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Centre for  
Humanitarian  
Dialogue

Mohammed VI Foundation

# *Taking Peace into their own Hands*

AN EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE TUMIKANG SAMA SAMA  
OF SULU, PHILIPPINES



August 2012

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The **Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre)** would like to thank the author of this report, Marides Gardiola, for spending time in Sulu with our local partners and helping us capture the hidden narratives of their triumphs and challenges at mediating clan conflicts. The HD Centre would also like to thank those who have contributed to this evaluation during the focused group discussions and interviews in Zamboanga and Sulu. Our gratitude also goes to Mary Louise Castillo who edited the report, Merlie B. Mendoza for interviewing and writing the profile of the 5 women mediators featured here, and most especially to the Delegation of the European Union in the Philippines, headed by His Excellency Ambassador Guy Ledoux, for believing in the power of local sultanons in resolving their own conflicts. Lastly, our admiration goes to the Tausugs for believing in the transformative power of dialogue.

## DISCLAIMER

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This publication is based on the independent evaluation commissioned by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue with funding support from the Delegation of the European Union in the Philippines. The claims and assertions in the report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the HD Centre nor of the European Union.

## COVER

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**“Taking Peace Into Their Own Hands”** expresses how people in the midst of conflict have taken it upon themselves to transform their situation and usher in relative peace. The cover photo captures the culmination of the mediation process facilitated by the Tumikang Sama Sama along with its partners from the Provincial Government, the Municipal Governments of Panglima Estino and Kalingalan Caluang, the police and the Marines. This photo was taken during the peace settlement signing and reconciliation ceremony between the Alibbons and the Missuaris.

## LAYOUT & DESIGN

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With funding support from the



Center for  
Humanitarian  
Dialogue

Mobilizing for peace

# *Taking Peace into their own Hands*

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AN EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE TUMIKANG SAMA SAMA  
OF SULU, PHILIPPINES

MARIDES VIROLA-GARDIOLA  
AUGUST 2012

# MESSAGE FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

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For the last three years, the European Union has been providing assistance to the work of the ‘Tumikang Sama Sama (TSS)’ through its partner, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, in the framework of the European Union’s long term support of the peace process between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

The European Union indeed considers this tremendous and unique mediation endeavour in Sulu as a critical piece of its strategy for helping the Parties to the conflict in establishing peace in the context of the conflict in Mindanao. On the one hand, clan feuds that the TSS aims to mediate are a serious threat to the peace process due to the numerous spillover effects they cause, and in particular due to their potential to drag the Parties into the strife with all the consequences this might imply. Be it for the people involved, the distinction between *ridos* and armed conflict-related hostilities is often blurred as the Parties in the former are frequently the same as or closely related to either or both parties in the latter. On the other hand and perhaps even more importantly, clan conflicts are a source of untold sufferings for the people they impact on directly or indirectly. Life of local communities will change very little, if at all, if violence stemming from the armed struggle for Moro autonomy is replaced by violence from “private” clashes which, as experience sadly demonstrates, have the potential not only to kill and injure but also displace hundreds, if not thousands, of civilians with dire socio-economic consequences. Addressing the issue of *ridos* is therefore paramount for the negotiation and implementation of a peace agreement whose final objective is to bring peace, security, and development to the people of Mindanao.

After three years of efforts and at this particular moment of the peace process where there is

cautious optimism that an agreement be in perspective, evaluating the work of the TSS and drawing lessons from its successes and failures is particularly timely. The findings and recommendations of the experts shared in this publication brings an independent and fresh look into this local mediation endeavour which hopefully will enable the mediators and their supporters to further improve their undertakings and will inspire other peace-promoters in Sulu and elsewhere in Mindanao, but also, in other relevant context all around the world. In societies which value traditional modes of dispute settlement over the formal justice system, mediation is indeed a very powerful peace-enforcement mechanism. But what makes the approach adopted by the TSS unique above all is a multi-stakeholder method of conflict resolution combining the mediation of well-respected local individuals with international third-party presence, support from the formal security sector, as well as often interventions of the local officials. Furthermore, it is a process involving shuttling between the parties in conflict and backed by peace-building initiatives at the level of the communities to consolidate the settlement. In this respect, one could even look at these mediations as small ‘laboratories’ for the facilitation of national armed conflict.

The foregoing leads me to express, on behalf of the Delegation of the European Union, my deep appreciation and thanks to the members of the TSS and to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue for the energy, time, and resources they relentlessly devote to make the wonderful islands of Sulu a peaceful and thereby also a potentially prosperous place.

## **GUY LEDOUX**

Ambassador


Delegation of the European Union  
to the Philippines

# PREFACE

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**O**n behalf of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, we are pleased to release our latest publication, 'Taking Peace Into Their Own Hands', an evaluation of the local mediation work of the Tumikang Sama Sama in Sulu which we have proudly supported for the last three years. This independent evaluation was commissioned by the HD Centre to help all of us practitioners learn from the experience in Sulu both to improve our work in Sulu but also elsewhere in Mindanao and even more broadly.

Evaluating conflict resolution initiatives are always fraught with controversy. Often, those of us in the field know mediation works or at the very least contributes to resolving conflict. However, we do recognize the difficulties in robustly determining its singular impact. Furthermore, as a counterfactual, we can never absolutely determine when we actually prevented a conflict from getting worse and hence how many lives were saved. We can also never be entirely sure how lasting the solutions to these conflicts are. This publication will not wade into this area. Instead, we hope at the least the report sheds a little more light on how local mediators have operated in such a complex situation as Sulu, how their efforts have evolved over the years, the impact on communities and stakeholders and recommendations for sustaining their efforts.

We hope that this publication will help us all learn from the efforts of the dedicated volunteers in Sulu who bravely try to prevent and resolve conflicts in Sulu. These mediators and the field monitors and support team from the Preventing and Resolving Armed Violence often find themselves literally in the midst of conflict as they travel throughout Sulu engaging with the parties to the conflict and all stakeholders. Through their perseverance, courage, modesty and humanity we learn from them what mediation is all about. 

**DAVID GORMAN**

HD Centre Mediation Advisor

August 2012

# FOREWORD

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## **Local Mediation in Sulu – Effective Conflict Resolution at the Community level**

*A Narrative of HD's work in Sulu – By Michael Vatikiotis*

**D**eep in the heart of a part of the Philippines long considered one of the most violent, a bold initiative to curb vicious clan conflicts and bring lasting peace, development and prosperity is making headway. Remarkably, the local community is driving these efforts, including those who once considered armed violence as a way of life. This homegrown peacemaking deploys a blend of classic conflict mediation and community peace-building techniques that have succeeded in resolving dangerous clan conflicts and preventing once endemic political violence.

Jolo's sleepy harbour-front and tree-lined streets are typical of Philippine island towns that have yet to see the kind of prosperity that has come with either lucrative trade or tourism. But whilst other remote islands in this colander of an archipelago such as Palawan to the Southwest and Bohol further North have stabilized and developed lucrative tourist attractions, Sulu's violent past has deterred potential development. .

High up on a jungle-clad hill that overlooks the seat of a once proud sultanate sits a Philippine army camp with a commanding view of the city below. In the 1970s, the Philippine army was forced to invade the island to retake it from Muslim Moro rebels in a bloody fight that saw the destruction of historic downtown Jolo. Not much changed. Only a few years ago "bad guys" from Abu Sayyaf passed through just below the camp unimpeded and several notable Islamic terrorists from Indonesia found safe haven and a place to train or develop bomb-making skills. As a result, the US has a small contingent of military trainers in the region.

The key challenge to security in Sulu stemmed from a potent brew of historical grievances stemming from the marginalization of a small Muslim minority in a majority Christian country, and local clan conflicts among the indigenous Tausug people. The insurgency coupled with the proliferation of weapons and poor or non-existent law and order, spawned ever more violent clan conflicts. Often these disputes were settled with modern heavy weaponry instead of traditional knives and spears. The resulting fear and disruption closed down schools and left thousands of people displaced and penniless.

The Moro National Liberation Front, whose leadership had strongholds in Sulu, signed a peace agreement brokered by the Organization of Islamic Conference led by Indonesia in 1996. But the agreement never included a stipulation that the insurgents disarm and the local autonomy package was never fully implemented. Furthermore, the agreement never included the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, another armed group centered in mainland Mindanao, which rejected autonomy.

These lingering grievances and associated clan violence took a backseat with the explosion of terrorism that followed the 2001 Al-Qaeda attacks on New York. The Southern Philippines was suddenly painted as a refuge and training ground for extremist militants further exacerbating, internationalizing and complicating the conflict.

It was against this seemingly hopeless backdrop that a handful of Moro fighters, government actors and local civil society activists came together in 2005 to consider a way out of the cycle of violence that prevented the people of Sulu from leading normal lives.

The initial idea stemmed from a need to prevent and resolve incidents between armed MNLF fighters and the Government security forces, who were still clashing in Sulu despite having signed a final peace agreement a decade earlier in 1996. The two parties agreed to establish the GPH-MNLF Peace Working Group with the help of the Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, which opened a Manila office in 2005. The concept was simple. The Peace Working Group would act as a neutral

body mandated by the parties to jointly identify existing and potential security problems, jointly develop plans for resolving them, and conceive plans for addressing the longer-term humanitarian impact of conflicts in the region.

The Peace Working Group was a bold experiment in local third party mediation in an active conflict zone. It worked initially, but with the lack of political progress in implementing the 1996 agreement, and continuing violence perpetrated by lawless groups such as Abu Sayyaf and explosive clan conflicts the two armed forces continued to be drawn into conflict.

It soon became evident that the violence and dislocation was occurring for much more complex factors relating to clan conflicts within Tausug society. These conflicts were in turn exploited or exacerbated by local politics and the underlying Bangsamoro struggle.

After a particularly violent period in 2007, when MNLF camps in Sulu were overrun by government forces, the HD Centre decided to reformulate the concept and operation of the peace working group to focus more on localised drivers of conflict. Instead of just working with representatives from the MNLF and the Government of the Philippines, the Peace Working Group started to work through credible and respected individuals from the conflict-affected communities, who had already been playing a role as local mediators.

The Peace Working group was therefore transformed into a more locally-anchored body, the “Tumikang Sama Sama” – which means “Together we move forward” in Sinug, the language spoken by Tausugs. The group is composed of a small body of well-respected local individuals including the security sector and the Office of the Mufti assisted by a secretariat drawn from the local community and led by Sulu native Vand Birowa. Based on experiences with specific conflicts, TSS derived an approach to conflict resolution that combines the influence of local tradition with international third party presence. It has mobilized a locally-driven conflict resolution process where people come together to speak about conflict issues that affect them, choose leaders who can mediate clan conflicts, and engage



in back-and-forth shuttling between parties in conflict. The HD Centre, with financial support from Australia and the European Union, provides training in conflict resolution, administrative and financial support as well as expert assistance to the mediators.

Experience also showed that rather than trying to resolve all the region's conflicts, it paid to focus on communities where there was a genuine desire to turn away from violence. One such community was Silangkan on the western coast of Sulu.

Barangay Silangkan in the Municipality of Parang bears the deep scars of prolonged conflict. The area was a battleground for the MNLF in the 1960s and 70s, and saw much fighting during the resurgence of conflict after 2001. Memories of aerial bombardment, mortar and artillery fire remains fresh in the minds of members of the community. Insurgency provided cover for the activities of Abu Sayyaf, and clan conflict-related violence was rife. As a result of the violence, displacement and disruption has wreaked havoc in a society where no one could invest in land or business, education opportunities were tenuous and with very few police or military present, law and order fell into the hands of clan and insurgent commanders.

In 2010 matters came to a head when a once former senior MNLF commander, Abtajir Tingkasan, was drawn into an election-related clan conflict. But this time, Abtajir had seen enough blood spilt. He agreed to give peace a chance and supported a TSS-led mediation and settlement of his clan conflict, which eventually led his community to declare Silangkan a "Peace Centered Community". The resulting declaration, the product of weeks of consultation in the community, was signed by representatives of all the families in the area. Along with the declaration, the families agreed to a series of implementing rules and regulations, which include, among others, a prohibition on the public display of firearms in order to prevent armed violence.

"Silangkan seemed to embody so many of the challenges in the Province of Sulu," reflects David Gorman, the HD Centre's Country representative

in the Philippines for the past seven years. “Its homes were dilapidated, there was little infrastructure, industry or development and barely any government presence save for a school overladen with children with few opportunities to look forward to.” What made all the difference, Gorman explains, was this one commander, Abtajir, who was willing to put his community before his pride and settle his clan’s conflict unconditionally.

By becoming amenable to peace and the peaceful resolution of conflict, Commander Abatjir was transformed into an influential local mediator. For the TSS and the HD Centre it was a valuable insight into how mediation can be made an effective tool of conflict resolution if those who are respected and accepted by the parties can be persuaded to mediate.

Building on success in Silangkan, the TSS, with support from the HD Centre has applied itself to developing interlocking mediation and peace-building initiatives drawing on facilitators and mediators identified and trained in the local community. No fewer than 10 clan conflicts have been resolved.

The programme has reached a level of maturity and effectiveness that earns high praise in government and security sector circles. “Our aim is to form a pool of credible community-based mediators,” says Vand Birowa, who runs the TSS and its related community-peace-building programmes from a modest compound in downtown Jolo.

Vand stresses the role that local custom and culture has played in making this model of local mediation more effective. Most of the clan conflicts are resolved through settlements determined by shuttling between the hostile parties, who would be too proud to meet face-face – especially if the conflict has resulted in death. “One of the best weapons we have in settlement is Islamic injunction,” says Vand. There is also space for government officials, who are often required to persuade the parties to settle and then use their official power to solemnize agreements.

For the stars of this not particularly costly but effective initiative, the HD Centre’s local staff led by Vand Birowa, knowledge of all actors and their

relationship is a critical tool in peacemaking. “Sulu is complex,” Vand explains. “So it is important to have a detailed map of who is important and credible and therefore needs to be involved in a settlement.” The analysis his team does in every conflict situation focuses on the complex web of relationships and identifies not just the parties to conflict in detail, but also the most likely and effective local mediators.

In any violent conflict resolved through mediation there’s a need for peacebuilding to prevent violence re-erupting, and so the Sulu initiative has developed a range of community peace programmes to prevent and manage violence. These programmes depend on a network of volunteers, many of them young, but many of them also, like former gunsmith Amajar Usman from Omar Municipality, with a violent past. Usman was a gunsmith for sixteen years, during which time he estimates that he fixed almost a thousand weapons. His one regret: “I don’t know where these guns are and what they have been used for.”


The network of volunteers has focused their energies on preventing election-related violence. For even if the people of Sulu vote for their officials, frequently, the run up to the elections and the results are marred by violence among the competing clans. Using meetings in communities to hold what are called “speak outs”, the volunteers establish a presence and recruit local monitors. These monitors use text-messaging technology or sometimes phone in to local radio to report on incidents so the violence can quickly be addressed. This has put mobile phone technology at the frontline of peacemaking.

The Speak Outs are primarily conducted in areas where conflicts are currently being mediated as a way to reinforce community involvement in the peace settlement. Weekly radio shows are also deployed to cement peace agreements and broaden the appeal of the local resolution. These shows bring on the air mediators and clan leaders who have been involved in resolving conflicts to share their experiences and promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Using these innovative home-grown methods, and where relevant drawing on international expertise, the TSS, along with the network of local volunteers who support their mediation work, have mobilized local government officials,

the security sector and even whole communities in both the resolution of clan conflict and in the prevention of the recurrence of armed violence. Provincial Board Member Hadji Abdulkadir Estino, is one such official who has been tapped to mediate in some of the TSS -facilitated cases. He is supportive of the TSS for its role in documenting cases of clan violence, and coordinating resolution. “They are also able to share global opportunities and connections.”

The security sector is also supportive. The local approach to mediation the TSS spearheads is transforming how the military deals with communities and vice-versa. Lt. Col. Quemado of the Marines, who is the army’s operations officer in Sulu, observes their engagement with the Peace Centered Community of Silangkan as a case in point. “Silangkan is ‘ground zero’ for the MNLF, and it was only after 15 years since we pulled out that we have been able to return. We came in through the request of the people themselves. With HD Centre and TSS support, there were a lot of outcomes like the bridge and water. A manifesto was signed that they support the project once it is done. There is stronger co- ownership. There is stronger support.”

The work of the TSS is indeed transforming relationships in the island of province of Sulu – between clans, between communities and the security sector, and between communities and the state. While the people of Sulu and across Muslim Mindanao await progress in promising peace talks between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Government, for now as long as the “people of the current”, as the seafaring Tausug call themselves, take peace in their own hands, there will be hope for their beloved “lupah sug” or land of the current. 

*Michael Vatikiotis is Asia Regional Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, based in Singapore.*



COMMUNITY MEETING OF PEACE CENTRED  
COMMUNITY AT SILANGKAN, PARANG, SULU.

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# ACRONYMS

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AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
AVRI	Armed Violence Reduction Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DILG	Department of the Interior and Local Government
EU	European Union
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GPH	Government of the Philippines
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
HD Centre	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
IRA	Internal Revenue Allotment
LCE	Local Chief Executives
LGU	Local Government Units
MBLT 3/9	Marine Battalion Landing Team 3/9
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
PCC	Peace Centered Communities
PARV	Preventing and Reducing Armed Violence
PERV	Preventing Election Related Violence
PNP	Philippine National Police
PWG	Peace Working Group
TSS	Tumikang Sama-Sama

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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- Adat** Sinug (the language spoken by the Tausugs) term for traditional practices which do not have any direct reference to religion. However, popular notion is that it is part of the practice of their religion.
- Bangun** Sinug term for financial compensation given to or demanded by an aggrieved party when the conflict results to the tragic loss of life. The payment of *bangun* finds basis in Islamic law and is done to prevent retaliation.
- Fitnah** Literally means incitement; in Sinug, the term refers to gossip, rumor or hearsay. Reactions to *fitnah* are well established within the religious scripts and can instigate conflict. There are *barangays* that have resolutions outlining penalties for *fitnah* or rumors.
- Kawasa** Sinug term translated to describe the value of one's personal character. Conflict arises when one's *kawasa* is disrespected or injured.
- Kasulutan** Refers to peace settlement. The word derives from *sulutun*, which means people in conflict.
- Martabbat** Pertaining to social status, this term in Sinug means pride, dignity or honor. Used by the Tausugs to refer to the value of one's personal character, insulting another person's *martabbat* leads to conflict.
- Masallah** In Arab culture, this refers to the story-telling tradition. The Tausug also use the term to describe good history and stories of successful war campaigns of ancestors.



Pagba'li, Pagbanta, Pagkalu	Sinug terms which mean disagreement, clash or even war between two opposing parties. In Tausug, it would usually connote conflict between clans or families.
Pagmahi	Sinug term which means rights over someone. Commonly used in cases where a family member expresses claim or rights over an individual who has been involved in the conflict.
Pagpatiút	Sinug term which means mediation or mediating.
Pagtaubat	Sinug term meaning repentance; it is between a person and Allah
Pag maaf	Sinug term which means forgiveness.
Pamindahi or Pagpinda	Sinug term meaning making or becoming different. In conflict situations, it could mean a change in the mindset of people involved.
Parail	A way to elaborate on expressed idea such as using metaphors to describe a situation.
Sabar	An Arab term adopted by the Tausug meaning restrain. Traditionally, this term is closely linked with <i>sunnah</i> , or behavioral practices preferred by the Holy Prophet (PBUH). For instance, when a person does not want to retaliate against his another party, he would utter the word <i>sabar</i> to announce his refusal to be involved in the conflict.
Tau maas	Refers to a person well-respected by the community due to his wisdom. Village elders and imam or religious leaders are considered as tau maas. The term is also applied to local leaders such as <i>barangay</i> chairperson or mayors.

