

**Mitigating Localized Conflict in Mindanao and Sulu through  
Rapid Response of Local Non-State Actors**

**FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT**

October 31, 2008 to December 31, 2008

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Submitted by



**The Asia Foundation**

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## I. Project Background

In the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, violence is a frequent, unpredictable, and often highly localized phenomenon. The region has multiple armed insurgent movements, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Moro National Liberation front (MNLF), New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, *Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa sa Mindanao* (Revolutionary Party of Workers in Mindanao or RPMM), and other small factions. The presence of these insurgent groups poses a serious threat to stability in the region, and the heavy military presence in the region is a response to this threat. Although the Muslim separatist conflict dominates the media, research supported by The Asia Foundation shows that clan violence (or *rido*) in Mindanao is actually more pertinent in the daily lives of the people. Small-scale, local conflicts stemming from *rido*, political rivalries, or inter-communal tensions complicate an already volatile environment mixed with separatism, banditry, and military involvement.

One of the major challenges in addressing conflict in the southern Philippines is this constant threat of localized violence, and the lack of state and local capacity to intervene at the critical point of escalation. Violent conflict can erupt when there is an incident or unresolved dispute between local actors – clans, political leaders, military units, police, insurgent groups, and criminal networks – that cannot be resolved or mitigated through existing local mediation or state intervention. When armed conflicts flare up between the military and the major insurgent groups, it is usually between local units and is triggered by a local incident or grievance that may have little to do with the larger state-insurgency conflict.

Peace talks with the MILF have been sporadic for some years now, but the cessation of hostilities has largely held. As negotiations with MILF continue, however, the main threat to peace and stability lie in the rupture of the cessation of hostilities. The first danger, which was much bandied about, was the withdrawal of the international team of monitors due to the lack of progress in the peace talks. The second danger lies in the localized outbreak of hostilities that have been discussed, along with their potential for spreading into a more generalized conflict. The ceasefire mechanisms have been designed to maintain peace between the two mainline forces—MILF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines—and are much less effectual with respect to localized conflicts. Both these dangers can be addressed by the strengthening of community-based mechanisms. Should local communities become more effective in mitigating localized conflicts, they are unlikely to spread into more generalized warfare. And, to the extent that self-reliance in maintaining a cessation of hostilities is generated, reliance on foreign monitors is reduced.

Meanwhile, the recently aborted signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) in August 2008 as a result of a Supreme Court injunction and the subsequent armed encounters involving three MILF base commands in Central Mindanao, Sarangani, and Lanao del Norte, resulted in the dissolution of the GRP Peace Panel, a hiatus in the peace process, and growing displacement of communities as a result of the hostilities. These recent developments provide more reason to mitigate localized violence to prevent its escalation, which

will hopefully improve the environment for the reconstituted GRP Peace Panel and the MILF to return to the negotiations table.

## **II. Goal and Objectives**

**Goal:** To mitigate conflict in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago by enabling local, non-state actors to quickly and effectively intervene in localized conflicts and crises.

**Objective 1:** To strengthen the capacity of civil society actors and community-based leaders to manage crises and prevent the escalation of localized conflict.

**Objective 2:** To improve rapid response mechanisms and interventions for outbreaks of hostilities that may occur between armed combatants.

## **III. Expected Impact**

The program will achieve a number of important outputs, notably: the creation of a core group of capable, community-based leaders with the expertise required to effectively mobilize their communities to respond to crises with effective time sensitive interventions; the creation of a pool-fund system that will allow conflicts to be quickly responded to by trained civil society organizations and community leaders; and more effective implementation of existing local conflict resolution mechanisms.

The proposed activities will also achieve more far-reaching outcomes, summarized as follows:

- Greater community engagement and cooperation with local and central government among citizens of Mindanao;
- Reduced conflict, greater responsiveness among community groups in responding to conflict when it arises, and accelerated development within the region as the intensity and longevity of conflicts is reduced;
- An improved environment for peace and reconciliation in Mindanao;
- Strengthened capacity of the community to respond to and minimize conflict; and
- Facilitation of a more conducive environment for the GRP and MILF to resume the peace talks.

