

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

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2010
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Submitted by



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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 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), and the *Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa sa Mindanao* (Revolutionary Party of Workers in Mindanao or RPMM). 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. As witness the events after August 2008, the main threat to peace and stability lie in the rupture of the cessation of hostilities. The first danger, which came to pass in late 2008, 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 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. In the face of renewed peace talks, there is more reason to mitigate localized violence to prevent its escalation, which will hopefully improve the environment for the reconstituted Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) Peace Panel and the MILF to return to the negotiations table in this new administration.

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 trained civil society organizations and community leaders to quickly respond to conflicts and more effectively implement existing local conflict resolution mechanisms.

Project activities will also achieve more far-reaching outcomes, 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 has established 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 utilizes 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 involves:

- 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 and 2008 electoral reform programs in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

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 who 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 (e.g. 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 closes these gaps, leading to a more coordinated response to conflicts and effective conflict mitigation by local actors. This can be primarily achieved by

implementing a two-pronged strategy of capacity-building that helps 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. While the first strategy is done through the Foundation's usual grant mechanism, the second approach involves a rapid response funding process.

V. Project Accomplishments for FY 2010

The accomplishments in this annual report are organized along the two objectives of the Mitigating Conflicts Program: (a) to strengthen capacity of civil society actors and community-based leaders to manage crises and prevent the escalation of localized conflict; and (b) to improve rapid response mechanisms and interventions for outbreaks of hostilities that may occur between armed combatants.

A system for mitigating localized conflicts such as brewing tensions, flare-ups, and other outbreak of hostilities has been successfully developed under this program. This system utilizes a highly evolved network composed of a pool of reliable local partners strategically located throughout Mindanao acting as an early detection system for brewing conflicts and a mechanism for rapid conflict response. This system also developed a flexible pool fund and quick response funding process to help support the rapid mobilization of NGOs and other civil society groups to intervene during times of armed conflict and crisis.

For this reporting period, around 22 conflicts were supported and managed under the project. Of the 22 conflicts, nine of them were related to *rido* and six of these nine cases were successfully resolved by the project partners. Since October 2008, a total of 28 conflicts have been managed which variously include the following:

- Muslim-Christian animosities in Brgy. Gayonga, Northern Kabuntalan, in Maguindanao and Brgy. Palian, Tupi, in South Cotabato;
- *Rido* and political rivalries in Brgy. Nabalawag, Midsayap, in Cotabato, Brgy. Zeneben, Lambayong, in Sultan Kudarat, and Brgy. Dasalan, Hji Muhtamad and Maluso in Basilan;
- Conflicts caused by criminality such as the series of lootings and bombings in Maguindanao as a result of the fall-out of the Maguindanao Massacre;
- Interethnic violence between B'laan and Maguindanaon communities in Malapatan, Sarangani; as well as
- Feuding between MNLF and MILF commanders in Lebak, Sultan Kudarat and in Datu Blah Sinsuat, Maguindanao.

The program has also successfully piloted the development of Quick Response Teams (QRTs). These quick response teams function to engage brewing and ongoing conflicts in selected municipalities in Cotabato and Maguindanao. It must be noted that these QRTs were developed through a series of community-based trainings on conflict and disaster preparedness and security

planning in an effort to prepare the conflict-affected communities in case of emergencies and flare-ups. Partner NGOs have been successful in training and in utilizing QRTs to manage conflict. For instance, Cotabato-based United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) used QRTs to mitigate conflict between feuding Muslim and Christian families with links to armed groups (MILF and Civilian Volunteer Organization) in Barangay Gayonga, Northern Kabuntalan, Maguindanao. They also successfully resolved a *rido* between two Muslim families in Brgy. Nabalawag in Midsayap which killed 6 and affected five barangays¹ in Midsayap.

Meanwhile, another local NGO, the Magungaya Center for PALMA, has been successful in utilizing QRTs to mitigate potential conflicts caused by criminality (cattle-rustling and drug-pushing) and in deescalating tensions among armed groups in Barangay Mudseng, Midsayap due to a land dispute which involved an MILF commander. Through a series of dialogues, these QRTs together with Magungaya have also been successful in discouraging fighters in the villages from joining feuding commanders of MNLF and MILF in Lebak, Sultan Kudarat and Datu Blah Sinsuat in Maguindanao. This initiative greatly complements with the ongoing negotiations being facilitated by the Joint Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (JCCCH) to resolve the conflict between the feuding commanders. This conflict has already displaced 7,000 people and killed 66.

For FY 2010, a total of 27 sub-grants were issued to project partners, 22 of which supported the mobilization and actual intervention of partners and other local actors to rapidly respond to brewing conflicts and tensions in the community. The remaining five grants were meant to support a series of capacity building activities on emergency response and conflict management in order to prepare the communities in case of flare-ups or armed conflicts. This includes a set of activities that allowed some civil society groups to take initial steps toward engaging and empowering the *Ulama* (Muslim religious group) in Sulu to participate more in peace and development initiatives. More than 2,000 people in select areas of Cotabato, Maguindanao, and Sulu were trained on conflict mitigation and resolution under this program for this period of reporting.

For this reporting period, partners under this project include the following:

- Ateneo de Zamboanga University,
- Basilan Advocates for Peace, Environment, and Sustainable Development Association,
- Bangsamoro Center for Justpeace in the Philippines, Inc.,
- Bangsamoro Development Agency,
- Bangsamoro Muslim Aid Philippines, Inc.,
- Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society,
- Integral Development Services, Inc.,
- Liguasan Youth Association for Sustainable Development,
- Magungaya Center for PALMA Inc.,
- Peace and Development Advocate League, Inc.,

¹ Tugal, Mudseng, Rangaban, Kadingilan, and Ulandang. According to reports, residents of Brgy. Nabalawag were displaced more than 10 times because of this conflict. The families involved were fully armed and have links with the MILF and the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU).

- Mindanawan Community Development Organization, Inc.,
- Mindanaw Tulong Bakwet, Inc.,
- Sustainable Alternatives for the Advancement of Mindanao, Inc.,
- Ulangig Mindanao, Inc.,
- United Muslim Professional for Peace and Development Association, and
- United Youth for Peace and Development.

On September 28-29, 2010, the Foundation organized a Seminar Workshop on Mitigating Localized Conflict in Davao City which was attended by 34 representatives from 23 partner organizations, including government institutions that are involved on conflict mitigation and peaceful resolution of conflicts in Mindanao. The activity offered an opportunity for the project partners to gather and exchange learnings from the implementation of their conflict mitigation measures supported by the Foundation and provide information and feedback on the shifting ground conditions in conflict-affected areas, new learnings on existing conflict mitigation measures, and new directions for the conflict intervention initiatives of the Foundation and its partners that can evolve into a more shared or more institutionalized response to the issue. An overview, trends, and insights on conflict mitigation in Mindanao as well as specific cases of actual rapid responses implemented by select partners was also presented during the event.

