six workshops held separately in Cebu, Bohol, and Coron were organized by the Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC) from July to December 2005 to strengthen the participating people's organizations and deepen their commitment to properly manage their resources. Each area's issues were further defined through conflict management trainings and planning sessions with selected community

members, after which consultations and information campaigns were done to explore and validate proposed solutions with the larger community. An additional project area was added in Coron, Palawan due to an urgent resource-use conflict in an Indigenous Cultural Community located in Palawan. With ELAC's assistance, the Tagbanuas have initiated a series of dialogues with the company that plans to build a shipyard within the Tagbanuas' ancestral domain claim. Some of the capacity trainings are as follows:

- On July 31 to August 2, environmental awareness seminars were conducted in Culion, Palawan to instill environmental awareness among the community residents. The status and significance of the coastal/marine and terrestrial area, the impact of destructive activities on the environment, salient provisions of various environmental laws, and the concept of paralegalism were discussed during the seminar.
 - Team-building workshops were conducted to raise the participants' level of awareness of their environment, of their concern towards their fellow members, and of their attitude in working as a team on July 8-9 in Bohol, and on July 17-18 in Cebu.
 - A workshop on problem-solving and conflict management that culminated in a brainstorming and planning session was conducted for all the areas. Bantayan and Mabini had a joint workshop in Cebu from September 15 to 17, while Coron and Culion in Palawan had a joint workshop on October 20 and 21, 2005.
 - Lastly, from December 8 to 10, ELAC staff and selected members of partner communities attended a Negotiation-Coaching Training for environmental NGOs in the Visayas and Mindanao. The training gave the participants knowledge and skills in entering into negotiated agreements as an option in managing conflict. Participants recognized the importance of applying their learning to help manage the conflicts on their island.
- Tanggol Kalikasan (TK), in its efforts to balance the negotiation table between conflicting parties has continually organized capacity building trainings for non-government organizations and local leaders in various project sites. TK believes that by leveling the playing field, empowerment of the marginalized sectors of the society will be realized, thus encouraging them to enter into negotiation and mediation processes over environmental and natural resources conflicts. From August to December 2005, introductory courses on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) were given to 212 barangay officials from the provinces of Batangas, Pangasinan, Bohol and Quezon. The activity, developed and organized by Tanggol Kalikasan, popularizes the use of ADR in the communities and is part of the module for environmental governance. A negotiation coaching seminar for 38 NGO representatives from Visayas and Mindanao was also conducted from December 8-10 in order to enhance the skills of selected local leaders and non-government

organization to assist the partner communities involved in conflict. A similar training session on Alternative Dispute Resolution for National Government Agencies in Tanggol Kalikasan project sites is scheduled to be conducted in February 2006.

- The conference proceedings on the "Philippine Forum on Environmental Justice: Forest and Coastal Resources" was published and disseminated by Tanggol Kalikasan in December 2005. The forum provided a venue for the exchange of ideas, insights, and experiences on environmental justice among the different environment stakeholders, particularly local government units, people's organizations, non-government organizations, policy researchers, professionals, the media, and other environmental advocates all over the country.
- The community-based peace program of the Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC) tries to address marine resource conflicts arising from the use of sea space such as seaweed farming, fishing, and aquatic foraging. After the initial capacity-building trainings on mediation, peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA), negotiation coaching, and conflict mapping, comes the actual application of these trainings to address the community resource conflicts in the communities of Kabukan and Bangas, in Hadji Panglima Tahil, Sulu. On July 28 and August 2, conflict mapping was conducted for Kabukan and Bangas respectively. A total of 71 key representatives attended the sessions comprised of local government officials, barangay and community leaders, peoples organizations, Department of Interior and Local Government, as well as representatives from the religious, youth and women sectors. Other program partners include the Department of Health, DXMM radio station and the some members of the local Philippine National Police.

Following the mapping was a PCIA on August 23, 2005 jointly conducted by the two communities, so that better understanding and collaboration between the two neighboring areas can be achieved. The activity involved 70 stakeholders from the municipality of Hadji Panglima Tahil with special participation of the staff from the offices of the Provincial Governor and the Vice Governor. Through the activities, the participants identified the resource areas utilized by the communities, and discussed who has control and access to such areas. Outsiders who were directly or indirectly part of the conflict were also identified. Conflicts were identified such as the competition for the use of sea space between seaweed farmers and fisher folks, the incidence of illegal fishing in preserved areas, the influx of outsiders to engage in seaweed farming, and the increasing incidence of renting sea space. All the stakeholders recognized the need to solve these problems peacefully and agreed to involve the Department of Agriculture/Fisheries and other concerned organizations.

Aside from the resource conflicts discussed, various conflicts related to marriage, elopement, unpaid debts and harassment were managed by local communities using mediation activities they learned from the project implemented by NDJC. From August to December, seven conflicts were resolved through the efforts of local community leaders and peace enforcers trained in mediation and negotiation coaching. Amicable settlements were signed by conflicting parties thereby preventing the

possible escalation of conflict between feuding families. Local government officials and community leaders were able to recognize the importance of conflict resolution skills in handling conflicts. The success of the trainings of NDJC and the actual dialogues conducted by community stakeholders have stirred the interest of neighboring communities like Bubuan, to undergo a similar process.