## **IV. Approach and Strategy**

The Asia Foundation's rapid response project will establish mechanisms for urgently responding to outbreaks of hostilities in the conflict-affected regions of the southern Philippines, through a network of civil society organizations, and respected community-based leaders. The project will utilize several multi-pronged and context-specific approaches involving a collaborative process of assessment, capacity-building, networking, actual conflict interventions, community reconciliation, and evaluation. Specifically, this approach will involve:

- Enhancing the wide range of community-based peace initiatives and indigenous, or alternative conflict resolution mechanisms existing on the ground in managing flare-ups;
- Supporting the efforts of various NGO coalitions and civil society groups in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago in preventing and deescalating conflicts;
- Enhancing cooperation between NGOs skilled and experienced in ceasefire monitoring and more localized civil society groups;
- Utilizing the Foundation's ability to work with local conflict dynamics and mobilize a wealth of networks on the ground;
- Applying the Foundation's experience in successfully mitigating clan feuding (*rido*) in Mindanao and the success of its 2007 electoral reform program.

The Foundation's experience has shown that, in cases where localized violence is prevalent, local civil society organizations and community-based leaders are the most critical actors for monitoring and responding to outbreaks of hostilities. Working in partnership with these key non-state actors has enabled the Foundation's previous projects to achieve high levels of credibility and respect within Mindanao communities. These non-state actors also derive significant benefit from the Foundation's capacity-building programs and are well placed to deliver enhanced conflict mitigation, resolution, and monitoring services to Mindanao citizens.

The Foundation believes that the only people that can effectively mitigate localized conflict are those that have the credibility and respect within the local community to negotiate with, or on behalf of, the community in times of crisis. When conflict escalates at the local level, there are few local groups or leaders that can intervene to negotiate or mediate between the parties. These local NGOs, community and religious leaders, local government officials, and occasionally members of the security forces stationed in the area are most often the ones that must manage crises related to conflict—movement of internally displaced persons, relief operations, fact-finding inquiries, dispute resolution, and, at the same time, engage with other state actors or policy-makers to avert escalation of hostilities. The problem is that many of these actors require resources and expertise in order to mobilize communities and respond to crises with targeted, time-sensitive interventions. In many cases, local actors that are very well-placed to mediate between combatants lack the skills or networks to effectively manage disputes and crises.

The rapid response program intends to close these gaps, leading to a more coordinated response to conflicts and effective conflict mitigation by local actors. This will primarily be achieved by implementing a two-pronged strategy of capacity-building that will help strengthen civil society actors and community-based leaders to manage crises and prevent escalation of localized conflict; and supporting the mobilization of local actors to rapidly respond and intervene during outbreaks of hostilities and other emergencies. The first strategy will be done through the Foundation's usual grant mechanism. The second approach will involve developing and implementing a rapid response funding process.

## V. Accomplishments

The following activities were implemented last quarter of 2008:

### **Objective 1: Strengthen capacity of civil society actors and community-based leaders to manage crises and prevent the escalation of localized conflict.**

