

PeaceTalk: A Directory of Peace Process in Mindanao

Authors

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Abstract

This paper introduces a directory of peace instruments crucial to the peace process in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Nearly three years into the transition, the former MILF rebels, now in charge of the interim administration, have, with the assistance of the national army, largely confined the armed groups opposed to the peace process.¹ Even so, there are still occasional clashes in the area, despite the low threat of major conflict.

The paper also briefly explains the different facets of the Moros' struggle in Mindanao. It will explain the history of armed conflict in Mindanao, including some of the operations of terrorist networks influenced by violent extremism; peace instruments: laws and agreements; international organizations; stories and publications; organizations and movements; and peacebuilding initiatives; and conclude with the current status quo of the BARMM.

The importance of this paper lies in the fact that there is a need to stretch our understanding of what peace instruments are crucial to the peace process in the long war situation experienced by the Muslim Filipinos in the South.² This will help academics and independent researchers learn about the contributions of different aspects to continuing to achieve peace in Mindanao.

The resources used to assess the likelihood in this paper will focus on the history of the Moro people in Mindanao through peer-reviewed journals, research papers, news articles, commentaries, and documentaries.

To Just and Lasting Peace in Mindanao

The Muslim-dominated regions in the southern Philippines, Mindanao, have fought colonial powers in Manila for four centuries, regardless of whether those forces were Spanish, American, or Filipino.

Insurgencies, Terrorism, Clan Wars, Political Clans, and the glimmerings of hope for peaceful cooperation, and repetitions of this dynamic have all occurred amid pervasive violence and

¹The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Security in Southeast Asia. (n.d.). United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/events/moro-islamic-liberation-front-milf-and-security-southeast-asia>

²Muslim Rulers and Rebels. (n.d.).

<https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft0199n64c&chunk.id=d0e2252&toc.depth=100&toc.id=d0e2176&brand=ucpress>

poverty. Now, the question is whether peace-related efforts were effective as to the development and have contributed to the healing of Mindanao, especially to the Moro people.

It is important to understand the story of the Moro people's ongoing struggle for their right to self-determination which is one of the fundamental causes of armed conflict in the region. In response to the national government's failure to achieve genuine social progress, peace, and development in the southern Philippines, a fight that involves an affirmation of their heritage and a demand for meaningful governance has arisen. As stated in the paper, the conflict also stems from "historical injustices" and serious breaches of the social justice of the Mindanao people.³

As a democratic country that believes in the power of universal diplomacy, it is imperative for the government to realize the real problems on the ground. Moreover, the need for democratic evaluation, stabilization, and co-optive solution is necessary to obtain the peace which the Moro people have been fighting for decades.

After then-President Joseph Estrada launched an "all-out war" against the MILF in 2000, which resulted in incalculable casualties, injured troops, and extensive community displacement, mostly among Moro people, many organizations became more involved in the Mindanao peace process.

The Philippines is and has adhered to a considerable approach of more decentralization in response to the various and many identities of its people by pledging to accept Bangsamoro requests for greater self-rule. At the same time, MILF's pragmatism and negotiating prowess dispel the myth that political Islam is inherently violent and radicalized. In resolving the aspirations for self-determination of the Muslim population in Mindanao, Philippines, both parties have displayed courage and tenacity.

Background

The researchers of this paper will be applying the *historical narrative* approach, which contains stories from the Moro people from the book "Peace is for Everyone." Subsequently, in order to establish factual data and appropriate findings for this paper, the resources used will depend on the history of the Moro people in Mindanao through academic papers, research papers, documentaries, and news articles.

The paper will also explore five (5) subsets or instruments that are evidently helpful in the establishment of the peace process in Mindanao: *agreements and/or laws*, *organizations*, *publications*, *peacebuilding programs*, and last but not least, the *international community*.

Although there has been a major amount of peacebuilding processes regulated and implemented for Mindanao, due to the constant and continuing presence of terrorist groups, mainly the Abu Sayyaf, the New People's Army, and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, it still poses an amount of security risk in the region and they are still continuing to ramp up recruitment.

³Bauzon, K. (n.d.). The Philippines: The 1996 Peace Agreement for the Southern Philippines: An Assessment. PeaceBuilders Community. <https://peacebuilderscommunity.org/documents/2006GRP-MNLF-FPA.pdf>

Peace process is and will always be a long journey. For numerous decades, Mindanao and its people have witnessed the exceptional savagery of armed conflict. The question now is: After all these long roads of instrumentalities in achieving peace in Mindanao, will it be sustainable in the future?

Peace Instruments in Mindanao

Laws and Agreements

1. The Tripoli Agreement

This is the agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with the participation of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission Members of the Islamic Conference and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference.⁴

This agreement establishes autonomy in the Southern Philippines within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines. It defines the autonomous territory and delineates the competence of the central and regional governments.