Insights, Opportunities, and Next Steps

There are several insights generated from the work in managing *rido* and community resource conflicts. The UNYPAD initiative to address *rido* between two clans provides an important proof of concept in addressing such conflicts. UNYPAD is a fairly new organization composed of Muslim youths working for peace and development. The members of this organization previously lacked skills in research and conflict management. Through the efforts of SENTRO and the support of The Foundation and USAID, the staff of UNYPAD was trained in research and conflict resolution in an indigenous setting, which allowed them to study and understand feuding families and eventually help resolve *rido* conflicts in their own communities. The efforts of UNYPAD in organizing and involving a council of elders to help them, represents informed action through participatory research and highlights the importance of utilizing existing local mechanisms and processes in addressing conflicts. The example of UNYPAD's progress underscores the importance of involving the youth in managing conflicts and strengthening the capacity of Muslim civil society organizations. This comes in light of the *rido* study of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies which shows the dwindling number of leaders who have skills in mediation and arbitration as these hitherto were acquired traditionally through experience as the youth were encouraged to learn by observing the settling of conflicts. The new conflict management skills learned by the youth through deliberate capacity-building trainings complement and strengthen the existing local mechanism of conflict resolution in the communities. Equipped with these new techniques, the involvement of the youth strengthens the mediation process and gives them more options to deal with conflicts.

In the same way that the youth play an important role in managing conflicts, the involvement of local government officials in traditional or local conflict resolution processes (as mediators or witnesses) is also important. As the case of Notre Dame's intervention illustrates, the interaction of government officials with traditional mediators in settling conflicts actually slowly draws the traditional authority and processes into the system and processes of the government. Hence, supporting the formation and strengthening of councils of elders, peace and order councils, and other mechanisms that combine both the mainstream and traditional ways of resolving conflicts, is imperative.

The strength and broad experience of civil society in Central Mindanao is another resource that offers many possibilities in addressing conflicts not only in Mindanao but throughout the Philippines. This point is clearly illustrated in the ongoing resource conflict management projects in Sulu and Anda, where communities, civil society organizations, and local governments covered by this project greatly benefited from the cross-fertilization of ideas and interaction with partners from Central Mindanao and Luzon. For the past 50 years, The

Foundation has been at the forefront at supporting activities in the Philippines that promotes linkages and strengthens partnerships. Through this current linkage and transfer of knowledge, newly acquired techniques in conflict management such as conflict mapping, mediation, PCIA, and negotiation coaching have been well-received and are being utilized by partner communities in Sulu and Anda to address resource conflicts in areas as diverse as Southern Mindanao and Central Luzon. This is a major breakthrough particularly in Sulu where conflicts are often stereotyped as separatist conflict, Muslim-Christian conflict, piracy, or the work of terrorist organizations. Many of these conflicts are actually manifestations of conflicts over diminishing resources such as the competition for sea spaces, which intensifies when military operations in the interior of Sulu displace residents and force them to flee to the coastal areas and islands, coming into competition with existing coastal communities. The advent of seaweed farming, its commercialization, and high demand in the world market have only served to intensify competition among communities for dwindling sea. As seaweed farming grows in importance in the economy of Mindanao in the years to come, and as development projects continue to come in, the need for conflict management in these areas will continue to increase.

The wellspring of experience, knowledge, and lessons of conflict and conflict management in Mindanao should also be tapped and channeled to help address tension and violence in urban centers where Muslims and Christians live in the same communities. The underlying tensions and conflicts in Metro Manila in particular, are largely ignored by donor agencies as funding is particularly focused on Mindanao. The Greenhills controversy in 2004 where there was a protest against the construction of a Muslim prayer room inside a shopping complex in Metro Manila highlights the prevalent attitudes of prejudice and discrimination against Muslims among the largely Christian populace in the metropolis. And, there are many incidents of unmitigated conflict and violence in Muslim communities around Metro Manila that are not being reported to the police, or do not figure in the news. These are indicative of the problematic reality that exist in Muslim communities around Metro Manila, but are not widely known by the general public, or given serious attention by authorities.

The reasons for the prevailing situation of conflict and violence in urban centers are many and complex. An important factor influencing conflict in communities shared by Muslim and Christians is the discrimination and prejudice experienced by Muslims from a predominantly Christian society, which is further complicated by other factors such as illegal drug trafficking in such areas, the existence of family and clan feuds (*rido*), as well as the multi-ethnic composition of Muslim communities. To add to this complexity is the volatile situation of conflict in Mindanao and the slow pace of the peace talks that has resulted in conflict spilling over to the urban areas. The same lessons and conflict management techniques developed in Mindanao can be effectively utilized to clarify the roots of conflict and facilitate dialogues in communities that have tension. There are also a number of very good civil society organizations in Manila that have their own remarkable initiatives in managing conflicts and promoting dialogues. Unfortunately, support from donors in this unnoticed but important area of engagement is lacking.

The assortment of initiatives conducted by communities, civil society organizations, and government to address conflicts in Mindanao is commendable. While finding a strategic

thread that somehow ties together all of the best practices is still elusive, all these experiences and lessons will eventually reach a tipping point and lead to something more strategic at the wider level. What is realistic on a smaller scale for the conflict management program are activities and interventions that revolve around the following ideas:

1. Continue strengthening Muslim civil society.
2. Involve the youth in conflict resolution.
3. Identify recognized mediators and strengthen their capabilities.
4. Support initiatives on the formation and strengthening of a council of elders and peace and order councils.
5. Develop an analytical tool for assessing areas where there is a high risk of *rido* and determining the stages of the conflict.
6. Develop a network of people to watch over potential conflicts and conflict-prone areas.
7. Continue supporting the efforts of the Coordinated Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities.
8. Identify and harness existing local or indigenous institutions and processes in conflict resolution, and harmonize these with the formal institutions of government.