- A Conflict Management Program Assessment and Planning Workshop was conducted last November 25 to 26, 2008. The two-day activity was intended for the staff of The Asia Foundation involved in conflict management to be oriented on the different components of the program, and to discuss and strategize solutions to management-related issues and other concerns, leading to more consolidated efforts in the effective implementation of the program. The results of the planning workshop also fed into the drafting of the Work Plan for *Mitigating Localized Conflict in Mindanao and Sulu through Rapid Response of Local Non-State Actors*.
- The Work Plan for *Mitigating Localized Conflict in Mindanao and Sulu through Rapid Response of Local Non-State Actors* was submitted last December 3, 2008 and subsequently approved by the USAID CTO last December 19, 2008 with some clarifications and suggestions for including a reporting format. Suggestions have been incorporated.
- Consultation and preparatory meetings were conducted with NGOs, broader civil society coalitions, national government agencies, AFP, Nonviolent Peace Force, as well as conflict-affected localities, grassroots communities, and local governments. On November 12, 2008, a total of 27 participants from 15 non-government and civil society organizations attended the project orientation in Cotabato City. A series of separate consultations and meetings were also conducted with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front-Coordinating Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities (MILF-CCCH) and representatives of various civil society organizations in the areas of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, and Cotabato Provinces. (Please refer to Annex 1 and 2 for list of participants).
- The Rapid Response project was also presented during the 5<sup>th</sup> Mindanao People's Peace Summit on December 14, 2008 at Marawi City. A separate meeting was also conducted with Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities (RIDO Inc.) for possible partnership under the project to cover the areas of Lanao del Sur and adjacent municipalities in Lanao del Norte. RIDO Inc. has been successful in facilitating the settlement of *rido* across Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur which can be attributed to their use of traditional governance (sultanas and council of elders), clan organizing, and documentation of genealogies. The sultans and other local influentials have demonstrated significant influence in conflict resolution. This same network of volunteers and influentials are well placed to address flare-ups under the rapid response program.
- A project meeting with Ginapaladtaka Foundation (G7) was held in Pikit on December 17, 2008 to discuss their proposal on strengthening grassroots

interfaith dialogue and understanding in conflict-affected barangays of the Municipalities of Pikit and Aleosan. G7 is an aggrupation of seven barangays<sup>1</sup> in Pikit perennially affected by conflict, which were able to organize themselves and reduce the negative effect of the cycle of wars through dialogue and conflict transformation. Upon the request of neighboring barangays bordering Pikit and Aleosan, G7 aims to replicate the G7 Space for Peace structures and help in conflict preparedness to mitigate conflict in the following critical border area barangays which are of mixed Christian and Muslim population: Bualan, Pamalian, Kolambog, and Silik in Pikit Municipality, and Pagangan and Tapodoc in Aleosan Municipality in North Cotabato. The barangay captains in the target border areas are already supportive of the need to build grassroots structures of peace between Christian and Muslim communities. Such initiative is also timely in the wake of the latest round of clashes in border areas of Pikit and Aleosan which is part of the current wave of attacks by MILF Commander Kato. Initiatives are also being explored for G7 to dialogue with leaders and civil society groups from critical communities in Basilan and Sulu (i.e. the Patikul multisectoral peace and security core group) in the hopes of replicating the success of G7 in selected municipalities.

- During the reporting period, the Foundation engaged the following potential partners for rapid response in prioritized areas:

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Area/ Coverage</b>
<b>Integrated for Development Services, Inc.</b>	Kapatagan and Balabagan in Lanao del Sur and Matanog and Parang in Shariff Kabunsuan.
<b>Mindanao Tulong Bakwet</b>	Datu Piang, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, & Mamasapano, in Maguindanao
<b>Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities, Inc.</b>	Lanao Sur and Lanao Norte: Poona Piagapo
<b>Ginapaladtaka Foundation (G7)*</b>	Pikit & Aleosan in North Cotabato
<b>Pakigdait, Inc.</b>	Kauswagan and Kolambugan in Lanao Norte
<b>United Youth for Peace and Development</b>	Midsayap and Pigcauyan in North Cotabato; Northern Kabuntalan and Mother Kabuntalan in Maguindanao; and Pualas and Butig in Lanao del Sur
<b>Patikul Multi-sectoral Peace and Security Core Group*</b>	Patikul, Sulu

\* - still for due diligence

**Objective 2: To improve rapid response mechanisms and interventions for outbreaks of hostilities that may occur between armed combatants**

- Steps have already been made to make the rapid response pool fund work. A number of meetings were already conducted with finance staff in order to streamline rapid response funding process. Orientations for accessing the pool fund were already conducted with partners, and an initial list of NGOs have been lined up for prior due diligence on their financial and management

<sup>1</sup> Ginatilan, Nalapaan, Panicupan, Lagunde, Dalingaoen, Takepan, Kalakacan.

systems. Standard request and reporting formats have also been developed (please refer to Annexes 3 and 4).