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

The following are the project's accomplishments under this objective:

- Conducted *Bantay Bakwet* Planning Workshop in Davao City to identify issues and recommend actions that affect the plight of internally displaced persons in the conflict-torn areas of Datu Piang and Datu Saudi Ampatuan in Maguindanao Province.
- Completed the conduct of capacity-building activities to strengthen the skills and maximize the participation of the community in detecting, monitoring, and mitigating localized conflicts in nine select barangays in Midsayap and Pigcawayan in Cotabato Province and in Northern Kabuntalan, Maguindanao.
- Implementation and completion of capacity-building activities that will help the community in eight new barangays of Midsayap, Cotabato to effectively respond during emergencies in addition to the pilot barangays that was reported in the previous annual report to train the community.
- Launching and recognition of the Quick Response Team composed of 1,900 community leaders in 25 barangays in Midsayap and Pigcawayan, Cotabato and in Northern Kabuntalan, Maguindanao who were trained on emergency response, early warning system, basic human rights documentation, basic community organizing, disaster management preparedness, and conflict mediation and resolution.
- Mobilization and empowerment of the *ulama* (religious group) in the Province of Sulu on peace and development advocacy.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Mindanao Tulong Bakwet (MTB)

Community Preparedness and Management on Armed Conflict in the Municipalities of Datu Piang and Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Maguindanao

From March 2009-October 2009, MTB was supported to develop a Quick Response Team (QRT) from select pool of volunteers in the towns of Datu Piang and Datu Saudi Ampatuan in the Province of Maguindanao which was eventually called, “Bantay Bakwet”. Bantay Bakwet (Displacement Watch) was tasked to monitor conflicts and document cases of displacement during armed conflicts in the targeted areas. A series of capacity building activities were undertaken to equip the QRT members with necessary skills in preparing and managing conflict in an event of emergencies. Around 103 local volunteers from the academe, barangay, and municipal governments from the targeted areas were initially trained on conflict mitigation, crisis management, hazard risk assessment, and camp coordination and management. Subsequently, the QRT members re-echoed the training sessions to more than 200 participants at the barangay level in the target communities as reported in the FY09 Annual Report.

As a final activity, MTB organized a Planning Workshop in Davao City on October 9-11, 2009. Thirty-six members of *Bantay Bakwet* attended the workshop that aims to develop an action plan that will respond to the issues affecting the plight of the internally displaced families as well as other issues on human security and protection in their respective communities. In the Municipality of Datu Piang, an Executive Order was issued by the local chief executive who recognized the involvement of *Bantay Bakwet* during disaster operation or emergency response.

United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD)

Maximizing Community Participation in Mitigating Conflicts in the Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao

Because of the war that broke out in August 2008 due to the aborted signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain between the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front, UNYPAD was supported to implement the project, *Maximizing Community Participation in Mitigating Conflicts in the Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao* in select areas in Midsayap² and Pigcawayan³ in North Cotabato and in Northern Kabuntalan⁴, Maguindanao. While most interventions in these areas were focused on medical and relief missions, the grant to UNYPAD was made to conduct activities that will prepare the communities in case armed conflicts or atrocities take place.

² Nes, Tugal, Nabalawag

³ Kabpangi, Bulacaon, Matilac

⁴ Labio, Gayonga, Montay

The project which runs from July 2009 to April 2010 has mobilized and trained around 400 local volunteers on early warning and disaster management preparedness, conflict prevention and ceasefire monitoring, human rights documentation and advocacy, and conflict management, mediation, and resolution in the communities covered under the project. As mentioned in the report in the previous quarter, local volunteers were mobilized to become members of the Quick Response Teams which was tasked to facilitate and resolve any security issues that may escalate into a large conflict or violence and result to civilian displacement in the community.

The table presents the total number of participants trained by UNYPAD under the project.

Table 1: No. of Participants Trained by UNYPAD per Activity (July 2009-April 2010)

Workshop Activities	No. of Participants Trained	Male	Female
Early warning, conflict prevention, and ceasefire monitoring	90	67	23
Conflict management, mediation, and resolution	90	57	33
Basic Human Rights and Community Journalism	92	69	23
Community Disaster Preparedness Planning	212	130	82
Community Simulation and Field Drilling	79	60	19
Total	563	383	180

Table 2 below shows the number of people fully trained in the barangays who completed the series of trainings conducted by UNYPAD:

Table 2: No. of People Trained by UNYPAD per Barangay

Municipalities	Barangays	No. of People Trained	Male	Female
Midsayap, Cotabato	Nes	44	34	10
	Tugal	44	34	10
	Nabalawag	48	36	12
Pigcawayan, Cotabato	Kabpangi	48	38	10
	Bulacaon	60	42	18
	Matilac	49	37	12
Northern Kabuntalan, Maguindanao	Labio	45	32	13
	Gayonga	45	32	13
	Montay	55	49	6
Total		438	334	104

Magungaya Center for PALMA, Inc. (MCPI)

Securing and Emancipating Civilians from Unwanted and Recurring armed conflict affecting Pigcawayan, Aleosan, Libungan, Midsayap, and Alamada through Rapid Response and Capacity Enhancement (SECURE PALMA thru RRACE)

The SECURE PALMA thru RRACE project has the goal of empowering people at the grassroots level to participate in the conflict transformation and local socio-economic development and management and mitigate the devastating impact of current armed conflict in the seventeen Muslim-populated barangays of Midsayap, Cotabato and prevent its escalation into larger conflict in the communities of PALMA⁵ areas. While MCPI had initiated and completed the implementation of the project in nine barangays⁶ in Midsayap, Cotabato in June 2010, additional support was provided to expand the project in the remaining Muslim barangays in Midsayap which was not previously covered by the project.

Specifically, the project aims to: (1) promote community empowerment in Muslim communities affected by the ongoing conflict between government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front within the Liguasan Marsh straddling Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces; (2) increase participatory governance, peace and security in conflict-affected areas through convergent strategies anchored on strong community participation in barangay governance, integrating human rights concerns in local development and security planning; (3) establish and form community-based Quick Response Teams (QRT) as a conflict mitigation response mechanism at the community level, and; (4) support in the development of strategies for formal or non-formal structures in the community to resolve family feud (rido) among conflicting armed groups⁷ in the area in coordination and collaboration with the organized QRT.

