



Centre for
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The Reintegration of the Moro National Liberation Front in Mindanao

Mini Case Study

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1. Introduction

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) first emerged in Mindanao in 1972, the same year martial law was declared in the Philippines. In 1976, the Philippine government entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the MNLF with little results. Finally, a peace agreement, with the Ramos Government in 1996 gave the predominantly Muslim areas a degree of self-rule, setting up the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The ARMM composed of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan installed Nur Misuari, MNLF chairman and founder, as their first regional governor. However, Misuari's rule ended in violence in November 2001, when he led another uprising that was defeated. He is now in a maximum-security jail. On February 2005, MNLF troops still loyal to Misuari (MNLF Misuari faction) launched a series of attacks on the army troops in Jolo. The trigger for the violence was said to be the launch of large-scale military operations against the Abu Sayyaf kidnap for ransom group. Fighting between government forces and the MNLF resumed once more in 2007 after an MNLF commander took a government peace negotiator hostage for a few days¹. Recently, the MNLF ambushed elements of the armed forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Sulu killing some 27 soldiers and 20 civilians in just one day. While frustrations remain high for many MNLF ex-combatants, the MNLF (Parouk Hussein faction) claims that they are still sticking to the 1972 Peace Accord that was reiterated in the 1996 peace agreement with the hope that all the provisions of this agreement will soon be honoured². In their view, the "missing provisions" relate to the desire for more economic development. Meanwhile, many MNLF ex-combatants and their families still have no jobs and live in dire poverty after ten years since the peace agreement had been forged. This is one major reason why there is still fighting in Mindanao.

Extreme poverty in Mindanao, particularly in the Muslim areas, has caused several "Muslim wars". Filipino Muslims, comprising approximately 10% to 13% of the national population and about 17% to 20% of the people of Mindanao, continue to struggle for the right to self determination. Even today the government is still fighting running battles against MNLF Lost Commands, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Communist New People's army, and the Abu Sayyaf. The root of war in Mindanao is the historical injustices done to the Muslims aggravated by the dehumanizing poverty experienced by its people. Mindanao houses some of the poorest regions in the Philippines yet, it is also the richest in terms of natural resources.³ Mindanao has the highest population growth rate, the lowest literacy rate,

¹ General Dolorfino and his staff were visiting an MNLF camp in Sulu when he was hostaged. The MNLF demanded that Misuari be released from jail in exchange for Dolorfino. After a few days they released Dolorfino after making their demands heard over news media.

² They await another round of talks in Jeddah scheduled some time in late 2007

³ Reality Check, October 2004 > Mini-Marshall Plan for Mindanao: Will Foreign Aid Help End the

and the highest poverty incidence within the Philippines.⁴ Sulu, part of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), is still the poorest province in the Philippines. Tawi-Tawi, Lanao Del Sur, and Maguindanao, also part of the ARMM, belong to the 10 poorest provinces in the Philippine government's latest poverty survey.

Compared with the rest of the country, Mindanao has the worst quality of living. Of the 4.5 million Filipino families that suffer from hunger in the Philippines, 1.4 million are found in Mindanao. Furthermore, many families in Mindanao do not have access to basic services, compared to Luzon and Visayas. According to Peace and Development Advocates (PDAs) from Zamboanga, the lack of potable water remains a critical issue in many Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) communities despite the onset of development projects since 1996. According to the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCO), Mindanao has an infant mortality rate of 63 per 1,000, the highest in the country. It also has an increasing maternal mortality rate of 320 per 100,000. Clearly more schools, specifically Madrasas⁵ and more medicine are needed in Mindanao.⁶

While Mindanao is the poorest island region in the Philippines, it receives less foreign aid compared to that of Luzon and the Visayas. In 2001, for example, Mindanao received Php 904.9 million pesos in ODA loan commitments from multilateral and bilateral donors. Such an amount accounts for only 7% of total ODA commitments in 2001. Per region, the bulk of the foreign aid commitments went to Metro Manila and Luzon.⁷

Mindanao's ODA utilization rate is pegged at only 20%, compared with Luzon's 50% and Visayas' 40 percent. According to the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), Mindanao has a low ODA absorptive capacity. This is still due to lack of human power training and capability to handle funds. Many Peace and Development Communities (PDCs), for example, still do not have people who have the technical skills in making proposals to funding agencies, hence the need for a more bureaucratic approach for assistance and funding of local development initiatives and more foreign intervention.

2. History of the Conflict in Mindanao

Islam was first introduced in Mindanao in 1460. Muslim clerics and missionaries established the first Islamic communities and kingdoms in Maguindanao and Sulu. Mindanao has a long history of Muslim resistance and revolution dating back to Spanish rule. Resistance to Spanish colonialization in the 16th to 19th century was especially strong among the Muslim population of southwestern Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago⁸. Spain had earlier developed deep anti-Muslim sentiments due to their struggle for independence from the Moors.⁹ Spanish control over Filipino

Moro War?

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Islamic schools

⁶ Taken from interview

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Merliza M. Makinano and Alfredo Lubang, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: The Mindanao Experience, February 2001, p. 5

⁹ Ibid

Muslims was never completed, and the Muslim struggle carried over into the United States colonial era. The Muslims fought the Spanish attempts to colonize them for over three centuries. Yet, despite Spain's failure to colonize Mindanao, it included Mindanao in the territories ceded to the United States under the 1898 Treaty of Paris.

The American pacification campaign in Mindanao succeeded in neutralizing Muslim resistance to colonial rule but not without a cost in lives and struggle.¹⁰ The Filipino Muslims earned a reputation as fierce fighters. Stories have been told of the US developing the 45 caliber pistols in order to stop the Moro warrior from advancing on US troops¹¹. After the granting of Philippine independence, Filipino Muslims continued to resist Manila's rule, leading to widespread conflict until present times.