SPEAK OUT AT BARANGAY  
KANLAGAY, KALINGALAN  
CALUANG, SULU.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When people take peace into their own hands, paradigms will definitely have to shift. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) realized this early on in its pioneering work on preventing and reducing violence in Sulu when it came across with the incontrovertible impact of clan-based political conflicts on the individual and social fabric of Tausug communities. In the next two years that followed its initial forays into addressing broader conflicts from 2005 to 2009, practices on conflict resolution were explored, studied and promoted in partnership with stakeholders from the 19 municipalities of the province. Various levels of creative dialogues transpired in the form of Speak Outs, Lakbay Kapayapaan (Journey for Peace), Clan Leaders'Conference, Mediators' Retreat and team strategizing, which were anchored by the nascent mechanism called *Tumikang Sama-Sama* (TSS) that the HD Centre sought to establish in partnership with the European Union (EU).

Composed of scholars and civil society organization (CSO) leaders, or, and *eminent persons*, who serve as advisers and local facilitators, and supported by a Secretariat of two local consultants, TSS aims to give people and communities solid experiences of resolving their conflicts through the use of non-violent ways. From their experiences in actual case handling, TSS has derived an approach to conflict resolution that combines the influence of local tradition with international third party presence. It has animated locally-driven conflict resolution processes where people come together to speak about conflict issues that affect them, choose leaders who can mediate, and engage in

*TSS has derived an approach to conflict resolution that combines the influence of local tradition with international third party presence.*

back-and-forth shuttling between parties in conflict. The end in sight is reconciliation which has been witnessed in the 10 cases that TSS handled for the past 18 months. However, TSS has come to the realization that the culmination of months of convincing and bringing parties together is not only found in signed agreements but in the collective efforts of their communities to chart new pathways to peace.

With the growing demand for its intervention, TSS is faced with the need to self-reflect and assess nodal points for growth as its relationship with HD Centre takes on a new spin. Inspired by the capacity and commitment of local people in pushing the initiative forward, the HD Centre is opening up possibilities for TSS to further enhance its role in conflict resolution as an independent and autonomous organization.

Thus an evaluation was held from May to June 2012 in order to ascertain the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of TSS as an initiative and point out future directions that can be pursued for its continued development. These directions, primarily organizational, can be summarized as follows:

**a) Revisiting results and outcomes.**

Through this process, TSS should be able to validate the long term vision and goals that it seeks to achieve based on its assessment of the contextual needs in Sulu. As proposed by the new country representative, a theory of change can be culled from the summary of outcomes, lessons learned – what worked, what did not work – and helpful mechanisms and strategies which can guide TSS in identifying future outcomes that it can realistically achieve in the next 3 to 5 years;

**b) Taking on a systems view in assessing and planning organizational functioning of TSS.**

By identifying the related, sub- and micro systems within which TSS operates, it can determine which functions can be carried over in a future scenario where TSS has achieved more independence and self reliance from HD Centre, how the future TSS should be structured



and what operational systems need to be set in place. For example, how will the future TSS relate to the Preventing and Reducing Armed Violence (PARV) project and the HD Centre as well as with other institutions it has worked with in the past.

**c) Building its resources.**

Resources refer to the financial, human and physical resources that TSS needs in order to operate smoothly and attain its vision and goals. For this purpose, an organizational development (OD) process should be able to guide TSS in designing program proposals, establishing a responsive and efficient human resource system, and installing planning, budgeting, monitoring, reporting and evaluation procedures that will keep it vibrant and dynamic as an organization. 🐦

# BACKGROUND



COURTESY CALL TO BARANGAY  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
OFFICIALS IN OMAR, SULU.

**T**umikang Sama-Sama (TSS) is a *Tausug* phrase that stands for “together we move forward”. It was conceived as a program of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre)<sup>1</sup> which, after several years of working on the broader peace process, decided to support efforts to address clan conflicts as these appeared to be the main drivers of insecurity in the province of Sulu.

On his way to one of his first visits to Panamao, then HD Centre country representative David Gorman remembers seeing men with guns who apparently were not affiliated to either the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) or the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). He would later learn that these men were hired gunmen linked to politics. It was then that the HD Centre became aware, as David Gorman said (personal communication, July 2, 2012), of yet “another layer of the conflict” and realized that if they wanted to deal with violence in Sulu, these groups had to be engaged too.

Deeper analysis into the issue of clan conflicts was pursued through consultations. CSOs and the HD Centre shared the concern that larger clan feuds would go beyond a series of proxy conflicts into something more province-wide. A Clan Leaders’ Conference was convened and discussions led to the realization of prioritizing small-scaled conflicts. During the conference, the participants forged a commitment to work on conflicts

that they could solve in order to develop a track record and demonstrate to themselves and the people of Sulu that conflict resolution does work. As these were resolved, it immediately led to a deluge of requests for a more organized way of responding to such conflicts.

The TSS mechanism thus came into being as a response to this context and need. It has been operating as a body of well-respected local individuals, or *eminent people* as they are called, who seek to address the security concerns of Sulu by providing opportunities for peaceful and neutral conflict resolution processes within conflict-prone communities and among stakeholders.

The services it extends to the communities range from advising, facilitating and supporting the mediation of conflicts, or simply providing the space for belligerents to resolve their conflicts in a peaceful, neutral and conducive environment. The work of the TSS is complemented by the Prevention and Reducing Armed Violence (PARV) initiative which supports the deployment of 25 field based monitors to report incidents of election –related violence to the TSS team, help in the facilitation of local conflicts with the TSS mediators and conduct peacebuilding activities in their districts which complement the facilitation efforts.

The TSS was drawn out of the HD Centre supported Peace Working Group (PWG), which started in 2005 with the task of preventing and resolving incidents between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and MNLF as well as other groups engaged in conflict. As snags in the implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement persisted and the virulent “tug-of-war” among political clans and activities of the ASG continued to fan the conflict between the MNLF


*The services it extends to the communities range from advising, facilitating and supporting the mediation of conflicts, or simply providing the space for belligerents to resolve their conflicts in a peaceful, neutral and conducive environment.*

and GPH to the extent of government gaining foothold in MNLF camps, HD Centre decided to shift its approach.

After conducting an extensive study of violence and conflict in Sulu, the HD Centre set up a multi-stakeholder initiative called the Armed Violence Reduction Initiative (AVRI) which aimed to study and raise people’s awareness on how violence can be prevented in the province. The HD Centre then broadened the PWG to include stakeholders beyond the MNLF and GPH to members of civil society, the provincial government, and parties to the conflict. Even with some initial success in resolving local level conflicts particularly in Silangkan, the broader issues of marginalization, underdevelopment, poor governance and lack of economic opportunities loomed prominently as hindrances to sustainable peace. Hence, the HD Centre refocused into more community-based efforts called Peace Centered Communities (PCC). Starting with mediation, the HD Centre eventually moved on to more comprehensive approaches to peacebuilding in order to draw the attention of donors and government to support people’s increasing level of confidence in dialogue and development.

**FIGURE 1: Evolution of HD Interventions in Sulu**

YEAR	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
PWG								
AVRI								
TSS								
PERV								
PARV								

In the past, those shifts in strategies and approaches have been informed by reflective decisions and actions. Program transitions have been the best time to reflect and discern future directions based on lessons from on the ground experiences. Thus, after another two years of its continued support for TSS, the HD Centre embarked on an external evaluation to generate lessons which could guide its future work and partnership with the TSS. 




# THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK:

## OBJECTIVES, SCOPES & METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of TSS was conducted from May to June 2012 to take stock of the accomplishments, assess the contributing and hindering factors, and identify possibilities for its sustained growth and development.

To draw invaluable analysis and learnings from the two-year TSS initiative, the evaluation looked into the following key areas:

- a) relevance, or the extent to which TSS interventions are important for the target group/s and within the local, regional and national context;
- b) effectiveness, or the extent to which TSS interventions have contributed to achieving particular results and outcomes;
- c) efficiency, or the extent to which the desired results have been achieved vis-à-vis the resources available for the initiative;
- d) sustainability (as well as continuity and viability), the extent to which the results, processes and strategies will likely be sustained without interventions from the HD Centre; and
- e) cross-cutting themes of gender and youth, particularly inter-generational involvement, or the extent to which the women and youth participate in and benefit from all the different activities and interventions of TSS.

Data-gathering methods such as key informant interviews, focused group discussion (FGDs) and secondary data review were utilized to generate both qualitative and quantitative description and analyses based on the five key areas mentioned. Respondents came from the TSS Secretariat, PARV, local government units (LGU), CSO, security sector, religious groups, and parties to conflicts which have been successfully resolved as well as those that are still ongoing. 

# THE EVALUATION

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## 1 FINDINGS (versus Key Areas)

### 1.1 RELEVANCE

When the TSS was activated to focus on local conflicts, it had an entire province comprising of 19 municipalities as its target area. These municipalities are categorized into two districts: District 1 where the presence of the ASG is said to be more felt and where the main camp of the military is located; and District 2 where the community relations activities of the military are more welcome.

Sulu has two main facets to its reality. On the one hand, it is described as a land of plenty and abundance. As expressed by Governor Sakur Tan in a speech delivered at the Assumption College IBES Peace Advocacy Campaign (2007), Sulu “is a place blessed with rich aquatic resources, with its 88,000 hectares of lands so fertile that any plant or tree can grow”. Virtually free from natural disasters and calamities<sup>2</sup>, Sulu is said to be capable of catering to fruit requirements of other areas in the Philippines. It is also one of the major fishing grounds in the country as well as a major supplier of seaweeds.

Then there is the more commonly portrayed image of some areas in the province as conflict-affected. Sulu province is the site of some of the fiercest and most devastating armed encounters where the politico-military bailiwicks of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) can be found. It is in fact where the movement for Bangsamoro liberation was led by one of its prominent leaders Nur Misuari in the 1970s. Scholar and researcher Mucha Shim Arquiza (2012) recounts the following:

In the social memory of the Muslim population in Sulu archipelago, the rise and fall of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is considered a golden age and a milestone.

Founded in the mid-1960s, the MNLF is one of the first centrally-organized ethno-nationalist political movements that successfully bonded together the various ethnicities of Sulu, namely, the Sama, Tausug, Yakan, Jama Mapun and Kalibugan [and Palawanun, if Cagayan de Sulu and Batarasa and Balabac of Palawan island are to be considered tied to the old unified Sulu archipelago] into one national identity as the Bangsamoro, principally basing on a common political history and mobilizing into an ideology under the unifying formula of **hulah, bangsa, agama** – homeland, people and religion.<sup>3</sup>

When the GPH-MNLF Final Peace Agreement was inked on September 2, 1996, it did not bring the armed conflict between the two parties to a close. The MNLF continues to assert that the provisions of the agreement have not been fully implemented, which has triggered armed encounters and skirmishes between the GPH and the MNLF. International organizations, such as the HD Centre, have earnestly acted as monitors and made their presence felt in the affected areas by mobilizing their resources to support the two parties in their effort towards sustainable peace and development since the 1990s.

*...conflicts among families and clans who compete for control over resources in communities of Sulu. As they operate below the radar of the peace talks, these kinds of conflicts are rendered more insidious and virulent.*

In a recent research on *Pagpati'ut* and the configuration of conflict in Sulu, Oreta and Tolosa (2012) stated that “more than the vertical conflict of government forces versus rebel groups (MNLF, MILF, ASG) the conflict in Sulu has a more horizontal character”(p. 32). The study delved into the nature of conflicts among families and clans who compete for control

over resources in communities of Sulu. As they operate below the radar of the peace talks, these kinds of conflicts are rendered more insidious and virulent.

The family feud over control of land is at the root of the different types of conflict that the study was able to map. This inter-generational conflict is exacerbated by the unabated proliferation of firearms and has extended over to some political conflicts where the resource-in-contest becomes the internal revenue allocation (IRA). As administrators of the IRA funds, the local chief executives (LCE) gain added leverage over his or her opponents and so elected positions are hotly contested as “personal properties and even part of the ‘estates’ of clans, to be passed on from one generation to the next as a birthright” (Oreta and Tolosa, 2012, p. 33).

Some of the factors which reinforce the current election-related family feuds are (a) the proliferation of firearms and high tolerance of people to gun proliferation and use; (b) the lack of economic opportunities; (c) poor road networks which makes mobility of people and goods difficult; (d) the absence of dominant political leadership which breeds a *free-for-all game* to claim authority; and (e) limited political space for the young and educated Moros. (Oreta and Tolosa, 2012, p. 37)

Trying to understand how people perceive and mediate violent conflicts in the sample areas of the study, the research offered typologies of communities as those with active conflict, dormant conflict and peaceful. It is interesting to note how perceptions, actions and mechanisms varied depending on the level of conflict in the community. For communities with active conflict, the military, police and LGU play an important role in addressing conflicts and in fact they, in many cases, provide the local mechanism for conflict resolution. In the so-called peaceful areas, there is more importance placed on the role of the LGUs, especially the *barangay* captain and civilian population in resolving conflicts.

As the TSS sought to address violent conflicts, it charted and prioritized the conflicts in Sulu according to (a) the seriousness of the conflicts; and (b) the likelihood for hostilities and tensions rooted in these conflicts to resume. (PERV, 2011)<sup>4</sup> Out of the 58 conflicts mapped, the TSS then prioritized the resolution of those conflicts which were serious yet which could also be resolved.

**FIGURE 2: HD-TSS-PERV Analysis of Conflicts in Sulu**

		SERIOUSNESS OF THESE CONFLICTS				
		1 (not serious)	2 (not very serious)	3 (serious)	4 (very serious)	5 (most serious)
LIKELIHOOD FOR HOSTILITIES AND TENSION ROOTED IN THESE CONFLICTS TO RESUME	5 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tongkil - Brgy. Sigumbal, Sahidulla vs. Hj. Ridzwan</li> <li>Tongkil - Brgy. Tainga Bakkaw (Sitio Duay Bud), Sahidulla vs. Maling</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panamao - Brgy. Parang, Duyan and Kan Sipat vs. Aksan (RESOLVED)</li> <li>Panamao - Brgy. Sikan Haw, Salialam vs. Kudjah</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tapul - Brgy. Kamaunggi, Jaka vs. Major Ismael</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kalinggalang Caluang (Political Conflict) - Brgys. Tunggul and Pang, Misuari vs. Alibun</li> <li>Maimbung - Brgys. Poblacion, Kulasi and Tanduh Patung, Tan vs. Maldisa, Arbison, Nanda</li> </ul>
	4 very likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parang - Brgy. Kannaway, Halipa vs. Majidul</li> <li>Parang - Brgy. Kaha, Alih and Tingkahan vs. Abdurahim</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patikul - Brgy. Taglibi, Land Grabbing and Rape Case</li> <li>Panamao - Brgy. Suligpang Tayungan, case of the Brgy. Captain of Adjid</li> <li>Siasi - Brgy. West Kuntad, Alam vs. Iddin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pata - Brgy. Kamawi, Hajihil vs. Burahan</li> <li>Omar - Brgy. Niangkaan, Pantasan vs. Tapahing</li> <li>Parang - Brgy. Tikung, Hadjirul vs. Kalah</li> <li>Lugus - Brgy. Bas Mangkalalay, Hajad vs. Hassan</li> <li>Lugus - Brgy. Alu, Duyong (Aradais) vs. Hailulla</li> <li>Lugus (Land Dispute) - Maastah vs. Malik</li> <li>Luuk - Brgy. Lianutan, Binang vs. Rae</li> <li>Indanan - Brgy. Kuppong, Al-nasher Talib vs. Sonny Talib</li> <li>Lugus-Brgy. Omlah, Hajan vs. Laha</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talipao - Brgy. Lambanah, Uddin &amp; Abduhasan vs. Aldam &amp; Asimuddin</li> <li>Talipao - Brgy. Samak, Kiram vs. Imam Tuan Rajik Bakkal</li> <li>Parang - Brgy. Piyahan (Idjing) vs. Brgy. Igan-gan (Sampang)</li> <li>Maimbung - Brgy. Bualuh Lahi and Lapa, Ammasita vs. Joko</li> <li>Panamao - Brgy. Tabuh Manok, Undug vs. Pustaham</li> <li>Jolo - Brgy. Kasanyangan (Tulawie) vs. Barangay Kasalamatan (Ajirin)</li> <li>Jolo - Brgy. Walled City (Abduhalim) vs. Brgy. Asturias (Gasman)</li> </ul>	

## SERIOUSNESS OF THESE CONFLICTS

### LIKELIHOOD FOR HOSTILITIES AND TENSION ROOTED IN THESE CONFLICTS TO RESUME

	1 (not serious)	2 (not very serious)	3 (serious)	4 (very serious)	5 (most serious)
3 likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parang - Brgy. Bulih Bawang, Jaam vs. Dahay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jolo - Brgy. Kasanyangan (Tulawie) vs. Brgy. Kasalamatan (Ansao)</li> <li>Patikul - Brgy. Liang, case of the policeman killed by unidentified suspect at large</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panamao - Brgy. Siet Higad, Membol vs. Brgy. Chair Ruben</li> <li>Pandami - Brgy. Subah-Subah, Mamang vs. Naser</li> <li>Indanan - Brgy. Talatak Conflict Area, ASG vs. AFP</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tongkil - Brgy. Kahikukuk Sahidulla vs. Ladjamatli</li> </ul>
2 not very likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panglima Estino - Gasman Amman vs. Estino</li> <li>Pangutaran - Barangay Alu Buna, Monus vs. Posing</li> <li>Kalinggalang Caluang, Barangay Pangdan-Pangdan Political Rivalry</li> <li>Panglima Estino - Barangay Likboh, Akkang vs. Rainer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jolo - Brgy. Kasalamatan (Tulawie) vs. Brgy. Kakuyangan (Nahudan)</li> <li>Indanan - Brgy. Tagbak, Brgy. Captain Jakiram vs. Isnaji</li> <li>Talipao - Brgy. Buntud, Salim vs. Suliban</li> <li>Pata - Brgy. Likud, Masillam vs. Burahan</li> <li>Indanan - Brgy. Bunut, Brgy. Captain Askali vs. Baridji</li> <li>Pata - Brgy. Daungdung, Faujja Sahibil vs. Lucia Group</li> <li>Tapul - Brgy. Hawan, Salip Paang vs. Daud</li> <li>Tapul - Brgy. Kannaway, Sulayman vs. Daud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pata - Brgy. Sangkap, Haddari vs. Rajik &amp; Burahan</li> <li>Parang - Brgy. Lanao Dakula, Sikal vs. Jinnul</li> <li>Indanan - Brgy. Kan Ebis vs. Barangay Andihih</li> <li>Indanan - Brgy. Malimbayah vs. Barangay Tanduh Pugut</li> <li>Luuk - Brgy. Tubig Putih and Barangay Kan Mindus, Maddas vs. Arbison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Siasi - Brgy. Lammin, Jerry vs. Anni</li> <li>Panamao - Barangay Election for Association of Barangay Captains on December 13, 2010</li> </ul>	
1 not likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pangutaran - Brgy. Pandaniog, Logo vs. Residents of Poblacion</li> </ul>				

In this context, HD Centre has chosen to adopt a *neutral third-party role*, which provides advice to improve the peace situation in Sulu. The polarity and divided loyalties among political clans and their wards necessitated an external push to bring warring parties together in a common process to resolve their conflicts.