The Tripoli Agreement symbolized the highly indefinite, open-ended and circuitous nature of the Mindanao peace process as the first peace accord signed between the Philippine government and the Moro rebel group. This agreement was manifested in Proclamation No. 1628 on March 25, 1977.

2. Exploratory Talks

While collaborative dialogue helps to increase a true understanding of the situation on the ground, exploratory discussion has been active between rebel factions and the Philippine government.⁵

The Comprehensive Compact's points and the MILF's stance were clarified during the previous peace talks, which were their main focus. Public consultations have been held by both the government and MILF panels to gauge public opinion on the myriad problems surrounding the Mindanao peace process. It strengthens the significant security required by both sides with the aid of these official discussions between groups and the government.

3. 1996 GRP-MNLF Final Peace Agreement

⁴ The Tripoli Agreement of 1976: Lessons, impact on the Mindanao peace process. (n.d.).

<https://pcij.org/article/881/the-tripoli-agreement-of-1976-lessons-impact-on-the-mindanao-peace-process>

⁵GPH-MILF 21st exploratory talks start today | GOVPH. (2011, April 27). Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2011/04/27/gph-milf-21st-exploratory-talks-start-today/>

The final agreement on the implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with the participation of the organization of Islamic Conference Ministerial Committee of the Six and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

The 1996 Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) officially ended the 24-year-old struggle waged by the MNLF for independence and later for autonomy.⁶

This agreement contains a three-year transitional period which commits the GRP to a massive programme of socio-economic development for the region encompassed in the Zone of Peace and Development (ZOPAD), through the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) and the consolidation and expansion of the ARMM beyond the four provinces.

4. Establishment of the BARMM

The establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is one of the attestations of how the Philippine government deals with the long-running battle fought by the Moros, the Indigenous people, and the other marginalized groups situated in Mindanao.

Moreover, the impact of the ARMM may have different repercussions, results, and outturns, which outliers the importance of continuing the fight for self-determination for the Moro. With the establishment of BARMM, it sought to resolve major and minor issues the people of Mindanao are facing. This would also help the "sultanates" or the local leaders in the BARMM to lead their respective areas in accordance with their preferences, faith, attributes, and lifestyle.

5. Republic Act No. 9054

Republic Act No. 9054 is an act to strengthen and expand the Organic Act for the autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao. It amended Republic Act No. 6734, entitled "An Act Providing for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao". It presents specific provisions describing the powers and responsibilities of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Departments, as well as sources and sharing of revenues and authority of the Regional Government over the natural resources located within the autonomous region's jurisdiction.⁷

6. Republic Act No. 6734

⁶MMP: Moro National Liberation Front. (n.d.). FSI.

https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/moro-national-liberation-front#highlight_text_17071

⁷Republic Act No. 9054 Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). (2003, July). Department of Natural Resources.

<https://faspselib.denr.gov.ph/sites/default/files//Publication%20Files/Primer%20on%20RA%209054-Organic%20Act%20for%20ARMM.pdf>

Republic Act No. 6734 or An Act Providing for an Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.⁸

The 1987 Philippine Constitution authorized the establishment of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). This act governed the creation and operations of the ARMM which, in a plebiscite on November 17, 1989, encompassed Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi.

Its purpose is to provide a basic structure of government within the framework of the Constitution and national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines and to ensure peace and equality before the law of all people in the Autonomous Region.

7. Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB)

The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) consolidates and affirms the understanding and commitment between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

It is a product of the pursuit of a solution to the Bangsamoro Question with honor, justice, and dignity for all concerned. It ends the armed hostilities between GPH and MILF, and promotes peace and stability in this part of the world.

8. Republic Act 11054

It is an act providing for the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). It is also known as the Bangsamoro Basic Law.⁹

The purpose of this Organic Law is to establish a political entity and provide for its basic structure of government in recognition of the justness and legitimacy of the cause of the Bangsamoro people and the aspirations of Muslim Filipinos and all indigenous cultural communities in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to secure their identity, and posterity, allowing for meaningful self-governance within the framework of the Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines.

Through this act, the promotion of unity is endorsed wherein the Bangsamoro Government shall promote unity, peace, justice, and goodwill among all people, as well as encourage a just and peaceful settlement of disputes.

⁸Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. (n.d.). Department of Budget and Management. <https://www.dbm.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/OPCCB/OPIF2011/ARMM.pdf>

⁹Republic Act No. 11054. (n.d.). https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2018/ra_11054_2018.html

Organizations/Movements

1. Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is an Islamic separatist organization based in the southern Philippines that seeks autonomy for Filipino Muslims called Moros.