After 1946, the Philippine Colonial Government continued US style policies and programs to pacify the "Moro" by "Christianizing" Mindanao. The result of this policy is that Mindanao is now a multi-cultural, or populated by "Tri-people"¹², island. Tens of thousands of Christian settlers were sent by the government from Luzon and the Visayas to live in Mindanao displacing Muslim and Lumads¹³ alike. Filipino Muslims became increasingly alarmed by the immigration of Christians from Luzon and the Visayas, and this made them feel like minorities in their own land. By 1970, the Christian population outnumbered the Muslims and Lumads by approximately 74 %.¹⁴

Table 1: Islamized and Lumad Population in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan 1970 Census

Province	Total	Muslim	%	Lumad	%	Other Indigenous Inhabitants	%
Agusan del Norte	278,053	1,350	0.48	1,998	0.72	3	---
Agusan del Sur	174,682	1,036	0.59	29,531	16.91	30	---
Bukidnon	414,762	3,998	0.96	73,359	17.68	5,533	1.33
Cotabato	1,136,007	438,134	38.56	62,326	5.49	4,703	0.41
South Cotabato	466,110	28,349	6.08	43,908	9.42	109	---
Davao del Norte	442,543	12,657	2.86	15,034	3.40	5,754	1.3
Davao Oriental	247,991	1,818	0.73	11,503	4.64	84,308	34.0
Davao del Sur	785,398	9,027	1.15	92,666	11.80	12,297	1.57
Lanao del Norte	349,942	83,921	23.98	999	0.29	11	---
Lanao del Sur	455,508	404,359	88.	89	0.02	0	---

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Lesser hand guns did not stop the Muslim warrior from getting close enough to hurt the American soldier

¹² Muslim, Lumad, and Christian

¹³ Lumads are indigenous Filipinos who are neither Christian nor Muslim. Lumads, who make up less than 10 % of the people in Mindanao, have been threatening to go to war because they have been excluded from peace talks between the GRP, the MNLF, and the MILF.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 8

			77				
Misamis Occidental	326,855	485	0.15	2,828	0.87	0	---
Misamis Oriental	482,756	656	0.14	2,601	0.54	312	0.06
Sulu	425,617	412,591	96.94	1,573	0.36	581	0.14
Surigao del Norte	238,714	430	0.18	386	0.16	1	---
Surigao del Sur	258,680	1,701	0.66	2,204	0.85	698	0.27
Zamboanga del Norte	411,381	22,098	5.37	43,684	10.62	3,050	0.74
Zamboanga del Sur	1,029,479	178,146	17.3	47,103	4.58	154,710	15.03
MINDANAO	7,924,478	1,600,756	20.20	431,792	5.40	272,100	3.43
Palawan	236,635	32,328	13.66	9,353	3.95	91,434	38.64
General Total	8,161,113	1,633,084	20.01	441,145	5.41	363,534	4.45

In 1972, after martial law in the Philippines was declared, more spontaneous rebellions arose among the Filipino Muslims in Mindanao this time over the issue of gun ownership. Muslims, who traditionally equated the right to carry arms with their religious heritage, were forced by the “Christian” government to turn over their guns. Naturally the Muslim Mindanaoan¹⁵ rebelled. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was founded as a response to “gun grabbing”, land grabbing and the disappointment of the Muslim people of Mindanao with the government’s failure to solve social, political and economic problems.

From 1971-1976, the damage due to the war with the MNLF was considerable¹⁶. Towns and villages were razed to the ground; thousands of families were displaced; properties and harvests were destroyed while some 60,000 lives were lost; and about 300,000 refugees moved to Sabah.¹⁷

At present, the Philippine Government still maintains some 35,000 troops, and a 25,000 strong para-military unit in Mindanao.¹⁸ Proliferation of unlicensed small and high-powered arms has been recognized as factors that aggravates the situation.¹⁹ According to Lubang and Makinano, the intensity of the conflict in Mindanao is directly proportional to the availability of small to high-powered arms.²⁰ The proliferation of firearms in Mindanao can be attributed to easy access and affordability of locally made firearms. Firearms acquired by Christians are not sold to Muslims and vice versa, given the reported feelings of mistrust between Muslims and Christians.

¹⁵ Person born and living in Mindanao

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 11

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 12

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 13

²⁰ Ibid

3. A Matter of Culture

For many Muslims in Mindanao possession of firearms is a matter of “historic right”. A belief common with many people in Mindanao is that the more arms one possesses, the more “macho” a Mindanaoan becomes. The prestige lent to firearm possession remains to be considerable. For some Muslim in Mindanao, the Koran encouraged the use of weapons as a preparation for Jihad or holy war and to prepare the Muslim against oppression. This religious invocation has been used to justify the free and widespread possession of firearms for many Muslims²¹ there.

4. The Moro National Liberation Front

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) initially stressed the primary goal of secession but later on opted for autonomy. The MNLF’s initial demand for an independent Bangsa Moro Republic was to be composed of Mindanao, the Sulu archipelago and Palawan. Under the Tripoli Agreement of 1976, it was later reduced to regional autonomy comprising of 13 provinces and nine cities. However, differences in the interpretation of the implementation of the accord became a stumbling block and the fighting continued.

The MNLF reportedly received support from Muslim backers from outside the Philippines.²² By 1975, the Bangsa Moro Army (fighting arm of the MNLF) was able to field some 30,000 armed fighters. The military responded by deploying 70 to 80 percent of its combat forces in Mindanao. From 1973 to 1976, an estimated 50,000 people were killed.²³ The government also employed a variety of “non military tactics” like the granting of amnesty and land titles to “peaceful Muslims” and the formation of paramilitary groups composed of Christian settlers, some of who were cultists²⁴. These government's programs, and the sharp decrease in the flow of arms from Malaysia, set back the MNLF movement by the later part of 1976.²⁵

Armed conflict by Muslims in Mindanao continued with only sporadic clashes between government and their forces. The MNLF was further weakened during that period when rival leaders formed the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization, drawing many Maranaos away from the MNLF.²⁶ In 1977, Hashim Salamat, supported by ethnic Maguindanaons from Central Mindanao formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). MNLF fighting strength declined to about 18,000 by 1983²⁷.

5. Autonomy

After the first EDSA People Power Revolution in 1986, President Cory Aquino initiated talks with the MNLF in 1986. Discussions produced a cease-fire in

²¹ Ibid

²² AFP Blue Print, 2006 , p. 4

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Christian cultists like the “pulahans” and “Ilagas” were organized into paramilitary units to combat the MNLF. The latter responded by creating their own paramilitary “Black Shirts”.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 5

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

September, followed by further talks under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In January 1987, the MNLF signed an agreement relinquishing its goal of independence for Muslim regions and accepting the government's offer of autonomy. When sporadic fighting ensued the government pressed on with plans for Muslim autonomy even without the MNLF's cooperation. Article 10 of the 1987 constitution mandated that the new congress establish an Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In the November 1989 plebiscite, only two Mindanao provinces, Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur, and two in the Sulu Archipelago, Sulu and Tawi Tawi, opted to accept autonomous status. The fragmented four-province Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), with its own governor and unicameral legislature, was officially inaugurated on November 6, 1990.

6. The Peace Agreement

The Jeddah Accord was signed on January 3, 1987. According to this agreement “both parties agreed to continue discussion of the proposal for the grant of full autonomy to Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Palawan subject to the democratic processes²⁸.” By January 15, 1987, some 70% of all Mindanaoans voted for the 1987 Constitution while Sulu garnered the highest votes at 95%. One of the contentious issues within the MNLF demands was that of autonomy for the islands of Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Palawan and Tawi-Tawi, as agreed by all parties. Such agreement would have expanded the area of autonomy from 13 provinces under the Tripoli Agreement to 23 provinces. But the MNLF later announced its decision to settle for just 13 provinces including all cities and villages in these provinces. In 1994, the 13 provinces under the Tripoli Agreement were composed of approximately 19.79% Muslims and 80.21% non-Muslims, while the entire Mindanao population was 13.09 % Muslim and 86.91 % non-Muslim.

Table 2: Islamized and Lumad Populations and Other Identifiable Indigenous Inhabitants in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan 1990 Census

PROVINCE	TOTAL	ISLAMIZED	%	LUMAD	%	OTHERS	%
Agusan del Norte	464,789	2,729	0.59	2,673	0.58	29,757	6.40
Agusan del Sur	419,920	870	0.21	53,151	12.66	13,384	3.19
<i>Basilan</i>	208,006	166,110	79.86	53	0.34	34,409	16.54
Bukidnon	742,269	3,562	0.48	84,004	11.32	11,982	1.61
Camiguin	64,176	50	0.08	39	0.06	258	0.40
<i>Cotabato</i>	763,149	111,753	14.64	31,522	4.13	11,985	1.57
<i>Maguindanao</i>	756,878	484,292	63.99	2,470	0.33	117,893	15.58
<i>South Cotabato</i>	1,071,135	52,497	4.90	124,726	11.64	6,798	0.63
<i>Sultan Kudarat</i>	435,454	80,709	18.53	13,961	3.21	10,931	2.51
Davao	1,053,167	19,553	1.86	51,356	4.88	28,191	2.68
Davao Oriental	394,304	13,884	3.52	23,565	5.98	127,700	32.39
<i>Davao del Sur</i>	1,478,723	23,990	1.62	178,474	12.07	16,271	1.10
<i>Lanao del Norte</i>	613,259	134,947	22.00	628	0.10	1,195	0.19
<i>Lanao del Sur</i>	598,800	557,003	93.02	487	0.08	86	0.01
Misamis Occidental	423,590	443	0.10	5,030	0.19	1,990	0.47
Misamis Oriental	862,660	3,423	0.40	2,522	0.29	4,329	0.50
<i>Sulu</i>	468,856	457,866	97.66	867	0.18	872	0.19
<i>Tawi-Tawi</i>	227,731	210,063	92.24	48	0.02	2,676	1.18
Surigao del Norte	425,290	1,018	0.24	1,208	0.28	271,942	63.94
Surigao del Sur	451,287	1,997	0.44	7,553	1.67	87,836	19.46
<i>Zamboanga del Norte</i>	676,014	39,486	5.84	59,081	8.74	5,446	0.80
<i>Zamboanga del Sur</i>	1,540,299	168,800	10.96	78,080	5.07	234,070	15.20

²⁸ In accordance to provisions in the Philippine Constitution

Mindanao	14,139,756	2,535,045	17.93	721,498	5.10	1,020,001	7.21
<i>Palawan</i>	524,493	29,696	5.66	11,943	2.28	191,300	36.47
TOTAL	14,664,249	2,564,741	17.49	733,441	5.00	1,211,301	8.26

The Republic Act 6734 or the Organic Act for the Creation of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was approved by then President Aquino on August 1, 1989. However, only 4 out of the 13 provinces voted to join the ARMM during the November 19, 1989 plebiscite. Misuari thus refused to recognize the ARMM and insisted on an autonomy based on the Tripoli Agreement, and the fighting broke out once more.

The MNLF and the Government held another exploratory talks in Tripoli, Libya on October 2, 1992. A second round of other exploratory talks was held in Jakarta, Indonesia on April 14, 1993. After 47 months of negotiations, the Final Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front was finally signed on September 2, 1996 in Malacanang Palace.

7. Reintegration without Disarmament and Demobilization

The integration of MNLF combatants in to the AFP and PNP has abetted the proliferation of arms and has not contributed to arms reduction in Mindanao according to a 1999 University of the Philippines report²⁹. While the Peace Agreement has brought about a longstanding ceasefire between the MNLF and the government, it has not necessarily demobilized the MNLF. President Fidel V. Ramos was reported to be sensitive to the “loss of face” for the MNLF if they were forced to disarm and demobilize in order to enter a peace pact with the Philippine government in 1996. Ramos expressed a “critical need to keep a strategic view always and to refuse to be muddled or stampeded by tactical pressures.”³⁰ This was one reason why the government during the negotiations did not force the issue of ‘demobilizing’ or ‘disarming’ the MNLF. Ramos was also conscious of Misuari’s expressed concern over “losing his men to other militant armed groups” if demobilization and disarmament were to take place.

Meanwhile MNLF combatants continue to be capable of regrouping for active combat. There was no compulsion on the MNLF to disband its military formations and reports of training and recruitment have been reported³¹. Integration by the MNLF to the AFP and PNP effectively brought about the “reintegration” of a select number of MNLF ex-combatants into Philippine society as salaried soldiers. But this integration without disarmament and demobilization did not bring a sustainable peace into Mindanao. In effect, the integration program helped in bringing about a measure of goodwill and helped in the reintegration of about 6,500 Moro rebels or kin, but did not at all serve as a mechanism for demilitarization³². Hence, the inherent weakness of the 1996 Peace Agreement between the Philippine Government and the MNLF.

²⁹ Ferrer, 1999, p. 2

³⁰ Makinano and Lubang, 2001, p. 26

³¹ Ferrer, p. 2

³² Ibid

Since the implementation of the MNLF integration to the military in November 1996, a total of 4,850 out of 5,066 MNLF members graduated.³³ Of this number, 160 have been commissioned in the armed forces and called to active duty as 2nd Lieutenants, while 4,690 have been enlisted in the Philippine Army with the initial rank of Private. The current number of MNLF integrees into the PNP is 4,835 out of the original strength of 4,850. Since their integration, some have left due to absences without leave, death and summary dismissal. Many MNLF combatants did not meet the age (between 20 to 30 years of age), literacy and height requirements (at least 5'3"). The educational qualification to enter the AFP and the PNP, at least 72 college units and a college degree, respectively, was understandably difficult to meet for many of the MNLF ex-combatants who spent most of their lives fighting. Most of the ex-MNLF combatants interviewed did not graduate from high school. To solve this problem, the government simply waived the educational as well as age and height requirements. In addition, the Civil Service agreed to waive the civil service eligibility requirement that is earned by passing the Police Officer 1 Entrance Examination.

As for the lack of educational and literacy qualifications, literacy classes and placement test were arranged for those who did not pass the literacy test. A special six-month education program equivalent to two-years' criminology course was instituted for those who are being trained for the PNP. The Philippine Government credited the study. In July 1997, the Arturo Eustaquio College in Zamboanga gave five-month scholarship grants to 500 MNLF integrees. The graduates of this special course were given credit for 72 units. Another 556 AFP integrees have also involved themselves in secondary education and in some non-formal educational projects³⁴.

By the year 2,000 the numbers of MNLF integrees are organized into 10 Engineering Company and 39 Rifle Companies plus a support group of 1,500 non-uniformed police integrees.

8. The Culture Shock of Integration to the Military

The Philippine Government and the MNLF both considered the integration of the MNLF forces into the AFP and the PNP as the most successful aspect of the peace agreement.³⁵ Despite this claim, occasional disputes and misunderstandings did occur. The MNLF complained that their integrees were not issued firearms. The AFP, on the other hand, accused some MNLF integrees of involvement in kidnapping cases and of spying and selling their guns for money.³⁶

Another initial problem regarding the integration of MNLF members into the AFP and PNP was the foreseeable difficulty for the integrees to adjust to a completely new establishment. Former MNLF interviewees reported that many of the MNLF integrees experienced "cultural shock". The AFP is more hierarchical, while the MNLF approach places emphasis on trainer and trainee equality.³⁷ Also, the AFP reportedly did not understand the culture of the Muslims, and that some AFP personnel still considered the MNLF integrees as enemies. A former MNLF commander complained

³³ Op Cit, p. 30

³⁴ Ibid, p. 26

³⁵ Ibid, p. 29

³⁶ Ibid, p. 27

³⁷ Ibid

that the MNLF volunteers were integrated into the AFP/PNP too soon without the proper healing of old hurts and mistrusts. Also many of the MNLF ex-combatants still did not understand the entirety of the peace agreement for the lack of education. Many of the same do not read nor write and not a few were simply too old to change. Because old wounds were not allowed to heal properly some MNLF combatants returned to fighting.

As a response, the government created “an internalization program” for MNLF integreees and AFP personnel in order to “enhance the assimilation process of the integreees into the AFP”.³⁸ Service providers also conducted information seminars to bridge misperceptions and build trust among MNLF integreees and regular members of the AFP. An AFP Speaker’s Bureau was also established to conduct seminars and support dialogue in various parts of Mindanao as part of this information drive.

Some MNLF men walked out during training. Most of the MNLF members were in their late forties or early fifties in 1996. Thus, some integreees to the AFP and PNP were merely representatives of these elderly MNLF members (typically, sons or nephews). There were also unverified reports that some people bought slots in order to be integrated into the AFP or the police.

An interviewee shared this story about this boy from Basilan, the son of an MNLF commander who already died, who graduated from college with a “study now pay later” program and underwent an intensive six month military training course with the intention of taking his father’s place as an MNLF integreee. At the end of the training, he was not accepted by the military because he had no gun to return as his father was already dead. The boy later found out that there were others who did not come from the MNLF, who only underwent two months of military training, who were not even high school graduates but were accepted as integreees because they “returned” an M-16 rifles and paid 20,000 to 30,000 pesos per slot.

There was another story from a women from Basilan who told of a brother who trained as an MNLF commander in Malaysia and went back to the ARMM after the peace agreement had been signed but saw no change in the way integreees were treated in the military. The former MNLF commander was said to have left the military and is now unemployed. Stories such as these have created an atmosphere of disillusionment for many of the resource persons that we have spoken to from the MNLF.

MNLF members who did not opt for integration into the military or the police mostly went back to farming. A foreign funding agency brought in 1.2 million USD in 1997 to initiate an emergency livelihood assistance program to “convert arms to farms”.³⁹ Others lost hope in the armed struggle and gave up fighting to lead a civilian life, given that the fight had provided little benefit for them. However, they felt that only those with “connections” have benefited from the peace agreement.⁴⁰

Some other former MNLF members have gone on to form their own groups or join existing associations branded as “lost command groups”, kidnap-for-ransom gangs,

³⁸Ibid, p. 30

³⁹ Emergency Livelihood Assistance Program August 1997 to May 2001 Final Report, Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM), executive summary.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 34

and terrorist groups. Some MNLF integrees left the AFP when they were made to fight the MILF and other Muslim “brothers-in-arms”. In fact, many other former MNLF members joined the MILF due to what they considered as MNLF’s compromised situation and its accedence to the government’s terms for autonomy.⁴¹ This exodus was confirmed by Al-Haj Murad, MILF’s Vice-Chair for Military Affairs, as well as by military figures that showed a drastic increase in MILF strength from 8,000 in 1996 to 15,420 as of June 1999. MILF firearms holding also increased from 10,227 in December 1998 to 11,351 by June 1999.

Dr. Marcelina Carpio, a university based service provider based in Zamboanga, said that there is still a need for more dialogues between Christians, Muslims, and Lumads in Mindanao because 10 years is not enough to heal old hurts, hatreds, biases, and misunderstandings between these people who have fought each other for centuries.

9. The Politics of Foreign Aid

Past Philippine governments have used the wars in Mindanao as reason to draw financial aid to the country in the light of past and present budgetary crises. The Philippines is, after all, one of the most dependent countries on foreign aid. Billions of foreign financial aid has poured into Mindanao since 1996. At least 1.6 million US dollars came from just two international funding agencies to provide livelihood projects for MNLF combatants, and their families, who were not integrated in to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) in 1996.

The USAID played an important role in the Ramos administration’s peace efforts with the MNLF in the 1990s. In 1995, it launched a project to “strengthen the prospects of sustainable peace’ in Mindanao. The ELAP and LEAP programs were supposed to be completed in 2004. But after 9/11, the USAID extended and improved its support package. The LEAP program is the improved version of the Emergency Livelihood Assistance Program (ELAP). ELAP is responsible for transforming 13,000 former MNLF guerillas to become ‘productive farmers.’⁴²

Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) also introduced in December 2002 its Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao. The objective of the package was to provide sustained support to contribute to poverty reduction and peace building in Mindanao. Its particular target is the ARMM. Its priority areas include: (1) Support for policy formulation and implementation; (2) Support for improvement of basic human needs; and (3) Support toward peace building and the fight against terrorism. Japan dispatched a team to formulate and design concrete projects for the package. Aside from the projects to be identified by this team, Japan also announced ¥4 billion in new commitments. It includes the ¥2.5 billion ARMM Social Fund for Peace and Development. It also includes ¥1.5 billion for the socio-economic development and peace building in ARMM areas. Also part of the Japan package are ¥40 billion in past commitments in Mindanao like the Philippine-Japan Friendship Highway Mindanao

⁴¹ Critics of the MNLF criticized the latter for allegedly falling for the government ploy to subject autonomy status to the constitutional provision for referendum. Since Christians mostly populated many of the provinces in Mindanao the initial ARMM consisted only of 4 out of the agreed 13 provinces.

⁴² Emergency Livelihood Assistance Program (ELAP) p. 4

Section Rehabilitation Project (I and II), Mindanao Container Terminal Project, and the Lower Agusan Development Project (Flood Control Component - Phase II).⁴³

The World Bank also committed \$2 million for the fund. It also agreed to manage and administer the fund aimed at developing war-torn Mindanao. On top of the \$50 million, the US pledged another \$50 million for the same initiative. The US package funds a five-year socio-economic program for the ARMM. The Philippine Government asked the ADB, Japan, Canada, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, and the European Union (EU) to support the fund. It is also soliciting assistance from the Islamic Development Fund and Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Muslim countries like Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia were also identified as possible donors⁴⁴. Japan and the US are traditionally the largest bilateral foreign donors in the country. Meanwhile, the ADB and the World Bank are the largest multilateral sources. It must be noted, further, that while the US is dominant in the World Bank, Japan is dominant in the ADB⁴⁵.

The use of foreign development funds to entice Filipino Muslim rebels to surrender is not new. The latest mini-Marshall Plan for Mindanao proposed by President Arroyo recently is similar to the package of foreign aid used to woo the MNLF in signing a peace agreement with the Ramos administration in 1996. Supposedly, such fund would help in the 'transition' of the Moro rebels from guerilla fighters to productive and law-abiding citizens⁴⁶. But MNLF factions are still harassing and killing government soldiers in Mindanao. The obvious reason for the continued fighting is poverty. The usual complaint by some MNLF commanders was that the funding was never enough. But the amount of money that went into Mindanao should have had an impact on the people's lives by now. More likely the money that was supposed to go to community based development projects went to developing the land and resources to bring investors into the island. Some of the funding was lost to corruption, and some projects were simply poorly planned and unsustainable.

Obviously, a lot of money found its way to some MNLF commanders and local government units in Mindanao from 1996 onwards. Due to the nature of the Peace Agreement with the MNLF much of the funding for development projects went straight from the funding agencies to MNLF structures like the SPCPD and the ZOPAD. Many of these initial projects failed due to the inability of some MNLF commanders to manage money and resources.

10. Conflicting Motives?

According to interviewees, the perception among many critical Mindanaoans is that there are conflicting motives for the aid and projects that go into Mindanao. The US-AID has given massive financial support for the reintegration of MNLF communities into the fold. However, the US government is also funding the present and past administration's war efforts in Mindanao. Using 9/11 and the Abu Sayyaf as political justification, the US plays an increasing role in government's campaign to pacify

⁴³ Reality Check, October 2004

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ US AID and Japan Foundation, the WB Social Fund and other funding agencies were present by 1997

⁴⁶ Ibid

armed Muslim Filipinos.⁴⁷ In 2001, the US sent 1,000 soldiers, disguised as a military exercise (Balikatan 02-1), to help the AFP fight the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan. The drastic increase in US bilateral assistance to the Philippines since 2001 is also said to be due to increased military assistance. From 2001 to 2002, US ODA for the country fell by 19%, from \$30.3 million to \$24.5 million. In contrast, US foreign military financing jumped by 900% – from \$1.9 million to \$19 million. This may serve to reveal Washington’s real agenda for Mindanao. Some people feel that the US merely wants to maintain their military presence in the southern Philippines Mindanao as part of their war against terror.

But another hidden motive for bringing financial aid may also be financial in nature. Private contractors and consultants from the donor countries have always raked in profits from ODA-funded projects. It is common practice that firms from the donor country end up signing contracts to implement the ODA-funded project. These private contractors and consultants are often long-time partners of their governments in implementing different projects worldwide. The Louis Berger Group, for example, managed the construction of the US military base in Thailand, one of the largest in Southeast Asia. The Louis Berger Group was also in charge of the ELAP and LEAP projects in Mindanao. Japan ODA for Mindanao, on the other hand, tends to concentrate on infrastructure development like the construction of roads, bridges, dams, etc. This is because Japan’s industrial structure has a very high rate of civil engineering and construction works.

The hiring of foreign consultants and contractors from the donor country allows a significant portion of aid to flow back to its source. In effect, foreign donors were simply giving their own corporations projects from which to profit. Worse still, since most foreign aid is in the form of loans, the recipient-country actually shoulders all the costs while the donor’s own contractors and consultants earn immense sums of money.⁴⁸ More importantly, local communities and/or their organizations were rarely consulted in identifying, designing, and implementing ODA projects. As such, most ODA projects do not reflect the true development needs of communities but the interests of foreign corporations. Therefore, it is no wonder why many ODA projects were feared to have lead to economic and physical displacement of communities.⁴⁹

11. Lost Years 1996 to 1997

From 1996 to 1997, some attempts to reintegrate MNLF combatants and their families back into the folds of mainstream Filipino society were scattered, disorganized, and in many cases failed to bring in immediate and long-term relief to MNLF communities. For one thing many of the MNLF rank and file did not know about the details of the peace agreement even after the treaty was signed. All they knew, was that the war has stopped and they were told to wait for further orders back in their camps.⁵⁰ Some of these combatants waited for as long as two years until service providers were finally

⁴⁷ Reality of Aid Check, October 2004

⁴⁸ Peace and Development for Whom? Bantaaw Journal Vol. 19, p. 19.

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Gathered from former MNLF combatants

able to reach out to them. Some MNLF combatants got tired of waiting and just went home.⁵¹

Also, an anonymous resource person (working for the Philippine government in Mindanao) disclosed that the political objective of the peace agreement was peace and not really development. The US government wanted a foothold in Mindanao and both the US and Philippine governments wanted to open Mindanao to investors. In the haste to make these things come true many of the projects were rushed and implemented without much planning, consultation, and capability training. In lieu of more organized and planned development programs, huge amounts of money were coursed through the MNLF Hierarchy and their State Chairmen⁵² who were made to identify and implement development programs. A management committee chaired by the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (composed of highly ranked MNLF officials) and the Bangsamoro Women's Foundation for Peace and Development (BMWFPD) as well as the government's National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and some international funding agencies oversaw "emergency" aid.⁵³ Participants were selected from combatants of the MNLF who were not integrated into the AFP or the PNP. At the MNLF state level Community Committees (COMCOM) were established to provide assistance and monitor support. The COMCOM consisted only of the State Chairs, the BMWFPD, and MNLF commanders. The BMWFPD acted as the NGO component of these emergency projects.⁵⁴

But some of the early attempts to integrate MNLF communities were also rushed. In one instance, an MNLF community in Zamboanga was given training in vegetable production. However, this particular community was composed of fisher folk who lived beside the sea and could not go into vegetable production despite the training because they had no land.

Admittedly, many of the projects supervised by the State Chairs themselves failed. Some never materialized with the money being kept or given away. In the course of interviews some MNLF commanders admitted that initially they thought the money given through the State Chairs was, "...blood money" (to pay for the lives lost during the wars) or dole outs to keep them from fighting. As an unnamed Peace and Development Agent states, "Only State Chairmen of the MNLF benefited from the early projects. Grassroots communities did not benefit mostly."

Seemingly, the failure of many projects from 1996 to 1997 in Mindanao came from management errors. Funding agencies and service providers suffered from human resource problems in the early years after the signing of the peace agreement. In Zamboanga, for example, there are only five UNDP personnel to manage 55 Peace and Development communities until now. More leaders within the MNLF structure should have been identified and given more training in peace and development building⁵⁵ to assist the UNDP and other service providers.

⁵¹ Excerpts from an interview with Commander Taupan MNLF Vice Chair for Political Affairs

⁵² The MNLF called territories where they have an armed presence "states" said to be comparable to a province. MNLF Chairmen were the officers in charge of an MNLF state with ranks equal to General.

⁵³ ELAP, p. 2

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 4

⁵⁵ Taken from interviews

There were also some early failures in monitoring. One MNLF State Chair admitted that in 1996 he was both the project supervisor and the evaluator of projects in Davao city at the same time. One MNLF Commander said that he was assigned to be the project monitor by his state chair when he did not know anything about monitoring and evaluation. Some United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) were also reported to have failed in monitoring the early (1996 - 1997) projects. Instead, the MNLF state chairs appointed their own people to monitor these projects. Even if the peace and development agent (PDA) monitors were honest and sincere, they did not have the training to evaluate the projects and programmes.

Before the Peace and Development Communities (PDCs) for the MNLF were formed in 1998, some UN volunteers merely went to the MNLF State Chairs and asked them to identify the MNLF combatants in their communities. An MNLF commander was surprised in 1996, when a UN volunteer simply walked up to him and declared that he was a Peace and Development Agent. Peace and Development Agents were only given training in 1998. With hindsight, prior to the training and formation of PDAs, trained social development workers should have been provided to assist and compliment MNLF State Chairs who were tasked to identify MNLF communities, the trainings and projects. MNLF State Chairs could also have been better trained before they were given the above mentioned tasks. In addition, more grassroots people could have been consulted⁵⁶ before projects were planned and implemented. In retrospect, the MNLF has always been formed as a military force rather than as a political organization. This explains why it lacked a comprehensive socio-political and community-based development program, and the difficulty it had in assuming the function of governance once the peace agreement was signed.

Foreign consultants often do the planning and implementing of ODA projects in Mindanao. A case in point is the formation of the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) under the Ramos administration as part of its peace agreement with the MNLF. The Philippine Government established SZOPAD's through multi-donor ODA funding led by the USAID, ADB, and World Bank. It was projected to become a 'vibrant area of economic growth, social cohesion, and sustainable development.' Consistent with the project, the ARMM government signed a law transforming the ARMM into an economic zone on August, 2003. Foreign and local investors could then locate their capital in the ARMM and enjoy certain incentives. However, to bring in the investors some local communities had to be displaced. As with the rest of the country, rich investors tend to get richer while the poor MNLF ex-combatant ended up with very little in the exchange in Mindanao.

Macro managing development projects in Mindanao may have diverted much needed development funds into projects of special economic interest to foreign investors to the neglect of local development efforts. Only 10% of the MNLF in Zamboanga and nearby provinces have been organized into Peace Development Communities. Some MNLF ex-combatants who were not integrated into the AFP/PNP, or were not given livelihood projects joined the MILF or the Abu Sanyaf groups.

⁵⁶ Taken from interview

Poverty also breeds corruption. The inclusivity policy that is built in the development projects in Mindanao necessitated the entry of Local Government Units (LGUs) into these projects. With their entry into development projects in Mindanao some funding was lost to corruption. The MNLF-Misuari faction complained that most of the projects and funding went to the 15 member Executive Committee of the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD). The Executive Committee of the SPCPD, for their part, complained that most of the development funds went to Misuari and his family.⁵⁷ Corruption, mismanagement, and neglect have contributed to the failure of development projects to uplift people's lives. In Mindanao as elsewhere, the moment a project fails to get funding or collapses due to mismanagement, grassroots people stop trusting the service providers and the government once more. Wars and conflict in Mindanao remain the norm rather than the exception.