Some CSO leaders attest that the HD Centre and TSS are significantly blazing trails in this field with their focus on a community-based approach in which indigenous practices are kept intact.

The HD Centre is perceived by CSOs and LGUs as an international NGO with the mandate to work with the LGU, military and local people. Their role in bringing in the resources – financial, technical and manpower – is also seen as necessary in resolving conflicts in a highly volatile situation.

This neutral third party role of the HD Centre was affirmed many times by the respondents as a significant contribution to the resolution of local clan based conflicts in Mindanao.

Representatives of the Misuari clan (personal communication, May 17, 2012), which is party to a successfully resolved conflict, have said that:

The HD Centre was the one who approached the LGU and marines and that is where they got their strength. With the presence of an outsider, LGUs feel more compelled and confident in settling conflict. The HD Centre people are also perceived to be more neutral because they do not take sides. They know how to speak well and are able to stay calm even if people say hurtful words.

*The polarity and divided loyalties among political clans and their wards necessitated an external push to bring warring parties together in a common process to resolve their conflicts. Some CSO leaders attest that the HD Centre and TSS are significantly blazing trails in this field with their focus on a community-based approach in which indigenous practices are kept intact.*

Provincial Board Member Hadji Abdulkadil Estino (personal communication, May 15, 2012), who has also been tapped to mediate in some of the TSS -facilitated cases, has expressed that:

Their value added is documentation. When the case bogs down or when the parties in conflict get into trouble again after getting settled, we go back to the documentation. The commitments are there. Their role is a big factor in documenting the cases and also in coordination. They assist in the process. They are also able to share global opportunities and connections. We lack publicity. The radio station should be there and publications work. If possible, they can have direct news access to Manila. Part of their job is also to provide employment for the Suluanons as long as there is no other purpose or agenda.

## **1.2 EFFECTIVENESS**

### **18-Month Goals and Outcomes**

The main goal was for TSS to mediate conflicts in Sulu with a target of 18 events in a span of 18 months. This distinct way of goal-setting has been carried on from the HD Centre system of prioritizing and budgeting of activities. An event amounts to approximately Php70,000.00 and may cover the costs in handling one or more cases depending on the factors that influence conflict resolution like the pace of the process, availability of local resources, and intervention from local officials.

The following outcomes are evident from the records and accounts of the staff.

#### **Outcome 1: Mobilized LGU role in conflict resolution**

Table 1 below shows the number of local government officials mobilized in the course of the conflict resolution in each of the 10 municipalities where the identified priority cases emanated.

A total of eight mayors, two vice mayors, 11 municipal councilors



and 16 barangay officials were actively involved with Indanan having the highest number of officials mobilized (7), followed by Panamao (5), Panglima Estino (4), Kalingalan Caluang (4), Patikul (3) and Jolo (2).

**TABLE 1: Number of LGU officials involved in conflict resolution**

Area	Mayors Mobilized	Municipal Councilors	Barangay Officials	Vice Mayor
1. Kalingalan Caluang	1	1	1	1
2. Luuk	1	-	-	-
3. Omar	1	4	-	-
4. Panglima Estino	1	-	2	1
5. Jolo	1	-	1	-
6. Parang	1	1	2	-
7. Pandami	-	-	1	-
8. Panamao	1	2	3	-
9. Indanan	1	2	4	-
10. Patikul	-	1	2	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>

The various roles in which these LGUs were involved include (a) participation in convening the parties in conflict; (b) acting as frontliners in settlement; and(c) raising *bangun* or blood money.

The role of the HD Centre is well appreciated and welcomed by the LGUs. One of the participating LCE, *Barangay* Captain Najer Susulan (personal communication, May 16, 2012), stated that:

CHD-TSS is helpful because they add knowledge and strategies on what to do particularly in making connection with the military. This is important when we go to areas where there is open and direct conflict. They provide transportation for gasoline and costs of meeting like snacks. I used to spend for my own costs so it is helpful. I will not feel bad even if they do not give such support because I accepted the responsibility not because of anything but because I am a banwa. The reason why they are effective is because they do not look at the evil in people. They see everyone as good. They talk to everyone properly and treat each one as equal. They are my favourite because I remember my grandfather.

When Vand speaks I remember my grandfather. So even if they run out of money, I will still join them.

**Outcome 2: Generated participation from community residents in resolving conflicts**

Directly over 960 persons participated in 16 community Speak Outs which were conducted throughout the province on topics ranging from (a) conflict resolution and dialogue in the community; (b) ARMM election postponement in 2011; (c) clan conflict as a factor affecting peace; and (d) security and rules and regulations on Barangay Peacekeeping Action Teams-Police Auxiliary Units (BPAT-PAU), which is the controversial militia groups established to buffer operations against kidnapers.

For only that time, many of these individuals had a chance to discuss and engage on these issues with others in a constructive setting to learn the basics on solving a conflict which may have helped even prevent some small conflicts from erupting and to ensure greater accountability of the BPATs.<sup>5</sup>



COURTESY CALL TO SULU PROVINCIAL POLICE DIRECTOR.

**Outcome 3: Resolution of 10 originally prioritized conflicts, (2010 to 2012)**

Of the 58 cases that were mapped at the onset of the program, the TSS prioritized 10 cases to be resolved in 18 months. Of the 10 cases that were resolved, three were amicably settled without the need for blood money and six were settled with the provision of some funds by the HD Centre for the ceremonies and rituals. In one of the cases -- the Pandami case of August 2010—mediation to prevent further violence was done by the TSS

Secretariat over the phone; the conflict was eventually resolved by the LGU.

The case that took the longest time to settle was the Alaluddin-Kudjah conflict, which spanned almost six years (from 2006-2012, with the conflict starting even before the TSS was formed). This was followed by the Pantasan-Tapahing case and Alibibun-Misuari case which took 9 months of conflict settlement work. For these two conflicts, however, it should be noted that these are considered partially resolved because not of the parties involved have affixed their signatures on the settlement. It is also worth mentioning that the Alaluddin-Kudjah case was strategized as a result of the high—profile Sulu Clan Leaders' Conference held last September 2010.

In addition to the 10 cases that were resolved, there were two cases for which the technical assistance of TSS was sought from January to April 2012. The assistance involved preparation of the covenant or settlement and documentation of the proceedings sans the mobilization of mediator and the provision of funds for rituals and transportation.

#### **Outcome 4: Increased the level of security during mediation processes**

According to the TSS and PARV, the PNP played major roles in the settlement of conflicts particularly in District 1 municipalities such as Jolo and Indanan. In District 2 areas, where there was more openness to the presence of the military, the MBLT3 partnered with the PNP in providing security during the actual face-to-face mediation between the conflicting parties.

The increase in the level of security is said to be evidenced by the fact that more people are attending community activities, parties were more open to communicate and firearms were not displayed during these gatherings.

*“...mediation as practised in the TSS milieu means more than the internationally-understood process of bringing conflicting parties to the table so that the interests and needs are articulated, options are explored and mutually acceptable solutions are arrived at.”*

### **Strategies and Approaches which facilitated the attainment of Outcomes**

In attaining the abovementioned outcomes, the HD Centre-TSS mainly used 6 major approaches which are discussed in the following section.

#### **Approach 1: Actual Handling of Cases**

Oftentimes, the process of conflict resolution is referred to as mediation. However, mediation as practised in the TSS milieu means more than the internationally-understood process of bringing conflicting parties to the table so

that the interests and needs are articulated, options are explored and mutually acceptable solutions are arrived at.

In relatively simpler cases like marriage problems, elopement and *fitnah* (rumor mongering), the TSS local mediators say that such a standardized approach may be applicable since the issues need to be surfaced and addressed are solved bilaterally between two parties. However, in a context described earlier where violent confrontations have accompanied the settlement process, there is more to conflict resolution than simply bringing the parties together to work out an agreement.

As mentioned in previous sections, the TSS approach puts a premium on community ownership and participation in the conflict resolution process and this is evident in their painstaking efforts to secure mandates through community dialogues which are known as *Speak Outs* as their entry point to a more open discussion of conflict issues. *Speak Outs* are undertaken on both provincial and community or *barangay* levels.

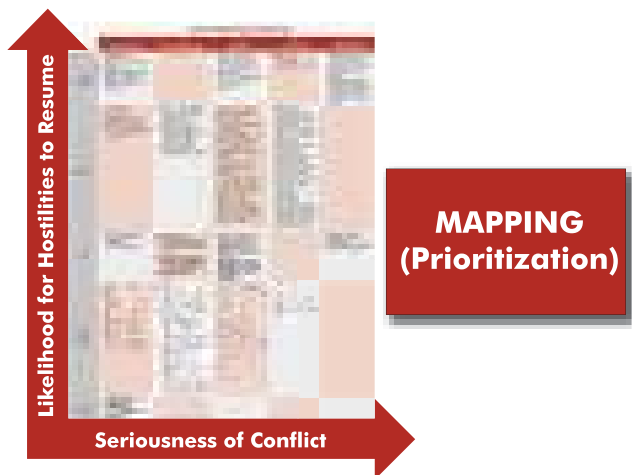
At the provincial level where clan leaders, LGUs, religious leaders, CSOs, security sector and other key stakeholders are brought together to map out the issues surrounding the conflict, TSS is able to forge partnership with these groups who agree to respond to these issues. A *Speak Out* is done workshop-style where the stakeholders are asked to reflect on how they were before, during, and after the conflict . At the onset, the data gathered is given to the neutral non-partisan parties, like the AFP and LGU, who then commence the mediation process catered to each identified case.

The process of resolving cases usually consists of the following basic steps:

## 1 GENERAL MAPPING

*Lakbay Kapayapan* (Journey for Peace) is an activity where next steps towards resolving specific cases are planned by concerned mid-level leaders of the conflict-affected community. Usually held outside of the community (such as the EcoZone Freeport and some Muslim communities), participants get inputs on conflict mapping, dialogue, the wisdom of settlement in Islam and how to strategize the resolution of conflicts.

**FIGURE 3: Mapping (Prioritization)**



Using a TSS-designed conflict mapping tool, which categorized conflicts according to seriousness and likelihood of its resumption, the conflict cases are prioritized based on the potential of the case to be resolved as signified by the willingness of both sides to reconcile.

The use of criteria and tools for mapping conflicts is essential to avoid the concerned individuals from coming up with *suntok-sa-buwan* (impossible) goals in conflict settlement. TSS cites the case of Maldisa, which passed the two criteria of seriousness and likelihood but did not indicate any willingness from both parties to reconcile; it was later dropped and tagged as non-viable even after getting big clans to intervene.

## 2 DETAILED MAPPING PER CONFLICT IN THE AREAS

A more specific and detailed analysis of the prioritized cases at the community level with the local facilitators and volunteers (under the PERV program) leading the process. At this level, there are two ways for prioritizing and assessing the conflict.

Speak Out - an activity which serves as a venue for people in the concerned community to identify persisting conflicts they want to be resolved and the people widely accepted to have the credibility and authority to handle or mediate



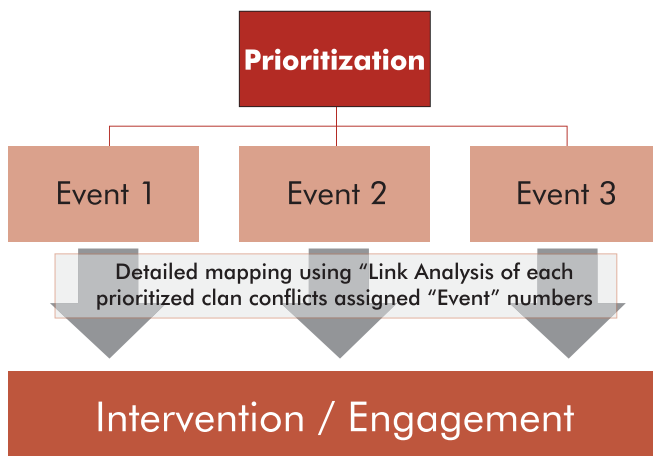
the conflict. Usually, it is the community elders who are identified given such a mandate, but in some cases the LCE is perceived as more qualified.

*Endorsements* - in which case people on their own initiative come to TSS mediators or the Secretariat to endorse conflict issues to be mediated.

In both cases, the conflict mapping takes on a process where the community people are able to analyze the conflict based on (i) identification of alliances, or parties in conflict, relationships, etc.; (ii) history, or background narrative, causes, mediation attempts; (iii) assessment of the conflict, or the identification of potential to resolve; (iv) previous interventions; (v) willingness of parties; and (vi) background and profile of peace potential facilitator or mediator.

An important exercise that the identified mediators need to undertake as part of detailed mapping is the “link analysis” where the direct and indirect actors situated in different levels of the conflict as well as their relationships and influence are mapped out.

**FIGURE 4: From Prioritization to Engagement**





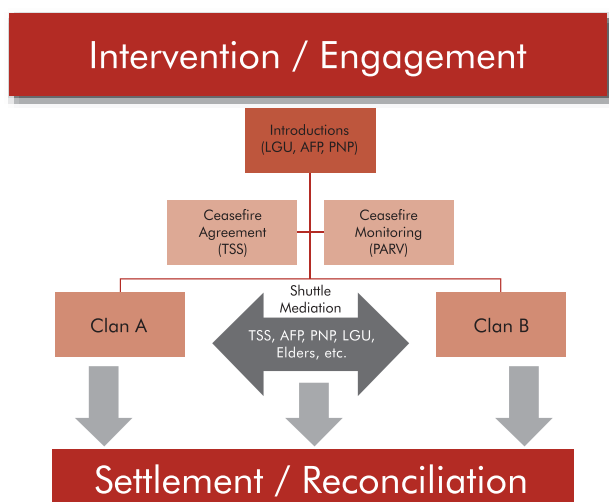


The PARV volunteers make use of SMS technology to send information of incidents and ceasefire violations to the PARV Secretariat based in the HD Centre office in Jolo. The TSS, on the other hand, validates all the information it receives from both parties in the conflict.

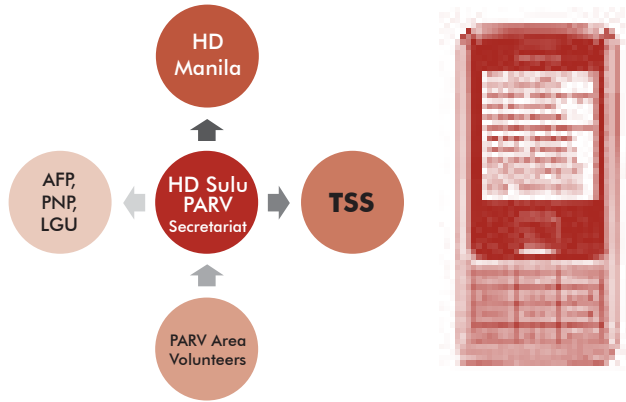
Ceasefire mechanisms help prevent further violence in conflict situations, but it does not guarantee that the dispute will come to an end by virtue of a final agreement. In some cases, violence has been used by one party as leverage in order to gain advantage in the agreement. However, the respite created by the ceasefire agreement is still significant since it helps decrease the tension and allow parties to start talking about their issues and demands.

At this phase, the local mediators strive to make the ceasefire more binding between the parties by virtue of a document explicitly describing the terms of the mechanism, lobbying for the support of influential politicians to obligate the parties' compliance to the agreement, and recognizing the role of local volunteers in monitoring any violations.

**FIGURE 6: From Engagement to Settlement**



**FIGURE 7: PARV Incidents and Ceasefire Monitoring**



## 5 SHUTTLE MEDIATION (SURFACING OF ISSUES AND DEMANDS)

With ceasefire mechanisms in place, TSS proceeds to the initial phase of the mediation, which happens through a lot of shuttling back and forth rather than formal negotiations between the parties. During this phase, the TSS local mediators are able to gather data from both sides and regularly convene a core group of designated peace facilitators composed of CSOs, religious leaders, LGUs and security sector representatives to probe deeper into the information being generated.

One significant issue raised during this phase is the demand for proper compensation for any casualty or the loss of life in connection to the conflict. As a response to this demand, the TSS clarifies that any financial compensation, usually *bangun* or blood money, cannot be provided by the TSS facilitators. What the TSS can provide, however, is logistical support such as transportation of local mediators, snacks for the people attending the meetings, and some supplies. In addition, the TSS can assist the LGUs to raise the amount of the *bangun*.

## 6 ACTUAL SETTLEMENT AND SIGNING OF AGREEMENT

The actual negotiations only occurs when the initial provisions of the settlement has been reached, which is based from the demands raised during the shuttle mediation. This means that once the parties meet face-to-face, both of them are informed of the issues and demands from each side, including the financial compensation.

In the entire process, the HD Centre takes precautions that it is not perceived as the prime mover as it ensures the high level of visibility and presence of the local official who has been chosen by the community to act as mediator. The role of the HD Centre is then to facilitate the venue, audience and act as co-signatory to the agreement. In the end, the credit goes to the local officials, religious leaders, community leaders and the elders who worked together in resolving the conflict.

With some LGUs becoming aware of the role and presence of the TSS as a result of previous engagements, the TSS has been requested to provide technical assistance in some cases where their interventions are limited to the preparation of agreements and covenants for signing as well as providing religious injunction or preaching during the healing and reconciliation phase.

*In the entire process, the HD Centre takes precautions that it is not perceived as the prime mover as it ensures the high level of visibility and presence of the local official who has been chosen by the community to act as mediator. The role of the HD Centre is then to facilitate the venue, audience and act as co-signatory to the agreement.*

**PEACE COVENANT/AGREEMENT  
(Pagsulut, Pagsalassay sin Parkalah)**

This Peace Covenant/ Agreement entered into by and between MUHAJIRAN “Jirah” SAYYADI, a.k.a. Udjaman (and his family included), a resident of Wanni Pijanjihan, Parang, Sulu, hereinafter referred to as the FIRST PARTY;

*Pia-awñ in Parjanjan ini ha antara hi Mubajiran “Jirah” Sayyadi atarwa Udjaman (lamud na in ahli niya), naghubulah ha Wanni Pijanjihan, Parang Sulu, saltah tiyawag siya amu in FIRST PARTY*

**And  
Iban hi**

JULHAHA “Dada” TAMMANG (and his family included), a resident of Sapah Malawn, Indanan, Sulu, hereinafter referred to as the SECOND PARTY;

*Julhada “Dada” Tammang (lamug in ahli niya), ngubulah ha Sapah Malawm Indanan, Sulu saltah tiyag siya amu in SECOND PARTY.*

**WITNESSETH**

That after a series of negotiation of the family conflict between the two families abovementioned which was triggered by the killing of JAHANDAL MAHABASSAL, brother of Julhada and the killing of ABDULBASSAR SAYYADI, brother of Muhajiran, the two parties agreed to settle the conflict and execute this Peace Covenant with the following specific agreements.

*Pagubus sin paghidjatul sin parkalah sin mga tao mass, ha pangunahan hi Barangay Captain Hadji Palahuddin sin Sapah Malawm iban hi Barangay Captain Jun Baanan sin Tukay na awñ in kasulutan saltah amu ini in mga parjanjian.*

1. That the parties shall abide by the mode of settlement as discussed and explained to them by the mediators and negotiators which they consequently agreed to respect;

*In durwa tumpukan imaku atarwa magad sila ha atara sin Pagsulut kiyapag igmaan ha pag-alupan iban sin mga ngtaomaas.*

**FIGURE 7: Peace Covenant/Agreement**

2. That complaints filed, if any, in any court of law are hereby considered quashed, terminated and/or withdrawn by the respective complainants.  
*Bang adakala awn tuntut kiya pagsampay hisiyu-siyu na tumpukan, in tuntut yadtu puasun na atawa din makajari palausun;*
3. That after the signing of this covenant by the parties, the conflict in all its forms and nature is now considered closed and settled with high expectations that the relationship between the two families shall be normalized;  
*Pagubus signan atawa pilmaban sin durwa tumpukan in Parjanjan ini, in parsagaan sin durwa family sulut na, tibmus na, puas iban dubulan na, saltah hi balik na biyah sin kaina tagnah in pagsumadja atawa pagasip-iyasipi;*
4. That any of the parties who would start another round of hostilities shall become the object of police action or military operation if deemed necessary; and,  
*Bang awn malaung tumagn sin hilubalah mgbalik, in tumpukan yan amu in pagmubut-mubutan larugun atawa patrolan sin Pulis iban sundalo;*
5. That copies of this Peace Covenant shall be furnished to all concerned.  
*Dibilan kopya sin Parjanjan ini in katan wajib dibilan.*

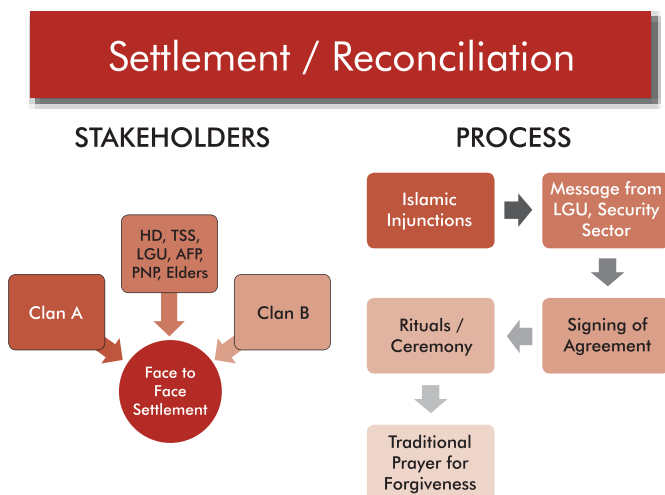
SIGNED by both parties, and witnessed by Barangay and Municipal LGU, Chief of Police, Marine Company, PNP Representative, and TSS Representative/HD Centre Sulu.

## **RITUALS AND CEREMONIES**

TSS again convenes the families after the signing of the agreement and brings religious leaders to expound on the need for unity and brotherhood, why forgiveness is important, and how killing of fellow Muslims is forbidden in Islam.

Then possibilities for post conflict initiatives are explored usually on a Friday after the weekly congregational prayer when community folks are usually gathered at the local mosque. Some communities decide to become a Peace Centered Community (PCC). Usually after the settlement the parties just shake hands but that does not preclude the recurrence of some tension and so TSS views the idea of PCC declaration as a way of strengthening and sustaining the peace that was made between clans. The experience of Silangkan in Parang Municipality is highlighted as an example of such efforts towards more long term peace and development initiatives.

**FIGURE 8: Settlement/Reconciliation**



**Some Lessons Learned from Handling Conflicts**

TSS tries to maximize opportunities for learning among the local facilitators by allowing them to share and reflect on lessons they have gained from the cases they handled. Some of these lessons are summarized below with anecdotal reference.

- Cases like *fitnah* can escalate into violent confrontations between the parties if they are not addressed early.

TSS cited two conflict cases caused by *fitnah* or rumor in which murder became the recourse for the aggrieved parties. For both cases, member of the wronged group was rumored to be associated with lawless elements (criminals) and worked for the government as spies.

Conflict triggered by rumors can worsen, but it may end peacefully with a settlement. For instance, two people, who were both married, were rumored to be having an affair. This case could potentially lead to violent confrontation between the parties involved given its sensitivity and the value on one's repute. Through the efforts of the TSS Secretariat – by visiting the families of the people involved to put the rumors to rest – the case resolved.

The facilitator assigned to the aforementioned case (the alleged lovers) shared that the team relied on usual procedure in settling any other misunderstanding. However, they did not have enough tools to analyze or really understand why *fitnah* happens, what it indicates and how conflicts caused by *fitnah* can be resolved. Having such knowledge, skills and tools could help prevent conflicts such as *fitnah* from escalating into violence. TSS member Rosemain Abduraji (personal communication, July 31, 2012) added the following:

Because this thing is too sensitive especially in Muslim communities. Punishment is stoning to death but fortunately, we were able to talk to the two concerned people, check out the reality and then later we talked with both of their families. Eventually I don't know how I did it really, ma'am, especially at my age.

- Consensus should be ensured between and among the parties involved in the conflict.

As participants in the FGDs conducted, members of the TSS Secretariat (personal communication, May 17, 2012) shared

the following on the significance of consensus-building and cooperation between and among the concerned groups:

All stakeholders should be present during the settlement proceedings. If even one member of the parties is absent, it can cast doubt on the agreement. This can be seen in cases like the Alibun-Misuari conflict where the agreement was pursued with the assurance of the provincial board member that he will be responsible for his niece. However, the widow of the slain Misuari has become a potential source of recurrence of the conflict with her manifestation of frustration that the accused policeman had not been penalized. Similarly, in the Tapahing-Pantasan case, 80 percent of the parties agreed to settle because the mayor gave his assurance but it was not very clear how the compensation will be given and so there has been a resurgence of violence from the 20% of the parties that did not go with the agreement that was brokered by the mayor. It is also important that each party has a facilitator and internal decisions are achieved by consensus. (TSS-PARV Secretariat)

- Payment of *bangun*, while acknowledged as part of the tradition in Sulu, poses problems to the community and the officials involved in settling conflicts.

In an interview, Provincial Board Member Haji Estino (personal communication, May 14, 2012) gave his insights on an important issue that is common in most conflict situations:

When I was a mayor, I became very thin because I used to spend for the blood money. It has become a common practice among political leaders in the province of Sulu because both sides ask for it. It is only now that we have been able to remove it. We realized that it posed more problems to the province. It is used (sic) by some to earn money and for creating trouble.



Al Caluang (personal communication, May 15, 2012) a participant of the FGDs conducted, expressed the following:

Most of the conflict areas are poor. If you just give blood money it is not guaranteed that there will be peace. So they are given seeds and assisted in (sic) how to form cooperatives. The approach is more developmental. I see this as a better solution especially if there is no politician involved. It is easy to resolve conflict in the areas

- It is important to understand the nuances of a conflict through analytical tools like Link Analysis.

On the aforementioned subject, TSS and PARV members (personal communication, May 17, 2012) said that:

A simple misreading in the link analysis can cause potential damage. One time we were almost killed because we had a lapse in link analysis. We were trying to get an agreement signed and the marines wanted to go by the book and get the LGU to sign the agreement so the son of the mayor (who is also the administrator) went with us in behalf of his father and when we came to the area the men were not there. We found out that they were positioning themselves (sic) against the son of the mayor who had a clan conflict in the area.

- Facilitators need to project credibility, power and authority in getting the parties to stop the violence and go to the negotiating table.

On the significance of the facilitator's authority and credibility in mediation, Brgy. Captain Najer (personal communication, May 16, 2012) gave the following comment:

I was called by then Mayor Estino of Panglima Estino that there was some problem in Tunggul. That is where I met CHD in 2011. They were still fighting when I came in my motorcycle and stood in between (sic). I shouted that they should stop the fighting and told them that the dead could



SHUTTLE MEDIATION AT SITIO TANDUH PANUAN, OMAR, SULU.

be given to me as balato (token). I said I did not have power but I had so much mercy (sic) for them and so asked that I be given the case because it was not doing them any good. Within 15 days it was settled. They also felt mercy for me because I was not from there. It really helps if an outsider comes in to mediate. The same happened in the Marsada (Panglima Estino) case which was election-related. It was resolved within 4 months. I told them, "I am not from here, I do not have a stake, you cannot vote for me. I am not asking for anything in return. Allah has sent me".

Documentation of agreements is essential, but prudence and caution should be observed at times when presenting and handling the settlements.

On this subject, Provincial Board Member Haji Estino (personal communication, May 14, 2012) commented that:

But they also have to be careful in order not to be (mis)interpreted (sic). For example, in bringing out the document. They should consult local officials first before they do anything. They do this but sometimes they forget. It is really hard to please everyone

- Resorting to legal means to make the peace settlement binding is a necessity.

Similar to the ceasefire mechanism, making the peace settlement legally binding would help ensure compliance on the part of the conflicting parties. The TSS Secretariat (personal communication, May 19, 2012) stated that:

In some cases, this works by making the parties swear on

the Qur'an but in some cases signing of the agreement is considered binding. Still, there should be a compromise agreement for penalties to be imposed on those who violate the agreement.

### **Approach 2: Capacity Building**

Aside from actual handling of cases, TSS was able to launch two activities which aimed to enhance the competence of mediators: the *Mediators' Retreat* and the *Clan Leaders' Conference*.

The *Mediators' Retreat*<sup>6</sup> was conducted last November 2011 in line with efforts of the HD Centre to build sustainable, locally-adopted and culturally-tailored mediation approaches. It was a gathering of province-wide local mediators who had shown credibility in mediation and were willing to share experiences. The TSS secretariat mentioned that a mediators' manual or guide was supposed to have been published for their use. However, the actual results were the documentation of (a) common trends and kinds of conflicts being mediated in the province; and (b) the approaches local mediators often adopt that are anchored on the culture, dynamism and traditions of Tausug society. In addition, a list of traits of a mediator and some guidelines in mediation work were culled out for publication in a monograph.

Convened by the Office of the Mufti of Sulu and the HD Centre, the *Clan Leaders' Conference on Security Issues in Sulu* was held in Zamboanga City from September 21 to 22, 2010. This conference was the precursor of the TSS program. At that time, the HD Centre was exploring ways to effectively address clan conflicts in Sulu, in particular cases where conflict between two prominent families would worsen and turn into a major conflict. As a result, the major clans were brought together to see what could be done. The participants of the activity agreed that it would be very difficult to solve the more complex conflicts. Instead, it would be gainful to focus on resolving small-scaled conflict.

Speakers from the AFP Western Mindanao Command (WESTMINCOM), the Commission on Muslim Filipinos and the Mufti of Sulu provided background information on the security issues in Sulu while the invited clan representatives discussed at length how conflicts can be resolved. A declaration was later signed by the clan representatives after two clan conflicts were resolved during the conference. Indeed, when two conflicting parties meet during the conference promoting understanding, they eventually realize that both sides value reconciliation and healing for their families.

### **Approach 3: Advocacy (with PARV)**

Through the TSS Communications consultant, the program is able to promote peace and conflict resolution efforts over the radio and through print media. TSS maintains a one-hour program, which comes after the PARV radio program at DXMM where they broadcast cases of violence reported by local volunteers deployed in each municipality. Aside from that, the radio program allows the interactive exchange of ideas and opinions between the TSS and the listeners on the peace and order situation and the ability of the government forces to enforce the law and ensure the security of the community. Often times, the hosts would invite TSS mediators or representatives from clans to discuss conflicts that have been settled. They are asked to give a walk through on how the conflicts were solved in order to provide the listeners insights on conflict resolution and its application in the Sulu context.

Feature articles are also published intermittently in the Sulu Gazette and TSS has seasonal publications based on special issues and topics related to peace.

Other approaches that complement the TSS strategies and approaches can be gleaned from the (Preventing and Reducing Armed Violence) PARV<sup>7</sup> program, as follows:

#### **Approach 4: Community-Based Local Monitoring**

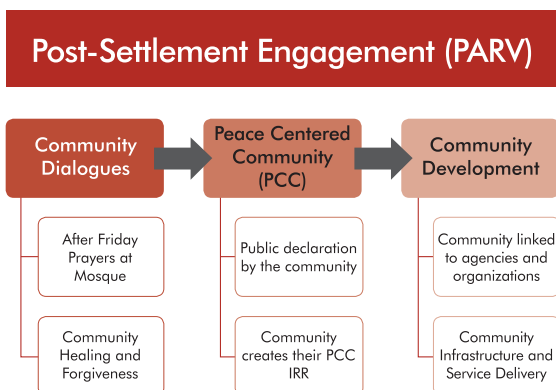
Nineteen local volunteers were assigned as monitors that report incidents of violence and security problems to the PARV Secretariat, which is composed of four fulltime, project-based staff. One volunteer is assigned per municipality and they coordinate their monitoring activities and reports with the local PNP. Reporting is done using mobile phones and, in areas where telecommunication facilities are not available, the radio. Any significant information reported on air is also fed back to the police officers. The local PNP admits that they rely a great deal on the reports of these local monitors for any security updates due to the limited number of officers deployed in the area.

While the role of the monitors is highly appreciated, they shared in the FGDs that their presence is still needed in the province's remote *barangays*. The presence of the local monitors helps to keep the local facilitators updated on the security situation in areas where they are resolving conflicts. Moreover, they often help lay the ground work for mediation initiatives and provide valuable follow up from the field. Often they are familiar with the parties to the conflict and are trusted to intervene in the process if needed.

#### **Approach 5: Peace-Centered Communities (PCC)**

Peace Centered Communities (PCC) are described in the HD

**FIGURE 10: Post-Settlement Engagement (PARV)**

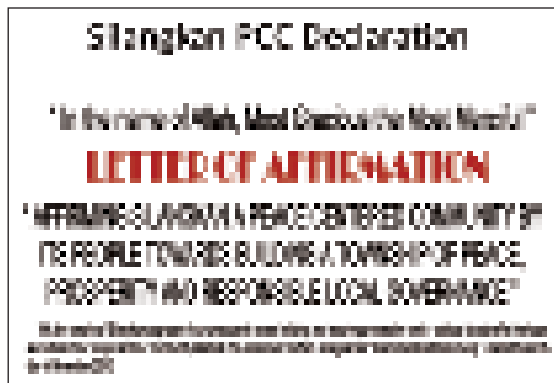


Centre-commissioned study as “those where conflicts were successfully resolved, albeit its sustainability is yet to be seen”. It is a community where people themselves initiate interventions to create a secure environment where government resources can flow, and hopefully pave the way for development initiatives. Rather than simply accepting things as they are, people in these PCCs have the ability to mediate their everyday encounters with violence and create a environment conducive for development, governance and private investment.

In 2010, the PCC initiative took off in Silangkan and was designed as a post-conflict engagement to sustain peace among parties in conflict and the broader community. Towards formalizing the process of setting up the PCC, residents develop implementing rules and regulations (IRRs) which are adopted by the community as a covenant. The HD Centre expects the local and national government to work with the communities in identifying indicators and benchmarks for improving governance, development and security and envisions that collaborative action between LGU and the people can serve as a model for other areas to replicate.

The intent as well as the content of a peace covenant is illustrated below.

**FIGURE 11: Sample of a PCC Declaration**



PARV local volunteers and monitors are expected to perform the tasks significant to the organization and sustenance of the PCCs, such as informal meetings and weekly dialogues. These activities are usually attended by the *barangay* captain and representatives from the security sector. The HD Centre's support to the PCCs is within the mandate of helping them sustain and prevent violence. In addition, they link these communities to agencies which can provide the necessary technical and financial assistance.

To date, the development of the PCCs varies among communities. While some have been successfully and officially declared as PCCs, others are still in the process of indicating their intention to become one. As shown in the table below, various activities and services have also been planned for implementation in the PCCs.

**TABLE 2: List of PCCs, Activities, Services and Plans**

Municipality	Activities Conducted	Services Rendered	Next Steps
1. Silangkan, Parang	Declared PCC with Letter of Affirmation  Finalization of Implementing Rules and Regulation  Graduation of both elementary and high school students  Survey on flash flood victims and relief  Conducted Mindanao Week of Peace 2011 celebration  Weekly dialogue (Friday)  Celebrated Hari Raya and Maulud	Conducted Medical, Dental, Veterinary Mission with multi stakeholders  Playground for elementary pupils  Operation "Tuli"  Operation "Gupit"  Constructed kiosk	Construction of latrines for elementary pupils -refurbishing of some schools

Municipality	Activities Conducted	Services Rendered	Next Steps
2. Niangkaan, Omar	Intention to be declared as PCC from the community	Sports activities for youth like basketball tournament  Feeding program by MBLT-3	Construction of kiosk for dialogue
3. Butun, Parang	Declared PCC, to be strengthened  Celebrated Hari Raya and Maulud	Facilitation of Speak Outs	Delivery of water system and electricity
2. Masjid Punjungan, Kalingalan Caluang	Ongoing facilitation for declaration as PCC	Construction of road by Local Government Unit	Delivery of water system and electricity
3. Lakbay Kapayapaan Area (Bato-Bato)	Conducted Lakbay Kapayapaan (Journey for Peace) seminar for mid-level representatives of conflicting parties	Conducted survey	Delivery of water system and electricity
4. Lakbay Kapayapaan (Malimbaya)	Conducted Lakbay Kapayapaan (Journey for Peace) seminar for mid-level representatives of conflicting parties		Delivery of water system and electricity  To be declared PCC, intention expressed by the community
5. Lakbay Kapayapaan (Sionogan)	Conducted Lakbay Kapayapaan (Journey for Peace) seminar for mid-level representatives of conflicting parties  Conducted survey on Mediating Violence in Sulu (Pagpatiut)	Refurbishing of schools by MBLT-2	Delivery of water system and electricity  To be declared PCC, intention expressed by the community

The secretariat lists seven PCCs although only four have been actually declared as PCC. Some areas did not go as far to declare themselves as PCCs which, according to HD Centre Project Officer Michael Alar, is a wise move because communities



should not to think of PCCs as a “cure-all, like aspirin” (M. Alar, personal communication, June 2, 2012) PCCs are characterized as homegrown initiatives which are uninfluenced by similarly conceived peace zones in other areas like Central Mindanao. The caution comes with the intention that future efforts will not just be to *replant* or replicate the PCC approach in other communities which have caught the excitement from the Silangkan experience. Emphasis, according to the HD Centre, should be on their being a locally initiated mechanism for the community to sustain peace efforts rather than the development projects that usually comes with the concept of a peace zone.

A common feature of the PCCs is the celebration of *Hari Raya* and *Maulud*. Other activities and services that have been rendered at PCCs are medical and dental missions construction of road and other facilities, conduct of *Lakbay Kapayapaan* and participation in the *Pagpati’ut* study by Oreta and Tolosa (2012). Silangkan, being the oldest PCC, has undertaken the most number of activities in the community. Most of the PCCs list construction of latrines, delivery of water system and electricity as their future plan of action. It is not reported whether regular meetings and gatherings take place in the PCCs.

There are no formal structures or leadership mechanism in the PCCs and it is usually the local facilitator, in tandem with LGU officials, who initiate the activities. No new formal or informal leaders have emerged from the PCC initiatives but there are some who have shown support for the PCC.

There is no elaborate planning process but meetings are held where the people are asked about what services they would like to avail of. At the moment, it is the task of the local volunteers to source out support for the projects they have identified. Some of these have been accessed from the LGUs such as the rubber tree project and medical outreach programs. The PCCs are cautioned against becoming dependent on external resources and so even

the Medcap doctors and medicines came from locally available resources.

Collaboration between the local facilitators and the volunteers has not been harnessed in the past due to the distance of the PCCs from the homebase of the volunteers. For more efficient mobilization of human resources, though, this is something that needs to be planned in the future.

Proof of the initial outcome from the Silangkan PCC experience is indicated by increased school enrolment, holding of graduation rites, and construction of playground, among others. The PCC approach has also caught the attention of some CSO leaders. CSO leader Prof. Dinampo (personal communication, May 14, 2012) said, “CHD, through Vand and Commander Abtajir, are making breakthroughs in the peace and development centers starting with Silangkan. They were able to convince MNLF leaders to try the way of peace. CHD gave new hope for the MNLF who transformed from fighters into peacebuilders”.

Similarly, Lt. Col. Romulo Quemado II PA (personal communication, May 20, 2012), in describing the PCC concept as consonant with their approach of strengthening community relations, said that:

Silangkan is the MNLF ‘ground zero’ and it was only after 15 years since we pulled out that we have been able to return. We came in through the request of the people themselves with Medcap and Dencap. With CHD and TSS support, there were a lot of outcomes like the bridge and water. A manifesto was signed that they support the project once it is done. There is stronger co-ownership. There is stronger support. We would like the Jolo-Silangkan road to be opened for free market access. There are areas like that which were usually blocked and it was the MNLF which secured us.

### **Approach 6: Linkage**

With the presence of several partners in mediation work, the need to foster and maintain linkages with the LGU, security sector and CSOs have become another area where the energies of the TSS and PARV secretariats are mobilized. In such linkages, unplanned activities and initiatives have emerged as a result of the trust and confidence of some partners in the competence of the TSS and PARV people.

One of these emergent initiatives is the *Community Relations Training (CRT)*, which has been conceptualized and implemented by the MBLT9 in tandem with TSS and PERV. Partnership with the marines started rather accidentally when both groups had to work out the best way of dealing with a manhandling case involving the AFP and a PERV Secretariat. The HD Centre opened communication lines in mediating the case with the AFP until the time it was resolved. Eventually, then Executive Officer Lt Col Quemado, who was doing a re-entry program on Community Relations Training from his Bridging Leadership course, invited the TSS and PARV to help in the pilot training and would later on become part their regular training complement. TSS and PARV would provide inputs on facilitating local conflicts and the MBLT3 would tap the local volunteers for their community initiatives.

The TSS Secretariat believes that even if the CRT engagement is technically outside of their mandate, there are a lot of advantages to their participation such as the enhancement of their training and facilitating skills and the resource exchange with the MBLT3 who are able to reach out to their communities with basic services.

Lt. Col. Quemado (personal communication, May 20, 2012) expressed that:

“They [TSS] are doing well in terms of resolving conflicts and they should intensify what they are doing. They have gained a lot of momentum and you do not pull the plug



when the energy is high, you allow the energy to flow. In Sulu, I believe that there is a lot more opportunity for change now more than ever. CHD should continue to play its role in a more strategic way. The partnership with the security sector was most critical because they cannot do it on their own. They were able to crack it last year when we got engaged. Tactical units get involved in clan conflict resolution in different capacities like some as observers, sometimes direct mediators, especially during the time of Col Marcelino. It depends on the nature of the conflict. Also it depends on whether the parties have respect for the unit or officer. They also help in ensuring compliance with the ceasefire mechanism.

### 1.3 EFFICIENCY

#### **Human Resource**

TSS operations are guided and supported by four permanent and four non-permanent advisers, local mediators who gather together on a case-to-case basis, and a secretariat comprising of two fulltime local consultants backed up by four PARV Secretariat staff.

**TABLE 3: List of TSS Advisers and Local Consultants**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Current Designation</b>	<b>Name of Person</b>	<b>Background/Qualifications</b>
Tumikang Sama- Sama (TSS)	Permanent Adviser	Ustadz Gabir Kasim	Islamic studies graduate from Marawi City  BOD of Sulu Ulama Council of Peace and Dev't
		Doc Hannbal Barra	Graduate of Islamic Studies from UP Diliman  Dean of Graduate Studies in MSU-Sulu  CSO leader (SUGPAT and Sulu People's Congress Co convenor
		Benhar Usman	PWG member MNLF representative  Former Mun. Councilor of Patikul (dealing with local conflicts)
		Abtajir Tingkasan	MNLF commander
	Non-permanent Adviser	Al Caluang	Businessman; comes from a family of MNLF commanders  After the EDSA revolution, was appointed mayor of Kalingalan Caluang which was named after his late grandfather
		Hajan Abduhasad	Former Chief of Police of Luuk
		Najer Susulan	Brgy. Captain of Kanlagay, Kalingalan Caluang
		Piling Muammil	3-termer Municipal Councilor

Program	Current Designation	Name of Person	Background/Qualifications
Tumikang Sama- Sama (TSS)	Consultant for Information: In charge of communication and public outreach; supervision of 3 representatives (permanent advisers) and 4 assistant facilitators (PCCs); conducts Sunday radio shows and interview key personalities involving conflict (1 hour PARV, 1 hour TSS); does scripts for the radio program and commercials	Nash Usman Abduhadi	Graduate of MassComm and was involved in development communications; did interviews for Sama Dilaut and was their bookkeeper and resource info officer; former volunteer reporter with DXMM; did freelance documentation work  Shuttled back and forth between AVRI and TSS as volunteer and staff from 2008 till 2010 when TSS was reorganized (shuttling was due to shifts in the program design and timeframes)
	Consultant for Logistics Coordinates local mediators, AFP in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> district; assists in areas in identifying which are critical; links the people with the right person to talk to who are credible to both parties; supervises area facilitators (4- based on PCCs) who are mobilized based on conflicts that need to be resolved	Kalmie Abduhasad	BS Pharmacy graduate from Southwestern University in Cebu City; was into various jobs like real estate, encyclopedia sales, etc.  Started as AVRI volunteer assigned to Luuk in 2008 and became fulltime TSS consultant in 2010

Program	Current Designation	Name of Person	Background/Qualifications
Tumikang Sama- Sama (TSS)	Project Officer/ HD Centre based	Vandrazel Birowa	<p>Former computer instructor at the South Western Islamic Institute</p> <p>Served as special consultant to the provincial government e-center under the NCCC and LCSP</p> <p>Former HD Centre computer technician under the first project on MNLF-GRP PWG 2005-2008</p> <p>Project-based office manager running AVRI from 2005-2009 with no link to Geneva but as consultant; became a direct staff when the country rep and program manager left the field due to security reasons</p>

Advisers meet at least twice a year and provide guidance in the directions and strategies being undertaken by the TSS which banks on their credibility and wisdom in peace and conflict resolution. Permanent advisers are distinguished from the non-permanent advisers who are mobilized on a case-to-case basis. There are some cases, though, where even the permanent advisers are also tapped like Ustadz Gabir Kasim who was actively involved in the recently resolved conflict in Brgy. Pasil, Indanan.<sup>8</sup>

All of the advisers, consultants and staff are from Sulu. Hence, they are steeped in the culture and practices of the province, which is considered as an advantage. Some of them came in as local volunteers or contacts from a local Islamic educational institution. Eventually, the volunteers were hired to do fulltime work, most of them starting with the AVRI program in 2009

and later on being given specific tasks for TSS in 2010 when the program was established. The consultants and staff are hired on a project basis and receive honorarium determined by the national office. Due to the nature of their employment in the TSS, they do not receive provisions on sick leave and benefits such as insurance.

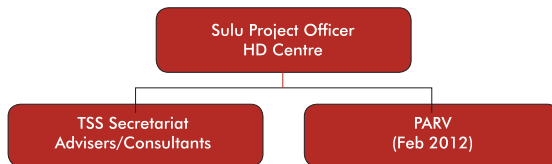
The Secretariat considers it an advantage and a big boost to their motivation that they are all from Sulu. Members of the TSS Secretariat (personal communication, May 17, 2012) stated that:

We are the ones who will be affected by the situation of Sulu. In Islam it is the noblest deed if we are able to reconcile people. We are happy to see that we are able to help through our initiatives for them to be able to surpass their situation and problems. It was particularly moving to see how people respond to our presence. At our age, personally, it is fulfilling to see that we are emerging secondliners in mediation work. The salary is not really commensurate to what we are doing. It is our love for our work which makes us stay. We will be here until we are needed. We do not count the number of hours we work and sometimes it is our own lives that are at stake. Compared to teaching for seven years, there is not so much fulfillment as what we are doing in HD.

### Structure and Coordination

As illustrated below, work is coordinated from the HD Centre through the MNLF-GPH Project Officer who provides supervisory, administrative and financial support to all the secretariat staff.

There is also one fulltime security adviser providing inputs to the local and national offices of the HD Centre.



**FIGURE 12: Current Structure of TSS and PARV**



The current HD Centre Sulu project officer started in 2005 as an IT project-based staff and was later designated as HD-based project officer for the program in 2009 when the country program manager was advised against travelling to Sulu due to the worsening peace and order situation at that time. For a limited time, the TSS was managed by the HD Centre project officer as a one-man team complemented by a local consultant and the advisers. After doing an evaluation of their efforts to initiate dialogues with the MNLF, Abu Sayyaf and political clans in 2009, TSS was redesigned with more local people onboard as advisers and the hiring of two fulltime local consultants in the Secretariat. This track was pursued with the intention of developing more locally-driven initiatives.

*Responsibilities, competencies and working relationship*

The main tasks of the combined TSS and PARV Secretariats are facilitating, liaison work and writing of reports. In the performance of such tasks, there is a high level of confidence in the current level of competencies demonstrated by the staff, such as writing skills, facilitation, storytelling, and coordination with other organizations (LGUs, AFP and PNP). High morale is evident as they have persisted in working together even beyond regular work hours and in very risky situations. Team work is also harnessed effectively as they discuss matters that need to be addressed in the field, rely on their closeness to each other, and treat each one as equals.

In describing their work relations, the TSS and PARV Secretariat (personal communication, May 17, 2012) stated that:

With the exigent nature of conflicts that have to be addressed, the assignment of tasks is very loose and flexible. PARV coordinates closely with the TSS in the monitoring of incidences of violence in the area and in identifying. There is strong teamwork and cooperation because of our camaraderie and the daily interactions help to build that. Brainstorming is done in a collegial manner

where no idea is rejected, everyone listens to all and then ideas are consolidated until a solid decision is reached. If someone is out of town, someone else will take over and there is no meddling in another person's affairs/tasks. If the other person needs help, then we help. There are also systems that we have developed such as Speak Out in which we have already determined who will facilitate, document and undertake other tasks. There are fixed tasks and if the other person cannot do it, the others will help. Go lang ng go, walang negative energy (we keep going, there is no negative energy).

#### Supervision and coordination

Management is mainly done through delegation of work and most of the TSS and PARV people had to learn the ropes (sink-or-swim) while they responded to the appeal for conflict resolution in the areas. This management style was passed on by the country representative to the current project officer who confided that such hands-on approach has provided ample opportunities for learning and growth.

The Secretariat considers the style of management as facilitative and collegial. Discipline and strictness are enforced when it comes to beating deadlines. Intelligence, dedication, commitment, responsibility and ability to follow the leader were mentioned as their strengths.

#### Training and development

Except for some advisers with academic background on Islamic studies, not one of the TSS advisers and secretariat has received training or education in conflict and peace studies and community development. Activities undertaken by the TSS for the local facilitators and volunteers, such as the recent Mediation Training (basic and advance) held with the Mediators' Network for Sustainable Peace (Mednet)<sup>9</sup>, serve as training opportunities for the secretariat. They also consider the training provided by



other groups and travel to other places like Zamboanga City as learning opportunities. There is no planned staff development intervention although the information consultant has been able to participate in a one-month overseas training on gender because of the recommendation from an HD Centre staff.

The need for further enhancing documentation skills and designing a template that would help them organize their report and data on the cases were cited. The present narrative style of reporting is limited to an account of 'who', 'what', 'where' and 'when'. Chronological accounts need to be documented and a simple template has to be designed for that, according to them.

Other skills that the staff think they need to develop are community organizing, situation assessment, and conflict system analysis. Also mentioned were the need to have a better grasp of land laws and issues specific to the situations they are mediating. TSS is also exploring the possibility of getting legal counsels or tapping lawyers to address the lack of knowledge on laws.

Building the credibility of the Secretariat is seen as a necessary endeavor because most of the staff are young and emerging secondliners. Maintaining impartiality and being unbiased is also deemed important. The need for more exposures and external engagements was underscored by the secretariat.

One of the major concerns raised by the secretariat is the experience of stress caused by their unwieldy schedule. The risks that are attendant to the context and nature of their work pose real threats to their security. There are no contingency benefits in spite of the HD Centre being a humanitarian agency. The secretariat is grateful, however, that there is a lot of room for developing their resilience like travelling.

## 1.4 SUSTAINABILITY

As defined by the TSS secretariat and advisers, sustainability has to do with the processes in conflict resolution that have been set into motion, mechanisms for maintaining peace and financial as well as institutional arrangements that support the initiatives of TSS.

Some of the initiatives and mechanisms that TSS has adopted are the following:

### **LGU partnership**

The strategy is to work closely with LGUs with the hope that they will help sustain the on-the-ground initiatives of TSS in conflict resolution. LGUs have mechanisms for conflict resolution, such as the Provincial Peace and Order Council (PPOC), MPOC, *barangay* justice system, but these are generally not functional. In all the things they do, TSS keeps in mind that LGUs should be part of the process because they are the more stable institution that can be found in the community. They are expected by the people to assume responsibility for settlement and so they are supported and encouraged to figure significantly in the procedures.

However, the Secretariat recognizes the fact that working with LGUs can be challenging. In addition, the TSS points out that the idea of LGUs taking over what TSS is doing might be too ambitious in the Sulu context. Similar to what they learned in

*Bridging Leadership*<sup>10</sup> course, while there is co-ownership, LGUs have not yet reached a level of *co-creation* that would allow them to take on fully and objectively the role of third party mediator like TSS. To strengthen co-creation, TSS thinks that LGUs need to develop skills on conflict mapping, linkages and liaison work, writing of covenants, endorsing people who can help in mediation and documenting proceedings.

Training programs, according to TSS, should be attended by on the municipal mayors rather than their proxies. In turn, the trainers should use methods and approaches that will also encourage them to attend. Included in the trainings for LCEs and

*In all the things they do, TSS keeps in mind that LGUs should be part of the process because they are the more stable institution that can be found in the community. They are expected by the people to assume responsibility for settlement and so they are supported and encouraged to figure significantly in the procedures.*

LGUs are best practices in conflict resolution. For this purpose, TSS can identify conflict-affected areas where such interventions were successful; this and other similar experiences can serve as an example other LGUs can readily learn from.

Institutionalizing the mediation process at the LGU level means emphasizing the imperative of conflict resolution to them and the TSS Secretariat thinks that this is an area where the DILG should intervene. Dissemination of specific modules on mediation in the context of Sulu should be undertaken. TSS Secretariat even suggested that the document that was drafted

as a result of the *Mediators' Retreat* can be used for this purpose since it was based on local experience. Recognizing that the said document be first validated and then subject to periodic review thereafter, it was also recommended that LGUs adopt the document and turn it into a municipal ordinance as a long term goal.

Grassroots-level organizations in each municipality are envisioned to handle smaller cases, such as elopement. Meanwhile, for more complex cases of conflict, which involves prominent clans and that could escalate to violent confrontations, there could be an exchange of best practices on mediation among municipalities and other conflict-affected areas

### **TSS as a Mechanism and Approach**

TSS mediators and Secretariat pictures a future scenario where they are no longer involved in conflict resolution and mediation in Sulu because the province has become peaceful and the communities more empowered. At the moment, though, TSS thinks that local efforts need to be sustained further through (a) increasing the number of skilled local mediators; (b) coordinating with the local monitors of PARV; and (c) engaging in a full range of conflict prevention approaches, in addition to mediation.

Inspired by the saying “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure”, TSS envisions a time when it is engaged more effectively in peacebuilding initiatives.

An indication of such a future scenario is when the community pro-actively seeks assistance from TSS mediators or Secretariat in the resolution of conflict instead of the TSS having to seek them out. This would be a sign that they perceive conflict resolution as a need and that the mediation process is culturally and socially grounded. For this to happen, TSS gets local partners and utilize traditions according to the context of the community.

*TSS is aware that the current practice of providing financial support for certain activities is something that cannot be sustained if it were to rely on local resources. Thus, it reiterates the need to strengthen co-ownership of the mediation process and mechanism.*

TSS is aware that the current practice of providing financial support for certain activities is something that cannot be sustained if it were to rely on local resources. Thus, it reiterates the need to strengthen co-ownership of the mediation process and mechanism. A CSO leader suggests that enabling people to internalize the wisdom and practice of reconciliation in Islam could inspire them to volunteer their efforts and not depend on what the HD Centre provides as support. Considering the finiteness of resources, in particular funds from donor agencies, TSS thinks that it should work towards minimizing external inputs. A respondent brought up the possibility of asking support from the business sector like in the case of Panamao where they raised 40% of the blood money.

The Secretariat laments that the project-based nature of the TSS initiative limits their capacity in terms of how far they can bring the processes forward. There is recognition that the HD-based project cannot be sustained but there is also recognition of the potential for TSS to become an independent organization. For this, a lot of capacity building is needed.

In terms of options for sustaining the TSS as a conflict resolution mechanism, here is also the idea of placing it within existing governance structures such as those of LGUs. However,

institutionalizing TSS as a model or mechanism which can be adopted by the LGU is not seen as a viable option or strategy because TSS, particularly its current advisers and the Secretariat, can lose its impartiality if they get into the LGU structure.

Hence, the HD Centre has plans to expand to other areas, keep TSS independent and support it for the next two years.

## 1.5 ADDRESSING GENDER AND YOUTH CONCERNS

In Sulu context, the idea that women should not sit in the mediation table is still widely held even among some of the advisers and local mediators who were interviewed. Gauging from the six documented stories of women under the HD Centre program<sup>11</sup>, however, they play very significant roles in shuttle mediation and in convincing parties to get to the conflict settlement table. Below are some of the insights of the women mediators featured in an unpublished work commissioned by the HD Centre.

### **Rumma Kalim-Aminulla**

*A devout teacher. A proud professional. A reluctant warrior.*

With firsthand experience on the devastation caused by clan wars, Rumma believes that engaging in dialogue is the best solution to any misunderstanding. "As professionals, dialogue is our way. We do not wish to engage in war. We did not struggle thru school to carry arms. I am still hoping for conflict settlement with the other side. If there is dialogue, there is no problem. Anything is possible with dialogue. I, a woman, became the spokesperson to defend our land rights because men are hot-headed. I have never imagined that I would be tasked as head of one party in conflict. I am a public school teacher who has now become a commander in defense of our land. Unfortunately,



politics entered the picture which complicated and worsened the situation and forced us to engage in armed confrontation.”

### **Nurmina Hayudini-Abubakar**

*Wisdom, Courage and Generosity*

Nurmina discussed the advantages of being a woman in conflict resolution. “Men are usually impatient and hot-headed. Women are ‘malaming’ (soft spoken and sweet talker) even with difficult people. Women are more persuasive in many ways. They have wisdom and can easily settle or bridge conflicts. In my case, if I go to the warring individuals, I ask them why they are fighting, I ask them what they need and if it is money-related, I settle it by asking each of them how much they want. I call upon them and point to them how shameful it would be for relatives to be fighting over money.”

### **Darwisa Kadil-Jakiram**

*Woman of courage. Defender of human rights.*

Darwisa believes that women are more effective than men in resolving conflict. “I accept things as they come. Sometimes if I cannot handle a situation, I also cry out of frustration. My husband and my siblings are very supportive of my work. They lighten up my load. They provide me good advice.” Where does Darwisa get her strong will and courage? “If one is a peacemaker, Allah will reward her. It is God’s gift. Allah provides me guidance. I try as much as I could to please Allah so He rewards me with opportunities.” According to her, women can also be leaders. “They did not know that women can also do what men can do. Having a woman President (Cory Aquino) gradually made them realize that women can hold public office. Now, there are laws to protect the rights of women and people learn about this.”



KUSUG BATA SUG YOUTH GROUP (SUCCESSOR GENERATION OF LOCAL MEDIATORS AND PEACEBUILDERS) DOING THEIR PART FOR A CLEANER AND MORE PEACEFUL SULU.

In the same manner, the TSS recognizes the importance of training the youth in mediation and peacemaking. It has sought their participation and involvement in the various community based activities such as the Speak Outs where youth leaders have emerged and have been organized by the PARV into the KUSUG BATAH SUG. There are around two to three youth leaders from each of the municipalities who have been mobilized in local activities such as the recent Piece of Peace (POP) Art event held in June 2012. 🐦

# Against All Odds

**Mariam Indal**



**A**mbuh Mar or Auntie Mar is the youngest among four children. Following the steps of her father, she became Barangay Captain of Lunggang in Maimbung and is currently serving her first term. Barangay Lunggang is a small community with most residents related to each other as it is in many communities in Sulu.

Mariam remembers that during her childhood years, despite poor technology and difficulty in transportation, “we felt safe and unafraid”. Her father owned the land. “My father and mother were elementary public school teachers in the adjacent Barangay Lapa.” Sitio Lunggang was then a sitio under Brgy Lapayan. The children went to nearby Lapa for schooling.

Mariam grew up in Jolo where she and her siblings studied from elementary to college. Her studies at the Sulu State College were interrupted by an unexpected leg amputation in 1998 due to osteomyelitis or infection of the bone marrow. “I overcame my depression with the support of my father, my sister (a nurse) and friends.” Despite this misfortune, and with the loving support of her family, Mariam finished her BS Business Administration at the Sulu State College in 2002.

## **Her father’s daughter**

Mariam helped her father who was the Barangay Captain from 2002 until 2010. During this period, she was also a volunteer with the Bangsa Moro Development Authority in 2003 as catalyst. “When my father could not run anymore, he asked me to run for office.” Mariam is proud that a small barangay like Lunggang has some accomplishments to boast of: a small barangay hall, a public toilet,

a daycare, a mosque and a public market. Even as Mariam's family and her community are victims of armed conflict they have never directly engaged in armed conflict. The barangay is a close clan.

### **Displacement history**

The Year 2005 was when events became problematic in Lunggang. "As my father was starting an expansion project of the barangay hall, conflict started." Datu Bas or Basil Isad, Mariam's nephew, was a reputed courageous Tausug policeman who fearlessly pursued bad elements even if they were his own relatives particularly those involved with drugs. Datu Bas had arrested some criminals and to avenge this, his enemies would go after his relatives in Lunggang. In 2005, he had killed one of the ASG leader's brother.

Barangay Lunggang became a *No Man's Land* when the First Barangay Councilman was killed by the Abu Sayyaf Group of Albader Parad in November 2005 as a form of retaliation. "My father wanted to move out and called on the people to leave Lunggang. He wanted to abandon the area to avoid more deaths but I told him I was hoping for peace and prayed for patience."

In December 2005 to July 2006, the military helped organize local CVOs. The community appreciated the effort of the local commander. "After he left in July 2006, there was an encounter with the ASG, and we lost three CVOs, all of them were our relatives. So we were forced to evacuate." Barangays Laba and Lahi also evacuated.

Datu Bas was killed in August 2006. During the displacement, Bantohan and Albader's group took over the land.

It was only when the local government facilitated a *Balik Barangay* in March 2010 that the people of Lunggang and other nearby barangays were able to return since being displaced in 2006. "Despite the killings of the three CVOs, we returned to our land. The damage (death of relatives) has been done."

### **Hoping and working for a better life for Lunggang**

My father used to say to me, "*Habang may buhay, may pag asa*" (For

as long as we live, there is hope). Mariam is proud to say that her father was a loyal barangay servant who disdained corruption. "Like him, I hope and dream to be of help to my people. I believe that either the governor or the mayor cannot do it alone. I am encouraged to bring new developments to Lunggang. I want to get opportunities for my community. Our people need livelihood so their children could go to school. For now they are dependent on coconut and seaweeds farming in Barangay Lahi. I would like to have more programs for the children, and also to fix our water sources."

For Mariam, peace means seeing her people living freely and productively in Lunggang with no fear in mind. "Peace is about having total freedom with no enemies or threats to life. Peace is about not having to move away from your home to seek sanctuary elsewhere."

Mariam, together with five female barangay captains in Maimbung (out of 27), recently underwent a training on Barangay Development Planning. "I accept any invitation to participate in as many trainings as I could to enhance my skills and knowledge as barangay captain on behalf of my community." Hence, attending the CHD Mediator's Retreat is something Mariam is thankful for. "I often have to settle conflicts over unsettled loans." Mariam cites the case of a widow of the first councilor who was murdered in 2005. She has five children and this widow kept on borrowing huge sums of money and is unable to settle them. Mariam facilitated in settling some of her loans. "I ask the people to understand her situation, asking them to be patient, and also arranging for her to settle it little by little. I also try to be firm with her to drive home the message that the widow must also take responsibility to pay her loans. I try not to tolerate irresponsibility."

### **Gratitude**

"My father was the most influential person to me. I became courageous and confident because my father had always shown interest in my undertakings and would prod me to do more and do my best." Mariam is thankful to her parents for giving prime value to education. Her father died in Feb 2011 at 78 years old while her mother passed away in 2007. She also pays tribute to an aunt who

took care of her and encouraged her to finish college despite her disability. "And so I did. It is now my turn to take care of her."


### **Commitment to service**

Settlement of conflicts is not new to Mariam as there were other people who were displaced from their communities and sought refuge in Lunggang in 2002. "If one perseveres to settle the conflict and pursue peace at all costs without fear, regardless of how others may see you as 'you are just a woman', you will earn people's respect. Women, when they speak the truth, the people listen. I hold on to my principles and to being truthful. Even if there may be a public perception that I cannot do it because I am a woman and an invalid at that, I do not give up. Even if I feel nervous, I still try to speak my mind in public."

Mariam does not let her disability impede her desire to serve and help her people. "I do not see myself as an invalid. The only disadvantage I see is the physical limitation but despite of which I try to overcome this limitation. Even if I may be physically handicapped, I can be as effective as any man. I can still speak. My heart compensates for my missing leg. I have a fierce desire to help. Only one part of my body has been lost, my left leg. But as I always say, I have four legs but only one is original."

Mariam avoids showing difficulty in resolving conflicts that come to her office. "I try to do my best to help solve conflicts in my barangay in my own little way. I project myself to be strong. Sometimes I am overcome with frustration but I get encouragement from family and friends." As a woman peacemaker, Mariam is able to boost the morale of other women, and extend encouragement to others to be more understanding and patient.

### **Overcoming challenges**

Mariam is a woman of faith. "I pray and seek guidance from Allah. I do not compromise the truth. I defend the truth. Even as I give advice, I try to be humble. Let others comment on what they think. I cannot comment on what people think about me." 

# In Pursuit of Excellence

Diligent Student. Successful Businesswoman. Devoted Wife.

**Nuriam Asanji-Abdurajak**



**I**yam, as she is fondly called, was born in Luuk as the youngest of six children. She is married to Hadji Kudarat Abdurajak, currently the barangay captain of Upper Patibulan in Panamao. They have nine children. “My marriage was arranged by my parents. I was engaged to be married when I was a student.”

Nuriam’s educational credentials range from an AB Political Science degree (with proficiency and scholastic awards), a BS Nursing degree in WMSU, and a Master’s in Public Administration from the same university. She also took up two years of law studies in WMSU and some MBA units in ADZU. For Nuriam, learning never stops. “I studied well and took as many courses that interest me as I would like to have an impressive resume. I was the only one in the family who was able to study. I did it against all odds with the support of my mother. She was a *Gabriela*, a fighter and had many skills. My father’s anti-education stance for women was due to his family’s fear that I would be converted from Islam.”

## **Growing up in the midst of conflict**

Nuriam remembers Sulu to be already in conflict since her childhood. “We are used to evacuating all our life. As children, we were happy when trouble strikes because there will be no classes and we could play *bahay bahayan* in the roadside culvert.”

“We did not experience high school graduation because it was already mass promotion for students due to the conflict. It was the peak of activism. Jolo was burned in 1974. The soldiers came. We evacuated to Camp Andres in Luuk.”

“My family was involved in the Magic 8 and the ensuing conflict with the Moro National Liberation Front or MNLF. I remember disguising myself

and would travel by boat to bring medicines to Sulu.” Nuriam states that they have learned to live with minor clan conflicts.

### **Professional life**

Nuriam served as a public health nurse in Panamao for four years. She then went to Saudi Arabia and worked there for six years as a nurse and later as a nursing supervisor. Upon her return in the 1990s, she became a businesswoman trading goods between Zamboanga City and Sulu for 18 years. She now manages a successful transportation business and was able to establish residence in Zamboanga City.

### **A devout wife**

Nuriam pursued higher education to prepare herself for political participation and to support her husband who was the vice mayor of Panamao in 1997. She is her husband’s political and legal adviser.

“In any conflict situation, I go first before my husband. I prepare his way. Like the Mangudadatu wife and the other women who were unfortunate victims in the Ampatuan massacre. They did it out of devotion to the men. I cried realizing how much love and sacrifice women have for their husbands. I realized I was like that, too.”

### **Working for peace**

“I am not after any role. We are for peace. We believe that peace cannot be bought by wealth. It cannot be quantified. It can only be rewarded thru peace and salutations in the hereafter. We have been doing mediation long before even in business. We help people and they trust us. We are recognized”

Her family resides in a neighborhood of Christians. “I was even appointed as Barangay Justice in San Jose, Guso, Zamboana City. I am glad they did that. I try to engage in as many civic activities as much as possible. I do not turn down any opportunity. I help a lot of people including refugees from Sabah.”

### **The art of communication**

Women are better off in settling political conflicts. “The fact is men are hot-headed. They tend to push for a fight. They generally do not know how to speak with flowery and praiseful words. Women are better able to psyche up people especially males. She can extend the warmth of her touch, and talk sweetly. I do that.



Nuriam believes that communication art is important. "One must adjust to the level of her audience or the person you are dealing with. There has to be initiative, innovation and creativity. If I know the person is against me, I will work my way to soften him up by humbling myself. I study the person I talk to before I approach him".

For Nuriam, it is also important to emphasize the value of clan relationships. "Try as well to impress upon them your connections so they will think twice."

Nuriam has mastered ways to communicate effectively through action and words. Using wit and charm, she has developed powerful qualities to settle conflicts mainly through artistic ways. "Women can sing songs, can extend a warm touch, and have a good sense of humor. At times, we can also pretend that we do not know especially in dealing with politicians. Politicians and military officials want to think that they know better. So be humble. Sometimes, I speak as if I were an ignorant person."


### **Holding on to principles**

"As a matter of principle, I cannot be paid. If you do right, God will provide you everything and will take care of all the risks. You will harvest many fruits if you plant many. *What you sow is what you reap.* In peacemaking, you end up sacrificing the self, family, home, business and wealth. If you want happiness, accept divine plans and when you die you go to heaven. For me, trust, sincerity and faith in God are important."

For Nuriam, respect is earned. "I want people to believe in me and respect me. What are you if you are not respected? What are you if you are not recognized? What are you if you have no identity?"

### **Personal vision for Peace**

Nuriam hopes that there will be better political cooperation and positive collaboration for the common good in Sulu. She advocates for the holding of grassroots' consultations and participation, a review of history and a research on the unwritten history of struggle and conflicts of clan members and families.

"I have done my part." And one can expect Nuriam to continue doing so. 



# *Woman of Courage. Defender of Human Rights.*

**Darwisa Kadil-Jakiram**

**R**aised with six male siblings, Darwisa grew up thinking she was one of the men. "I only became a girl when I studied to become a midwife. I had to wear dresses, stockings in school." After high school, her parents sent their only daughter to Manila to study. In her second year, she came back home to get married.

"All my memories of Sulu are about conflict. In 1972, we had to leave Tagbak for Jolo due to war training in Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) camps in our area. Schools stopped operating. I was nine years old during the bombing of Jolo in 1974. I remember that we sought refuge at the Integrated Provincial Health Office (IPHO). Classes were most often suspended during our high school days from 1982-1985. Livelihood was a serious problem. I grew up wanting to become a soldier. I see them as brave and proud men, able to shoot at the enemy."

Completing her primary and secondary education in Jolo amidst the conflict, Darwisa and her family were able to return to Tagbak only in 1989. She was already married and with children.

## **Service and gratitude**

Darwisa spent many years as a volunteer barangay health worker and day care worker in Tagbak in Indanan. She also worked with local NGOs for human rights advocacy. "I was actively involved in civic work until I became a barangay captain. I believe that I have done much more in the service of the people of Tagbak than others, including the men. People take note of this and are grateful for it."

Darwisa was elected as barangay captain of Tagbak in 2007. She has over 6,000 constituents. "I was elected perhaps because people have seen what I have done for others. My husband sees the concern and support of the community for us. Some IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) we have taken care of in Tagbak still come back to us in gratitude for the assistance we had given them in their time of need. They visit us from other barangays

and share with us their bountiful harvests or just even to share with us their miseries. Whatever it is, these warm our hearts.”

### **Earning people’s respect**

“Civilians in the *gimba* (interior communities) have high respect for people who are able to speak up to the military. People see that I am not afraid of the military. I am openly outspoken about human rights. I talk to the military anytime I have an issue to straighten out.”

One celebrated case in Jolo was the February 2007 Jumong murder case in Umbol Upat (Km. 4). A young boy on his way home was killed by Scout Rangers who were conducting nighttime operations in the vicinity. Darwisa pursued the case. “I was not afraid because it was the truth. My complaint was heard over the local radio station and I named the commander of the Scout Rangers as the responsible officer. They initially refused to let me go inside the area to look for the body of the child. Eventually, five of us were allowed the following day. The body of the boy was found in the town cemetery.”

Another experience was with a military soldier in 2007 who Darwisa accused of stealing her lumber which she left on the roadside near their camp. She had difficulty transporting the wood and left them temporarily. “I was told to prove it and I did. I gave them an ultimatum until 12 o’clock noon that same day to return my lumber, otherwise, I would file a case against them. By 10 o’clock in the morning, I was talking to the commander in Bud Dato. I told him that no civilian will go at night to steal my wood from a military camp. They replaced my wood.”

### **Mediating domestic conflict, managing political leaders**

Marital squabbles are not uncommon in Tagbak. Darwisa cites a favorite case that almost ended up with both sides of the husband and wife killing each other. “I talked to the husband who was beating his wife to change for the future of the children. I warned him firmly that if he does not do that, I would endorse the case to the police and he might end up in jail. He did not like that prospect and he promised to change. Now they are living together in peace.”

Political pressure is no stranger to Darwisa. When a congressman called on her to ask her to join his political party, she turned him down. “I told him I prefer to observe which party would be better. He just laughed at my frankness. I was not scared of him even though people do not normally treat him that way much less talk back to him as I did.”

## **Kidnapping problem**

Darwisa bewails the numerous incidents of kidnapping and clan conflicts in Sulu. The recent kidnapping incident of a local midwife, Evangeline Tabelisma, affected Darwisa. Not only because she was taken from a jeepney plying in Tagbak but also because the victim is a close friend. "It depressed me. I cried for 20 days. She had been with us for ten years. I hope there will be a strong leader who can resolve this problem of kidnapping, someone who will find ways for the safe release of kidnap victims without ransom. I hope that peace will come to Sulu for the sake of the next generation."

The Indanan Mayor mobilized the barangay captains for an operation to pursue the kidnapers with the help of the police force and their former Congressman. More than 300 people took part in *Task Force Evangeline Tabelisma* including Darwisa. The local government officials preferred to do this to avoid displacement of communities if military pursuit operations were launched. As such, evacuations were prevented. Barangay Tagbak has often been a host community of displaced civilians in the past years.

"These kidnapers, ASG or not, have nowhere to go. Local residents do not welcome the kidnapers anymore. I will not let them enter my territory."

## **Women as leaders**

It used to be that the Tausugs look down on women. "They did not know that women can also do what men can do. Having a woman President (Cory Aquino) gradually made them realize that women can hold public office. Now, there are laws to protect the rights of women and people learn about this."

Darwisa believes that women are more effective than men in resolving conflict. "I accept things as they come. Sometimes if I cannot handle a situation, I also cry out of frustration. My husband and my siblings are very supportive of my work. They lighten up my load. They provide me good advice."

Where does Darwisa get her strong will and courage? "If one is a peacemaker, Allah will reward her. It is God's gift. Allah provides me guidance. I try as much as I could to please Allah so He rewards me with opportunities."

Darwisa may be a fierce-looking lady but deep inside her is a soft-heart. "I have many friends." 

# Wisdom, Courage & Generosity

**Nurmina Hayudini-Abubakar**



**N**ur is the barangay captain of Buhanginan in Patikul. She is on her last and final term in office and is proud to say that she ran uncontested in the last elections. “I desire only to help my family and the people in my community.”

During the first and second terms, she challenged her political opponents: *Why do you want to run for office? Is it due to the IRA (Internal Revenue Allotment)? If you only need money, do not run anymore so that you will not fight among yourselves, and create a rift between relatives. If you only want money, I can put you to work in my office, under my payroll.*

Such is the practical wisdom that Barangay Captain Nur has adopted in mediating conflicts.

## **Displaced**

Born and raised in Anuling, Nur is the third child among eight siblings. She is a single parent to 12 children having been divorced from her husband ten years ago. She completed first year high school in Bakud and had to stop due to the conflict (Moro National Liberation Front or MNLF War).

During the war, Nur and her relatives evacuated from their upland villages to different places along the coastal areas. “Our land is in the mountain and it was difficult to go back to our place due to fear. We continue to live in Buhanginan since the conflict began.” Like many communities in Sulu, they have become permanently displaced.

The situation in Sulu remains unpredictable. Kidnapping for ransom, the presence of lost commands, and the ensuing military operations are among the prevalent problems Nur laments.

### **Working with the Military**

Buhanginan hosts the Marine Battalion Landing Team 6. "The other barangays in Patikul ask my help if there are any problems concerning the military. I talk to the Battalion commander on their behalf. I am able to deal with all the past and present Battalion commanders in Buhanginan. I have not encountered any problems in dealing with them so far. In fact, before I came to this meeting, I attended the Battalion Day in Buhanginan. We have a good professional relationship."

Cognizant of their rights as civilians, Nur says that "we are no longer fearful in speaking up to the military. I am also a civilian captain and I can face any military officer. I have always felt confident before military authorities. I know my rights. I advise the military officials not to make or cause conflict. I ask them to advise the civilians if there is going to be a military operation. I advise them not to hurt civilians who are unarmed. If the people see that you have no fear, you will command their respect. If the military sees you as courageous, they will respect you also. Now, they do not shoot at just anyone anymore."

As the trust relationship between the civilians and military has been harnessed in Buhanginan, Nur is able to approach the military for assistance, "and they will assist anything for peace. I have worked with the military in addressing the need for a farm-to-market road from Darayan to Danag. Without the road, it is difficult to bring down our farm produce from the interior areas to the town. So together with the military and the help of the US forces, we surveyed the area and the road was constructed. The people are happy with the farm-to-market road and I proudly consider this as one of my major accomplishments. Now the people have a shorter route to bring their goods to town, less time and effort even when it rains. More jeepneys are able to travel. There is also the water project."