- The United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) is implementing a series of dialogue and targeted messaging with Christian and Muslim civilians in Pigcawayan, North Cotabato. The activity was conducted to refute inflammatory rumor and avert a possible massacre against Muslim evacuees in the evacuation center as an act of retaliation by Christian civilians who dominate the area and were affected during the clashes between the MILF and the military last December 24, 2008. A community peace forum will be conducted on January 30, 2009 to celebrate the gains of the interventions.
- In the area of Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR), recent kidnap victims (Espie Hupida, Milet Mendoza, Chuchay Feliciano, and Joed Pilanga) and their families have agreed to meet and share their experiences and see how they could help each other to try and get an objective record of events that transpired as seen from each others' perspective. In this process, interesting and important points of convergence among their experiences can be culled such as: *modus operandi* related to the choice of victims and the actual process of abduction; places to which the victims were brought and where they were hidden; methods of negotiation and psychological terror employed by the abductors; common personalities involved in some or all of the cases. Lessons will be helpful in upcoming KFR forums to help prevent future cases from occurring or help in facilitating the resolution of new cases which may take place. This latter process will be conducted by Milet Mendoza and Victor Taylor from January 17 to 21 in Zamboanga City.

#### PLANS FOR THE NEXT QUARTER

- Conduct Grants Management Seminar for selected priority partners
- Continue due diligence of potential partners

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Area/ Coverage</b>
<b>SUGPAT</b>	Patikul Sulu
<b>Sakayan Mindanao Inc</b>	Parang, Maimbung, Talipao & Pata Island
<b>Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society</b>	Central Mindanao and Sulu
<b>Bangsamoro Development Agency</b>	Central Mindanao
<b>Non Violent Peace Force</b>	Central Mindanao and Sulu
<b>Salam Incorporated</b>	Iligan
<b>CONZARRD Inc.</b>	Zamboanga del Norte

- Conduct a coordinative meeting and brainstorming session with prospective partners on their proposed initiatives
- Conduct an assessment of critical areas for the rapid response program
- Provide technical assistance to partners in prioritized critical areas
- Refine rapid response funding process
- Continue making grants for rapid response to specific incidents

**ANNEX 1: Rapid Response Activity Log from October to December 2008**

Date	Event (Training/ Workshop/ Conference/ Large Meeting)	Venue	Profile of Participants (e.g. government, CSO, business)	Number of Participants			
				Male	Female	Muslim	Christian
November 12, 2008	Project Orientation on Mitigating Localized Conflict through Rapid Response of Local Non-State Actors	Pacific Heights Hotel, Cotabato City	Representatives of non-government and civil society organizations	19	8	22	5
December 3, 2008	Project Meeting with Non-Violent Peace Force	Greenbelt 3, Makati City	Key representatives of Non-Violent Peace Force	4	2	3	3
December 14, 2008	Presentation of Mitigating Localized Conflict through Rapid Response of Local Non-State Actors	Institute of Development Studies, MSU, Marawi City	Representatives of non-government and civil society organizations	65	43	38	72
December 15, 2008	Project Meeting with RIDO on Mitigating Localized Conflict through Rapid Response of Local Non-State Actors	Ayala Resort Hotel, Marawi City	Representatives of non-government and civil society organizations	5	3	5	3
December 17, 2008	Project Meeting with Ginapaldtaka Foundation, Inc. (G7)	Pikit, North Cotabato	Representatives of G7, barangay captains	4	1	3	1