12. Two Kinds of Peace Advocates

Of the fifty-six Central Committee members of the MNLF, thirty-seven were military officials and nineteen are civilians (including former governor Misuari). Twenty-two Central Committee members are also State Revolutionary Chairs, two with the rank of Major General, and twenty ranked as Brigadier. General by the MNLF high command. Many of them are currently working for the military or locals government units as intelligence officers or security officers. But at least three of them, resource persons for this mini-case study, also refer to themselves and their respective security details as 'peace advocates'. They call themselves peace advocates, although their work would qualify them more as 'peace and order agents', in order to get funding for their pet projects. In fact one of them, a State Chair based in southern Mindanao, had been black listed by some foreign funding agencies for pocketing a portion of the funding or selling items for his own aggrandisement. Despite this setback, this particular MNLF State Chair talked to us with the hope that he could get some more funded projects in the near future. He said he wanted to help his people. By people, he may have been referring to his four to five wives and their children. These are the kind of peace advocates that foreign funding agencies and service providers should avoid.

In contrast to the previous example, there are also real 'peace agents' who have been given training by the UNDP and other credible agencies and who have organized themselves into Peace and Development Communities. The peace advocates whom we met in Zamboanga, Davao, and Basilan mostly come from an MNLF community. But a growing number of them are not from the MNLF. Some are not even Muslim. Although the training were originally given only to MNLF beneficiaries, now the training is given to all interested parties because peace and development cannot be the exclusive property of just one group. Some of the elderly men were officers during their MNLF combat days but none of those we talked to were of the level of State Chair. Their Central Committee does not allow MNLF State Chairs to actively participate in peace and development communities, supporting the thesis that the MNLF never really intended to reintegrate fully into Filipino society. Many of the peace and development advocates were ordinary people, many of them were women, who work within the framework of their community to make their lives just a little

⁵⁷ Misuari's wife was placed in charge of the WB Social Fund in Mindanao

more bearable. All they want are some livelihood projects and a little more transparency from the federations who manage and submit their project proposals.

13. Actions for Peace

From 1996 to 1997, only 20% of the economic provisions of the peace agreement have been implemented. This came from Peace and Development Advocates who were asked to give their observations and insights regarding past efforts to integrate MNLF communities into the main stream of Filipino society. But when accredited service providers handled projects professionally, the same said programs became more effective and sustainable. By 1998, some 3,952 MNLF combatants were able to receive training and assistance in seaweed cultivation by emergency projects that began in 1997. By 2001, the number of recipients from emergency livelihood training projects rose to 13, 902. But the recipients were individuals and not communities as a collective. Community based projects only began with the 'Act for Peace' program.

Sometime in 2001, a community-based approach began to be implemented in PDCs located in MNLF territories. The training of PDA's from the ranks of the MNLF and their families began on January, 1998. An expanded phase for emergency and livelihood assistance was given in post-conflict areas from 1998 to 2001. From June 2001 to June 2004, phase three commenced by creating the PDCs and by extending peace and development projects to include Non-muslim communities and adopting a tri-people approach.⁵⁸ In 2002, as phase three of the Acts for Peace program came into effect, Local Government Units were employed to oversee most of the development projects. This was also the time when peace and development projects became "inclusive" or given to non-Muslim and non-MNLF communities as well. Some MNLF commanders complained that while this approach was commendable, many MNLF communities did not directly benefit from this assistance. They complained that they were the ones who went to war, got concessions, but that it was others that got too much too soon. Due to the inclusivity policy above mentioned, MNLF communities now have to compete with local government units (LGUs) for projects and funding.

Phase four began on June 2005 and will end on June 2010. Phase four is also called "Act for Peace" and is geared towards giving the PDCs more responsibilities in crafting their own preferred future towards a longer term and sustainable development. The Act for Peace program has adopted a six-stage approach. Stage one was confidence building. Stage two was/is peace constituency building, hence the creation of PDAs. Stage three is strengthening capacities. Stage four is the implementation of the training that PDAs have received from stages one to three. Stage five is adoption of the program by the PDCs themselves. Stage six is said to be that of empowerment.

⁵⁸ Tri-people of Mindanao are the Muslims, Christians, and the Lumads (Indigenous People)

Act for Peace: Six Stage Approach

1. Confidence building
2. Peace Constituency
3. Strengthening capacities
4. Implementation
5. Adoption
6. Empowerment

As Table 3 demonstrates, at the time of this report, only nine out of 263 PDC's across Mindanao have reached stage five of the process to-date. Most are still in stages two to four.

Table 3: Programmatic and Integrative Aid For Mindanao

Time Frame	Phase	Nature of Response	Funding agents and service providers	Actions taken	Comments
1996-1997	1	Emergency response and needs assessment	UN UNDP, NEDA, SPCPD WB- Social Fund Japan MOFA	Relief and Rehab	Many projects were rushed and not properly monitored
1998-2001	2	Expanded emergency response	Same	PDA's were trained	Confidence building measures were effective
2001-2004	3	Test to implement multi-donor programs	EU, Australia, Canada were invited	PDCs and the PDA federations were organized	Development projects became context driven. PCIA and Participatory approaches were made for Needs assessment and planning. Also Development projects were extended to non Muslim participants (Inclusive approach)
2004-2007	4	Successor phase of development projects	Acts for Peace, MEDCO	Implementation of 6 stage approach	Acts for Peace is a UNDP implemented program

It used to be that Community organizers could go straight to the funding agencies with their community based project proposals for funding. In 2007, a new procedure was introduced. Community Organizers (CO's) still conduct planning and draft proposals for livelihood projects with community members. However, COs then submit their proposals to the Alliance and then the Federation for endorsement. The alliance then submits the proposal to the Federation for finalization and technical support. The Federation then submits the proposal for funding straight to the Area Management Office if the project cost is less than 200,000 pesos. If the project cost more than that the proposal is sent to the Provicinial Management Office for funding.

Organisational Structure of the PDC's:	
Peace and Development Community ↓	(PDC)
Community Organizer ↓	(CO)
Peace and Development Advocates Alliance ↓	(PDAAL)
Peace and Development Alliance Federation ↓	(Fed)
Area Management Office ↓	(Act for Peace)
Provincial Management Office ⇨	Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCO)

The new organizational structure of PDCs was created so as to facilitate the submission of project proposals and to ensure that projects are distributed equitably to all the PDCs in the province or area. But some PDAs have complained that at times their proposals “got stuck” at the federation level and that they have to wait for several months now in order to know about the status of their proposed project. Some PDAs have opined that the new structure may have just created more bureaucracy and red tape for them to deal with.