Through a follow-up grant to MCPI, the project was expanded to eight additional barangays⁸ in Midsayap, Cotabato. It supported, among others the selection and formation of QRTs in eight Muslim communities in the target area as well as a series of capacity building activities needed to prepare the QRT members for emergency response during armed conflict. The trainings which include among others, participatory rural appraisal on barangay development planning, disaster preparedness planning, early warning and early response, and conflict analysis and management training were held not only to strengthen the capacity of the QRT in emergency response, but also on conflict mediation, human rights violations monitoring, and local peace advocacies.

For FY 2010, more than 600 community leaders in 16 Muslim barangays in Midsayap, Cotabato were mobilized and trained on a series of capacity building activities designed to effectively respond to emergencies in their respective communities. At the end of the training, simulation exercises were held which allowed the QRT members to apply and put into actions the learning and skills acquired from the workshops. Similarly, QRT members also conducted a series of peace dialogues, networking, and advocacy works with relevant stakeholders such as the local

⁵ Pigcawayan, Aleosan, Libungan, Midsayap, and Alamada

⁶ Central Labas, Kadingilan, Kapinpilan, Lomopog, Mudseng, Olandang, Sambulawan, Tumbras

⁷ Moro National Liberation Front and Moro Islamic Liberation Front

⁸ Damatulan, Kadingasan, Kudarangan, Malingao, Nes, Rangaban, Salunayan, Tugal

governments, key groups that are involved in the peace process such as the International Monitoring Team (IMT), Joint Ceasefire Committees on Cessation of the Hostilities, the Bantay Ceasefire, and other non-government and civil society to highlight their contributions in responding to issues related to peace, human security, and civilian protection in their localities.

Table 3 shows the total number of participants trained by MCPI per activity:

Table 3: Total Number of Participants Trained by MCPI per Activity
(October 2009-September 2010)

Workshop Activities	No. of Participants Trained	Male	Female
Participatory Rural Appraisal –Barangay Development Planning	262	196	66
Organizational Development and Management and Disaster Preparedness Planning	341	255	86
Integrative Security and Conflict-Preparedness Planning	635	521	114
Gender Sensitivity Training/Basic Community Organizing and Paralegal Documentation	302	233	69
Early Warning and Early Response Training	351	268	83
Conflict Analysis and Management Training	226	178	48
Total	2,117	1,651	466

Table 4 below shows the total number of people fully trained in the barangays who completed the series of training conducted by MCPI:

Table 4: Total Number of People Trained by MCPI per Barangay
Municipality of Midsayap, Cotabato
(October 2009-September 2010)

Barangays	No. of People Trained Per Barangay	Male	Female
Central Labas	188	147	41
Damatulan	61	51	10
Kadigasan	50	47	3
Kadingilan	99	97	2
Kapinpilan	115	83	32
Kudarangan	20	15	5
Lomopog	146	111	35
Malingao	48	36	12
Mudseng	139	135	4
Nes	46	20	26

Barangays	No. of People Trained Per Barangay	Male	Female
Olandang	194	182	12
Rangaban	49	36	13
Salunayan	35	8	27
Sambulawan	135	95	40
Tugal	46	29	17
Tumbras	115	75	40
Total	1,486	1,167	319

Launching and recognition of both sets of Quick Response Teams

Under the Conflict Mitigating Program, community leaders at the municipal and barangay level, the youth sector, religious groups, and clan elders were organized and strengthened to respond to various conflicts such as clan wars, which is usually affiliated with armed groups and also to engage in the GRP-Moro Islamic Liberation Front peace negotiations. On July 31, 2010, around 1,900 members of the Quick Response Team organized by MCPI and UNYPAD in 25 barangays in the Municipalities of Midsayap and Pigcawayan in Cotabato and in Northern Kabuntalan, Maguindanao were formally presented to various stakeholders in Midsayap, Cotabato. The activity was attended by representatives from Provincial Government of Cotabato, Armed Forces of the Philippines, the media, and the International Monitoring Team.

Ulangig Mindanao, Inc.

Ulama Empowerment: Roles on Peace and Development Advocacy in Sulu (Phase I)

In the Province of Sulu, civil society groups consider the *ulama* as the only group that can unite the people as they have moral persuasion over the citizens. However, the *ulama* lack the skills to be involved in development issues and the dynamics between the local and foreign-trained *ulama* further constrained their influence and potential to be a significant arm in engaging with civil society groups and local governments in various development works. In this project, The Foundation worked with UMI to address the gaps of empowering the *ulama* in Sulu to be significantly involved in peace and development issues in their communities.

Specifically, the project, *Ulama Empowerment: Roles on Peace and Development Advocacy in Sulu* aims to: (1) organize the *ulama* as one institutional council or committee to become partners in development works by the local government and civil society groups; (2) reinforce the religious learning with relevant secular education through seminars, workshops, or trainings if possible; (3) utilize the *ulama* as resource persons, lecturers, or mediators on various development issues and dialogues, and; (4) facilitate greater involvement of the *ulama* on the issues confronting their respective communities.

A profiling of *ulama* was held in July 2010 to gather relevant information and baseline statistics about the current number of *ulama* in the Province of Sulu. Based on the data gathered, there

were a total of 14 mosques and 18 madrasah centers in Sulu which are under the direct supervision of *Darul Iftah*.⁹ A total of 95 religious leaders were identified to be registered members of *Darul Iftah*, a Council which despite of its establishment and influence in the community has no direct and popular participation in governance and development issues except on religious and social gatherings.

In August 2010, the *ulama* consequently conducted a series of community-based assessments in the towns of Parang and Jolo to identify communal issues which could be resolved within the influence and capacity of the *ulama*. On August 13-15, 2010, UMI conducted a Strategic Planning Workshop to identify the training needs of the *ulama* in order to respond to the issues identified during the community assessments. Thematic plans of actions and recommendations on the *ulama*'s participation in relation to these issues were also identified. The table below summarizes the results of the *ulama* Strategic Planning Workshop which was presented on August 19, 2010 in Patikul, Sulu and attended by around 60 participants from various sectors.