**ANNEX 2: Organizations that participated during the Project Orientation in Cotabato last November 12, 2008.**

Organizations	No. of Pax	
	Male	Female
Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society	2	0
Institute of Bangsamoro Studies	1	0
United Youth for Peace and Development	2	0
Mindanao Emergency Relief Network	0	1
Bangsamoro Women Solidarity	0	2
Regional Madrasah Academy	1	0
Al-Ihsan Foundation.	0	1
Nonviolent Peaceforce	2	0
Ittihadun Nisa Foundation, Inc.		1
Ligawasan Marsh Research and Development Council	1	0
Mindanawan Community Development Organization	1	0
Bangsamoro Development Agency-Mindanao Trust Fund Reconstruction and Development Program	2	3
Bantay Ceasefire	2	0
Kadtabanga Foundation for Peace and Development	2	0
Ginapaladtaka, Inc. (G7)	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>

### ANNEX 3: Rapid Response Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Proponent Information

Contact person/ lead proponent: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of lead organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details (phone/email) \_\_\_\_\_

#### Details of the Incident (e.g. flare ups, alleged atrocities, inflammatory rumors, etc.)

What is the Incident/event?: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & time of the incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Place/s of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Source of Information regarding the incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Total no. of Victims (estimate): \_\_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_

No. of killed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Male: \_\_\_\_\_, Female: \_\_\_\_\_; Children: \_\_\_\_\_ )

No. of families displaced: \_\_\_\_\_

IDPs Place/s of origin: \_\_\_\_\_

IDPs Area/s of temporary stay: \_\_\_\_\_

*Other details or account of the incident/ allegations (you may use extra sheets):*

#### Response/ Intervention

*Proposed Intervention/Response (you may use extra sheets):*

*Number of people in the responding team (estimate): \_\_\_\_\_*

*Names of people in the responding team and list of organizations to be involved  
(please attach)*

*Anticipated Budget: P \_\_\_\_\_*

#### Contact Us:

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**Budget Summary Template**  
(You may use extra sheets)

Meals and Incidentals \_\_\_\_\_  
Transportation \_\_\_\_\_  
Board and Lodging \_\_\_\_\_  
Supplies and materials \_\_\_\_\_  
Communication \_\_\_\_\_  
Others \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: P \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
**Grantee Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel Nos.: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax Nos.: \_\_\_\_\_

=====  
**Bank Account Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Savings \_\_\_\_\_ Current \_\_\_\_\_ ATA

Bank: \_\_\_\_\_

Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

Interest bearing: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ %

Maintained for: \_\_\_\_\_ TAF only \_\_\_\_\_ TAF and other funds

\_\_\_\_\_  
Requested by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewed by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**ANNEX 4: Rapid Response Reporting Form**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Proponent Information**

Contact person/ lead proponent: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of lead organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Details (phone/email) \_\_\_\_\_

**Details of the Incident** (e.g. flare ups, alleged atrocities, inflammatory rumors, etc.)

What is the Incident/event?: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & time of the incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Place/s of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Source of Information regarding the incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Total no. of Victims (estimate): \_\_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_

No. of killed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Male: \_\_\_\_\_, Female: \_\_\_\_\_; Children: \_\_\_\_\_ )

No. of families displaced: \_\_\_\_\_

Place/s of origin: \_\_\_\_\_

Area/s of temporary stay: \_\_\_\_\_

*Other details or account of the incident/ allegations (you may use extra sheets):*

## Response/ Interventions Conducted

*Interventions Conducted (you may use extra sheets):*

Other details of the intervention:

*Number of people in the responding team:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Names of people in the responding team and organizations involved (please attach):*

*Total budget utilized:* \_\_\_\_\_

## Results of the Intervention

***What are the results of the rapid response intervention? (e.g. IDPs returned to places of origin, improved access to services, protocols developed, etc. Please include the number of IDPs returned; no. of protocols established; no. of people serviced; etc. You may use extra sheets if necessary.)***

Other details: