

# SIHNAAG



**Sulu Armed Violence  
Reduction Initiative** 2010 Review

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## Armed Violence Reduction Initiative (AVRI) – Overview of activities November 2009 to December 2010

### November 2009

The AVRI team in Sulu, including Community Co-ordinators, resumed activities with funding from the Swiss Government. Fatima Yusah was selected as the Initiative Co-ordinator.

### December 2009

The AVRI project was publicly re-launched during the Mindanao Week of Peace celebrations. AVRI sponsored an on-the-spot drawing contest in which many young people from Jolo participated. AVRI staff members also participated in the “Walk for Peace”. The AVRI team called upon the Mayor of Jolo, Mr. Amin, to brief him on the AVRI project and introduce him to key personnel. The Mayor highlighted the need for international support and offered to provide additional security when international staff from the HD Centre visited Jolo. The AVRI team also undertook a number of courtesy calls on Mayors of various municipalities and other local officials including the Philippine National Police (PNP) Operations Director for Sulu. They explained the project and re-affirmed support for the project given the considerable lost time the project experienced over most of 2009.

### January 2010

Interviews were held to fill two Community Co-ordinator vacancies. In order to increase the numbers of women working on the project, specific effort was directed to hiring women

candidates. As a result both new recruits were women. A researcher was recruited to undertake a range of tasks, including finalising the Sulu component of the Comparative Perspectives on Conflict Management 'Militia in Mindanao' project. Weekly incident reports were resumed, drawing upon data collected by the Community Co-ordinators.

The AVRI team in Sulu prepared a detailed annual plan which showed the budget allocation, rationale and expected output for specific activities. Regular weekly radio programming resumed with the hosting of 'AVRI Hour' on DXMM-AM. These talk shows specifically talked about issues concerning armed violence reduction in the province. The shows were interactive with guests and listeners texting their ideas on reducing violence in Sulu. While the programme was initially broadcast on the AM station, later it was moved to the FM station which had a younger audience. This was marked by increased listener responsiveness, and lots of text messages were received asking about the programme. It also became easier to book guests for the show on account of the popularity of the station. A detailed strategy for radio programming was also prepared. The AVRI team also regularly broadcast radio advertisements. The aim of the radio advertisements was to reinforce the impact of armed violence and help listeners identify ways to reduce or avoid it. The radio advertisements were a massive hit with FM listeners as indicated by the many people who requested disc jockeys to play these adverts. People on the street were also heard repeating the taglines.

On January 27, the first public "Speak-out" was organized. It provided an opportunity to stimulate evidence-based dialogue with representatives of Local Government Units (LGUs) and other stakeholders.

The first 'Speak-out' focused on the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team/Police Auxiliary Unit (BPAT/PAU). More than

a 100 people attended the public forum including academics, LGU representatives, civil society organizations, PNP representatives, Philippine Armed Forces (AFP) representatives, the media, the Barangay Chairperson and councilors. As a result of this event there was increased awareness regarding the BPAT/PAU and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

In the course of the proceedings, the capacity and resources of 19 Local Government Units in Sulu to monitor and support the BPAT/PAU, as required by national legislation, was discussed. Civil society organizations highlighted the fact that the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the PNP and the Provincial Government did not undertake consultations with Tausug constituents, prior to the creation and operationalization of the BPAT/PAU.

## February 2010

On February 4, 2010 the second 'Speak-out' was conducted to review and assess the effectiveness of the Jolo Zone of Peace (ZOP). Updates were gathered on the status of the IRR (Implementing Rules and Regulations) and factors facilitating and/or hindering the implementation of ZOP were identified. The event also highlighted the contribution of Bishop Benjamin De Jesus to maintaining peace in Jolo. Mayor Amin in his message to the gathering said that the co-operation of all constituents was needed to ban the carrying of weapons and constant education on themes such as governance, peace and security was necessary. In the discussions that ensued, participants felt that Jolo was relatively peaceful despite incidents of violence and its position as a business hub was drawing more people to it. This was supported by Jolo Municipal crime statistics presented by the Philippine National Police (PNP) which showed an increase in recorded crimes in 2008 but a decrease in 2009. Participants noted that the national and

“ Mayor Amin, in his message to the [second 'Speak-out'], said that the co-operation of all constituents was needed to ban the carrying of weapons and constant education on themes such as governance, peace and security was necessary.



Participants [in the third ‘Speak-out’] had an opportunity to state their views and discuss, with their candidates and administration officials, ways to reduce armed violence and impress upon them the need to conduct a peaceful election.

local elections could result in a deterioration of peace and law and order conditions in Sulu. The continued presence of lawless elements in the town from outside Jolo was highlighted as an issue. The weak follow-up on criminal cases by the justice system was also discussed.

### March 2010

The third ‘Speak-out’ was conducted on 22 March, 2010 and included an analysis of armed violence data in Sulu collected by the PNP. Representatives of six specifically-targeted LGUs participated (Jolo, Indanan, Talipao, Panamao, Luuk and Siasi) and participants discussed policy options that they could implement in their administrative area(s). Local government candidates contesting the May elections also participated. The participants had an opportunity to state their views and discuss, with their candidates and administration officials, ways to reduce armed violence and impress upon them the need to conduct a peaceful election.

Staff from the AVRI also contributed to research and data collection for a project, funded by the MacArthur Foundation, to generate new insights and policy analysis on the roles of militia in Mindanao. The report, which will be released in the first quarter of 2011, will include focus on Sulu. The knowledge and contacts generated during this research will feed directly into the AVRI project and its key objectives. The main objective of the study is to improve understanding of the phenomena of militia formation in the region through extensive primary research. This has included a survey of 577 militia members in ten provinces across Mindanao including Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, Sarangani, Lanao del Sur, Lanao Norte, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu. In addition, 12 focus group discussions and 22 interviews were conducted with the military, police, academics, religious bodies,

political and community leaders, business people, women’s rights organizations, youth and religious leaders.

In March 2010, the AVRI, in collaboration with researchers from the Institute for Bangasmoro Studies, held focus group discussions in Sulu. These focussed on the formation of militias in Sulu, their contribution to peace and violence, and their evolution into private armies. The discussion was attended by MNLF civilian members, civil society representatives and academics.

### April 2010

In April 2010, in partnership with the PNP, the AVRI helped arrange and participated in an inter-faith dialogue held at the Notre Dame College in Sulu. Religion is an important component of the social fabric of Sulu. Religious differences, at times, contribute to armed conflict in Sulu but religion has also been the source of initiatives to prevent or resolve conflict. The AVRI has conducted a number of activities with the religious community in Sulu.

### May 2010

In the run-up to the elections in May, the AVRI was active in civil society efforts to mitigate election-related violence. The project, along with other AVRI activities in Sulu, received significant publicity and acknowledgement for its efforts. The AVRI was part of the province-wide task force (Joint Task Force Kahanungan) on the issue and was involved in co-ordinating activities such as consultations with various civil society organizations and other actors including the PNP and AFP. The AVRI also undertook advocacy activities on mitigating election-related violence including through radio shows and banners stating, “Pagpuhpuh sin Sanjata Kahanungan ha Hulah da pa Huling Batah” (Reducing armed violence leads to peace

in the community and the next generation). These were displayed in six municipalities as well as at the ‘Speak-outs’.

The AVRI also participated in a meeting organized by the Commission on Elections to make civil society aware of the new automated voting machines. Along with other civil society groups, it also helped initiate the Sulu Peace Covenant, where stakeholders and election candidates from 18 municipalities in Sulu signed a public oath pledging peaceful elections.

During the election period, AVRI Community Co-ordinators, along with the 25 Preventing Election Related Violence (PERV) volunteers monitored incidents of election-related violence and compiled reports which were uploaded on a website ([www.votereportph.org](http://www.votereportph.org)). This website used the Ushahidi platform (which was built for information collection, visualization and interactive mapping in conflict situations) and it has been deployed in various parts of the world to track and record incidents of violence, particularly during elections. Although reports were not uploaded in real time due to technical issues (internet signal difficulties), it did enable public documentation of all the information collected. All the reports were verified in Sulu by the HD Centre before they were uploaded to avoid duplication of data or false reporting.

During May, the AVRI worked with religious leaders to ensure that relevant topics, such as peaceful conflict resolution and the reduction of gun violence, were incorporated in the Friday sermon in all established mosques.

## June 2010

In collaboration with the Provincial Government, the AFP, PNP and selected civil society organizations, the AVRI initiated an advocacy programme targeting the youth of Sulu; a group highly vulnerable to armed violence. The AVRI visited educa-

tional institutions and gave presentations detailing ways in which students could contribute to reducing armed violence. Students were also asked to dramatise AVRI radio adverts that detailed situations in which people are faced with the choice of resorting to armed violence. Students were also given the opportunity to ask questions about armed violence reduction. Students are especially vulnerable to armed conflicts in rural areas where the quality of education is lower than in the town of Jolo. Studies are often disrupted by violence and the need to move to evacuation centres. Education is further disrupted since school premises are often used as evacuation centres.

Students were encouraged to attend AVRI ‘Speak-outs’ and members from youth organizations were invited as guests on the AVRI radio show to talk about their participation in relevant initiatives. The AVRI also provided advocacy materials to students such as button pins saying “No to armed violence in Sulu”. It also distributed a short document to students on the AVRI project and its objectives.

The following campuses were visited and on average 200 students took part in each event:

- June 22, 2010 – Notre Dame of Jolo for Girls Department at Kasanyangan Village Jolo, Sulu
- June 24, 2010 – Sulu State College Laboratory High School at Barangay Walled City Jolo, Sulu

## July 2010

More campus tours were undertaken at:

- July 6, 2010 – Mindanao State University at Barangay Baunoh Bangkal Patikul, Sulu
- July 8, 2010 – Sulu High School at Barangay Baunoh Bangkal Patikul, Sulu

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One of the main objectives of the HD Centre's AVRI project is to collect and record data on armed violence. This is critical as evidence is weak and is a major impediment to coherent public policy.

## August and September 2010

The monitoring of incidents of armed violence continued. One of the main objectives of the HD Centre's AVRI project is to collect and record data on armed violence. This is critical as evidence is weak and is a major impediment to coherent public policy. Monitoring is crucial to effectively understand the trends, peaks and lows of gun violence, as well as 'hot spots' around the island.

## October 2010

On October 7, 2010 the AVRI team met officials of the LGUs of Luuk, Panamao, Talipao, Indanan and Jolo and briefed them about the AVRI project. On October 28 AVRI staff participated in a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting initiated by the 1<sup>st</sup> District Congressman Habib Tupay T. Loong. The AVRI staff put forward suggestions and policy options for reducing armed violence which were well received.

A series of 'Speak-outs' were held outside Jolo in co-operation with the LGU's. These 'Speak-outs' aimed to identify concerns regarding the maintenance of peace in the locality and to generate recommendations for policy formulation and activities to reduce armed violence.

On October 19, a 'Speak-out' was successfully held in Luuk. On October 20, a 'Speak-out' was held in Talipao and 95% of the invited participants attended. The Chief of Police presented a detailed analysis of crime statistics. On 21 October, a 'Speak-out' was held in Indanan which was well attended. On October 22, a 'Speak-out' was held in Panamao and although only 25 participants were expected eventually 74 were present. Many sectors were represented at the Panamao 'Speak-out' including Marine Battalion Landing Team 3 (MBLT3) Panamao Unit,

three members of the PNP, six teachers, ten student leaders, and the LGU of Panamao.

## November 2010

On November 4, a 'Speak-out' was held with partners Marine Battalion Landing Team 3 (MBLT3) and US Liaison Coordination Elements (LCE) 1212A in Tanduh Bato Luuk, Sulu. At this 'Speak-out', AVRI staff wanted to introduce its activities to potential partners and explore areas of possible collaboration, particularly with regard to the celebration of the Mindanao Week of Peace. Almost 200 people attended the event and MBLT3 and US LCE 1212A come up with some tangible activities for partnership and collaboration with AVRI in order to promote peace in the area.

On November 8, the tour of LGU's continued with a 'Speak-out' in Siasi. The session was very well attended by people representing many sectors including civil society and local government. The acting Mayor of Siasi said that he was very glad that the AVRI was able to come to Siasi and conduct a dialogue with the townsfolk. The discussions were able to identify areas for policy enforcement specifically on Coastal Resource Management. In the afternoon, the Puddang Performing Artists presented their stage play on the adverse effects of armed violence.

On November 25, the Mindanao Week of Peace celebrations were held in Sulu. Before the main parade, the AVRI team distributed advocacy materials such as vehicle stickers and T-shirts. The parade started at 7:30 a.m. and there were about 3000 participants. Father Romeo P. Villanueva, a member of the AVRI Resource Group, made the opening remarks and thanked the AVRI for its support for the Mindanao Week of Peace and for extending its celebration beyond Jolo. He hoped

that what the AVRI project had started would be reflected in other municipalities of Sulu. He said “If we want peace, we should start first within ourselves, let us do what we can to contribute to the quest for the ever-elusive peace in the province of Sulu”.

On November 27 and 28, the AVRI project organized the celebrations of the Mindanao Week of Peace in Luuk in partnership with Marine Battalion Landing Team 3 and US Task Force triumph. The theme was “Responsive and Responsible Governance: Key to Peace”. It was the first time that Mindanao Week of Peace was celebrated and observed in the Municipality of Luuk. The celebrations started with a parade, followed by speeches and a formal opening ceremony. Activities included an on-the-spot drawing contest, AVRI themed games, a sports competition and a variety show. The next day there was a meeting with parents, teachers and student leaders. The discussion covered the means of reducing armed violence and the AVRI project’s aims. A regatta was held which then lead to the closing session where the LGU and other partners, including the AVRI project, gave speeches.

## December 2010

On December 20 and 21, a ‘Speak-out’ was conducted on gender and security policy, with a focus on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325. Philippines is the first nation in Asia to have a National Action Plan on SCR 1325 and 1820. Karen Tanada, an expert based in Manila, and working as the Director of the Gaston Z Ortigas Institute served as a resource person. Suluano Fatmwati Salapuddin was also a speaker at the event. Ms. Tanada also had a discussion with AVRI project staff on how to amplify the focus on gender across the project.

## Zone of Peace: Is it delivering results?

By Fatima Darwizza Alfad Yusah, AVRI Co-ordinator

The Jolo Zone of Peace (ZOP) was created as a timely and practical initiative to advance the goal of disbanding the armed groups known as civilian voluntary organizations (CVOs) and reducing the ill-disciplined carrying of guns. Has it delivered on its promise?

The ZOP was inaugurated by the Mayor of Jolo, Hussein Amin, on April 23, 2008 (see article in Sihmag 2008). The Armed Violence Reduction Initiative (AVRI) worked closely with the local government to develop the ZOP, supporting the long-term process of establishing non-violent zones in Sulu. The AVRI team continues to support the process of operationalizing the ZOP and regularly holds meetings with stakeholders, particularly in relation to implementing rules and regulations.

In August 2008, AVRI assisted the Jolo Municipal Government in the creation of a Council of Elders, composed of eminent citizens of Jolo and representatives of barangays as peace advocates. The Council of Elders promotes peaceful settlement of disputes, especially among clans or families, before they become matters for the police or the court. It provides guidance and credibility to the ZOP and serves as an alternative mechanism to resolve conflict peacefully. Meanwhile, the AVRI team is working with the Mayor’s office to design and establish an executive body tasked with implementing the ZOP and its implementing rules and regulations.

On February 4, 2010 AVRI hosted a talk about the Zone of Peace, to encourage problem-solving and strategy development.



The AVRI team is working with the Mayor’s office to design and establish an executive body tasked with implementing the ZOP and its implementing rules and regulations.

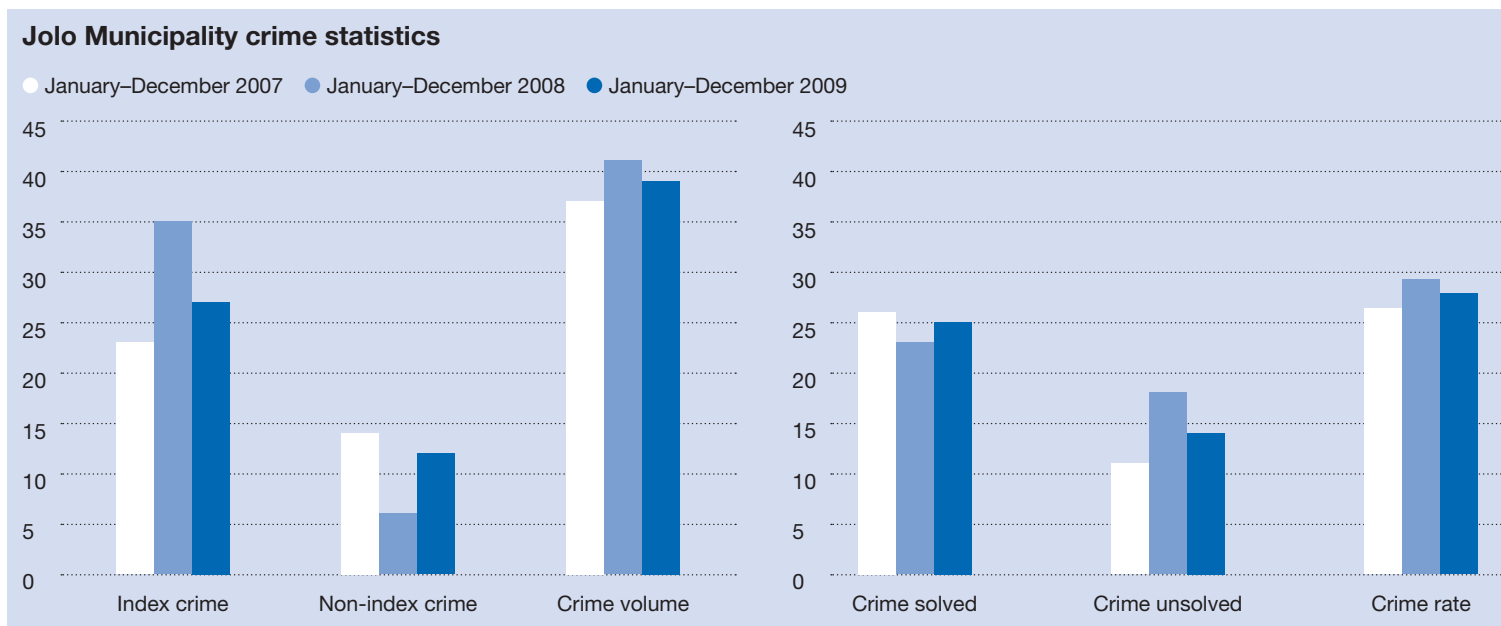
The event, at the Jolo Area Coordinating Center, brought together stakeholders from various LGUs; the Council of Elders; civil society; the media; Mayor Amin; AVRI Resource Group Member Abdul Kamar Hassan; eight barangay chairpersons and their councillors; and representatives from the Christian missionaries and Muslim religious leaders.

During this consultation it became clear that the Zone of Peace has been somewhat effective in its implementation. This success was attributed to continuous advocacy for peace, strict law enforcement, increased community awareness and greater understanding of the problem of armed violence. Expressing a strong desire for unity and peace, participants called for open consultation, as well as vigilant law enforcement and justice, for the benefit of future generations of Joloanos.

Colonel Panapan, the Chief of Police in Jolo, made a presentation on crime statistics and the security situation. He explained that Jolo was experiencing a relatively peaceful period, but the threat of terrorist acts and lawlessness makes the situation volatile. As the capital and business hub of the province, Jolo is also under pressure from a constant influx of people from outside. The national and local elections also affected peace and order in Jolo.

The first graph shows that index crime<sup>1</sup> – the most serious crime – rose from January to December in 2008, which included the period when the Zone of Peace in Jolo was declared. During this period non-index crime decreased. However, the following year saw a drastic reduction in index crime while non-index crime increased.

1 Index crimes are murder, homicide, physical injury and rape (crimes against persons) and robbery and theft (crimes against property). Non-index crimes include parricide/infanticide, maltreatment, kidnapping (crimes against persons); estafa and falsification, malicious mischief and damage to property (crimes against property); prostitution, vagrancy, alarm and scandal, assault/resistance to authority, corruption of public officials, gambling, slander and libel, threat and coercion and trespassing (crimes against morals and order), abduction, seduction, lascivious acts (crimes against chastity); as well as other crimes (illegal possession of firearms, explosives and ammunition, concealment of deadly weapons, smuggling, car-napping and prohibited drugs).





Police Chief Panapan stressed that no community in the world can reduce crime and violence exclusively through policing, instead there must be the full co-operation of the community. He also pointed out that police misconduct must not be tolerated (the Philippine National Police has taken disciplinary action against officers on numerous occasions). He encouraged all citizens to support peace and security by reporting incidents and people involved in crimes to the police. He concluded: “The police are the community and the community are the police.”

Mayor Hussin Amin said implementation and promotion of the Jolo Zone of Peace is primarily the responsibility of the LGUs of Jolo. The ZOP is a huge endeavour, not just for the government but for the whole community. The Mayor pointed out that responsibility for implementation is shared between his office and other designated officials and agencies. He reminded civil society organizations that they should be part of the monitoring team.

In closing, the Mayor expressed his appreciation for the efforts of AVRI and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue for assisting the Jolo Municipal Government, both before and after the declaration of the ZOP. This partnership is important to unite the Tausugs in promoting and attaining peace, not just in Jolo but also in other municipalities.

The effectiveness of the ZOP is still to be determined since it is still work in progress and many of its provisions are yet to be enforced. It is hoped that the implementation of rules and regulations can be finalized soon. The main focus of the ZOP so far has been on advocacy.

## Sulu clan conflicts

By Edmund C. Gumbahali, AVRI Researcher

Sulu is a mosaic of cultural communities, each with its own traditional code of conduct regarding personal or family matters, decision-making and relationship with other communities. These traditional codes of conduct are passed on by the elders to each new generation. Based on Islamic principles of solidarity, respect and harmonious neighborliness, a code of conduct serves to uphold the clan’s prestige and honor. Strong family kinship is a virtue for the Tausugs, creating profound loyalty to the family circle and other clan followers.

A clan is not just a group that shares a blood line; it is also a miniature dynasty striving to maintain its political and economic status as well as its own security. Clans have their own militias, made up of family members and others from their villages. A clan needs wealth to sustain its members and followers and to maintain its prominence. Despite their feudal character, clans did contribute to economic growth and peace among the population during the early 1960s. With income mostly from trade, agriculture and fisheries, the clans improved agricultural and marine production and kept the local economy on Sulu going.

Clan conflicts in the early 1960s were not as serious as they are today. Disputes were mostly associated with seeking justice and/or redeeming family honor. Clan leaders used traditional and customary ways of resolving conflict without the intervention of the government or the police. Clan members respected the elders as guardians of the family, so members accepted their decisions.



Clan conflicts in the early 1960s were not as serious as they are today. Disputes were mostly associated with seeking justice and/or redeeming family honor.



The government has never prohibited the Tausug people of Sulu from carrying firearms (except under martial law in the early 1970s), provided they complied with the law or were authorized under specific government security programs.

The introduction of the Philippine political and judicial systems brought a shift in attitude among clans, away from their traditions and toward power politics and local government. Violent confrontations began to occur, between clans and even within clans, when those in government failed to provide what the laws promised. A weak justice system, a lax security sector and the failure to protect civilians have eroded peace and order. At the same time, clan leaders began seeking positions in local government, viewing these as opportunities to acquire wealth and power, including power to influence the judicial cases. The Local Government Code authored by Senator Aquilino Pimentel Jr in 1987 gave more local governments even more power (even devolving to them authority over the Philippine National Police). The struggle for supremacy in electoral politics subsequently became a game among warlords: whoever has the strongest militias controls the process. The means justifies the ends – civil militias persist because their clan masters remain in power.

The government has never prohibited the Tausug people of Sulu from carrying firearms (except under martial law in the early 1970s), provided they complied with the law or were authorized under specific government security programs. Thus, authorization under government programs has become an easy way to qualify to carry a gun.

Many government security programs tend to exacerbate rather than reduce violence. The designation of authority to civil militia groups is an example. The militias are endorsed by the Government as a response to public insecurity. However, permitting them to carry guns primarily benefits their political patrons, the clan leaders. When militia members break the law, their patrons immediately protect them so that it is hard to bring them to justice.

The Government and the security sector are aware of the proliferation of firearms; there are probably as many guns as households in Sulu. However, there has been no repeat of the house-to-house weapons searches which the province experienced during martial law. In fact there has been no significant initiative to curb the proliferation of arms; the most the Government could do was declare an occasional “gun ban” which only applied during election periods.

The presence of large numbers of arms in Sulu – both licensed and unlicensed – affects security and order among the population. Although statistics are difficult to obtain, anecdotal evidence indicates that large numbers of deaths in Sulu are caused by armed violence, whether in clan wars, revenge attacks or battles with insurgents, or in common murders, robberies or acts of terrorism.

The problems associated with civil militias and clans cannot be addressed simply by campaigns to reduce armed violence or even by demobilizing the fighters. The aspiration for peace in Sulu depends on the social transformation of clans, so they can be active contributors to the peacebuilding process. Local disarmament and demobilization polices must be supported by programs to restore respect for law and order. Strengthening the local tradition of conflict mediation is also crucial. Disarmament is generally considered to be a difficult process, but separating the civil militias and their clan leaders from their guns will be even more challenging.

## The dynamics of Sulu political clans: Cash and power politics

By Edmund C. Gumbahali, AVRI Researcher

The evolution of clans in Sulu cannot be separated from politics. As elsewhere in the country, politics has become the energizer of clans, perpetuating power and dominance for some clans and providing an avenue of ascendancy for others. Although the democratization of the Philippine electoral system came into effect in the Muslim South in 1959, Sulu clans have exercised their own modified system based on traditional values of decision-making, leadership and governance which are feudal in origin.

Sulu culture is inspired by Malay and Chinese cultures with an Islamic influence, especially on social norms and the traditional conduct of leaders. These factors greatly influence attitudes among the Tausug.

The traditional Sulu leadership and governance models have been difficult to assimilate into the modern Filipino democracy. Since leadership in Sulu is traditionally based on family lineage, clans involve entire villages of people who are all related, with bonds extending out to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cousins. This explains why clans remain in power and always have a constituency to vote for them in elections. It is unusual to see non-clan members among political candidates for local government.

Marriage within the clan and an intense reverence for the concept of 'brotherhood' strengthens family kinship and clan alliances at elections and during clan wars. The political dominance of clans tends to make communities passive, as individuals remain subservient and leave their fate in the hands of their benefactors; the clan leaders. Villagers become

feudal subjects, able to be sent as part of a private army to a fighting death.

The concept of the clan comes from the pre-colonial era of the Sultans and Datus. In the present day, clans dominate the whole structure of village governance from the top to the lowest unit of a village chief or Barangay captain. Even bureaucratic positions in government are highly politicized, with eligibility for public service usually based on political clans. Likewise in economic transactions, whether underground or public, clans use their power to gain benefit and to exclude competitors such as Chinese businesses.

Clans control virtually the entire electoral system in Sulu. "Political kingpin" is a title commonly given to a clan figure who has the knowledge to assess political trends, the capacity to influence alliances and government officials and, most importantly, the ability to swiftly twist the electoral system to his own advantage. Thus the electoral dynamics of clans in Sulu are associated with armaments, private militias and money.

Journalists have often highlighted the clan connection as an element in election fraud and terrorism; but neither the Commission on Elections nor the Government has addressed the fraud and intimidation in the Philippines electoral system. Reform will only come about when the clans see an incentive to change, and conduct their politics in a more democratic fashion.



As elsewhere in the country, politics has become the energizer of clans, perpetuating power and dominance for some clans and providing an avenue of ascendancy for others.



After a day of facilitation, the parties were prepared to settle the conflict at a meeting at the HD Centre office in Sulu.

## Conflict in the month of Ramadan

By HD Centre Mediation Team – Sulu

In the middle of Ramadan, a conflict flared up between businessmen from two municipalities who were in the fruit business; Mr. Abdurakib Baid, presently a barangay councillor in Tulay, Jolo and Mr. Jordy Salikala of Patikul.

In a lumber yard while preparing wooden boxes for their harvested fruits, the two argued over who would get the first box and Mr. Baid drew his 45 caliber pistol. Luckily, people around them managed to intervene and stop further escalation.

A week later, the two businessmen both met again while loading their goods at the pier in Jolo. Both drew their pistols but the port authorities intervened and prevented violence.

By this time, both parties had initiated preparations for a confrontation by informing their respective family members. This information reached the barangay captain of the area where Mr. Salikala resides.

The HD Centre was informed by the chief of Police of Jolo about the incident and the ongoing preparations of both parties for conflict. Violence could have erupted at any time.

