

# PROMOTING THE TRANSITION FROM CONFLICT TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

PILOT PROJECT IN THE PHILIPPINES

Progress Report Number Two  
01 October through 31 December 2001

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*Front Cover Artwork: Peace Posters made by internally displaced children during one of the Peace Festivals organized by CFSI in cooperation with other local NGOs.*

# **PROMOTING THE TRANSITION FROM CONFLICT TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL**

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### **Introduction**

Community and Family Services International (CFSI)—a Philippines-based social development organization with twenty years of domestic and international experience with uprooted persons—has received funds from the Post Conflict Fund of the World Bank for a pilot project amongst internally displaced persons in Mindanao. There are two general objectives:

1. Make a difference in the lives of Filipinos displaced by armed conflict by working with the affected communities to develop enabling conditions that encourage safe return or settlement, facilitate the process of transition and stabilization, and provide a foundation for peace building and sustainable development.
2. Contribute to the existing knowledge base by developing and testing models that will inform approaches to the transition from conflict to peace.

The coverage of this project includes 6,759 families (33,550 persons) in five municipalities in two provinces and two regions of Mindanao.

This report—Progress Report Number Two—summarizes progress made towards project objectives between 01 October and 31 December 2001. It builds on the first progress report that was released in late October 2001.

### **Working Environment**

The working environment from October through December was challenging for both negative and positive reasons. It had a direct impact on project implementation.

On the negative side was the complicated security situation. Despite a cease-fire agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the situation on the ground remained tense. Gunfire between the Government's military and police forces on the one hand and what are locally referred to as "kidnap for ransom gangs" on the other, affected civilians and increased the risks of armed confrontations between these parties as well as with the MILF, especially when they spilled over to areas perceived to be under MILF control. Armed clashes resulted in more displacement albeit usually of a temporary nature (e.g., the displacement of more than 20,000 people in Pikit, North Cotabato late in the reporting period).

The debates associated with the election for the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), as well as the results of that election, generated tensions at various levels. Conflict within the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) as well as between the MNLF and Government forces—including an uprising in Zamboanga City staged by MNLF forces loyal to former Chairman Nur Misuari—generated both greater anxiety and the potential for yet more violence in Central Mindanao. In addition, crime—in the form of kidnappings, murders, and threats appeared to be on the increase, even in Cotabato City.

Regrettably, action on felt needs appeared not to be taken in a timely manner. For instance, many of the internally displaced wanted to leave the evacuation centers and return to their communities of origin before the end of 2001, but could not do so because they had received no assistance to rebuild homes and schools destroyed during the war of 2000. Hopelessness about the future, combined with the depression of life in an evacuation center, contributed to the possibility of untoward events.

On a more positive note, the Islamic community observed the holy month of Ramadan and the Christian community celebrated the Christmas season. Both communities expressed appreciation for these moments of joy at the end of a fairly depressing 2001. The loss in productivity during these periods seemed to be a small cost when compared to all of the challenges of the same time frame.

In summary, CFSI personnel continued to operate under less than ideal circumstances, often at a relatively high-risk of danger in one form or another. Project plans and implementation efforts were adjusted according to the very fluid security situation, developments in the political arena, and the holiday schedules of the various service-providers as well as affected communities.

## **Activities**

CFSI activities during the last quarter of 2001 were focused primarily, but not exclusively, on the project's first objective: assist affected communities to develop enabling conditions that encourage safe return or settlement, facilitate the process of transition and stabilization, and provide a foundation for peace building and development. These activities were consistent with the priorities outlined in Progress Report Number One, namely:

- (1) Undertake community profiling;
- (2) Fast-track "Go and See Visits";
- (3) Fully operationalize the livelihood component;
- (4) Strengthen and expand peace education efforts;
- (5) Strengthen and expand the psychosocial services component;
- (6) Secure approval of the sub-contracts for CFSI's Research Partners;
- (7) Contribute to the Mindanao Social Assessment effort;
- (8) Finalize the arrangements with the External Evaluator; and
- (9) Prepare proposals for calendar year 2002 operations.

The primary processes involved:

1. Promoting—through intensified community organizing and education—the participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in efforts to identify and address community needs as well as achieve durable solutions;
2. Enhancing—through consultation, mobilization, and encouragement—the roles of community leaders both in the evacuation centers and the communities of origin; and
3. Increasing—through advocacy, networking, and brokering—community access to the services and resources of Local Government Units (LGUs); line agencies of Government such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA); and the private sector.

### **Achievements**

Much was achieved during the reporting period. A significant highlight was the increasingly active participation of the IDPs in the various programmes of CFSI and others. CFSI was able to move ahead with a greater degree of efficiency in its service delivery to the IDPs. A summary of some of the more significant achievements follows.

### **Community Organizing**

In order to strengthen the participation of the internally displaced as well as to enhance their capacities to identify and address community needs, CFSI worked closely with recognized community leaders and volunteers. Training was provided for both, but particularly the latter, with the aim being responsive and timely action on the concerns of the IDPs. The seventy (70) volunteers who were organized and trained by CFSI in close consultation with recognized leaders were called “Sumpats”. “Sumpat” comes from the Maguindanaoan dialect and means “connecting with”. For the Maguindanaons, “sumpat” is the all-encompassing word for relationships at the personal, familial, and community levels.



The “Sumpats” represented the ideal of community-based leaders who are considered essential partners of CFSI and other stakeholders of peace with responsibility for facilitating social development efforts in war-affected communities. The criteria for becoming a “Sumpat” included being credible in the eyes of the community, literate, possessing leadership skills, and having the time necessary to carry out tasks in the community.

The “Sumpats” were seen as a critical core group in the IDP communities and were mobilized by CFSI Community Organizers at all project sites for a variety of important tasks. For instance, the “Sumpats” assisted the CFSI Community Organizers in coordinating activities, gathering data, disseminating information, organizing groups and committees, and giving feedback on conditions in the area.

### **Community Information**

The “Sumpats” also helped CFSI organize Information Committees in the evacuation centers. The aim was to ensure a range of service providers had greater knowledge about the situation of the IDPs and the IDPs had greater knowledge about available resources and services as well as efforts at the national, provincial, and municipal policy and planning levels. Community information activities were strengthened by the construction of “Pulungan Centers”. A “Pulungan Center” is typically a hut-like structure made out of indigenous materials with a specific design that has meaning for the community. Sometimes known as a “Purok”, the Pulungan Center is a meeting place or center for community gatherings.

The construction of a “Pulungan Center” in an evacuation center or community of origin starts when IDPs, members of the host community, or returnees voice the need for such a gathering spot and express a commitment to making it happen. In the case of the evacuation center setting, IDP leaders and the “Pulungan” or Information Committees coordinate with the leaders of the host communities to identify a site most suitable for constructing the Center. When an agreement has been reached, the Committee prepares a budget and presents a letter of request for funding support addressed to CFSI.

The average budget for the construction of a “Pulungan Center” ranged from P5,000 to P6,000\* inclusive of the imputed value of the IDPs’ labour, which was paid in the form of a “food for work” scheme. The average size of a “Pulungan Center” was ten (10) feet by ten (10) feet. “Pulungan Centers” generally included a blackboard and a bulletin board for information dissemination and announcements of community decisions and activities. As earlier mentioned, the counterpart contribution of the IDPs was usually labour. In many cases, the host community donated cement, galvanized iron roofing materials, nipa palm sidings, coco lumber, or other helpful items.