## **Woman making peace: Resolving conflicts**

“As a woman, I want to help the civilians – help the men in my community. I pity the civilians because they are “sobrang hirap” (very poor). I have an Adult Literacy Program with the Magbasa Kita Foundation. The barangay internal revenue allotment (IRA) is not much but I try to just recycle the funds through a loans program.”

“Men are usually impatient and hot-headed. Women are *malambing* (soft spoken and sweet talker) even with difficult people. Women are more persuasive in many ways. They have wisdom and can easily settle or bridge conflicts.”

“In my case, if I go to the warring individuals, I ask them why they are fighting, I ask them what they need and if it is money-related, I settle it by asking each of them how much they want. I call upon them and point to them how shameful it would be for relatives to be fighting over money.”

“If they are fighting over wood, for example, I prod them not to fight for the sake of their families. We agree to settle the amount fairly between them, and whatever volume of wood is left would be shared by the community.”

Another case is a conflict over a durian plantation and harvest. “To prevent conflict from escalating, I claimed the harvest as mine. I paid each of them parties in conflict and said that the rest of the durian harvest would be for the people.”

Most of the cases that come to her office concern elopement or divorce. In case of elopement, a minimum dowry of PhP 55,000 is required. Without the man settling the payment of PhP 55,000, he could get killed or a conflict between the families could ensue. “The young ones usually elope because they have no money to get married. I do the negotiation with the concerned barangay captain of the party involved if the man resides elsewhere. If you go directly to the family, it will be hard since they are upset and hot-headed. I try to find the

bridge to help settle the conflict. If the couple resides in my barangay, I talk mildly to the parents to appease them. We need to talk nicely and softly.”


Nur claims that her approach in resolving conflicts has so far been successful.

### **Facing up to the challenges with a generous heart**

“There will always be some people who would want to destroy you or set up blocks against the good work you do for the community.” Despite these, “I continue to help others. For instance, I allow them to harvest the farm produce from my land in Sitio Darayan in Buhanginan. I get whatever share they decide to give me. If it is not much, it is alright with me. I take whatever they can give me”.

Nur raised her 12 children on her own. “I accept all the challenges that come my way. I need to. What is important to me as a mother, as a woman and as a leader is respect for myself and others. Integrity is important to me. We just need to humble ourselves. We are all friends anyway.”

### **Personal vision for Peace**

Nur’s hope is the continuous provision of sufficient livelihood for the people. Patikul has one of the most fertile areas planted to fruits (mangosteen, durian, etc), root crops and coffee. “We have good harvests year after year. We have buyers in Zamboanga, Cebu and Iloilo. Business is good. We would like to continue farming with no fear of being disrupted due to kidnapping, military operations and clan conflicts. To have peace in Sulu means having sufficient income for all.” 



*A devout teacher.  
A Proud professional.  
A reluctant warrior.*

**Rumma Kalim-Aminulla**



**R**umma proudly comes from a family of professionals - of teachers and engineers. Her life and that of her relatives has been a struggle for the pursuit of education against all odds.

"When we were young, we had to walk 25 kilometers from our residence to school and back, every day. There were serious dangers of encountering enemies who would kill even women and children. With Allah's mercy, we were able to walk this dangerous route every day without encountering any harm. We eventually finished elementary."

It was no less dangerous when Rumma and siblings moved to Jolo for secondary education. "We lived with friends only. We experienced the political clan wars in Jolo where bullets and mortars blasting off all over town endangering just about anyone. This dangerous situation continued all the way through our college years. We sacrificed all the dangers of student life with the hope that we would serve as a model to our people back home - as professionals, educated people."

### **Mediating for peace**

For the past three years, Rumma's clan, the Suhaili, has been engaged in a war against the Tapahing clan over land in Barangay Niangkaan, Omar. Seventeen families in the Suhaili clan claim to own roughly 700 hectares of land before they were forced to evacuate to Camp Andres. "During the 1972 conflict when mortars were flying everywhere, it

became a camp of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The land was neglected. Other people planted and claimed the land." Since 2006, the Suhaili clan has been pushing for a survey to be done to support their rightful claim. They have been waiting for PNP security to carry this out. "Already, our relatives have died fighting over the land."

"As professionals, dialogue is our way. We do not wish to engage in war. We did not struggle thru school to carry arms. I am still hoping for conflict settlement with the other side. If there is dialogue, there is no problem. Anything is possible with dialogue. I, a woman, became the spokesperson to defend our land rights because men are hot-headed. I have never imagined that I would be tasked as head of one party in conflict. I am a public school teacher who has now become a commander in defense of our land. Unfortunately, politics entered the picture which complicated and worsened the situation and forced us to engage in armed confrontation."

### **A Classic case of mediation**

"Women can pacify and allow men to let off steam. I normally avoid fuelling the fire of misunderstanding by keeping to myself negative comments I hear from people against their enemies. Rather, I try to convey what is positive, or even the reverse. Somehow, this approach results to a softening of angry hearts."

Sometime in mid 1980s, there was a conflict between politicians in Luuk. When no one among the teachers wanted to oversee the registration of voters in the barangay of one rival, Rumma volunteered. In doing so, she also saw the opportunity to convey positive messages to both parties.

To Rival 1 : *Miss ka na ni Politician A.* (Political A misses you)

To Rival 2 : *Gusto na makipagkita si Politician 2 para mag surrender.*  
(Politician 2 would like to meet with you and surrender)

To Rival 1: *Gusto mo nang pumunta sa Camp Andres? Okay na sa kanila.* (If you would like to go to Camp Andres, it is okay with them.)

To Rival 2: *Dalhin mo sila dito.* (Bring them here.)


To Rival 1: *Samahan mo ako.* (Join me.)

Rumma did not anticipate that her prodding would lead to the two warring men to meet and settle the conflict. She actually did not realize that her conversations with each of them would end up in a reconciliation meeting. Hence, when the time came to meet, she did not have the courage to join Rival 1 who had requested her to accompany him. A peace settlement between the two parties was attained. Rumma claims that it was an accidental reconciliation but she is happy that all is well that ends well.

### **Facing the challenge**

"I am a teacher. I realize that I have sacrificed my profession as a teacher because of the conflict. My students are suffering. So therefore I got an assistant teacher to help out.

I have sacrificed my family. I only earn PhP 14,000 monthly. This is not enough but I am grateful that people help us. My husband takes care of our ten children. We support each other. What if the conflict between our clans is not settled amicably? Must we continue fighting each other?" In the midst of war, Rumma believes that it is important to attempt anything for peace.

"My primary strength is my fierce desire to defend the truth. My principle is not to lie to others or fool others. I take care of the people and that is why perhaps I was asked to be their leader in this battle." 

# THE EVALUATION



## 2 ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In its overall assessment of the situation in Mindanao, the HD Centre sought to address needs at all the 3 levels of the peace process: a) from the top level negotiations where it engages parties in the ongoing peace talks between the GPH and MILF and in the continuing peace process between the GPH and MNLF; b) to the provision of venues such as dialogues and consultations where the broader sectors of society get to discuss, participate and input into the agreements being crafted from both ends; and, c) to the more community based initiatives where other parties are engaged in efforts to address local conflicts and violence which impact on the broader peace process.

### ***TSS Role, Outcomes and Facilitating Factors***

TSS was created to serve as a mechanism that would set into motion locally crafted and culturally appropriate conflict resolution approaches and processes. Even without clearly defined targets and indicators to guide their work, it was able to utilize processes that are acceptable and satisfactory to the parties who are caught up in conflict. As a result, significant outcomes are evident in (a) the number of conflicts (e.g., 10

*More than the quantitative measures, however, there are outcomes that have not been monitored or placed in a matrix as evidence...*

to 12 cases in 18 months) that TSS has been able to settle; (b) the number of LGUs it has mobilized; and, (c) the level of security that it has fostered in a context where guns proliferation, there are challenges to effective leadership, breakdown of law and order and dependence on political clans.

More than the quantitative measures, however, there are outcomes that have not been monitored or placed

in a matrix as evidence but which, as Project Officer Alar (personal communication, June 2, 2012) pointed out, can be seen “as an impact on people who are so caught up in the conflict who cannot even imagine that there is an alternative reality, that they can talk peacefully without guns. But sometimes it is difficult to measure, other than the anecdotal evidence.”

Such outcomes can be seen in the opportunities for learning and personal transformation that the TSS has been able to optimize. Expression of appreciation for the new concepts and ways of looking at their practice can be gleaned from the responses of TSS members.

TSS member Tuan Gabir Kasim (personal communication, May 16, 2012) said, “The training on mediation was the first time. It was important for us to learn about behavior. There is a need to provide more training and provide more knowledge on the causes of conflict which are diverse and which require diverse strategies too”.

As if to concur, Al Caluang (personal communication, May 15, 2012) said: HD Centre contributes by helping in the enlightenment which has been lost in the Tausug culture where people would take a position even if it is wrong. They go to a place and explain why the situation is such and they help provide livelihood. Usually the younger constituents are easier to convince. It is difficult for older people

especially for those who are behind the conflict.

Capturing these stories of personal transformation, as seen above, is very important for an area that is isolated as Sulu. An example of personal transformation is that of MNLF commander turned facilitator Abtajir Tingkasan. On Abtajir's story, Al Caluang (personal communication, May 15, 2012) said:

When you recognize a person by calling him or her a TSS adviser or facilitator they take pride in that. An international organization recognizes them in the community. For example, Abtajir to be given a new role as peace advocate and be part of something where he is able to contribute significantly. When they get to travel outside of Jolo, it is a big thing for them.

On his new found role in the community, Abtajir Tingkasan (personal communication, May 19, 2012) stated that:

In terms of approach, I have become more tolerant and patient with people who did not agree with me like some of my men. I wait for them to start thinking first about what can be done. Just recently, there was a case which I was able to solve peacefully. Before I used to get easily provoked and used to challenge people. If it were not for CHD, I would not have changed my attitude. I do not want my children to become like me who is ignorant. I want them to study. It is good that CHD went to me because now I know what to do.

The facilitative style of planning and management of tasks which was employed by the country representative when the HD Centre started in Sulu has greatly influenced the development of approaches that are responsive to the local context, culture and needs. Entrusting the newly-designed TSS program, parallel to another program called PARV, to an untrained locally-based project officer in 2009 has proven to be advantageous to TSS because it had to rely on its local experts in its efforts to design interventions for conflict resolution. Its mediation approach challenges the formulas and standards that mediators have crafted internationally as TSS starts where the people are, that is, in their comfort zone of power-based, leader-centered conflict resolution processes while

remaining open to new strategies in communication to enhance the articulation of issues and demands among the parties.

Other factors which shored up the effectiveness of TSS in achieving its outcomes are the presence of a highly credible, respectable and committed group of advisers, equally dedicated, energetic and passionate young secretariat as complement and mobile local volunteers who had access to ground-level information on the conflicts.

Support from the national office in the form of flexibly allocated and relatively adequate funds, regular monitoring, minimal supervision and international credence has kept the TSS initiative acceptable in the eyes of political leaders, CSOs and the local communities. Its role as *neutral third party* intervener in Sulu is in fact enthusiastically welcomed in a context where clan loyalties and power wielders have ripped communities apart and thrown them into vicious cycles of inter-generational violence. Some groups think that without such third party groups, it will be impossible to abate the complex issues of violent conflict in the 19 municipalities of

Sulu. Part of the success of the TSS has also been that it is clearly driven and shaped by external demands and needs.



*Its mediation approach challenges the formulas and standards that mediators have crafted internationally as TSS starts where the people are, that is, in their comfort zone of power-based, leader-centered conflict resolution processes while remaining open to new strategies in communication to enhance the articulation of issues and demands among the parties.*

#### **Another Look at Results**

Still, TSS needs to look deeper into the results that it seeks to create in the future. A review of the outcomes based on the Peace Writ Large Criteria for Effectiveness was done by the evaluator to probe further into whether TSS has in fact contributed to the essential goals of peacebuilding.

*Criteria No. 1: Did TSS increase the number of people or organizations actively working or speaking out for peace or reduced the number of people (provocateurs) actively engaged in or promoting peace?*

With 10 cases resolved and two technically-assisted in the past 18 months, several Speak Out and *Lakbay Kapayapaan* (Journey for Peace) sessions held in the communities, the families and individuals that potentially benefited from the process of settlement at the community level can be summed up. The detailed numbers are found in the HD Centre Report to AusAid where it pegs the estimated population of communities directly affected at 10,050, estimated population of nearby communities affected at 4,800, number of people directly threatened at 2,590 and number of affected school children at 533 (HD Centre, 2012, p. 4).

In addition, the number of mediators, facilitators and partners who were involved in local issues of conflict from broader issues of security can be gleaned from the previous sections of this report (refer to data in Table 1).

However, with the absence of a baseline data on the previous level of involvement in conflict resolution, it is not possible to establish whether there has been a marked increase in the number of people or organizations who are actively involved in resolving conflicts.

*Criteria No. 2: Did TSS engage people in high-ranking and credible positions to make or influence conflicting parties to arrive at a settlement?*

From the LGU alone, TSS has been able to engage eight mayors, two vice mayors, six municipal councilors and 16 barangay officials in 10 municipalities. A provincial board member figures out prominently in many of the settlement proceedings. Several representatives from the security sector (PNP-Sulu Province and municipal police stations, and AFP-MBLT 3 and 9) have also lent their support in providing security mechanisms during conflict settlement.

From the religious leaders, five azatidz, five local imams, and the Grand Mufti of Sulu have played significant roles in the healing and reconciliation processes. From the community/local leadership, TSS has mobilized five



top MNLF commanders, and five local MNLF commanders.

This can be considered significant vis-a-vis the 10 prioritized cases as population sample. From these numbers, a significant impact which TSS can consciously strive to strengthen in the future is the improvement of relationship between individual and state which has been historically characterized by distrust and fear. With the LGU, military and local facilitators collaborating in efforts towards resolving specific cases of conflict, patterns of behaving and relating with each other have transformed into more confidence and trust in the capacity of both LGU and communities to find solutions to conflict issues.

TSS can also design their future interventions to take on incremental steps towards more civilian control over power rather to transform the current situation where there is heavy reliance on military and LGU use of force to bring parties to settle conflicts.

*Criteria No. 3: Did TSS promote a peace-related activity that, when violence worsens or threats are made, it is able to sustain its efforts and maintain its membership (referring to people involved in its structure)?*

TSS itself is a mechanism that is being promoted for sustaining and maintaining its membership or support group in addressing conflicts. Efforts to further develop and sustain this mechanism should be continually explored and realized, regardless if the cases escalate



POST-SETTLEMENT MEETING SPEARHEADED BY WOMEN MEDIATORS AMONG LAND OWNERS REGARDING SETTLEMENT OF CLAN CONFLICT OVER LAND.

The current practices and approaches being used by TSS in resolving conflicts, by virtue of their cultural-sensitivity and appropriateness, can also be considered as peace-related activity that can be maintained and sustained.

Two PCCs have been set in place but are still in their early stages of development and thus need further interventions towards self-reliance and locally-driven development. This assessment was derived from the list of activities that have been undertaken by the PCCs, which are found to be mostly activity-centered, short-term and lacking in structures that the communities can sustain by them. Lessons from the official PCCs should be systematically drawn and translated into a workable model for the 5 other areas which have already signified their interest in the PCC concept.

*Criteria No. 4: Did TSS establish a link between local leaders and the community in which both or either party was able to communicate their support and involvement to move negotiations toward a peace settlement?*

Through the partnership based approach of TSS, there are stronger links of communication between the leadership (political, religious, civilian, and military) in the province and the general public with the TSS serving as conduit and channel for information that needs to be gathered, disseminated and analyzed. TSS has definitely forged strong partnerships with and among these groups. While the TSS needs to build on the gains of renewed relationship between local leaders and the community, it also needs to maintain its independence as a neutral third party entity. This entails continuing self-reflection on its role vis-a-vis these groups who play distinct and important roles in conflict resolution.

*Criteria No. 5: Did TSS stop specific acts of violence which are unjust and breeders of further violence?*

From the conflicts that have been handled by TSS, it cannot be fully determined that violent confrontation between the conflicting parties will not happen since, as mentioned in the section on approaches, some cases have the potential of recurring because they are only partially settled (like

the Pantasan-Tapahing case, Alibun-Misuari case, and Pandami case). It can be said, however, that of the 12 conflicts, seven have been fully resolved and violent acts have been stopped.<sup>12</sup>

**Measuring Impact: the importance of indicators**

Another lens with which the effectiveness of TSS can be reviewed is the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) which ascertains potential and actual peace and conflict impact that may have resulted from the interventions. The areas to look into are conflict management, armed violence and sense of security, political structures and processes, economic structures and processes, social empowerment, gender, environment.

The following matrix lists down some of these actual and potential impacts and identifies areas where more data or information is needed:

**TABLE 4: Matrix of Impact Area and Peace and Conflict Indicators**

Impact Area	Peace Impact Indicators	Conflict Impact Indicators
Conflict Management Capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10-12 local conflicts resolved</li> <li>• Decrease in incidence of violence</li> <li>• Increase in the number of people involved in non-violent ways of dealing with conflict (8 advisers, 6 secretariat people, 19 local volunteers, 5 assistant PCC facilitators, etc. plus the individuals and families of parties who resolved conflict)</li> <li>• Presence of mechanisms for addressing conflict such as TSS, Lakbay Kapayapaan, PCCs</li> </ul>	
Armed Violence and Sense of Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of people participating in community activities</li> <li>• Decrease in the number of fire-arms being brought to meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased reliance on the security sector and armed groups for conflict resolution</li> </ul>
Political Structures and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of LGUs engaged in conflict resolution</li> <li>• Increase in the level of confidence in the capacity of LGU to institute law and order (for successfully resolved cases)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in the level of trust &amp; confidence in LGUs due to marginalization of some groups in the settlement</li> <li>• Decrease in the IRA which can be used for services due to allocation for ‘bangun’</li> <li>• Increased reliance on patronage politics</li> </ul>

Impact Area	Peace Impact Indicators	Conflict Impact Indicators
Economic Structures and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in economic activities in the area due to relatively stable conditions</li> <li>• Entry of development projects and services through the PCCs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in economic resources of individuals and families who had to raise logistics and 'bangun'</li> </ul>
Social Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of people cooperating in community activities</li> <li>• Increase in the number of student enrolment and graduation</li> </ul>	
Gender Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of women participating in conflict resolution and taking on leadership roles</li> </ul>	
Environmental Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the practice of agriculture and farming due to relatively stable conditions</li> <li>• Number of IEDs detonated</li> </ul>	

The evaluator does not want to have exclusive rights to determine the peace and conflict impact as this can only be achieved with the participation of the TSS mediators and Secretariat, who are in the best position to define impact on their own lives and context. However, to start a process of reflecting on the impact of TSS, the above-mentioned indicators are being offered.

### ***How a Strategy can result to Potential and Actual Conflict Impact***

One area which was affirmed during the FGDs was the potential impact of the mobilization of LCEs who are also clan leaders. The TSS reflected on whether it is already sufficient that more LCEs have been engaged in conflict resolution or should they also look into how LGU engagement is enabling these clan leaders to consolidate and perpetuate current system of patronage politics. In many of the cases resolved, it is still the political clan leaders who decide on how conflicts should be resolved based on how their interests will be protected in certain areas. The dominance and control of political clan leaders were cited through examples such as leaders hiding ceasefire agreements, and preventing the survey of contested land, among others.

In such a context of political dominance and control by the clan leaders, does violent conflict really end? Most of the TSS facilitators and secretariat

interviewed think that the conflicts just subside temporarily based on how effectively the clan leaders are able to wield control and power over their wards but eventually these long-standing conflicts are resurrected come election time.