Mr. Vand Birowa, one of the HD Centre's staff in Sulu, called an emergency meeting with its mediation group, the Tumikang Sama Sama, and planned an intervention. The HD Centre team in Sulu met and discussed the situation with the Philippine National Police in Jolo and took steps to meet with the conflicting parties. This is how the mediation started.

After a day of facilitation, the parties were prepared to settle the conflict at a meeting at the HD Centre office in Sulu. Preventing Election Related Violence (PERV) volunteers had facilitated the convening of the parties and laid the ground-

work, while the final stage of settlement was facilitated by the Tumikang Sama Sama (TSS).

The ceremony associated with resolving the conflict was witnessed by the following members; Dr. Daniel Moreno, Col. Ibnohasim Undug and Dr. Sahiron Amirul. Ulama member of the TSS, Ustadz Yahiya Abdulla, ended the ceremony with a quote from a saying of Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) that the real warrior is one who can manage his anger.

A compromise agreement was signed by both parties and witnessed by the TSS and the Chief of Police in Jolo, Police Senior Inspector Juliebee Mading Muksan.

This incident demonstrated that facilitation and mediation of conflicts can play an important role in reducing incidents of armed violence.

## Militia in Sulu

By Edmund Gumbahali, AVRI Researcher

The militia in Sulu are known as civilian volunteer organizations (CVOs). These civilian armed groups are formally, or informally, recognized by the Government and the the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and perform security functions during a crisis.

The militias are often closely associated with specific clans or political figures. However, the Government legitimizes these groups not only by tasking them with security assignments but, more significantly, by arming them to operate, and recognizing them, as an auxiliary component in local police peacekeeping. Popular participation in the maintenance of peace and order is highly regarded in Sulu's local security architecture, especially during times when the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP) have insufficient staff to address serious security problems.

In March 1993, the provincial government of Governor Tupay Loong, with the approval of the AFP local command in Jolo, set up a militia known as the "Black Fatigues" in response to the kidnapping of two Samaritan nuns. A month after the release of the hostages, several battles took place involving combined AFP-CVO forces against criminals led by the (late) Galib "Commander Robot" Andang. The kidnapers were defeated but Galib Andang escaped.

The kidnapping of the nuns was mirrored in the kidnapping of three humanitarian workers from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in January 2009. The latter incident led to the proclamation of Administrative Order No. 1 declaring Sulu under a State of Emergency. In

September 2009, the AFP implemented the order and inducted 2,030 civil militia troops, known as Barangay Peacekeeping Action Teams (BPATs) and Police Auxiliary Units (PAUs) [see article on page 14]. Gilbert Teodoro, Secretary of the Department of National Defense led the oath-taking ceremony at the provincial capitol, marking the significance of the event.

Despite the grand ceremony, the terms of reference for the creation of BPATs and PAUs have been deemed confidential by the PNP and thus not publicly released. However, it is clear that the PNP has direct supervision over the BPATs and PAUs is by the PNP who in turn come under the supervision of municipal mayors. The secrecy surrounding the terms of reference was one of the concerns raised during the AVRI "Speak out" forum in February 2010.

The existence of civil militia is one of the top security concerns in Sulu. Giving ordinary civilians easy access to high-powered weapons when they join a militia contributes to the uncontrolled proliferation of firearms. In addition, the absence of basic police training for militia members has caused serious problems for human security in Sulu. Political clans and warlords have used civil militia to terrorize communities during elections, to commit violence against their clan enemies and to suppress the human rights of other civilians.

Most armed clashes between, and among, political clans occur during election periods. These sudden violent outbreaks are short in duration, but the effects are profoundly damaging. Old clan conflicts persist for years in Sulu, producing hundreds of casualties without a resolution being reached. These old family grudges are compounded by divided political party affiliations and made more volatile by the availability of civil militias to do the fighting. Government/military recognition of the civil militia groups from both parties has prolonged their atrocities.

“ The existence of civil militia is one of the top security concerns in Sulu. Giving ordinary civilians easy access to high-powered weapons when they join a militia contributes to the uncontrolled proliferation of firearms.



Residents of Sulu, upset that their young people have lived in such a militarized environment during and after martial law, have developed a fear and mistrust of ‘foreign’ (including non-Sulu or Christian) soldiers.

On May 5, 2009 a decade-long clan conflict in Pata island municipality left three people injured and one dead from mortar shelling. The island had long been planted with land-mines by both warring families.

Ever since the 1970s when Sulu came under martial law, peace in the island province has never been restored. Shoot-outs come in many types: rebels versus government forces, terrorist groups versus police or army, family feuds, clan conflicts and more often clashes between the civil militia of different political warlords.

Residents of Sulu, upset that their young people have lived in such a militarized environment during and after martial law, have developed a fear and mistrust of ‘foreign’ (including non-Sulu or Christian) soldiers. The admiration for local militia commanders is even reflected in fashion, with civilians wearing military-style clothing such as camouflage jackets and trousers.

The militia can be a potential ‘force multiplier’ at difficult moments when the state security sector cannot muster sufficient troops. However, militia members should be provided with proper training in local policing. Building a civilian security constituency is part of community empowerment against crime and lawlessness.

The recruitment of militia is one critical process to consider. The militia should be a separate unit under the close supervision of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, not linked to any political clans. They should be treated with dignity, as regular auxiliary security units.

## **BPAT / PAU: What lies beneath the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team / Police Auxiliary Unit in Sulu?**

By Fatima Darwizza Alfad Yusah, AVRI Co-ordinator

A new entity consisting of armed civilians has been formed to help the police maintain peace and order in local communities in Sulu.

The Barangay Peacekeeping Action Teams (BPATs) and Police Auxiliary Units (PAUs) take orders from the Philippine National Police (PNP) who in turn come under the supervision of municipal mayors.

The province of Sulu is severely affected by armed violence, kidnapping and other types of crime and the local police have insufficient capacity to provide security and law enforcement. The kidnapping of three International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), workers in January 2009 led to the development of a comprehensive anti-crime strategy based on all community stakeholders sharing the responsibility for maintaining peace and order. Part of this self-policing strategy was the establishment of the BPATs and PAUs.

The official inauguration of the BPATs and PAUs took place in front of the provincial capitol on September 28, 2009 with Governor Abdusakur Tan and National Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro presiding over the inauguration. On September 25, 2009, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) issued Memorandum Circular 2009-145 explaining the BPATs and PAUs to provincial Governors, city and municipal Mayors, Punong Barangays, DILG Regional Directors and others.

With two Congressional Districts, 19 municipal LGUs and 490 barangays, Sulu initially required at least 100 recruits for BPATs and PAUs. This number later grew to a force of 2030.

The primary role of BPAT or PAU members in the community is to support the police in dealing with crime and lawlessness. They also act as barangay tanods, a volunteer force assigned as needed to assist the police in protecting civilians and in reporting and monitoring intimidation.

The PNP provides direct supervision and management of the auxiliary unit in situations where stability or security is under threat in Sulu. However, administratively the BPATs and PAUs are officially located in the DILG. They also come under the supervision of municipal mayors, who chair the local Peace and Order Councils and are deputized representatives of the National Police Commission under Section 16 of the Local Government Code. Administrative and operational costs are funded by the municipalities.

Government agencies believed this would be an effective tool for improving security but civil society organizations initially raised questions about the origin, composition and governance of the new units. AVRI provided the opportunity to discuss these questions at a ‘Speak out’ (public forum) held on 27 January 2010 in Patikul. About 70 participants attended the consultation from civil society, the PNP, the army and the Commission on Elections, as well as provincial and municipal governments.

A ‘Speak out’ or ‘mishuwarat’ serves as an opportunity to discuss and open dialogue among policymakers, implementers, supporters and investigators to deal with uncertainty and provide clarification. The event in Patikul used Memorandum Circular 2009-145 to consider topics including the role, regulation and areas of assignment of the BPATs and PAUs. The

discussion satisfied the doubts which had been raised, resulting in widespread acceptance of the BPATs and PAUs. This experience was a reminder that even complex problems can be solved through dialogue.



## Literary page – Sihmag sin Tausug

### Pungluh mu, kabuhi ku (your bullet, my life)

*By Nash Usman Abduhadi*

Mainig artah liya lanuh lanuan  
(A shiny thing that is well taken care of)  
Liya lana lanahan biyah sin batak ampa gimuwah daing  
ha kapandangan  
(With oil just like a new born child from the womb)  
Tiya trapu trapuhan biddah in ayad  
(Wiped with so much care)  
Way pagpikil bang pila cein in bayad  
(Without a care how much it costs)

Yaun na hi manahut, yaun na hi maaslag  
(There is tiny, there is huge)  
Inda ginis barapa awun hawpuh awun mahawah  
(Different kinds from short to long)  
Liyuluunan sin pungloh biyah laung mu mussah  
(With bullets as if it's pearls)  
Pistol, sinapang iban sanjatak hi Bapah  
(Guns and armaments of a certain man)  
Bang talih taliun makawugah sa artah yaun  
(To think that this thing is to be feared)  
Hambuuk kayu patay in hambuuk tao  
(One fire, one person dies)  
Buwat malaingkan unuhun mataud atu  
(But then again, there are lots of enemies)  
Hangkan pakukus dih magkaig ha laum ou  
That was why arms can't be taken out of our heads)

Timimbak pa taas  
(Fired up)  
Batak batak way pangirab nautas  
(Innocent child's life was lost)  
Timimbak pa bawah  
(Fired down)  
Nahaul sapih hi Amah  
(Father's cow was hit)  
Simurang pa tuu  
(Pulled the trigger to the right)  
Nalawah in atu  
(The enemy was gone)  
Simurang pa lawa  
(Pulled the trigger to the left)  
Nalawah ha panayu. . .  
(Gone insane). . .

### Bala mo, bahala sa'yo (your bullet, your conscience)

*By Nash Usman Abduhadi*

Sabi nga nila hindi ka Tausug kapag ikaw ay duwag  
(They say that you are not a Tausug if you are coward)  
Wala sa lahi mo ang madaling magpatinag  
(It's not in your blood who gives up easily)  
Sa mandirigma man o sa mga bumihibag  
(For warrior or for conqueror)  
Likas sa'yo ang pagiging matapang at wala kang katulad  
(It's innate that you are brave and one-of-a kind)  
Subalit hindi dapat armas ang basehan ng tapang  
(But then arms are not the basis for one's bravery)  
Dahil pati inosente at sibilyan at walang kamuang muang  
(Because even the innocent, civilians and newborns)



Nadadamay sa bagsik ng dahas na gumagapang  
(Are being involved in the harshness that lurks)  
Walang awang namamatay ng wala sa tamang gulang  
(Without mercy, they die not in due time)

Bala mo katumbas ay buhay niya  
(Your bullet is equivalent to his life)  
Armas mo ipagpalit mo na lang sa pagkain ng pamilya  
(Your arms should be traded for the food of your family)  
Wala ka pang masasagasaang tao, wala ka pang abala  
(You will harm no one, your conscience would be clear)  
Sasagana ang estado mo nang walang halong pangamba. . .  
(Your status would improve without any doubt). . .

### **Education is better than war, pen is mightier than gun**

*By Nash Usman Abduhadi*

How in the world can we attain peace?  
A question that has almost lost its meaning  
Several talks have been held  
Numerous speeches have been made

Where in the earth can we be safe?  
With guns, gangs and goons around us that proliferate?  
Why can't we end the violence?  
Why can't we all mean silence?

Why can't we all be educated?  
'Bout the pros and cons of armed violence that is continuously taking place  
Can't we just use the pen to kill an enemy?  
Or a gun to save a friend?  
Think about it . . .

### **What shall we do? . . .**

*By Nash Usman Abduhadi*

When a man is shot to death and killed  
When a perpetrator has not been identified  
When a witness's lips are sealed  
When authorities are unperturbed  
What shall we do to curb  
This armed violence that has been absurd?

When a rapist has been freed  
When a woman has been molested  
When a gay has been beheaded  
When an abductor has been hard headed  
What shall we do to curtail  
This violence and abuse  
If all they say is stop, look and listen  
If innocent lives have all been taken  
If convicts have no lesson to learn  
If justice remains a word forgotten  
What shall we do to attain the peace that we all have been waiting for?

Now that justice is delayed and denied  
Now that many lives have been taken away  
Now that many youth have gone astray  
Now that armed violence proliferates almost every day  
What shall we do to end this and look for a better way?

Questions bug our minds frequently  
Answers just don't come out easily  
What shall we do to end all this animosity?  
The answers depend upon us really . . .



The threat of armed violence still remains in Sulu even though the elections are over and the winners have been declared.

## Election mania 2010

By Nash Usman Abduhadi,  
AVRI Communications Officer

Elections have been defined as a procedure that allows members of an organization or community to choose representatives who will hold positions of authority. It is an important day to select the leaders of local, state, and national governments. It is also an opportunity for the public to make choices about the policies, programs, and future direction of government action. At the same time, elections promote accountability. The threat of defeat at the polls exerts pressure on those in power to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and take account of popular interests and wishes when they make their decisions.

Before the elections, election paraphernalia was posted all over Sulu promising good governance. In Sulu, the 2010 elections were memorable as it was the first time that a Sulu Peace covenant was signed by political aspirants from different parties. Many thanks to the conveners of the Sulu Peace covenant for conducting such a remarkable event.

Despite challenges, most individuals who signed the covenant abided by it. The low level of armed violence seen on election day is indicative of this. The gun ban was strictly implemented by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) which contributed to reduced cases of armed violence in the province during the elections.

Various non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other agencies conducted post-election assessments. Another outcome of election period activism was the establishment of the Preventing Election Related Violence Volunteers, otherwise known as PERV, an initiative of the

Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Sulu to monitor and assess election-related violence in the province. Each of the 19 municipalities of Sulu has a PERV volunteer who collects data on election-related violence.

However, the threat of armed violence still remains in Sulu even though the elections are over and the winners have been declared.

In his inaugural speech, the re-elected Governor of Sulu, AbduSakur Tan said “to curb violence, we will implement a gun ban in the entire province”. The challenge of ensuring a violence-free Sulu lies not solely in the hands of those who govern, but also with the people. As clichéd as it may sound, “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country” as former United States President John Fitzgerald Kennedy said.

## Finally, peaceful elections in war-torn Sulu

By Jules L. Benitez and Al-kamar A. Jidin,  
MindaNews/VERA Files

With just two incidents of armed harassment and no incidents of armed violence, election day was generally peaceful in the entire province of Sulu according to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and the Western Mindanao Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

In the first incident of armed harassment, the Provincial Joint Security Control Center, chaired by the COMELEC and comprising the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP), reported that armed partisan groups opened fire on civilians with small arms and mortar shells in barangay Tulay, in the town of Panglima Estino. No casualties were reported from the incident, which authorities said was meant to harass voters. One company of Scout Rangers (a coast guard unit) pursued the perpetrators.

The second incident of armed harassment occurred in the town of Lugus on election day. Attorney Vidzfar Julie, COMELEC Election Supervisor for Sulu, characterized the incident in Lugus as “public partisan armed harassment” which was meant to disenfranchise voters. No casualties were reported.

The Provincial Joint Security Control Center also moved to implement the gun ban in the province, apprehending one town councilor and three civilians caught carrying firearms on election day.

Major Enrico A. Ramones, representative of the AFP in the Provincial Joint Security Control Center, identified the councilor as Naser Sappayani, 39, of Tapul town. He was caught

red-handed with a .45 caliber pistol as he was entering Kalang Elementary School at 10:00 am. Sappayani was turned over to the PNP for the filing of appropriate charges.

Major Ramones identified the three civilians as Romeo Sahiban, 40, Manan Dahi, 32, and Kalih Sahibal, 42, all residents of Larap village, Lugus town. They were apprehended by elements of the Philippine Navy during the search of a small watercraft (M/L Ruhilyn) at 4:00pm in the open seas near Lugus, a day before the elections. Two M1 Garand rifles, one .45 caliber pistol and a variety of ammunition were confiscated during the search. The suspects were turned over to the PNP.

The Task Force Kahanungan, a civil society initiative to monitor and prevent election-related violence in Sulu, recorded five incidents of fist-fighting among hot-headed relatives and supporters of local candidates which injured 11 people on election day.

“It appears that gun fighting was replaced with fist fighting” said Vandrazel M. Birowa, 29, manager of the Sulu Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue office and a key organizer of Task Force Kahanungan.

“This is definitely an improvement compared to the levels of armed violence seen in past elections,” said Birowa. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue is implementing a program for the reduction of armed violence in six of the 19 municipalities of Sulu.

The AFP also sees the peaceful conduct of the elections in Sulu as a result of its efforts to improve its relationship with the Tausugs.

“This means that the security measures implemented by the AFP were effective,” said Western Mindanao Command Chief, Major General Benjamin Dolorfino.

“ The Task Force Kahanungan, a civil society initiative to monitor and prevent election-related violence in Sulu, recorded five incidents of fist-fighting among hot-headed relatives and supporters of local candidates which injured 11 people on election day.

**Table 1: Sulu election-related violence before and during elections\***

	Pre-election Day	During election day
<b>Incidents</b>		
Violation of gun ban	3	2
Armed fight	3	
Strafing/armed harassment/ assaults	1	2
Fist fight		5
<b>Casualties</b>		
Killed	5	
Wounded	3	11

\* As of May 13, 2010

Source: MindaNews Consolidation of AFP, PNP and AVRI Reports

Dolorfino said that the AFP participated in the peacebuilding efforts of civil society groups in Sulu and adopted the 20–80 approach – where 80 percent of the military’s efforts and resources is focused on community development and relationship-building, and 20 percent on armed interventions.

The province of Sulu has a voting population of 315,105, spread over 410 barangays.

## Situational assessment and crime statistics

By Fatima Darwizza A. Yusah, AVRI Co-ordinator

### General Conflict Assessment of Local Government Units (LGUs) in Sulu

#### *Jolo Municipal Government*

- In recent years Jolo was somewhat affected by the conflict between armed elements and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) which happened in the neighbouring municipalities. Some of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) were able to stay in the municipality. Most of them were settled in private or relatives homes and some established small shelters.
- To some extent Jolo has also been affected by *rido* or clan conflict from other LGUs. Clan members from outside Jolo frequently indulge in their feuds in the main town of the municipality. Infrequent/sporadic rido-related violence is also a concern some of the time and/or in some barangays.
- The LGU and some barangays sometimes struggle to keep false information regarding Abu Sayyaf or criminal elements (and/or vigilantes) from getting out of control, as well as maintaining law and order. There has been no news of incidents of kidnapping in the past six months.
- AVRI staff were usually able to travel within the LGU following careful scanning and intelligence-gathering for safety purposes.
- The LGU participated in AVRI project activities.

### *Prior to the May 10, 2010 Election Period*

- It was considered that tension or conflicts may arise in Jolo because all of the candidates' headquarters are located in downtown Jolo.
- On the first week of the election campaign, several candidates paraded downtown by motorcade to call for honest, orderly and peaceful elections.
- The proclamation rallies of the different parties were conducted peacefully. The signing of the covenant for peace was also successfully initiated by the lead conveners such as: Sug People's Alliance of Tausug (SUGPAT), AVRI and other civil society organizations. There were initial complaints that some candidates did not receive invitations to the first signing of the Sulu Peace Covenant. The lead conveners, however, were able to explain to them that the police were responsible for distributing the invitations.
- The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) started an education process around the campaign in several barangays of Jolo. They also imposed a rule of no posting of election paraphernalia on electric posts, hospitals and academic institutions. The candidates' were committed to peaceful elections in Jolo, and it was considered that there was no chance of chaos except from other municipalities.

### *After the May 10, 2010 Election*

- In the recent consolidated reports generated by AVRI from June up to September 2010, there were a total of four murders in Jolo in a manner that, to some extent, was affected by *rido* from other LGUs. Clan members from outside Jolo frequently indulge in their feuds in the main town of the municipality. Infrequent/sporadic rido-related violence is also a concern some of the time and/or in some barangays.

- Jolo is now finally preparing the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Zone of Peace with assistance and facilitation from the AVRI.

## **Indanan Municipal Government**

### *Prior to the May 10, 2010 Election Period*

- Indanan is the main camp of the Moro National liberation Front (MNLF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is active. The Local Government of Indanan was significantly affected by the MNLF armed factions which were present and operating in the LGU. Abu Sayyaf, organized criminal groups and vigilante groups were also present and operating in the LGU. In fact lawlessness was pervasive which is why the risk of violent crime was high.
- AVRI staff were significantly affected. Without prior notice they were not able to pursue scheduled activities and were not approved to travel to this LGU for significant periods of time during this year.
- The participation of the LGU was also significantly affected and one or more AVRI projects has had to be stopped at some point in the program until the situation improves.
- There was a possibility of armed conflicts between the government and armed groups in pursuit of the campaign against terrorism.
- The mayoral candidates in the municipality of Indanan, Sulu were Hussien Ahajan, Sharif Aloy Jainal and Eddih Jikiri (son of congressman Yusop Jikiri). All of them mobilized their political machinery for campaigning and distributing their political paraphernalia.
- There were no incidents of untoward political violence. This might be an effect of the signing of the peace covenant and abiding by the COMELEC law.

“ There were initial complaints that some candidates did not receive invitations to the first signing of the Sulu Peace Covenant. The lead conveners, however, were able to explain to them that the police were responsible for distributing the invitations.



As a result of military and Philippine National Police (PNP) presence, Tambrin's group was confident enough of having a peaceful election on May 10, 2010 in spite of the tension of family feuds and land disputes.

- 'Polling places were clustered in five barangays': Pasil, Poblacion Indanan, Tagbak, Kajatian and Batu-bato.

#### *After the May 10, 2010 Election*

- In the period since the election and up to September 2010, Indanan, despite the presence of the MNLF armed factions and some suspected members of Abu Sayyaf who are currently operational in the locality, in fact has only had one murder. The military is, however, not conducting operations in the area.
- AVRI staff have already conducted a 'Speak-out' activity and, as expressed by the Mayor, come up with very impressive partners for pursuing the reduction of armed violence in the locality.

### **Talipao Municipal Government**

#### *Prior to the May 10, 2010 Election Period*

- The LGU of Talipao had large numbers of IDPs staying in camps and/or temporary shelters. The LGU was engaged in providing relief.
- Serious, ongoing rido in the LGU heightened the threat of violence and restricted public movement and LGU activity.
- Abu Sayyaf, organized criminal groups and/or vigilante groups were present and operating in, or near, the LGU. Lawlessness was pervasive. On account of this, the risk of violent crime has been high.
- AVRI staff were not able to pursue the scheduled activities and/or had to be approved to travel to this LGU.
- LGU participation in one or more AVRI projects had to be stopped at certain points in the program due to the security situation.

- In the Municipality of Talipao, the focus before the May 10, 2010 election was more on the family of Vice Mayor Tambrin Tulawie and Hadji Lynden Tulawie and some MNLF political supporters of Chairman Nur Misuari.
- Vice Mayor Tambrin committed to peaceful elections in the municipality of Talipao if Lynden's group would not create chaos. One of the main reasons stated by Vice Mayor Tambrin for his confidence in peaceful elections was that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Brigade was located at Bayog, Talipao, Sulu and the 1513<sup>th</sup> Provincial Mobile Group was also located at Dalih, Talipao.
- As a result of military and Philippine National Police (PNP) presence, Tambrin's group was confident enough of having a peaceful election on May 10, 2010 in spite of the tension of family feuds and land disputes.

#### *After the May 10, 2010 Election*

- The Local Government of Talipao experienced only one incident of murder after the election.
- AVRI and 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Brigade AFP partners are involved in common activity conducted in the locality of Talipao which promotes peace through a series of consultations and 'Speak-out' advocacy initiatives with the active participation of many stakeholders.

### **Panamao Municipal Government**

#### *Prior to the May 10, 2010 Election Period*

- Some IDPs were present, mostly staying in private homes with a small number in camps/shelters.
- Serious, ongoing rido in the LGU heightened the threat of violence and restricted public movement and LGU activity.

- MNLF armed factions were present and operating in, or very near, the LGU. On account of this situation, there had been incidents of armed conflict with the AFP in previous years.
- AVRI staff were approved to travel to this LGU for significant periods of time.
- LGU participation in one or more AVRI projects has had to be stopped at some point in the program until the situation improves. LGU participation in one or more AVRI projects has also been cancelled (or was never initiated) due to the security situation.
- There was no potential political conflict because the representatives of both parties were brothers from the same family.

#### *After the May 10, 2010 Election*

- In the period since the election and until September 2010, no incidents have happened in the municipality of Panama.
- Recently, clan leaders began to negotiate mechanisms for mediating conflicts and there is one conflict resolved and the rest are still under negotiation.

#### **Luuk Municipal Government**

##### *Prior to the May 10, 2010 Election Period*

- A large number of IDPs were staying, in the LGU in camps and/or temporary shelters. The LGU was engaged in providing relief.
- Serious, ongoing rido in the LGU heightened the threat of violence and restricted public movement and LGU activity.
- MNLF armed factions were present and operating in, or very near, the LGU. On account of this situation, there had been incidents of armed conflict with the AFP in previous years.

- Abu Sayyaf, organized criminal groups and/or vigilante groups were present and operating in, or near, the LGU. Lawlessness was pervasive. On account of this, the risk of violent crime was high.
- AVRI staff were not approved to travel to this LGU for significant periods of time.
- LGU participation in one or more AVRI projects had to be stopped occasionally until the situation improved. LGU participation in one or more AVRI projects was cancelled (or was never initiated) due to the security situation.





After the election there was only one attempted murder and two incidents of crime against property.

- On April 3, 2010 at 10:00 a.m., Barzadar also known as Badang Jimbul, a mayoral candidate of Lakas Kampi went home to his barangay Kanmindus. He was abandoned by Arbison clan a year ago.
- People were alarmed after his brothers Habib Sintim Jimbul, a barangay captain and Alih Jimbul, a municipal councillor, holding guns, attacked their brother because they are in alliance with Mayor Arbison.

#### *After the May 10, 2010 Election*

- In the period since the election and until September 2010, the situation in Luuk has calmed down in terms of the number of crime incidents. There were three murders which resulted from the long-running family-related and election conflicts on Tulayan Island.
- There were two incidents of crime against property.
- Luuk is now open to new horizons as the AVRI, with partners from Marine Battalion Landing Team 3 and US Task Force LCE 1212A, has brought the essence and concept of the Mindanao Week of Peace celebration into the area.

### **Siasi Municipal Government**

#### *Prior to the May 10, 2010 Election Period*

- Some IDPs stayed in the LGU, mostly in private homes with a small number in camps/shelters.
- Infrequent/sporadic rido-related violence was a concern in some barangays.
- AVRI staff were usually able to travel to the LGU following careful analysis and intelligence-gathering, with the prior approval of the the manager of the Local Governance

Support Program in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (LGSPA).

- The LGU participated in AVRI projects but the mode of delivery was adjusted. For example, LGU participants had to travel to less conflict-affected areas for workshops and/or to meet AVRI staff instead of having these on-site in the LGU.
- The municipality of Siasi experienced tension as the cousin of the mayor, Arthur Muksan, was threatening Wilson Anni for running in the election.
- Wilson Anni was unable to pursue his campaign across the entire municipality.

#### *After the May 10, 2010 Election*

- The Local Government of Siasi is now on the priority list for an opportunity to undertake peace endeavours.
- After the election there was only one attempted murder and two incidents of crime against property.
- AVRI visited and stayed four days and three nights on the Island of Siasi and conducted ‘Speak-outs’.



## Terrorism, the Abu Sayyaf Group and violence

By Edmund C. Gumbahali, AVRI Researcher

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) has been a notorious gang in the Philippines ever since the Sipadan hostage crisis in 2000, when 21 people of different nationalities were taken from Sipadan Resort in Malaysia and held hostage in the island province of Sulu. Later the group became associated with the terrorist network of Jamaa Islamiya (JI), operating in the southern islands of Mindanao. Abu Sayyaf also goes by the name Harakat al Islamiya, which means Islamic Movement.

Philippine law forbids terrorist groups from participating in any peace negotiation or amnesty program. Thus, if Abu Sayyaf is defined as terrorist, no government entity or even NGO could ever engage in dialogue with them.

Sulu is a small island province where the presence of Abu Sayyaf is public knowledge. The local movement that turned into a resistance group was initiated by the late Ustadz Abdurajak Janjalani in the late 1990s in Basilan, another island province. Later, several commanders who defected from the mainstream Moro National Liberation Front, including Doc Abu and Raddulan Sahirun, embraced Abu Sayyaf and began conscriptions in Sulu.

### Freedom fighters in the cause of Islamic liberation

Abu Sayyaf is a close-knit, conservative Islamic armed movement that recruits mostly young recruits aged 17 to 25. They are inducted as loyal soldiers of God or mujahideen (Freedom Fighters). The indoctrination of mujahideen promises them

paradise if they die on the battlefield or upholding the cause. Attracted by martyrdom, young people are lured into the movement as they become devoted to the principles of Jihad (Fighting in the cause of Allah). As inducted mujahideen, they engage in avid praying and learning about Islamic wars.