The MNLF was the leading organization among Moro separatists for about two decades beginning in the 1970s. In 1996, the MNLF signed a landmark peace agreement with the Philippine government that saw the creation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Despite their heavy militant way of exerting Moro's self-determination, the group paved the way for Moro's recognition from the Government of the Republic of the Philippines.¹⁰

2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is the largest militant organization in the Philippines and seeks autonomy for Filipino Muslims. The MILF has waged a secessionist campaign in the southern Philippines since 1978 when they broke away from the secular Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Their avowed goal is to establish an independent Islamic state. Their ultimate goal is to establish a Muslim-dominated independent state while expanding the territory.¹¹

3. Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM)

The Muslim Independence Movement (MIM) was a secessionist political organization in the Philippines. It sought an independent Muslim state from the Philippines comprising Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan regions. The MIM acted as a lightning rod, attracting mostly young, educated Muslims either disenchanted with or debarred from Muslim electoral politics.

It consists of public political actions through pronouncements in the form of manifestos and declarations of policy publicized in the national and international press and disseminated to politicians and Muslim leaders in the Philippines and abroad.

4. IDEALS Inc. (Lawyering Group for the Moro)

IDEALS Inc. is a regional organization providing non-profit, non-stock judicial lobbying and services called Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment via Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS). IDEALS addresses the technical and legal requirements of disadvantaged,

¹⁰Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) - Philippines. (n.d.-b). The Library of Congress.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0008603/>

¹¹The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Security in Southeast Asia. (n.d.). United States Institute of Peace.
<https://www.usip.org/events/moro-islamic-liberation-front-milf-and-security-southeast-asia>

vulnerable, and marginalized communities, including farmers, disaster victims, and those affected by their areas.¹²

One of the most important works they have been doing through the years is called “Lawyering Group for the Moro”. They visit the areas of Jolo, Marawi, Cotabato, and Lanao del Norte to promote and advocate for the Moro by means of legal services such as the right to vote, the right to due process in local courts, and peacekeeping initiatives.

5. Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP)

The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process or OPAPP is the office mandated to oversee, coordinate, and integrate the implementation of the comprehensive peace process. The agency was created through Executive Order No. 125, s. 1993 which was later amended in 2001 with the signing of Executive Order No. 3, s. 2001 as a reaffirmation of the government’s commitment to achieving just and lasting peace through a comprehensive peace process. OPAPP has been an invaluable instrument for peace in the Philippines. It has served and continues to serve a vital purpose in the journey toward genuine and lasting peace in Mindanao.¹³

6. Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI)

The Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI) is an Asian training institute grounded in the Mindanao, Philippines, context that provides a space for people of diverse backgrounds to gather together, share, and learn in a safe environment where all viewpoints are encouraged and respected. MPI seeks to deepen commitment to justice and peace; respect for human rights; and dialogue and solidarity among individuals, institutions, and communities.¹⁴

7. The Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA)

The Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA) is a government-owned and controlled corporation (GOCC). Section 3 of Executive Order 560 mandates SPDA to be the implementing arm for the Economic Catch-Up Plan on the implementation of the 1996 GRP-MNLF Final Peace Agreement.¹⁵

It promotes the development of the Southern Philippines by initiating and or undertaking by itself or otherwise, development and/or business projects of corporate and economic nature whether in agriculture, power, infrastructure, energy, public utilities, land development, manufacturing, exploration and/or utilization of natural resources and other fields or projects.

¹²IDEALS. (2022, July 6). Home - IDEALS. IDEALS - Lawyering for Development. <https://ideals.org.ph/>

¹³Process, O. O. P. a. O. T. P. (n.d.). Office of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process. <https://peace.gov.ph/author/administrator/#:~:text=The%20Office%20of%20the%20Presidential,125%2C%20s.>

¹⁴Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc. (2023, March 1). Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute. <https://www.mpiasia.net/>

¹⁵About Us – Southern Philippines Development Authority – SPDA. (n.d.). <https://spda.gov.ph/about-us/#:~:text=To%20promote%20the%20development%20of,exploration%20and%20For%20Utilization%20of>

8. Regional Consultative Commission (RCC)

The Regional Consultative Commission (RCC) was created through Republic Act No. 6649 for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Its purpose is to assist in the enactment by Congress of the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. It seeks to carry out its purpose and consider ethnolinguistic, geographical, sectoral, educational, and cultural factors.¹⁶

9. National Unification Commission (NUC)

The National Unification Commission (NUC) was created by the Ramos Administration which was primarily tasked to craft “a viable general amnesty program and process that will lead to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace.”

The NUC’s task was to hold consultation with all concerned sectors, including rebel groups -- particularly the MNLF and the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front-New People’s Army (CPP-NDF-NPA) -- as well as the Philippine military and police. NUC serves as an ad hoc advisory group rather than a negotiating panel. It reviewed initial agreements between insurgent groups and government emissaries, pursued exploratory talks, issued safe conduct passes, and recommended the next steps to the President.¹⁷

10. Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD)

The Special Zone of Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines is a resolution expressed by the Senate in support of the peace efforts of the GRP and the MNLF.