From the reflective discussions that were held with the TSS secretariat, the need for more holistic and comprehensive approaches to conflict resolution was affirmed. These may include advocating and working for governance reforms, leadership development, civil society strengthening, and addressing community needs for economic development. The importance of more sustained mechanisms such as the PCCs was also underscored.

### **Systems Thinking**

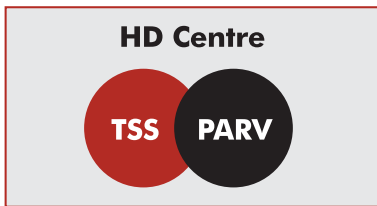
Looking at how TSS has evolved internally and how it has sought to make a difference in the external environment of violent conflict, the evaluation identified areas where systems thinking (or the understanding of how individual parts influence each other within a bigger whole), or the lack of it, has influenced how it is shaping up as a mechanism.

Even with the constant reminders from the HD Centre that TSS is separate from PARV as projects, the two cannot be assessed without considering their effect on each other and also without bringing in the history of project development that was undertaken by the HD Centre. Project-based orientation has its pros and cons. The limitations have been pointed out in terms of the effect on long term planning, human resource development and resource generation.

*In many of the cases resolved, it is still the political clan leaders who decide on how conflicts should be resolved based on how their interests will be protected in certain areas. The dominance and control of political clan leaders were cited through examples such as leaders hiding ceasefire agreements, and preventing the survey of contested land, among others.*

As an advantage, the HD Centre has been able to respond immediately to perceptible and short-term needs and avoid the trap of impossible targets. The formation of TSS and PARV went through a series of trials and assessments until a more comprehensive view of possibilities vis-a-vis actual needs became evident. Hence, from AVRI the project became PERV, and then PARV. Which also translates to the movement of strategies and focus from broader peace issues to election-related until the present configuration which is back to prevention and reduction of armed related violence.

**FIGURE 13: TSS & PARV within the HD Centre System**



PARV is a related system of TSS which is under the micro sub-system of the HD Centre. PARV and the TSS operated together under the HD Centre's management system and style of leadership which, at its best, was able to steer the project towards its

current level of accomplishment and development. While independent entities, the two are interrelated and must be treated that way if TSS, whatever organizational form it will take on in the coming years, will be strengthened.

With the impetus for the eventual strengthening of TSS as an independent and autonomous mechanism, it will need to make decisions in terms of how it should be able to balance the following concerns for:

- 2.1 Relevance: Does TSS see itself addressing the same contextual problems described earlier (of clan conflict, dependence and poverty) through conflict resolution, peacebuilding and development or should it strive to continue previous attempts under PARV of addressing broader issues of governance especially in the context of electoral reforms in ARMM?

To be able to answer this question, it needs to review the outcomes from the past 2 years of operation and validate (using the tools of Peace Writ Large and PCIA) whether they are really contributing effectively to the reduction of violence or whether they are just temporarily stopping them until the next cycle of conflict triggers come during election time. It will also need to take a look at the long term impact that can be realistically achieved in the next 5 years and decide whether it will continue doing what it is doing or shift to other approaches and strategies.

- 2.2 Effectiveness: Based on the decision on focus, TSS will need to determine broad and specific goals in addressing the context and also for its continuing internal development. Undertaking a “theory of change” exercise will help TSS to distill the logic from the activities and interventions that they have undertaken and relate these to the goals and vision. If it seeks direct impact on peace, TSS needs to sharpen its targets and set measurable indicators. It will also need to review its approaches and strategies in terms of which ones should be sharpened, explored further and which ones should be dropped.
- 2.3 Efficiency: From the sharpened goals and strategies, TSS should be able to come up with an appropriate structure (in relation to CHD, PARV and the local communities it is serving), recruitment and maintenance policy for its human resources, and systems for planning, budgeting, monitoring and assessment, including reporting, which will enable it to balance the principles and practice of flexibility and responsiveness with rigor and transparency.

The key areas which TSS will need to ascertain as matters of policy are:

- How it relates to external related systems such as the HD Centre as it evolves its own independent systems of planning, fundraising, monitoring, evaluation and human resource. If TSS will become independent from the HD Centre, who and

how will it maintain its integrity and quality. Specifically, who will monitor it and from where?

- In terms of human resource -- what kind of tasks need to be done, what kind of people (qualifications and background) it needs to be able to do those tasks, how will it recruit, sustain and develop their competencies to be able to be at par with the requirements of these tasks, what incentives they will be provided, and how will they relate to each other in terms of role (secretariat vis- a-vis advisers). One major area which TSS needs to consider seriously is the maintenance of an independent body of mediators/facilitators which will focus on their craft and an efficient secretariat which will be tasked to support these mediators through operational functions.

2.4 Sustainability: With clear goals, strategies and systems having been defined, TSS can gear for long term resource development in their human, financial and physical aspects.

Some of the options that it can consider in working towards sustainability are:

- Strengthening Islamic practice of mediation

TSS can find gems of insights from some CSO and religious leaders who are pushing for Islamic principles as the foundation for peace. Prof. Dinampo (personal communication, May 14, 2012) stated that:

The rule in pagpati'ut is that one does not need to be invited. You have to volunteer because your concern is that the community should not be disturbed and so the earlier the pagpati'ut the better. That is prevention. If it has happened, one can still do pagpati'ut but it is the religious functionaries and traditional leaders' function. The kutba in the mosque is that we are one ummah, we are all one. That is the theoretical aspect, and that is translated into pagpati'ut. Unfortunately this type of conflict resolution has not been institutionalized. The imam is not a cleric and



taking office is not allowed in Islam because officially you take part of the collection of the church. It is your religious obligation. If there is something offered for you to do that, the reward is from God, the reward for you in this life is in the form of zakat and part of the zakat is to be given to the imams, wayfarers, travellers, etc.. Thus, one should not have allowance

- Sustaining partnership with LGU  
As mentioned in the findings section, partnership with the LGU is a worthwhile endeavour that can help in sustaining processes at the community level. However, as most LGUs are still underdeveloped and function under a patronage style of governance, this track should be pursued along with efforts to promote good governance. This can be done in areas where TSS has already proven the capacity of the LCE, like in the case of Silangkan.
- Institutionalizing TSS as a mechanism  
Efforts to develop the different organizational elements of TSS towards its further growth and development should be commenced immediately and sustained for at least 2 to 3 years as a transition towards its independent and autonomous functioning. This should start with a review of its accomplishments, synthesis of learning, mapping out opportunities and threats and formulation of its goals, programs and plan of action based on clearly defined nature (identity), vision and mission.
- Learning from other CSO initiatives:  
Some CSOs have already started to initiate economic activities that will generate resources for their work with communities. Professor Dinampo (personal communication, May 14, 2012) shared how CSOs have supported community-based business opportunities:  
    "[We have] established an internet shop as income

generating project between Tulung Lupah Sug and CORDAID. We have 29 units and rented a space in a new building. I have 3 people in each municipality and that means 15 personnel whose compensation comes from the internet shop which has been running for one year. Another sustainability program is to emphasize on counterparts from our operatives. 40% is their counterpart from their salary. The amount raised from counterpart goes to their benefits. Some of the amount goes into a revolving fund for income generation.

## 2.5 Gender and Inter-generational Framework


Previous efforts to document stories of women mediators demonstrate TSS interest in making women more visible in mediation work. Aside from highlighting the role of women in bringing parties to talk and resolve their conflicts, TSS can deepen its approach to gender by surfacing stories of how men and women were able to harness their relational skills in conflict resolution. Some examples of this can be found in the narratives where women cite their qualities of nurturance, patience and calmness as contributory factors in successful conflict resolution. Similarly, male respondents like Brgy. Captain Susulan and Commander Abtajir Tingkasan shared how they have become more willing to listen and consult with their people before making any move. These qualities show how role stereotypes are changing as a result of the interaction between women and men in conflict resolution.

With deliberate steps to seek out the young people in the Speak Outs and PCC activities and providing venues for them to get involved, TSS is treading on an important terrain in peace work. Emerging second-liners in conflict resolution is a thrust that TSS can continue to pursue and provide resources for. At the moment, most of the older TSS respondents think that the youth are not capable of settling conflicts although they are already being tapped to help in some settlement procedures. It is worth

noting that in the Alibun-Misuari case, for instance, it is the sons and daughters of the parties in conflict who came to the FGDs for the evaluation and they were able to share significantly their insights, particularly on the effect of conflict to their families. Since they are also affected in the conflict, their families and communities will benefit from their participation in conflict resolution not only as observers but as decision makers as well. In the future, efforts should gear towards training and mobilizing the youth in conflict resolution.

### ***Summary of Next Steps***

For TSS to be able to make these decisions and actions towards its further growth as a mechanism for resolving conflicts and peacebuilding, the following steps are being recommended:

- a. Convene the advisers, local facilitators and secretariat in an organizational reflection and assessment on the contextual framework, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability points identified earlier;
- b. Conduct strategy and program development sessions that will be the basis for coming up with interim (2 year) and long-term (3 to 5 years) proposals for the continued financial and human resource support for TSS;
- c. Establish clear indicators of outcome and impact that will guide TSS in monitoring and evaluating the achievement of its goals;
- d. Review the current structure and human resource complement (including qualifications and specifications of people needed to accomplish the tasks) to become more aligned with the goals and strategy requirements of TSS;
- e. Review and install other systems of coordination, finance, information and communication, office maintenance, and performance evaluation to ensure efficient management of the resources of TSS;
- f. Install a constant monitoring and evaluation mechanism for these processes to take effect with the optimum results desired. 

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- 1 The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue is an independent mediation organisation, based in Geneva, Switzerland, dedicated to improving the global response to armed conflict. It attempts to achieve this by mediating between warring parties and providing support to the broader mediation community. The HD Centre is driven by humanitarian values and its ultimate goal to reduce the consequences of violent conflict, improve security, and ultimately contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflict. It maintains a neutral stance towards the warring parties that it mediates between and, in order to maintain its impartiality it is funded by a variety of governments, private foundations and philanthropists. ([www.centerforhumanitarian dialogue.org](http://www.centerforhumanitarian dialogue.org))
  - 2 Tan, S. Gov. (2007). People engaged in awareness and community empowerment for peace: Sulu Experience. [Presentation]. Speech delivered at the Assumption College IBES Peace Advocacy Campaign. Makati, NCR.
  - 3 Arquiza, M.Q. (2012). In Facebook [Notes page]. Retrieved June 2012, from <http://www.facebook.com/notes/mucha-quiling-arquiza/timpu-masa-aktibis-and-the-arts-of-memory/301236119968308>
  - 4 Indicators of seriousness: 1- not serious: no killing, no displacement, no one evacuated; 2- not very serious: no killing, no displacement but has potential to become worse; 3- serious: some wounded, no killing, no displacement, affecting 1 barangay. Indicators of likelihood of violence to resume: 1- not likely: no incidents in more than a year; 2- not very likely: no incidents for some time; 3- likely: incidents in past month, but stable; 4- very likely: incidents in previous months, getting worse; 5- ongoing: incidents ongoing. PERV, HD Centre and Ausaid, 2011.
  - 5 HD Centre Philippines (April 2012). PERV Completion Report submitted to AusAid.
  - 6 Mendoza, M. (2011). Proceedings from the Mediators' Retreat. Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
  - 7 PARV is a parallel program of CHD which evolved from the Armed Violence Reduction Initiative (AVRI) in November 2009 and later called the Prevention of Election-related Violence (PERV) in May 2010 just before the national and local elections tasked with the monitoring, assessment and reporting of incidences of election-related violence in the province as well as other incidents that could be linked to political rivalries. (PARV. Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and Ausaid. November 2011)
  - 8 Gardiola, M. (2012). Field Notes: Conflict Settlement Proceedings. Brgy. Pasil, Indanan, Sulu.
  - 9 Mediator's Network for Sustainable Peace (2012, April and August). Training Reports on Basic and Advance Training on Mediation. Metro Manila: HD Centre.
  - 10 An Asian Institute of Management-run course focused on developing consensual leadership among the LGUs, security sector, CSOs, religious leaders and traditional leaders in conflict-affected areas like Sulu. It outlines the process with steps starting from sensing, presensing, to co-creation. (Quemado, Lt Col, personal communication, May 20, 2012)
  - 11 From Documentation of Six Women Mediators' Stories by Millet Mendoza, unpublished document commissioned by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.
  - 12 Fully stopped and violence ended indicated by timeframe (at least 2 years no recurrent of violence, social engagement in community). Cases include Unding-Cabato Aspa-Sarabi, Tingkasan-Sayyadi, Alaluddin-Kudja, Baid- Salikala, Arakam- Abdurahim and Asali-Salimbulong. (TSS and PARV, Focus Group Discussion. Zamboanga City, June 1, 2012.)

# LIST OF SECONDARY

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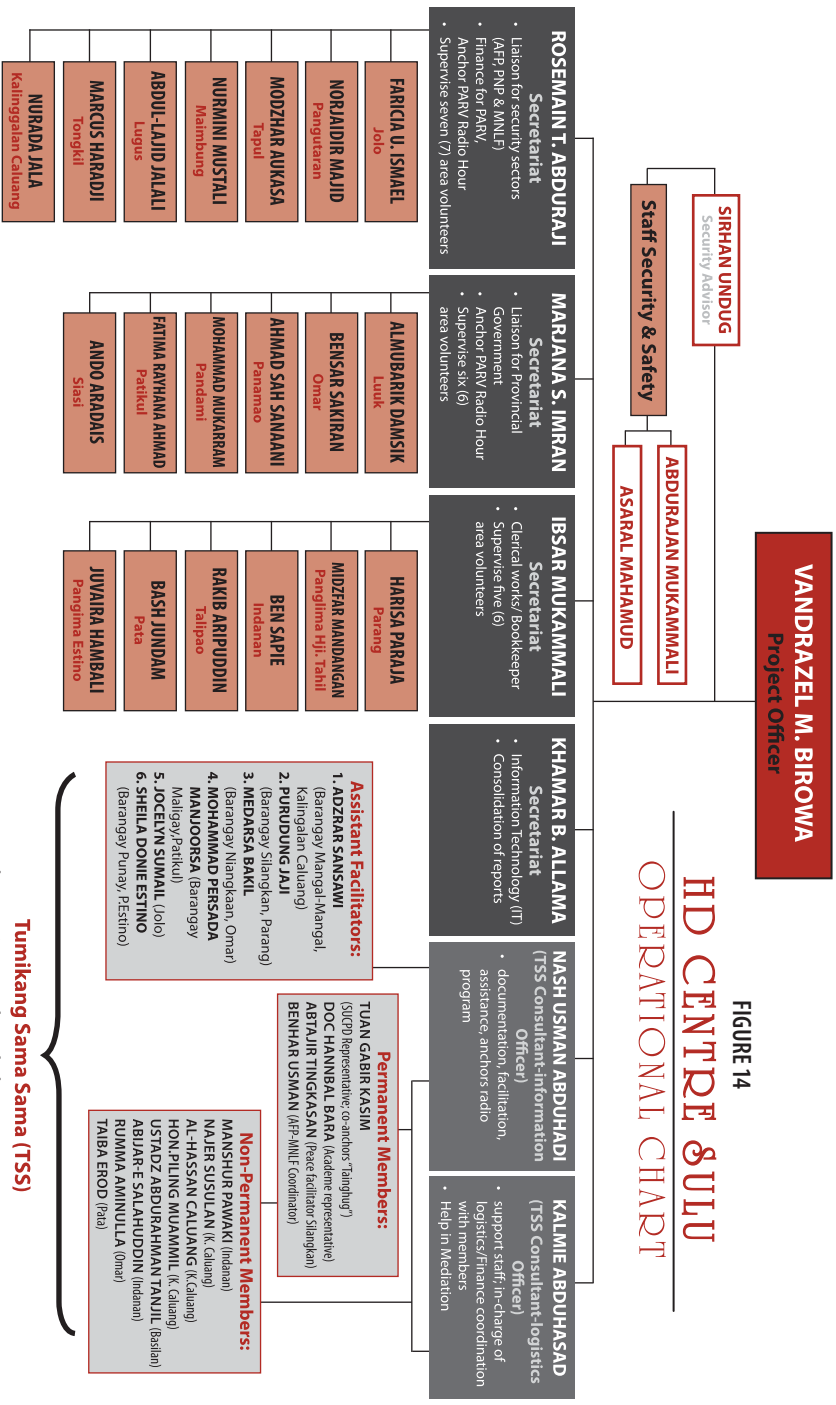
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**Preventing and Reducing Violence (PARV)**

**Tumikang Sama Sama (TSS)**

- PARV Area volunteers' main tasks include:
- Monitoring incidents in their respective areas reporting every 4:30 PM to the PARV secretariat
- Assisting the TSS facilitator in preventing and resolving clan conflicts
- Serve as facilitator and coordinator between the community and LGU/BLGU

# THE CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DIALOGUE

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**SIRHAN UNDUG** Security Adviser for Sulu

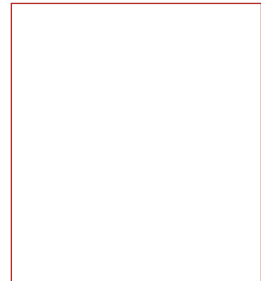
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**MARIDES VIROLA-GARDIOLA** is an independent facilitator, trainer and organizer who has worked with communities who seek transformation of individuals and society through empowerment strategies to address issues of poverty, dependency and conflict. For almost thirty years, the expertise that were developed in the areas of organizational and human resource development, gender mainstreaming, cultural integrity and peacebuilding have brought her to work with women's organizations, children's rights groups, peasants, urban settlers and, in recent years, indigenous and Moro groups in the Philippines and some countries in Asia.



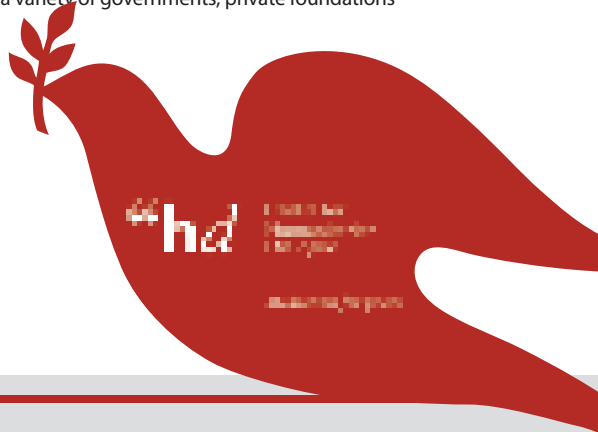
"Madett" is currently an active member of professional membership networks such as the Human Development Network, Participatory Development Forum, and the Mediators' Network for Sustainable Peace. Her current passion is mentoring facilitators and leaders of non-government organizations which are deep into ecology work, alternative education, peacebuilding and children's rights where she contributes as part of the Board of Directors or as process consultant. With an academic background in Philosophy, she believes that change starts with personal empowerment and has been teaching meditation and self-management as a volunteer in the last 18 years. She is the mother of 26-year old Ayyi with whom she has learned the art of joyful parenting. 

# THE CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DIALOGUE (HD CENTRE)

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (the HD Centre) is an independent mediation organisation, based in Geneva, Switzerland, dedicated to improving the global response to armed conflict.

It attempts to achieve this by mediating between warring parties and providing support to the broader mediation community. The HD Centre is driven by humanitarian values and its ultimate goal to reduce the consequences of violent conflict, improve security, and ultimately contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflict.

It maintains a neutral stance towards the warring parties that it mediates between and, in order to maintain its impartiality it is funded by a variety of governments, private foundations and philanthropists.



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