Some community organizers from Zamboanga have also complained that the processes for project proposals were at times not followed. Project proposals have to pass through a Federation where the problem is perceived (by interviewed PDAs) to lie in the leadership of the Federation and not of the structure itself. These COs also complained that the Federation would deduct 2,100 pesos from their monthly allowance of 5,000 pesos as technical fees. That’s almost 50% of their monthly allowance. The COs said that what they needed was more transparency from their leaders.

14. Some Lessons Learned

The extent of demobilization under the Integration phase to the military program was too small compared to the estimated number of MNLF combatants required to partake. This is because it was wrongly assumed, on the part of the government, that the MNLF would eventually disband⁵⁹. The MNLF could have then perhaps formed a political party, and its combatants transformed to private citizens earning a living and leading a peaceful and legitimate livelihood. However, it turned out the MNLF never had such plans and while it wanted peace, it also wanted to retain its arms and camps as well.

In the long run, there are no guarantees that the 1996 peace agreement will sustain itself, especially since the other aspects of the Peace Agreement have not worked out. When the MILF rebel activity intensified in late 1999 and early 2000, there were reports of former MNLF rebels joining the ranks of the MILF and other Muslim dissidents. Also, two of the MNLF rebels who integrated into the AFP were among

⁵⁹ Ferrer, p. 31

the six alleged members of the Abu Sayyaf group killed in an encounter with the military in Patikul, Sulu on 31 January 2000. The two, Private Tating Asbarin and Private Abdun Isnari, were reportedly assigned to the AFP 51st Infantry Battalion and the intelligence unit of the 3rd Marine Brigade. Rifles believed to have been issued by the government and Army identification cards were reportedly recovered from the slain soldiers.

What comes first the chicken or the egg? It seems that this paradox applies to the Mindanao experience with DDR. While the government and the UNDP are still trying to bring about social development in Mindanao in order to end the conflicts, at the same time Mindanao remains a critical front on the 'war against terrorism' despite past and present assistance programmes. While most of the MNLF cadres have integrated into mainstream society, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf groups remain hostile. Last June 10, 2007, fourteen Philippine marines were killed by MILF in Basilan⁶⁰. They were on a search and rescue mission to find kidnapped Italian priest Father. Bossi, when they were ambushed⁶¹. Despite the integrative and programmatic approach being attempted by the UNDP's 'Act for Peace' program, longer-term peace and a sustainable development will not take root if peace is still lacking in Mindanao. Because there is no peace, efforts at social development will have difficulties in succeeding in Mindanao. But without proper development, poverty and conflict will remain to be the case. There should have been a clear reinsertion phase before the reintegration phase so as not to confuse program objectives.

The reinsertion program could have focused on the "healing of old wounds of the past". Participatory planning strategies and Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments (PCIA's) could have then followed. Only then, should the reintegration phase have begun.

With hindsight, perhaps reintegration should not have been initiated in 1996 in Mindanao without first disarming and demobilizing the MNLF. A lot of the arms that the MNLF kept after the peace accord are still in use against the Philippine government today. The MNLF were prominent in the attack against Philippine government troops in Sulu on August 10, 2007, killing some 27 soldiers, the largest number of killed in action for the military in just one day. Some weapons are kept in MNLF armories to be used when fighting resumes. Other weapons were sold or transferred to the MILF or to the Abu Sayyaf. Some MNLF ex-combatants formed or joined kidnap for ransom groups. It is an open secret in Mindanao that the lines between the MNLF, MILF and the Abu Sayyaf are very thin indeed. They are all related somehow. The father of an Abu Sayyaf member may be an MNLF integree. His uncle is with the MILF. In addition it has been reported that some MNLF ex-combatants and/or MILF combatants are also Abu Sayyaf "by night". Before or even while social reintegration efforts were implemented in Mindanao, the MNLF should have been disarmed and demobilized. Instead of just exchanging guns for money, the MNLF should have been given more scholarships to formal and informal educational programs to increase their chances to reintegrate successfully.

⁶⁰ Basilan is MNLF territory. What were the MILF doing there?

⁶¹ 10 of the fourteen marines were beheaded and mutilated allegedly by the Abu Sayyaf after the ambush

Regarding development efforts from 1996-1997, more time should have been spent in preparing MNLF communities for social integration. The healing of old wounds should have first been addressed. MNLF leaders should have been adequately prepared to engage in development and community organizing work. Then community based Participatory Needs Assessment and PCIA should have been conducted before the large amounts of financial aid have been released. What the Act for Peace program is doing right now in phase four of the development program should be replicated, and expanded to include more initiatives or 'spaces' for peace. As such, community participatory needs assessment, PCIA and the proper mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation should be in place before the actual implementation of development projects. .

15. Policy Implications

1. Disarmament and demobilization prior or simultaneous to social reintegration is still the norm in post-peace agreement rehabilitation and rebuilding.
2. As far as The MNLF experience is concerned, there is no evidence to show that DDR is obsolete, as some people in Mindanao claim.
3. The demobilization and disarmament of the MNLF would have brought about a more sustainable peace in Mindanao.
4. Reintegration without demobilization and disarmament as in the case of the MNLF has failed to bring about the desired peace and stability in Mindanao.
5. In the reinsertion phase, sufficient time and adequate human resource to prepare the recipient communities is important.
6. Participatory needs assessment with the communities and skills training of local implementors, especially in the initial stage, are crucial in making long-term peace and development work sustainable.
7. Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment has proven to be valuable to peace and development projects⁶² in Mindanao.
8. A programmatic and integrative approach to reintegration and long-term peace and development, like the 'Act for Peace' program in Mindanao, is worthy of study and replication.
9. Community organizing processes which clearly integrate a culture of peace awareness, such as the "Historic journey" (sharing of stories) for the tri-people of Mindanao, is commendable.

⁶²Dr. Marcelina Carpio cited a case wherein a fishpond project was installed for a local PDC in Zamboanga. Ensuing quarrels over the right to water and waterways with privately owned fish pond owners led to the death of the son of one of the community organizers in that locality.

10. A thorough information, communication and education strategy regarding the substance of the peace agreement for all the stakeholders would have been crucial in avoiding frustrations and misconceptions which later eroded support for the peace agreement.
11. The timing of the implementation of an “inclusiveness policy” should not be at the expense of some MNLF communities that claimed to have been neglected.⁶³
12. The reintegration of communities in conflict must always be seen in the context of the other armed conflicts within the same geographical area.

⁶³ Livelihood projects no longer reach some MNLF communities because of too many channels and takers.

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