Table 5: Results of the *Ulama* Strategic Planning Workshop

Peace and Development Advocacy	Recommendations
Islamic Governance and Leadership and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Induction of the Darul Iftah • Establishment of partnership with local governments and civil society organizations • Sustained Islamic seminars and orientation • Governance and leadership trainings • Development and distribution of <i>kitab</i> and other reading materials on Islamic governance • Representation of the <i>ulama</i> in local special bodies • Popularization of <i>fatwa</i> on political, economic, social affairs
Organization and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of <i>ulama Darul Iftah</i> centers/units at the municipal level • Develop <i>ulama</i> communication, organization, and management skills • Establishment of Center for Islamic Transformation in Sulu
Peace and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form <i>ulama</i> conflict mediation and reconciliation council • Recognition and representation of <i>ulama</i> in the Provincial Peace and Order Council • Islamization of conflict resolution process (Islamic way of settling conflicts) • Spearhead the restoration of abandoned villages and communities (addressing internally displaced persons)
Education and Value Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and expand <i>madrasah</i> in 19 municipalities of Sulu • Islamic values orientation for public school teachers and leaders • Develop of textbooks based on <i>fatwah</i>, <i>hadith</i>, and <i>Qur-an</i>

⁹ A Supreme Council for Islamic Preaching and Guidance composed of the *ulama* (religious leaders) having *mufti* in the highest religious rank

Peace and Development Advocacy	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening community-based <i>madrasah</i> schools or Islamic Centers <i>Nikah</i> Counseling (Seminar for wedding couples)
Health and Sanitation and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mass orientation of Islamic health and sanitation and environmental issues Promotion of <i>halal</i> food and <i>halal</i> practice Preaching of health and sanitation issues on khutbah Develop kitabs on Islamic health and disease treatment
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop of Islamic manuals and reading materials on Islamic entrepreneurship Skills training and fund raising on sustaining small and medium livelihood projects Seminars on Islamic guidance for economic and commerce Massive campaign and orientation to socialize <i>zakat</i>
Community special programs support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the promotion and preservation of indigenous cultural products Islamization of culture through seminars and Islamic sessions Establish <i>Darul Ifta</i> Community Extension Service Centers for livelihood, value formation, and humanitarian service

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

The following are the project’s accomplishments under this objective:

- Roundtable discussions with academic institutions on kidnapping incidence in Basilan and Sulu.
- Supported a series of consultations and dialogues in the neighboring towns of Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Datu Hoffer, and Mamasapanao in Maguindanao.
- Conducted Participatory Public Safety Planning Workshop in the Province of Maguindanao.
- Supported the reactivation of local peace coordinators in the towns of Paglat, Pandag, and SK Pendatun in Maguindanao to prevent election-related violence.
- Supported the conduct of fact-finding mission for the internally displaced persons in Indanan, Patikul, and Panamao in Sulu.
- Multi- Sectoral Roundtable Discussions on Peace and Security in relation to bombing incidents in Mindanao.
- Resolution of six *rido* cases in 1) Barangay Bulod, Pikit, Cotabato; (2) Barangay Tuka, Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat; (3) Barangay Dasalan, Hadji Muhtamad in Basilan; (4) Barangay Tuyan, Malapatan, Sultan Kudarat; (5) Barangay Nabalawag, Midsayap, Cotabato; and (6) Barangay Gayonga, Northern Kabuntalan, Maguindanao.

- Supported on the ground interventions and media coverage of the internally displaced persons to mitigate conflict between feuding MNLF and MILF local commanders in Lebak, Sultan Kudarat and Datu Blah Sinsuat in Maguindanao.
- Signing of localized agreement between MNLF and MILF leaders in Barangay Zeneben, Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat and in Barangay Palian, Tupi, South Cotabato.
- Mitigating conflict in Munai, Lanao del Norte between local NGO volunteers and the group of rebel returnees
- Mitigating conflicts in select areas in Parang and Pata Island in the Province of Sulu to prevent election-related violence last May 2010 national elections.
- Supported the conduct of Transformative Peace Action Project for Moro National Liberation Front Combatants in Sulu

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Ateneo de Zamboanga University (AdZU)

Roundtable Discussion with Academic Institutions on Kidnapping Incidence in the Province of Basilan and Sulu

District supervisors and secondary school principals in Sulu and Basilan were gathered in a roundtable discussion held in Zamboanga City on December 12, 2009. The objective of the activity was to provide an avenue for the academic sector to discuss their sentiments and perspectives on the subsequent abductions of school teachers in these Island Provinces since January 2009. In the discussions, 29 participants who are school teachers, principals, district supervisors, and academicians jointly shared their growing fears for their security due to apparent failure of the government to prevent and respond to kidnap-for-ransom situations. Educators were identified as potential targets for kidnapping because of the impression that as government employee, they have the means to pay and that the government will surely provide for their ransom in an event of kidnapping crisis. It was also noted in the discussions that the kidnapping incidence in Sulu and Basilan was executed for purposes of extracting monetary ransom from the victim's family or organization more than furthering a certain political, religious, or ideological agenda. Action points determined by stakeholders during the Basilan roundtable were reported in the previous annual report.

Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA)

Mitigate Conflict in Brgy. Bulod, Pikit, Cotabato

In response to one of the flare-ups identified during the initial assessment conducted by BDA in select evacuation centers in the Province of Cotabato supported by this project, a series of consultative dialogues was subsequently held to mitigate the conflict between two families (Daud Nor vs. Sawali) in Brgy. Bulod, Pikit, Cotabato. The conflict started when a respected community leader was killed in April 2009 that resulted in a series of harassments and fighting between the two families who were both affiliated with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the area. The tension led to massive evacuation of the community residents in nearby barangays in fear for their own safety.

Community-level meetings among municipal officials, barangay leaders, Moro Islamic Liberation Front ground commanders, and representatives of disputing parties were held to open the line of communication between conflicting groups and map out possible solutions that will also realize the security and safety of the civilians affected by the conflict. Through the project, a framework was developed to prevent the occurrence of further armed encounters among conflicting parties that may result in community displacement in the area. An agreement between conflicting parties which includes provisions that will recognize the security of the civilians that may be affected in case of flare-ups was presented in the community after rounds of mediations and negotiations conducted by the responding team of the BDA

Bangsamoro Center for Justpeace Philippines, Inc. (BCJP)

Mitigate Conflict in the Province of Maguindano

When the media attention was centered on the court proceedings of the November 23 Maguindanao Massacre, increased accounts of violence such as clan feuds, robbery, looting, arson, killings, and harassments in some areas of Maguindanao that caused panic and fear among civilians were left unreported. In January 2010, BCJP was supported to conduct a series of consultations and dialogues in the neighboring towns of Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Datu Hoffer, and Mamasapano in Maguindanao to identify preventive measures in order to mitigate the conflict in these communities. A total of 20 consultations and dialogues were held to gather collective inputs from various key stakeholders on how to best respond to the conflicts and prevent further armed encounters.

Results of the dialogues were presented on March 20, 2010 in Cotabato City which was attended by more than 50 participants which include among others, representatives of the municipal, provincial, and ARMM regional governments, national government agencies, the contingent of the International Monitoring Team, the military and police forces based in Maguindao, civil society organizations, and the leaders of the conflict-affected communities.