If the goal of Abu Sayyaf truly is to build an Islamic state, should they be called terrorists? Acts like hostage-taking, bombing and even beheading have been frequently employed by Abu Sayyaf against their enemies. Since these acts violate national and international laws, the perpetrators can be defined as terrorists. However, Abu Sayyaf does not recognize or submit to government laws.

The example of groups like Abu Sayyaf has inspired other gangs to adopt similar tactics (including kidnapping for ransom, extortion and even ambushing Government troops) but with no ideological purpose. These groups are out to make money and disrupt public order (there are allegations that some government officials are connected to these gangs). Some commentators in Sulu classify ASG into three groups: “Real Mujahideen”; kidnap and extortion gangs; and the Abu Sayyaf itself. However, in practical terms there seems to be little distinction because generally the groups collaborate in major operations such as battles against Government forces.

### Fall of leaders would not end Abu Sayyaf scourge

Many ASG leaders on the list of most wanted terrorists have been killed, but substitutes have come forward to replace them. Thus the Abu Sayyaf as a group is not significantly set back when its leaders are eliminated. New commanders take up the positions of their predecessors, some more moderate and others more extreme than those who came before.

“ Philippine law forbids terrorist groups from participating in any peace negotiation or amnesty program. Thus, if Abu Sayyaf is defined as terrorist, no government entity or even NGO could ever engage in dialogue with them.



The Government's anti-terrorism campaign has resulted in the killing of a number of Abu Sayyaf leaders whom the Armed Forces of the Philippines had labeled as High Value Targets (with huge cash rewards). Yet this does not solve the security problems facing the country today.

The Abu Sayyaf may be compared to the Japanese samurais in terms of their perception among Sulu communities. They are variously considered to be, among other things, terrorists, bandits, mujahideen or revolutionaries. ASG activities have now become an entrenched element in the larger political and security problems of the province and more extensively in the Philippines.

The Government's anti-terrorism campaign has resulted in the killing of a number of Abu Sayyaf leaders whom the Armed Forces of the Philippines had labeled as High Value Targets (with huge cash rewards). Yet this does not solve the security problems facing the country today. The Government has succeeded in terminating terrorists but failed to suppress terrorism.

The answer must lie in curbing the inclination of young people to join Abu Sayyaf, through dialogues, negotiations, amnesty laws or other non-violent initiatives. Such measures may attract criticism from the Government or the international community, which will pose a challenge to peacebuilders and other stakeholders. However, relying on violent action against violent groups such as Abu Sayyaf will ultimately prove unhealthy for our society.

## “Honorable policeman”

By Edmund C. Gumbahali, AVRI Researcher

This is a short story. Perhaps, a case study for armed violence reduction advocates.

This happened sometime in 1980. A story of a policeman in Patikul. I shall call him Mukim to protect his self-respect.

Mukim, a police patrolman was a kind and honest man. People in the community honored him. Many people come to him for help, especially to mediate cases of family disputes and cases of shooting wars. His performance in keeping peace in the community ensured that he was made the unit in charge whenever his superiors were on leave.

Another police officer, Maidin, was envious of Mukim. One day, a police officer from the PNP headquarters, Inspector Freddy, came without prior notice to the unit for an inspection in compliance with the Philippine National Police (PNP) Director's memo on the enforcement of PNP policy reform. Maidin was the only police officer in the station while Mukim was out settling a conflict involving his relatives. Maidin told the inspection team that his superior, Mukim had been out for weeks and was constantly away from the office.

The PNP director ordered Mukim's chief to explain within 24 hours why he was away from his duty station. Mukim's chief did not comply and consequently the entire unit was suspended. It was an indefinite suspension and their salaries were with held for several months by the PNP finance office.

Mukim waited for months for the suspension order to be lifted and become indebted to various family members including distant relatives. One Friday afternoon, there was an emergency and his son needed to be taken to hospital. He

went to his office's finance department for help to cover his son's medical expenses and was told that his pay would be released within the next two days.

Mukim then asked his wife to find someone to borrow money from. His wife got a loan from a friend, Suhaili, with a promise to return the money in two days.

Mukim then followed up with the finance office but the release of salary continued to be delayed. Suhaili repeatedly demanded repayment of the loan from Mukim's wife.

One day, Mukim's wife received the following letter from Suhaili which said:

*"Well if you cannot pay your loan you can come to me and sleep with me, and you will not have to pay your loan anymore".*

Mukim's heart was broken. He had lost his dignity as man, and as a husband.

The next day, Inspector Freddy came to the police station to release salaries. Without saying a word, Mukim drew his .45 caliber pistol and gunned down Freddy. He then shot Maidin. Mukim then went to Suhaili's house and shot him.

Mukim fled but his brother was hacked to death by Suhaili's family. Mukim was last heard of in 1998 in Sabah Malaysia.

## A woman's perspective: The impact of violent conflict on women

By Zoraida N. Gumbahali,  
AVRI Resource Group member

Armed conflict in Sulu occurs between clans, as well as between state and non-state armed groups. Local clashes flare up unpredictably and then escalate into a larger conflict. The variety of actors makes these conflicts extremely volatile and difficult to mitigate. Common causes of armed conflict include land disputes, political power struggles and the Moro insurgency.

Although most combatants are male, women are very severely affected by armed conflict. In addition to creating displacement, fear and deprivation, armed conflict has an impact on the status and roles of women and men in everyday social practices. The most obvious example occurs when the male economic provider is killed, injured or absent from home due to the conflict. The burden of responsibility for all aspects of the household then falls on women, who must become external money earners as well as continuing with home-based work and looking after the emotional and material wellbeing of the family.

Conflict also affects how women perceive men, and how we see ourselves as women. When the predominant role of men involves exercising authority by carrying guns, women can develop a sense of inferiority and powerlessness. The inequality created by this power imbalance extends to all areas of family and community affairs, limiting women's authority, decision making, development and opportunities for advancement. Thus one effect of armed conflict is to curtail women's human rights, in terms of participation and development.

 In addition to creating displacement, fear and deprivation, armed conflict has an impact on the status and roles of women and men in everyday social practices.

Muslim Tausug women traditionally cannot exercise leadership over men, who typically regard women as weaker human beings. However, women can be partners in resolving conflicts and can contribute to peacebuilding. They should be encouraged to work actively for the empowerment of their fellow women.

We have some role models of women who have defied the stereotype to become leaders, like Congresswoman Nur-Ana Sahidulla, Representative of the 2nd district of Sulu. Many women in the NGO sector are also occupying positions of responsibility in their communities alongside like-minded men. Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go before women in general are able to overcome the limitations imposed by tradition in order to exercise our full citizenship.



## Tausug women's quest for peace in Sulu

By Feraiza Nor M. Maring, AVRI Community Co-ordinator, Panamao

The most prominent and distinguishing features of a Tausug Muslim woman is her deep faith and strong conviction that whatever happens in this universe, only happens through the will and decree of Allah. Over the years, the violence in Mindanao has caused much destruction of property, rendered many homeless and made many women widows.

Often, husbands have to leave their wife and children in a barren land with little assurance of coming back alive given the violent situation. Women face great difficulties in raising children and providing them with adequate food and shelter.

These are the reasons why Tausug women today actively participate in peace initiatives and try to become public servants. Traditionally, Tausug women are not allowed to be involved in any peace settlement or negotiations in their respective communities. Family disputes are mediated by the male traditional leaders or formal justice systems like the barangay council. However, in some instances, there are brave Tausug women who pave the way and become the members of barangay councils who mediate disputes. Tausug women in peace negotiations often serve as a channel of communication during the initial stage of mediation. In the battlefields, women are trusted by both conflicting parties since they are seen serving those who are in need of care and protection.

Women's role and participation in developing a peaceful community is a requirement. In the teaching of the Qur'an

the mercy of Allah (S.W.T) to muslim women is great indeed. Islam has rescued her from the abyss of humiliation (being regarded as valueless) and total subordination to men, and has raised her to the highest level of honourable and respected femininity, free from the exhausting burden of having to fend for herself and earn a living. Islam made her independent, entitled to dispose of her wealth as she wishes, and equal with man in human worth and with religious duties. Women and men are equal in the sight of Allah and may be rewarded or punished equally. It is high time to appreciate that women's contributions towards peace processes are vital and worthy. Tausug women speak not only about women's issues, but engage at the highest level on key political, social and economic issues relevant to sustainable peace in the province of Sulu.

## A Tausug goes to Bangalore to learn more about gender

By Nash Usman Abduhadi,  
AVRI Communications Officer

How in the world can we speak in one language? How can all genders be treated equally? How in the world can we unite regardless of our diversity? How can we be transformed into the kind of person that we ought to be? These were some of my questions as I journeyed to Bangalore, India in May 2010 for a course on 'gender, diversity and transformation'. The course was hosted by Visthar, a non-profit organization committed to enabling marginalized groups to secure their rights.

This was the first time I had ever travelled abroad (many thanks to AusAID who made this trip possible). This was also my first chance to rub elbows with folks from different parts of the world, including Sudan, Finland, Kenya, Nigeria, USA and India. This was also my first training course on the topic of gender.

I learned that there were some things that need much attention especially when tackling gender roles and responsibilities. I had been nervous about the course but once the classes started I realised there was no need to worry.

Dr Shekhar Seshadri was our course leader and made the class interactive by posing questions about our life cycle. What I found most useful on the first day was the Joker System Method, part of the Theatre of the Oppressed created by the Brazilian playwright Augusto Boal. His 'sculpting' procedure in theatre is based on seven elements: dedication, explanation, scene, episode, commentary, interview and exhortation. This seemed a very good approach, which I could use in formulating scripts for my radio advertisements on armed violence reduction.