It serves as a transitory agency to ensure that peace and development projects and programs are effectively accomplished. This organization will give greater opportunities for the participation of the MNLF in economic and social development in certain areas of Mindanao. Thus, creating an intensive and interactive management development program for MNLF and community leaders which will enable them to actively participate and contribute to the implementation of meaningful development programs.

11. Equal Access International - Philippines

Equal Access International - Philippines helps communities around the world drive sustainable and transformative change through proven participatory media, technology, and outreach models. EAI is strengthening the capacities of local organizations to build resilience

¹⁶Manager, R. E. D. O. (n.d.). REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6649 - AN ACT CREATING THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION FOR MUSLIM MINDANAO, PRESCRIBING ITS POWERS, FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFORE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES. <https://www.chanrobles.com/republicacts/republicactno6649.html>

¹⁷Barnes, C. (n.d.). Philippines National Unification Commission: National consultations and the ‘Six Paths to Peace’ | Conciliation Resources. <https://www.c-r.org/accord/public-participation/philippines-national-unification-commission-national-consultations-and->

to violent extremism and counter radicalization and recruitment efforts of armed groups in Mindanao.¹⁸

International Community

1. United States Institute for Peace (USIP)

USIP is a program in the United States that covers a broad spectrum of peace and conflict studies, including peace and stability in Mindanao. Since gaining independence, the Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands was once a U.S. colony.

The biggest change to achieve lasting peace in Mindanao has, however, come with the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in 2019. USIP is aiming to advance research on geopolitical tension in Mindanao and to assist the Bangsamoro Transition Authority and grassroots civil society, building on generations of reconciliation efforts in the area. This organization is an instrument for peace since it also promotes and builds the capacity for students and the youth to regain the peace needed in the region. At present, USIP continues to provide an avenue for young leaders in the Philippines with their program called “Generation Change Fellows” which concluded just last month.¹⁹

2. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

JICA works with local partners in the Philippines to support development in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, as well as economic growth, inequality reduction, disaster mitigation, and other development-related issues like health and governance. With the help of JICA, it enriches the culture of the Moro people by developing project frameworks that intend to boost the local economy in Mindanao.

3. European Union (EU)

Although the EU or the European Union upheld a broad array of relief and assistance to its valuable partners and allies, the EU has played an important role also in the internal assistance needed by the people in Mindanao. In accordance with the data presented by the EU, the Philippines has been receiving help from the EU with a focus on governance, job development, renewable energy, and support for vulnerable communities, particularly in Mindanao, the poorest region of the country that has seen conflict and population displacement.

4. United Nations (UN)

The Philippines' government has key development, peacekeeping, and humanitarian agendas, which the UN supports and assists. For more than 70 years, the UN has partnered with the

¹⁸Equal Access International. (2020, July 13). OURmindaNOW: Alternative Messaging Hub in Mindanao, Philippines - Equal Access International.

<https://www.equalaccess.org/our-work/projects/alternative-messaging-hub-in-mindanao-philippines/>

¹⁹United States Institute of Peace. (n.d.). Philippines. <https://www.usip.org/regions/asia/philippines>

Philippine government, helping state institutions uphold, respect, and carry out the duties of international treaties and agreed-upon development objectives that the Philippines has voluntarily embraced over time. This includes the enactment of the Bangsamoro Basic Law, and the UN has an integral part in pushing its reforms, call to action, and the most important role as part of the international landscape which is respect.²⁰

5. International Monitoring Team (IMT)

The International Monitoring Team (IMT) was a monitoring team composed of 60 members in Cotabato City, Mindanao of the Philippines to monitor the implementation of peace between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Moro conflict. The team is led by Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Japan, Libya, Norway, and the European Union. The IMT was responsible for monitoring the security, humanitarian, rehabilitation, and development aspects, as well as socio-economic assistance and civilian protection.²¹

6. International Contact Group (ICG)

The International Contact Group comprises four countries: Japan, UK, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, and four international NGOs: Muhammadiyah, The Asia Foundation, the HD Centre, and Conciliation Resources.²²

The ICG for the Mindanao peace process was established in 2009 by the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The purpose of the ICG has been to accompany and mobilize international support for the peace process and exert proper leverage and sustain the interest of the parties as well as maintain a level of comfort that restores mutual trust.

7. Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents.²³

The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world. The OIC has been playing a key role in assisting the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the different Moro fronts

²⁰The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. (2014, March 27). United Nations Peacemaker. https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/PH_140327_ComprehensiveAgreementBangsamoro.pdf

²¹Wikiwand - International Monitoring Team. (n.d.). Wikiwand. https://www.wikiwand.com/en/International_Monitoring_Team

²²Innovation in Mediation Support: The International Contact Group in Mindanao. (n.d.). Centre Peace Conflict Studies. <https://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/Innovation-in-Mediation-Support.pdf>

²³History. (n.d.). https://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en

since the 1970s to find common ground to resolve the Bangsamoro armed struggle in Mindanao.²⁴

8. Government of Malaysia

In order to provide better safety and stability in the Philippines and the region, Malaysia has been a steadfast supporter of the Mindanao Peace Process and is honored to serve a facilitative role as the Third-Party Facilitator in the Peace Process. In order to help the Bangsamoro people become ready for the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Malaysia also continues to provide assistance in the area of capacity building.

9. Government of Libya

The significant agreement signed in Tripoli, Libya, over 42 years ago set a milestone in the history of the Mindanao peace negotiations. The Tripoli Agreement, which established the first autonomous territory in the southern Philippines, was signed on December 23, 1976, by representatives of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

10. Conciliation Resources

Conciliation Resources is an international organization committed to stopping violent conflict and creating more peaceful societies. They work with people impacted by war and violence, bringing diverse voices together to make a change that lasts. They have different programs that are centered on peacebuilding initiatives which aim to bring a lasting impact to the communities who are vulnerable to war and displacement.

Conciliation Resources works with communities in Mindanao to support the implementation of the peace agreement by facilitating joint spaces for the community, especially in far-flung areas in order to help the disadvantaged, they also facilitate with the local governments to resolve conflicts and human security issues and to ensure the voices of women and indigenous people are listened to.

Peacebuilding Initiatives

1. OurMindaNOW Summit

The youth-led Alternative Messaging Hub, re-named OURmindaNOW (to resonate with Mindanaoans), took the form of active social media campaigns, stakeholder workshops, Tech Camps and Hackathons, mentorship for Peace Promotion Fellows, community outreach events, production and broadcast of radio programs on youth radicalization and empowerment, positive messaging, and behavior change. (Equal Access)

²⁴Interview: the Struggle for Peace in Mindanao, the Philippines. (n.d.). GPPAC.
<https://www.gppac.net/news/interview-struggle-peace-mindanao-philippines>

The purpose of this summit is to be able to collaborate with fellow young peacebuilders in the Philippines to communicate and push for reforms and co-create a better vision for Mindanao. Our MindaNOW summit is held every year which is sponsored by Equal Access International Philippines - and its headquarters in the United States.

2. Virtual Peacebuilding Training

MPI, or Mindanao Peace Institute, offers four online courses between August and December, which include courses about peacebuilding theory and practice, models for peace and conflict transformation, designing pedagogies for change, and monitoring and evaluation for peacebuilding leaders. These short online courses would be able to help practitioners, advocates, and policymakers have a better understanding of the systems changed and qualities of attaining a better Mindanao.

3. Mindanao Peace Forum

The Rotary Club of Cagayan de Oro East Urban, in partnership with the Eisenhower Fellows Association of the Philippines and Rotary Clubs of Zone 1, District 3870, will be conducting a peace forum on September 28, 2019 at the Capitol University Multi-Purpose Hall at 1:00-6:00 PM. Although there have been no developments with regard to the forum throughout the years, it definitely helped in shaping how private organizations, the business sector, and the youth can help in attaining and sustaining peace in the region.

4. Seeds for Mindanao's Advocacy and Youth Leadership

SMAYL is a phonetic distortion of "*smile*" and stands for **Seeds for Mindanao Advocacy and Youth Leadership**. It is a youth leadership program that introduces the story of peace and conflict in Mindanao through a hybrid of online and offline programming geared towards an action agenda.

Through this platform, 30 youth leaders are selected each year to learn the story of Mindanao's peace, conflict, and youth engagement by completing a short course. Moreover, they can also develop an action agenda with their cohort while also responding to the community's problem by implementing their action agenda.

5. Teach Peace Build Peace Movement Inc.

Teach Peace Build Peace Movement is an independent, non-partisan, and non-profit organization that aims to make every Filipino child and youth a peace hero. TPBPM advocates for the institutionalization of formal and non-formal Peace Education in the Philippines through the creation and development of a Modular Programme Curriculum and Creative Educational Materials and the implementation of a Peace Education Programme in strategic locations. (TPBPM)

6. Mindanao Peace Education Conference

In its sixth year, the MPSC is maintaining its pace and holding discussions on issues related to the aspiration for peace in Mindanao, which is particularly contextualized by the ongoing pandemic. From November 23 to November 26, 2020, it will be accessible online with Zoom links for each panel. Once more, the advancement of the peace process is being helped along by meaningful talks and conversational exchanges.

7. National Peace Consciousness Month

In the Philippines, September is commemorated as National Peace Awareness Month owing to Presidential Proclamation No. 675, which was proclaimed to raise awareness of and help people appreciate the value of peace among Filipinos. Due to this commemoration, a lot of local leaders start discussions and organize events to educate the public on the need for peace and security in a nation that has been decimated by armed wars. The stories of hope, aspirations, and dreams are brought to the attention of Filipinos during this month.

8. Mindanao Week of Peace

As stated in Proclamation Order No. 127, former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo established the Mindanao Week of Peace in 2001 to "recognize the common aspirations of Mindanaoans to live in peace, unity, and harmony with one another regardless of status in life, religion, or culture." The seven-day celebration acts as an encouragement to all Filipinos that we should embrace one another's diversity in faith, culture, and living environment.²⁵

9. National Peace Convention

On January 25, 2023, the first national peace convention took place with more than 1,000 participants from various sectors. The aforementioned peace convention opened with the slogan "Peace Builds One Country, One Future—Peace is Now," with the goal of creating a path for achieving peace in accordance with the goals of the Marcos Administration. On this occasion, a resolution for the potential proclamation of National Peace Day—a unique working holiday—will be delivered to President Bongbong Marcos. Since it only started this year, there are still no major highlights of the convention, but plenary sessions were initiated during the event.

10. Run for Peace

In the local landscape, a run for a cause event was held back in 2019. Together, WWGBA and Alabang Town Center are working on the project. The project's goals are to raise awareness of Rotary, fund RC Taguig West initiatives including Legal Mission, Aklat Para Sa Lahat, A Board for Every School, Scholarship Program, and Bag of Hope, and provide a venue for district clubs to generate money. The distances for running are 1K, 3K, 5K, and 10K. It is also crucial to remember that local initiatives are very much helpful in building

²⁵Peace, O. R. O. T. P. A. O. A. U., Process, O. O. P. A. O. T. P., & Process, O. O. P. A. O. T. P. (n.d.). Tag: Mindanao Week of Peace. <https://peace.gov.ph/tag/mindanao-week-of-peace/>

peace foundations in the Philippines. Thus, projects like run for peace and alike are integral to the development of the peace process as an instrument for peace in Mindanao.²⁶

Stories and Publications

1. RIDO: Clan and Conflict Management in Mindanao

It is critical to keep in mind that political clans are one of the causes of insecurity in Mindanao. Since the book contains various studies on feuding or clan conflict, also known as ride in Mindanao, this book is useful in the instrumental process. The book is the outcome of coordinated research performed by academic institutions and civil society organizations located in Mindanao with funding from the Asia Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

2. Resolving Conflict in Muslim Mindanao

Through an assessment of traditional conflict resolution methods from communities around the island and the ways in which they coexist with modern, non-indigenous practices in the nation, the papers in this publication examine and explore questions of recognition and self-determination. These procedures are essential for the continuation of traditional judicial processes and for attaining the recognition and respect required for the continuance of indigenous ways of life, but they are frequently ignored and eclipsed by modern institutions. The best part about this book is how it also demonstrates judicial practices and indigenous people's contributions to the peace process.

3. Peacebuilding and Sustainable Human Development (The Pursuit of Bangsamoro to Self-Determination)

The Bangsamoro Development Plan in 2015, which discusses the conflict and peace process with the Bangsamoro Liberation Movement in the setting of progress and peacebuilding, is the source of the theoretical framework used in this book. It also presents sustainable development and peacebuilding as a constructive answer to this important ambition of marginalized people, placing the right to self-determination in a positive paradigm.

4. Mindanao: The Long Journey to Peace and Prosperity

More than 30 years have passed since U.N. Resolution 1325, adopted by the Security Council, urged the international community to actively take the needs of women and girls in situations of conflict into account and include them in peace-building and conflict resolution initiatives.

This book shows the inbound problems faced by many Muslim women in armed conflicts. It's one of the instruments of peace since it answers many questions related to gender

²⁶Alagar, J. (2019, October 14). Run for Peace 2019. Pinoy Fit Buddy.
<https://www.pinoyfitbuddy.com/events/run-for-peace-2019/>

development in Muslim countries. Since then, there has been a marked improvement in awareness and acknowledgment of women's diverse roles in conflict and peacebuilding, as well as the many effects of conflict on both men and women.²⁷

5. The Mindanao Peace Talks

The lengthy peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that started in 1997 are reaching a crucial point as conversations on key issues are set to begin in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in February 2005. Since this negotiation has long been fought over, this book report contains a summary of the negotiations. Moreover, a deal with the MILF is crucial to ending the secessionist insurgency that has lasted more than three decades in the southern Philippines.

This book also explains all the resolutions strengthened with the help of international efforts to counter Islamic radicalism in Southeast Asia. The causes of the conflict, the development of the peace process, and the difficulties that both sides face are all explained in this report. It also suggests steps toward a fruitful resolution.

6. One Purpose, Shared Future: Bridges of Peace in Mindanao

The achievements of numerous leaders in the area as leaders are highlighted by the bridges of peace in Mindanao. The book describes the unwavering drive for community leaders to insist on banning guns in order for kids to lead normal lives amid the terror and sense of dominance. Ultimately, the book is useful as a peace tool since it provides experiences of what a better future for the Mindanao people might look like.

7. Gender and Conflict in Mindanao

More than 30 years have passed since U.N. Resolution 1325, adopted by the Security Council, urged the international community to actively take the needs of women and girls in situations of conflict into account and include them in peace-building and conflict resolution initiatives. This book shows the inbound problems faced by many Muslim women in armed conflicts. It's one of the instruments of peace since it answers many questions related to gender development in Muslim countries. Since then, there has been a marked improvement in awareness and acknowledgment of women's diverse roles in conflict and peacebuilding, as well as the many effects of conflict on both men and women.

8. Children of the Ever-Changing Moon: Essays by Young Moro Writers

Because of the common misunderstanding towards the Muslim faith, a good book that specifically tells the stories of young Muslim Filipinos is "Rays of the Invisible Light: Collected Works by Young Moro Authors" and "Children of the Ever-Changing Moon:

²⁷Process, O. O. P. A. O. T. P., & Process, O. O. P. A. O. T. P. (n.d.). International community affirms support to PH peace process. PeaceGovPH.
<https://peace.gov.ph/2021/05/international-community-affirms-support-to-ph-peace-process/>

Essays by Young Moro Writers," both edited by Gutierrez Mangansakan II (Bidadali Press, 2015). In the Philippines, racism is still a significant concern.²⁸

The Moros are no strangers to "othering" stories since they have had to put up with our prejudice and the violence it breeds. One of the writers quotes, "When I was growing up, it was acceptable to say, "A good Muslim is a dead Muslim, and nobody would bat an eye." They said learning from our mistakes requires a certain amount of genuineness in listening to others. They were taught to be monsters, and we hardly ever heard that being Muslim was a source of goodness, so we included this book as an instrument for peace.

9. The Songs of Salanda and Other Stories of Sulu

An emotional yet shockingly informative book is written by anthropologist H. Arlo Nimmo, who conducted fieldwork in the Sulu archipelago in the middle of the 1960s. Prior to the violent 1970s, when the Marcos administration waged war against Muslims in the archipelago, he was successful in capturing the way of life of the Badjao and Sama people. The last journey Nimmo makes to his field site is described in the final chapter.

The trip to Sulu has been challenging because he has been labeled as a CIA agent. He had gone away and come back to a place he loved that was entirely different. Although environmental destruction and army excesses characterized this vast field, Bongao, the tranquil outpost, became a city. Nimmo's account of how beautiful these locations were before the war was an account of true tales worth telling to the Filipinos.

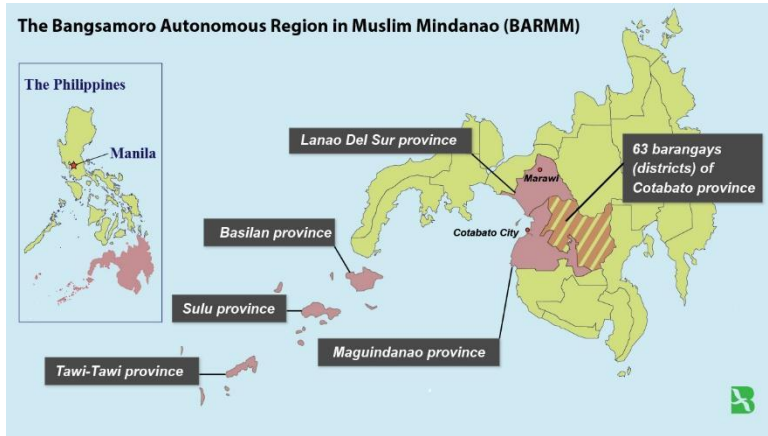
10. Colon

Colon is written in casual Filipino, and Braga's command of the language makes it easy to read. So don't let the fact that it seems simple to read fool you into thinking that. This exposes everything that is hidden from traditional Philippine history classes, particularly those that gloss over Muslim Mindanao's history. These names—Manila, Tacub, Palimbang, and Jabidah—should not be obscure to us, yet they are. These are true accounts of events caused by injustices and historical security stagnation, which are crucial to comprehending as a tool for peace in Mindanao

IV. Graphs

This section contains a visual representation of the map of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the map of Mindanao, and visual data on the number of displaced people in Mindanao due to clan wars, natural disasters, and armed conflict. This will help get a glimpse of what the geographical location looks like in the Southern part of the Philippines (Mindanao), as well as the Bangsamoro Region.

²⁸6 books to help you understand Mindanao better. (2018, August 13). Cnn.
<https://www.cnnphilippines.com/life/culture/literature/2018/08/13/mindanao-books-list.html>



(Image by Sulu Maps, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao)



(Map by Free World Maps, Physical map of Mindanao, Philippines)



(Visuals by UNHCR, 351,647 individuals are forcibly displaced in Mindanao, primarily due to natural disasters and armed conflict, followed by clan feuds, crime, and violence. This includes the 188,398 individuals who were forced to flee due to the earthquakes in Davao del Sur and Cotabato last October 2019, and the 126,835 individuals who are still displaced due to the Marawi conflict in May 2017.)

V. Findings/Result

Based on the peace instruments laid out in this paper, the researchers have come to realize that although there have been several endeavors to promote peace over the years, certain institutions, groups, and even the government have failed to acknowledge that ‘justice’ is one of the most important principles in putting an end to the long history of inequality endured by the Moro.

It is not as simple as giving the correct number of foods, clothes, and materials needed by the people in conflicted areas, but the question of accountability, followed by the question of the government's capability to address the problem themselves, that approaches like an "all-out war," not only triggers the very essence of peace, but it also speaks of division between the parties.

Additionally, to fathom the pattern of conflict in Mindanao, it is essential that we understand the underlying and root causes of this phenomenon. The researchers believe that there should be greater dialogue between decision-makers and the Moro people themselves, than merely between government officials and heads of various institutions.

The thing about resolving this problem is that it requires not just a theoretical approach but also that you go to the ground and learn about the different narratives that need to be publicized. It is important to ask ourselves what "fight" the Moros are fighting, what peace the Moro wants, and what the future looks like for the Moro being governed by a country with a majority of Catholics.

These research findings have led the researchers to a deeper understanding of how long the road to peace is in the Southern Philippines, Mindanao. History has taught the researchers that it was not easy but rather a gruesome reality of violence and deadly insurgencies to fight for one's self-determination, for peace. But, despite the complexity and diversity, the country is progressing in its Mindanao peace process.

VI. The Driving Force for Peace; This is Not the End

As told by one of the Moro in the book "Peace is for Everyone, Bangsamoro Stories of Hope, Survival, Pain, and Resilience": *"I was in elementary school when a group of armed men called "ILAGA" attacked our village, murdered Moros, looted their belongings, and burned their houses. The ILAGA members were the ones who massacred civilians in Kauswagan and my relatives in Bacolod. 18 people died in our family."*

"During the military operations in Tawi-Tawi, Banaran was one of the hot spots due to the presence of the MNLF commanders. The Philippine Marines launched a military operation in our area. They took many Moros as captives; they were treated like an animal because they were ordered to crawl and roll and were punched and slapped one by one"

"They stabbed my father, decapitated him, and burned our house. His body was retrieved, and looking at his corpse, I had only one thought on my mind. When I grow up, I will avenge him, and I will join the MILF."

As per the time being, these stories can't be left out because they need to be told and they need to be listened to, especially in this day and age. The struggle of the Moros is not just a question of poverty, exploitation, or human rights violations; it is as simple as the **question of identity**. It is so easy to calibrate conflict on the ground, yet difficult to build peace. With the current transition of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, it retaliates and brings us back to the very common question of "Was peace already achieved?".

Around the time of the presidential elections in May last year, armed groups in Mindanao engaged in political violence and attacks that led to displacement and safety concerns. In addition to violence, displacement, and poverty, the livelihoods and market importance of Mindanao are also disrupted by clan politics, a shadow criminal economy, and inter-communal tensions, necessitating a nexus strategy to respond. Because of the turmoil and bloodshed, over 100,000 people have been forced to relocate permanently to Mindanao.

After all of these peace instruments present during time of despair and war, may we never forget that the Moros are also Filipinos. The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao may be an indication of success because of the peace instruments coming from various directories, but the fight for peace is still not over. Peace instruments should continue to do their role as the main frontline of peacekeepers and builders of Mindanao.

The researchers of this paper hope that we continue to accompany the Bangsamoro people in their stories of the past and the present and continue journeying with them until peace and solace are fully realized. To listen, to hear, and to feel them is what they need to resolve the problem once and for all.

The progress of the region can be aided by a comprehensive strategy that incorporates inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, high-quality education, and efficient infrastructure development. A brighter and more peaceful future is attainable through persistent efforts and a dedication to understanding, healing, and harmony. May these vital and crucial peace instruments bring a just and lasting peace in Mindanao. Peace should be sustainable for all.

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