Bangsamoro Muslim Aid Phils, Inc. (BMAP)

Mitigate Conflict in Barangay Tuka, Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat

In October 2009, a killing incident in Barangay Tuka, Bagumbayan, Sultan Kudarat took place which was allegedly due to a clan feud of two influential families (Nilong-Bansil) in the area because of land dispute and political rivalry. It was reported that after the killing, subsequent assaults coming from both families were experienced which alarmed the residents within the community who were not directly involved in the conflict. Through a grant with BMAP, a responding team composed of municipal and barangay officials, community elders, religious, and traditional leaders was formed to lead the process of negotiation and convince the conflicting families to agree for possible settlement.

After successive attempts of mediation efforts, the conflict was formally settled on April 18, 2010 through the conduct of a Peace Assembly which was attended by more than 200 people in the community. The highlight of the activity was the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding which integrates the conditions of the settlement as agreed upon by each

representative of the conflicting families in the initial rounds of dialogues. Prior to the assembly, a community leader's dialogue was held which put forward the case into the hands of the Arbitration Committee within the Council of Elders in the community which was recognized by the representatives of the conflicting parties as it applies Islamic laws and principles in handling cases.

Basilan Advocates for Peace, Environment, and Sustainable Development Association (BAPESDA)

Mitigate Conflict in Select Areas in the Province of Basilan

Support to conduct a series of dialogues in select barangays of Hadji Muhtamad¹⁰ and Maluso¹¹ was provided to BAPESDA in response to the brewing conflicts that affect these communities. Through the project, BAPESDA formed a responding team which initiated a series of consultations and dialogues among disputants and relevant stakeholders such as community leaders, elders, local government, military, and the police to map out possible solutions to the problem and secure the civilians in the area in case violence takes place.

In Hadji Muhtamad, around 100 families in Barangay Dasalan were reported to evacuate due to an ensuing rumor of gunfights between two clans in the two neighboring areas (Sangbay Small and Palahangan) of Barangay Dasalan. From October 2009 to February 2010, a series of dialogues was conducted with the conflicting groups, selected elders, community leaders and local government officials particularly to the Chief of Police in the municipality and some Marine and Maritime officers in the area to discuss approaches that would paved way for the settlement of the feud. After subsequent mediation and negotiation efforts of BAPESDA responding team, the conflict was finally settled on March 9, 2010. The reconciliation of the feuding families prevented considerable evacuation and displacement in the community. The local government had also taken security measures that will safeguard the safety of civilians in case of possible recurrence of any conflicts of the same nature.

On February 27, 2010, a separate case of shooting took place in Barangay Tubigan in Maluso resulted in the deaths of 12 people and eight fatalities. According to some reports, the incident was a retaliatory act staged against the barangay captain and his family by a former member of Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in reprisal for the death of his son who was killed in Barangay Tubigan two months before the incident happened. BAPESDA ran a series of dialogues with barangay leaders, municipal officials, and security forces assigned in the area to pacify the community amid reports that civilians were arming themselves for possible retaliation since most of the victims were not directly involved in the conflict. As a final activity, a roundtable discussion was held to gather the perspective of the state actors on available courses of actions in response to the incident and identify mitigating measures that will secure civilians against another attack.

¹⁰ Barangay Dasalan

¹¹ Abong-abong and Tubigan

In another incident, a passenger jeep was ambushed on June 22, 2010 in Barangay Abong-Abong in the town of Maluso that killed four people and wounded two individuals. Allegedly, the ambush was made in relation to the death of one civilian in Barangay Tubigan who was a known follower of a certain local commander. The tension spilled over to other communities and there were reports that some residents especially in the nearby barangays of Canlas in Maluso and Libug in Sumisip where most of the victims from the ambush reside were allegedly arming themselves in an attempt to retaliate against the suspected perpetrators who were directly linked to the local commander. A heated argument and confrontation between the local commander of Barangay Tubigan and the Barangay Chairman of Barangay Canas, who were both known to have strong and solid armed supporters also took place in July 2010. The conflict almost resulted in a gunfight if it was not mitigated by the responding team organized by BAPESDA in collaboration with the police and the military.

However, some civilians started to evacuate to the nearby poblacion of Maluso for fear of being caught in crossfire between the conflicting groups. Rumors soon spread that a big firefight between the two opposing groups may happen which further heightened tensions in the community. The deteriorating relationship between these communities prompted BAPESDA to conduct a series of dialogues in the community to prevent the possibility of an armed clash that could engulf six communities in the conflict and eventually result in the displacement of residents. The intervention created an avenue for better understanding between communities as the dialogues helped clarify and negate inflammatory rumors of gunfight which could draw other nearby communities to take up arms for security. On September 22, 2010, final rounds of dialogue between conflicting parties were conducted and a resolution was forged among the leaders and residents to cease from taking up arms, or any acts that will damage the settlement.

Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS)

Fact-finding Mission for the Internally Displaced Persons in Sulu

Support was provided to CBCS to conduct fact-finding mission in select areas in Sulu, where thousands of civilians were displaced when the Philippine Armed Forces launched an offensive during the eve of the Eidl Fitr¹² celebration. The military offensive was allegedly conducted in pursuit of some members of the Abu Sayaff Group that were spotted in Barangay Marang, Indanan, Sulu. The grant allowed the CBCS to gather information on the plight of the internally displaced persons (IDP's) in the towns of Indanan, Kalinggalan Kaluang, and Panamao. More than 3,000 IDP's were accounted to have been displaced which evacuated in the nearby barangays to avoid being trapped in a crossfire that may happen between the combined armed groups which include the Marines, the combatants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and the lawless members of the Abu Sayaff Group (ASG).

Issues on war prevention and cessation of hostilities in the conflict-affected barangays of Indanan and Panamao were thoroughly discussed with community leaders, MNLF officers, local governments, and military officials during the series of dialogues conducted by CBCS. The need to conduct special programs related to civilian protection, establishment of early warning system,

¹² A holy day for the Muslims that marks the end of Ramadhan (fasting)

capacity building of local government officials on crisis response, conflict negotiation and mediation, and special research on the continuing build-up of civilian emergency forces in the Province of Sulu were among the recommendations identified by the fact finding mission.

Integral Development Services (IDS)

Participatory Public Safety Planning in the Province of Maguindanao

Amid the state of emergency that was declared in the Province of Maguindanao in January 2010, a grant was provided to IDS to conduct participatory public safety planning in the two districts of Maguindanao Province. A total of six municipalities¹³ in District 1 and eleven municipalities¹⁴ in District II were covered during the simultaneous workshops held on March 4, 2010 in Cotabato City (District I) and Tacurong City (District II). The workshop aims to develop public safety plans that will help secure the communities during conflicts or occurrence of violence. Aside from the development of public safety plan as an output, participants to the workshop also assessed the peace and order situation in their respective areas, mapped out existing and impending conflicts highlighting potential election-related conflicts that may result to violence during election polls, and discussed on how to establish local mechanisms that could help in managing local conflicts and monitor any threats of violence.

Around 120 participants who are members of the Municipal Peace and Order Council, religious and community leaders who will be involved in monitoring and managing peace and local conflicts in the covered areas attended the workshop. On April 22-25, few days before the national polls, public safety plans in billboards and tarpaulins which contained the names and contact numbers of lawful authorities, responding agencies, and other local mechanisms that are helpful in times of atrocities or flare-ups, were displayed in strategic areas in the covered municipalities. The table 6 below presents the number of participants during the workshop.

Table 6: Total No. of Participants Attended
Public Safety Planning Workshop
Province of Maguindanao

District	No. of Participants	Male	Female
I	60	44	16
II	60	47	13
Total	120	91	29

¹³ Barira, Buldon, Matanog, Parang, Upi, and Sultan Kudarat

¹⁴ Ampatuan, Buluan, Datu Abdullah Sangki, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Guindulungan, Paglas, Sultan sa Barongis, SK Pendatun, and Talitay

Liguasan Youth Association for Sustainable Development, Inc. (LYASD)

Mitigating Conflict in Paglat Pandag, and SK Pendatun in Maguindanao

Support was provided to LYASD to mitigate conflict in the municipalities of Paglat, Pandag, and SK Pendatun where a series of skirmishes was felt since August 2009 between the supporters of Ampatuan and Mangudadatu, the two major political clans in the area. The armed encounters displaced around 4,000 civilians in five communities in Paglat¹⁵ and Pandag¹⁶ towns which further escalated in nearby barangays in SK Pendatun. The skirmishes started when a former police director who is allied with the Ampatuans intended to create a new municipality out of the newly created municipality of Pandag—a town with a political leadership allied to Mangudadatu. The conflict was triggered when the November 23 Massacre took place in Ampatuan, Maguindanao and subsequent charges and arrest warrants were issued among local government officials and police officers which caused further tension in the communities surrounding the Liguasan Marsh.

In response to these hostilities, LYASD mobilized a pool of local peace coordinators in the area to conduct community-level peace negotiations among the supporters of the two major political clans to prevent further armed encounters that may result in massive displacement. A total of 25 local peace coordinators were mobilized and trained on Bridging Leadership, Planning, and Negotiation Training to effectively conduct localized mediation in their respective areas. A General Assembly was successfully held which provided an avenue for opposing political figures in the area and their respective supporters to arrive at an agreement not to engage in any armed confrontation.

Reactivation of the local peace coordinators were also supported during election period. Local peace coordinators which include religious and traditional leaders, barangay officials, and the youth conducted a series of consultations and dialogues among warring political clans and supporters to prevent violence at the community level, particularly at the polling precincts. Separate meetings and dialogues with the police and the military deployed in the area were also held to localized mediation to establish a coordinated system in reporting in case violence permeates in the target areas. Except for isolated cases of explosions aimed to intimidate the voting public, the redeployment of local peace coordinators during election time helped pacify tensions and mitigate violence rooted on the contrasting political alignments of the people in the conflict-stricken localities covered under the project.

Magungaya Center for PALMA, Inc. (MCPI)

*Mitigate Conflict in Midsayap, Cotabato due to the feuding between MNLF and MILF
Commanders in Lebak, Sultan Kudarat and Datu Blah Sinsuat, Maguindanao*

From May to June 2010, a series of skirmishes occurred between feuding local commanders of the MNLF and MILF which displaced civilians and affected around 2,000 Muslim and Christian families in three barangays¹⁷ in Lebak, Sultan Kudarat and four barangays¹⁸ in Datu Blah

¹⁵ Damalusay, Campo, Upper Idtig

¹⁶ Kayupo, Malangit

¹⁷ Datu Karon, Tran, Turogan

Sinsuat, Maguindanao. The armed confrontation is attributed to the longstanding feud between MNLF commander Randy Karon and MILF Commander Jing Kaludtiag.

In June 2010, MCPI was tapped to mitigate the conflict and conduct a series of consultations and dialogues with key stakeholders to come up strategies and establish mechanisms to prevent its further escalation. For instance, some of the dialogues were held with MNLF commanders and key community leaders to discuss options to deescalate the situation and prevent their involvement in the conflict since some of the fighters of Karon and Caludtiag come from their communities in North Cotabato. Among the resolutions agreed upon in the series of meetings was to intensify targeted messaging to inform their relatives in the MILF about the nature of the conflict which would hopefully dissuade them from joining the fighting, since many of their relatives became involved because they were misinformed. The other resolution of the group was to request the Philippine Armed Forces to send peace keeping forces to act as a buffer between the combatants.

To complement the on-going dialogues, media coverage about the conflict was held in July 22, 2010 in the conflict-affected communities of Lebak, Sultan Kudarat. The coverage was participated and conducted by select journalists from Cotabato City and Zamboanga City. The main objective of the coverage is to uncover the truth behind the armed conflict and raise awareness about the plight of the internally displaced persons who were seriously affected by the armed encounters. Significantly, these ground interventions paved the way to bring the conflict and its devastating impact to the community closer to public attention. It also generated a growing interest for other key stakeholders particularly the MILF leadership, the Joint GRP-MILF Coordinating Committees on Cessation of Hostilities, and the International Monitoring Team to mediate between the warring parties.

Mindananaw Community Development Organization, Inc. (MCDO)

Multi- Sectoral Roundtable Discussions on Peace and Security in Mindanao

During the first quarter of FY2010, roundtable discussions on peace and security in Mindanao were held in General Santos City in response to the recent spate of bombing incidents that subsequently took place in Mindanao, particularly in the cities of Cotabato and Iligan and in the small town of Jolo in Sulu. Select participants from the academe, civil society, local government, media, student leaders, peace advocates, police, and the military sector from General Santos and Sarangani Province were invited and shared experiences on various bombing cases and identified recommendations that will address the situation. In separate occasion, a security briefing was also provided by security specialists to these participants to equip them with concepts on peace monitoring, early warning system, and rapid reaction mechanism in case of an emerging threat of bombing or explosion.

¹⁸ Laguitan, Meti, Kamalig, and Sinepak

Peace and Development Advocate League, Inc. (PDAL)

Mitigating Local Conflict by Promoting Culture of Peace and Better Understanding among the MILF, MNLF, Christian, and Indigenous communities in the conflict-affected areas in the Provinces of Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat, and South Cotabato”

PDAL was supported to conduct a series of activities to mitigate localized conflicts among different ethnic groups (Muslims, Christians, Indigenous People) in the targeted areas by engaging the ground leaders of these conflicting groups as well as other non-state actors to a strategic, democratic, coordinative, and collaborative peace dialogues and consultations. In this particular project, PDAL specifically worked on three cases that covered specific areas in Malapatan, Sarangani Province, Tupi, South Cotabato, and in Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat.

For Malapatan case, the conflict started in July 2009 when a family member from Focal clan was killed by a family member of Harid clan in Barangay Lun Masla in Malapatan, Sarangani Province. While still on the process of mediation to settle the feud, the father of the victim (Focal) killed the son of Harid in reprisal to the death of his son. Since then, the conflict between these two families was linked to further armed encounters that happened in nearby barangays and was expected to grow and develop into an inter-ethnic clashes between the *Blaans* and the *Maguindanaons* in the area, if not mitigated.

On September 30, 2010, around 200 people, primarily consist of the members of the feuding families attended the ceremony (*dyandi/kanduli*) which celebrates the resolution of the most publicized *rido* case in Malapatan. The activity culminated in the Signing of a Peace Covenant which entailed the conditions concurred by both parties during the negotiations. PDAL in close collaboration with the Supreme Council of Elders representing the local government of Malapatan conducted a series of intensive negotiations and informal meetings with the conflicting parties prior to the conduct of the activity.

Separately, localized violence due to intense political rivalry particularly between MILF and MNLF local leaders were reported in Barangay Zeneben, Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat. A similar case was also experienced in Barangay Palian, Tupi, South Cotabato that caused further tension among the Muslim and Christian settlers in the area. According to the community leaders in these areas, the growing indifference of these two factions which emanate from personal to socio-political issues if not mitigated will result to internal violence in the community.

In response to the situation, PDAL conducted a series of consultative and collaborative dialogues among the community leaders to have a community-level peace process among these opposing groups in the area. As a result of the intervention, a Covenant Signing was successfully held on September 18 and September 24 in Barangay Zeneben and Barangay Palian, respectively. The covenant integrates the localized mutual agreement between the leaders of MILF and MNLF in support of each other’s cause and plans for peace and development in their respective communities.

Sustainable Alternatives for the Advancement of Mindanao, Inc. (SALAM, Inc.)

Mitigate Conflict in Munai, Lanao del Norte

A community peace dialogue was held on September 26, 2010 to celebrate the reconciliation of a former MILF commander and representatives of Ranaw Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Assistance Center, Inc. (RDRRAC, Inc.) in Brgy. Old Poblacion in Munai, Lanao del Norte. The activity provided an avenue for major stakeholders to identify mitigating measures that will further promote good relationships between the community and non-government organizations that operate in the area. The highlight of the activity was the signing of the covenant which sealed the commitment of both parties to work and support peace and development initiatives in their locality.

Prior to the conduct of activity, SALAM conducted a series of dialogues to mitigate the conflict between RDRRAC volunteers and the group of a former MILF commander which took place in February 2010. The incident happened when RDRRAC volunteers tried to pacify the local commander when he criticized the system of rice distribution facilitated by RDRRAC in his community which eventually ended in heated verbal exchanges that almost resulted in physical assault and harassment. The conflict resulted in a temporary suspension of RDRRAC's operation in the area due to some perceived security threats among its project implementers. RDRRAC is a non-government organization which was the project implementing agency partner of the United Nations Act for Peace Program that facilitated a project for Botika sa Barangay situated in a rebel returnee community in Old-Poblacion, Munail, Lanao del Norte.

Ulangig Mindanao, Inc. (UMI)

Mitigate Conflict in the Province of Sulu

On March 2010, a grant was provided to UMI to mitigate conflicts in select areas in the Municipality of Parang and in Pata Island in Sulu. UMI conducted field assessment to identify and prioritize conflicts that could trigger violence in May 2010 national elections. UMI collaborated with Task Force Kahanungan¹⁹ in its conduct of dialogues among the feuding families including informal meetings with respected individuals who had the capacity to influence the decision of the feuding clans to bring them in the negotiating table. The Sampang versus Maas Edjing in adjacent barangays of Silangkan and Piyahan in Parang as well as the Burahan versus Adjail in Pata Island were the two conflicts prioritized by UMI as they may have negatively impacted the conduct of peaceful elections in the Province if not mitigated.

For the Parang case, UMI through the Task Force Kahanungan sought the engagement of the local government of Parang to establish a ceasefire agreement between the two opposing families prior, during, and after the election period. In addition, a series of dialogues with the Armed Forces of the Philippines was also held to dispatch a peacekeeping force in the area to ensure the security of the civilians. Interestingly, the intervention was successful in engaging the feuding families not to resort to violence during the national elections. Due to the propensity of the case

¹⁹ Task Force Kahanungan is a local mechanism composed of multi-sectoral individuals from the academe, military, police, local government and civil society organizations which was formed to resolve conflicts and address election-related violence or other issues that threaten the safety and security of the civilians in Sulu.

to ignite flare-ups in the conduct of October 2010 barangay elections, series of dialogues was then undertaken with the municipal government and community leaders to negotiate with the feuding parties in order to sustain the ceasefire established between the warring parties. Currently, negotiation for settlements that will pave the way for the resolution of the feud has been worked out by the local government of Parang headed by the municipal mayor and some select elders who were tapped to assist in the conflict mitigation process.

UMI was also supported to conduct actual intervention in light of a series of skirmishes that occurred in Pata Island on April 20, 2010. The fighting in Pata Island which resulted in two deaths, four wounded, and displaced 14,000 civilians with their houses burned was widely seen as an act of retaliation of some members of Adjail family against the Burahan, the incumbent political family in Pata. The conflict between these two families started in October 2009 when a family member of Adjail was killed by Burahan's political supporter in a heated verbal argument while getting a registration form for the May 2010 elections. Subsequently after the incident, Adjail family subsequently allied themselves with the more powerful families of Karanain and MNLF Commander Rendiyong Masilam who also have a long standing feud with the Burahans.

From April to June 2010, UMI and the Task Force Kahanungan conducted several meetings and discussions among influential politicians in Sulu, the military, police, and community leaders in Pata to identify mitigating measures that will help reduce the violence in lieu of rising number of casualties brought about by successive fighting between Rendiyong and Burahan. As a result, a Marine peacekeeping force was deployed in the island to avert the sporadic firefight between the warring parties. Backdoor negotiations were also conducted by UMI to open the communication lines among the emissaries of the warring parties to encourage possible settlement from both sides. Through the project, UMI also raised the issue on landmines in Pata Island during its series of meetings with the provincial government which started when Rendiyong decided to challenge Burahan, who was since then the incumbent mayor of Pata during the 1998 elections.

Separately, UMI in partnership with Panglima Hawani Foundation also implemented the *Transformative Peace Action Project for Moro National Liberation Front Combatants in Sulu*. The objectives of the project among others include the re-opening of a coordinative communication line and understanding between the MNLF and the government and promoting local government's participation and support to local peace processes, particularly centering on the issues of disenfranchised MNLF ground forces in Sulu. Activities that were conducted include: 1) separate orientation session with the MNLF in Sulu with regard to the present status and review of the GRP-MNLF peace agreement as well as their accountability to the signed agreement; (2) needs assessment workshop with the MNLF forces to identify their needs, interests, and options based on new information on the present status of the GRP-MNLF Final Peace Agreement; (3) dialogues and consultations with the provincial government to draw out possible local government actions that could complement the local peace process centered on the issue of MNLF ground forces in Sulu. An inter-CSO/sectoral workshop was held on September 13, 2010 to assess the outcome of the series of engagements with the MNLF, AFP, and the local government to formulate a comprehensive ground security framework which will be shared to the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the GRP-MNLF peace panels for possible local policy formulation.

United Muslim Professional for Peace and Development Association (UMPPADA)

Mitigating Conflict in Malapatan, Sarangani Province and Surallah, South Cotabato

In December 2009, support was provided to UMPPADA to mitigate the brewing conflict between the *Blaan*'s (Indigenous People), *Ilonggos* (Christians), and *Maguindanaons* (Muslims) in Barangay Upper Sepaka, Surallah, South Cotabato. The conflict was expected to grow and develop into inter-ethnic clashes following the death of the barangay captain and the prior unsolved incidents of killings in the community which were allegedly reprisals among these ethnic groups. Through the responding team organized by UMPPADA, a series of intensive dialogues and mediation among local ethnic leaders was held to gather the sentiments of each conflicting groups and come up a mutual agreement that integrates the conditions and recommendations that were agreed during negotiations.

As a culminating activity, the results of the actual interventions and the agreement arrived during consultations and negotiations were presented to the community which was subsequently signed by both representatives and leaders of the ethnic groups. While the signing of the agreement did not assure the reconciliation of the conflicting groups due to the depth of history and nature of violence involved, the intervention however pacified the residents in the community and prevented further violence in nearby barangays.

Similarly, UMPPADA also formed a responding team to mitigate the conflict between *B'laan* and *Maguindanaon* in Brgy. Tuyan, Malapatan, Sarangani Province. The conflict has further escalated to Brgy. Lun Masla of Malapatan and resulted in the deaths of two people, one from each side of conflicting parties. To pacify the situation and prevent the escalation of violence in nearby barangays, UMPPADA was supported to conduct a separate focus group discussions and community leader's dialogue to identify the root causes of the conflict. While the intervention did not necessarily resolve the issues of the conflicting parties, the dialogues provided an avenue for the families to air out their sentiments and conditions to settle the dispute.

The conflict started in August 2009 when a series of killings took place in Lun Masla and Tuyan that resulted in apparent armed encounters between *Blaans* and *Maguindanaons* which was perceived by the locals as an act of retaliation between the opposing groups.

United Youth for Peace and Development

Mitigate Conflict in Midsayap Cotabato and in Northern Kabuntalan Maguindanao

The conflict between the families of Samson and Luna started on January 1, 2010 when a family member of Samson (Abdila Samson) was killed in Barangay Gayonga, a Christian-dominated barangay while he was on his way home after attending a New Years Day celebration in the area. Seven days after his death, his brothers allegedly attempted to rape a family member of Luna. The incident triggered the conflict between the two families, both of which have links to the armed groups in the area. Also, Samson's death added more tension in the community since rumors were spreading that Samson's family was staging a retaliatory attack against the Christian community in pursuit of the suspected killer of their family member.

The Quick Response Team in Northern Kabuntalan (which was formed and organized under the Conflict Mitigating Program) was supported through UNYPAD to rapidly respond to the conflict. A set of activities was organized to encourage the families to have a face to face dialogue to determine the areas and conditions for a possible settlement. On April 27, 2010, a thanksgiving ceremony (*kanduli*) which was also a Muslim-Christian celebration was held in the community to formalize the reconciliation of the feuding families. The highlight of the event was the signing of the community peace covenant which integrates the conditions of the settlement concurred by both parties as well as the agreed protocols in case the same nature of conflict will occur in the area. The Samson-Luna feud if not mitigated is expected to escalate into a large-scale violence that will affect the means of livelihood not only of the conflicting parties involved but also of the other civilians in the area and its neighboring communities.

The QRT through UNYPAD also spearheaded the resolution of the feud between two families (Salem-Masgal) in Barangay Nabalawag, Midsayap, Cotabato. On July 29, 2010, a thanksgiving ceremony (*kanduli*) was held in the area to celebrate the reconciliation of the warring clans which culminates in the signing of a community peace covenant by the parties that were involved in the conflict. Prior to the activity, a series of informal meetings and exploratory talks were made to the elders who were considered hardliners and decision makers of each family, to persuade them into entering a possible settlement. Subsequently, a face-to-face dialogue was conducted where key representatives from each family discussed possible options for settlement in order to finally end the feud.

The Salem-Masgal feud started in 1993 when the elders of these families were involved in an intense leadership rivalry that led to bloody armed encounters which killed a total of six deaths from the conflicting groups. The skirmishes extended to other five neighboring barangays in Midsayap where both parties have families and familial connections and caused massive displacement and destruction to the properties and livelihood in these communities. The successful conduct of the intervention prevented the tendency of the conflict to reoccur and formally sealed the peaceful resolution of the feud.

VI. Plans for the Next Reporting Period

In the next reporting period, support will be provided to UMI for the continuation of the project with the ulama in Sulu. The support will particularly fund the initial set of activities as prioritized of the different *ulama* groups which aims to address the specific issues in their communities as identified during the Strategic Planning Workshop. Monitoring visits and on-site coaching with partners for some remaining activities will also be held.

A map will also be developed that will graphically represent the efforts to manage conflicts under the Mitigating Conflicts Program which includes the hotspots and critical areas identified, interventions of partner NGOs, statistics on flare-ups, and other localized conflicts). The map will build on the existing *rido* interactive map which the World Bank is currently using for its conflict intensity index. Writing of final reports and preparation for project close-out will be made as the project winds down on December 31, 2010.

Attachment: Activity Log