

PRESS RELEASE

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Ms. Noraida Adang Abdullah Karim of Community and Family Services International (CFSI) has been named a recipient of the "Voices of Courage" Award to be given by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children at an awards luncheon in New York City on 10 May 2007. The "Voices of Courage" awards are presented each year to people or organizations from around the world that have shown commitment and leadership to promote the well-being of displaced women, children, and youth.

Noraida was born in Cotabato City in 1970 and spent most of her formative years in Datu Piang in Maguindanao, Mindanao, Philippines. Her childhood and youth were marked by poverty, repeated displaced due to armed conflict in Mindanao, and a determined desire to survive. She finished high school in 1988 and, like many others, left war-torn Mindanao in hopes of safety in Manila. Noraida spent the next five years assisting other displaced Muslims in Metro Manila organize to meet basic needs and advocate for peace negotiations in Mindanao.

The peace agreement of 1996 set the stage for Noraida's return to Mindanao. She began working with local civil society organizations concerned with human rights, the situation of displaced persons, and livelihood projects for poor women. Noraida also went back to school, completing a degree in social work at De La Vida College in Cotabato City in 1999. Later, she taught social work at the same college.

War broke out again in 2000, resulting in the displacement of more than 930,000 people and the beginning of CFSI activity in Mindanao.

A licensed and highly experienced social worker, Noraida began her service with CFSI in March 2001 as Community Organizing Officer, helping large numbers of internally displaced persons to return to their communities of origin and begin making the transition from conflict to peace. She subsequently played a leading role in the Literacy, Livelihood, and Food Sufficiency Project for women and male youth that CFSI field-tested for the World Bank. Noraida then stepped up to lead the "Arms are for Hugging Project" that has helped ensure over 600 formerly out-of-school children and youth have access to primary education in their own community in Inug-ug, Pagalungan, Maguindanao.

Noraida is presently Officer-in-Charge of CFSI operations in Mindanao and, concurrently, Coordinator of the Food Assistance Project that CFSI is carrying out in conflict-affected communities in Maguindanao in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP).

All those who have seen her work, know that Noraida has significantly contributed to the safety and well-being of very large numbers of people. Many have been impressed by her hard work, strength of character, courage, and humility.

Happily married to Ustadz Hashem E. Abdullah Karim, Noraida is an excellent example of servant leadership and the best of CFSI. The mission of CFSI—a Philippine-based humanitarian organization now celebrating its 25th anniversary—is to protect and promote human security, specifically the lives, well being, and dignity of people uprooted by persecution, armed conflict, disasters, and other exceptionally difficult circumstances.

CFSI nominated Noraida for the “Voices of Courage” award, upon the recommendation of Board Member Sheila Platt. The nomination was strongly supported by partners and friends of CFSI.

In addition to the “Voices of Courage” award, Noraida has been chosen to give the keynote address at this year’s awards luncheon in New York. This will enable her to expand her advocacy efforts on behalf of women, children, and youth in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao.

End of Press Release of 19 January 2007



Noraida Adang Abdullah Karim, Dec 2006