How in the world can we speak in one language? How can all genders be treated equally? How in the world can we unite regardless of our diversity? How can we be transformed into the kind of person that we ought to be?



Overall, the biggest hit on the course was the Theatre of the Oppressed, because it developed the participants' capacity to be creative in promoting gender equality through stage plays.

Shubha Chako and members of Sangama (an NGO that works with sexual minority groups) presented on the subject of strategies to engage with men as potential agents of transformative change. I thought some of the concepts in this class could have been defined better by the facilitators. However, I really appreciated the presence of people from Sangama – interacting with gays, lesbians and transgender people broadened the course participants' horizons in terms of accepting various identities. Transgender has a place in India, so why are transgender people in the Philippines belittled by society? This question made me think something should be done to reduce the stigmatization of homosexuals in my country.

The next day we covered gender-sensitive policies including the concept of gender-neutrality. These approaches are vital especially to NGOs and civil society organizations who implement programs, projects and other activities where gender should be given top priority.

Ranjani K. Murthy took a session on understanding poverty, gender-specific causes of poverty and globalization. This session was the one that I enjoyed most, since we had the chance to see the global gender gap report of our countries. Looking at the statistics, I was happy to see that the Philippines has greater equality in health, economy, politics and education compared to India and to Sudan, Kenya and other African countries. Ranjani made us think critically by using case studies of each country and presenting the causes of poverty and possible solutions.

In the session on 'Gender and rights, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform of Action (1995), Millennium Development Goals', Revathi Narayanan made us realize how so many women are oppressed and denied their rights. We were also introduced to Bandhavi, Visthar's programme for girls at risk. The girls pre-

sented a stage play illustrating the problems they face in their communities. I was moved by their presentation and thought that a play could also be an avenue for advocacy in armed violence reduction. Also, the project itself was such a noble endeavour: I wish there were something similar for girls in Jolo, Sulu.

Edwina Pereira of the International Services Association India taught us more about the stereotypes that women are facing in the session on 'Gender, Reproductive Health and Rights, the Application of gender analysis and a human rights framework to sexual and reproductive health policies and programmes'. Women are perceived only as bearers and nurturers of children, doing household chores and similar things. The media tends to portray women as objects.

The class on 'Gender and HIV/AIDS: Strategies to advocate for sexual and reproductive rights at national/international levels' presented facts and information about AIDS/HIV. I wish it had dealt more with the effects of the disease on gender equality.

The class on 'Institutionalizing gender within organizations' structure, culture and leadership' was indispensable, showing how we need to consider gender equality in the workplace, including in hiring personnel. Group exercises generated proposals for our different fields of work. Gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation relies on four types of indicators: input, process, output and impact.

Overall, the biggest hit on the course was the Theatre of the Oppressed, because it developed the participants' capacity to be creative in promoting gender equality through stage plays.

During the closing ceremony the participants all expressed mixed emotions. We were happy to be 'transformed' by what we had learned, but sad to be leaving each other. I was inspired to write: "I dreamt of a place where peace resides, I dreamt of a place where equality is at my side, and now I'm awake."

## The beginning of an end (A call to stop violence and abuse against gays in Sulu)

By Nash Usman Abduhadi,  
AVRI Communications Officer

Violence lurks everywhere. In our homes, in the workplaces and in the surroundings that we live in. We cannot assure that we are totally safe and sound. Especially so when a person is gay. How do we actually change the negative adjectives that people give to us which eventually lead to all forms of abuse and violence? How can we put an end to the killing of innocent homosexuals in our troubled place?

Homosexuality is not a crime, but why do people kill gays just because they are born that way? It has been two years since a certain Jai (not his real name), a local beautician was found dead in Asturias with several stabs wounds. A week later, Aya (not his real identity) was shot to death by an unknown suspect. Aya was the best friend of Jai. These incidents created trauma for some gays in Sulu fearing that they would become the next targets.

The tension continued for quite some time but justice was not forthcoming. A year later, Aiko (nickname), a teacher, was abducted by a rebel group in Patikul and was beheaded because his family was not able to pay the ransom that was demanded.

Something must be done to end these heinous crimes against sexual minorities. Such incidents get limited attention and raise the question of how people in power are tackling this issue.

There is a gay group in Sulu called the GAP which stands for Gay and Proud but it seems they are not doing much to address these problems. There should be a union of gays to

stop violence and abuse against them. If I have a say, I would call it GAVA which means Gays Against Violence and Abuse.

It was very good news when Ladlad, a gay group in Manila, was approved on the party list. But questions remain unanswered. How can we survive in a world full of discrimination against our rights? Ending violence and abuse against gays is not an easy task; it takes courage, perseverance and acceptance.

“Something must be done to end these heinous crimes against sexual minorities. Such incidents get limited attention and raise the question of how people in power are tackling this issue.”



Youth today are more critical thinkers and generally more aware than ever before. They are more inclined towards education and are constantly exposed to new information. They are also considerably technology savvy.

## Youth against armed violence

By Nash Usman Abduhadi,  
AVRI Communications Officer

According to an old adage, “Youth is the hope of the nation”. However, the youth of today face many challenges including drug addiction, criminal activity and armed violence. The following are excerpts from an interview with Sitti alhada “Dadah” Abayan , youth representative of the AVRI Resource Group.

### What can you say about the youth of today compared to the youth of yesteryears?

Youth today are more critical thinkers and generally more aware than ever before. They are more inclined towards education and are constantly exposed to new information. They are also considerably technology savvy.

### How do you see the involvement of youth in reducing armed violence cases?

Youth play a significant role in reducing cases of armed violence. Youth are often members of rebel groups and other similar entities. If they are aware about the need to have a violence-free society, then perhaps by the next generation, a tangible reduction in the rate of armed violence will be possible.

### Why do you think that the youth is a vulnerable sector in terms of armed violence?

Youth are affected in many ways by armed violence. Very often, their education is disrupted, which in turn prevents them from having a chance to escape the cycle of armed violence through personal growth and development.

### What do you think that the youth should contribute to attaining the ever-elusive peace?

The youth should focus on gaining education so that their eyes would be opened to the benefits of peace. If the youth are educated, they would not be inclined to armed violence and instead they would have a chance for a more brighter future and to pursue opportunities other than using arms.

### Aside from education, what else?

The elders in the society should also focus on delivering the right sort of Madaris education .We all know Islam teaches peace. So the message should be reinforced to youth that the true essence of being a Muslim is to stay away from armed violence.

### What if these youth would have no access to education due to financial problems etc? What are other alternatives?

Aside from Madaris, youth should also be given livelihood training focusing on poultry farming and livestock raising etc. So that an alternative is provided to getting involved in armed violence.

### As a youth representative, what are your contributions in the quest for peace in the province?

One way that I contribute to fellow youth is by spreading awareness and teaching them in formal and informal ways about the importance of armed violence reduction in the province. I organize the youth so that they will be busy educating themselves rather than turning to armed violence. Organizing team-building efforts is also important because if the youth is organized then they would have a better chance to be heard.



### **What do you think are the issues concerning the youth of today?**

A key issue concerning youth today is that the number of school drop-outs is increasing. These drop-outs are more vulnerable to drug addiction and getting involved in armed violence. Illegal gambling is also an issue of concern.

### **How are these problems to be addressed?**

These problems should be addressed by local elders and our government official. The LGUs should focus on these problems.

### **Why should the youth be given priority in terms of peace matters?**

The youth is the hope of the nation; we can mould them if we pay attention to the youth. They will be the future stakeholders and image-builders of society.

### **How would you discuss the importance of youth participation in peace initiatives?**

Youth need to be prioritized in any peace initiative. By participating in such initiatives, they can choose a future which is free from involvement in armed violence.

### **What are the apprehensions they face in terms of peace issues? Why can't they move forward?**

I think one of the factors is that the elders in the society are so busy doing their jobs that they can't give much priority to the participation of youth in peace initiatives.

### **Do you still see the truth in the statement that the “youth is the hope of the nation”?**

The statement may not be totally correct given the current situation in Sulu. Everything is politicized even the Sangguniang Kabataan or those youth involved in the political arena.

### **What should the youth do in order to retain the image of being the hope of the nation?**

The youth should be more active in voicing their rights.

### **As a youth what can you relay to your fellow youth to minimize, if not totally eradicate, armed violence?**

I would encourage them to spread the message among their networks. Youth play an important role in armed violence reduction in the province of Sulu. They serve as a catalyst for change. What is lacking is co-operation and active participation by the community. If the youth is united then armed violence reduction can be a reality.



## Hold your weapon: A Tausug's journey into a world of weaponry

### Photo Essay

By Nash Usman Abduhadi  
Photography by Abdul-Lajid Jalali  
(an AVRi volunteer)

#### 1. “Baby can I hold your gun”

This is a clear manifestation of how parents expose their child to the world of violence at an early age.

Someday, I'm going to be a military . . .



#### 2. “Dad, buy me pellet gun”

As he turns into a toddler, he wants a toy gun to use on his enemies in the play ground . . .



#### 3. “Fire in to the hole!”

That's what his friends urge while playing a computer game called Counter Strike. The computer game's depiction of violence is affects young minds.



#### 4. “It's a bird, it's a plane, no brother it's life”

His elder brother shows him violence in an implicit manner. (The young man is using a “boga”, gun made of wood which uses marble as bullets).



#### 5. “BOGA”, the new craze in gun shooting in Sulu.





**6. “I wanna lay you down on a bed of bullets” . . .**

As he turns into adolescent, he holds a genuine gun and handles it with extra care.

**7. His passion for violence continues . . .**

The photo is of a shop selling military type gear.

**8. . . . He thinks that the gun is mightier than a pen, while infact it’s the other way around . . .**

**9. As time goes by, his love for guns made him permanently disabled . . .**

**10. And finally, his son advocates saying “NO TO ARMED VIOLENCE” . . .**

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