Some of the “Pulungan Centers” were designed to be a bit larger and to serve as multi-purpose centers that the communities could use to hold large group meetings, gather information, and discuss issues and concerns affecting their well being and development. These “Pulungan Centers” were also intended to serve as venues for the strengthening of relationships amongst the IDPs. Gatherings at the “Pulungan Centers” helped the IDPs re-establish their identity as a community as they talked about common concerns, aired grievances, and exchanged views in order to arrive at solutions to their problems. For many, the construction of a “Pulungan Center” was a symbol of community stability and a favourable peace and order situation.

*\*PHP50 = 1USD*

## Community Profiling

Two (2) separate community profiling efforts were conducted by CFSI in October 2001. The “Sumpats” played a major role in these initiatives and some of the “Pulungan Centers” provided the perfect venue for both explaining the rationale and collecting the data.

The first profiling effort focused on internally displaced persons being accommodated in the thirty (30) evacuation centers covered by CFSI in the municipalities of Pagalungan, Pagagawan, and Carmen. As noted in Progress Report Number One, 3,140 displaced families (15,708 persons) were interviewed. The collected data was encoded and analysed over the course of the following months and will soon be released in the form of a report. A comprehensive database was established that allows for informed programme planning as well as the tracking of movement from evacuation centers to communities of origin.

The second community profiling effort focused on those who had already returned to the fourteen (14) barangays of origin to which most of the currently displaced are also expected to return. These fourteen (14) barangays are located in five (5) municipalities—Pagalungan, Pagagawan, Carmen, Kabacan, and Pikit.

Whilst highlights of the preliminary results of the community profiling activities in the evacuation centers were included in Progress Report Number One, profiling in the communities (barangays) of origin involved 3,619 families (17,842 persons) broken down as follows.

Province of Maguindanao	
Municipality of Pagalungan	353 families (1,769 persons)
Municipality of Pagagawan	1,377 families (6,926 persons)
Sub-Totals	1,730 families (8,695 persons)
Province of North Cotabato	
Municipality of Carmen	567 families (3,024 persons)
Municipality of Kabacan	257 families (1,207 persons)
Municipality of Pikit	1,065 families (4,916 persons)
Sub-Totals	1,889 families (9,147 persons)
Totals	3,619 families (17,842 persons)

The preliminary results of the profiling in the communities of origin suggested the sex ratio was 108 males to every 100 females. Fifty-one and a half percent (51.5%) of the females were in the reproductive age group (15 to 49 years). The age dependency ratio was 80 dependents to every 100 persons in the economically productive age group (15 to 64 years). Children and youth comprised 62.5% of the population with children (below 18 years) comprising 49.5% of the total population and the youth (15 to 24 years of age) representing 20% of the total population.

Over 85% of the population were Maguindanaons and just under 88% were of the Islamic faith. Only 22.6% of the primary respondents (mostly heads of families and mostly males) reported attaining more than a primary education. More than forty-six percent (46%) of the primary respondents reported receiving at least part of their education in a Madrasah.

The full report of CFSI profiling efforts in both the evacuation centers and in the communities of origin should be released during the first quarter of 2002. However, it is interesting to note that: (1) the vast majority of the IDPs wished to return to their communities of origin, but were not moving out of the evacuation centers owing to security concerns, the destruction of their homes, and the fear that they could not earn a living in a timely manner; (2) both the IDPs and the returnees already in the communities of origin had seen their previously low family incomes reduced by almost fifty percent as a result of the war in Central Mindanao in 2000; and (3) both groups reported significantly high possibilities of trauma within their communities.

### **Go and See Visits**

To ensure the IDPs could make informed decisions about their futures, CFSI worked very hard to fast-track “Go and See Visits”. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) developed the “Go and See Visit” methodology for repatriation efforts in other countries. “Go and See Visits” allow uprooted persons to briefly return to their communities of origin in safety, dignity, and peace for the purpose of getting a first-hand feel of the situation there.



In the context of conflict-affected Mindanao, “Go and See Visits” provide the IDPs with the opportunity to get a sense of the security conditions obtaining in their communities of origin/return and to make an on-site assessment of whatever family and community infrastructure and assets remain after the war. The “Go and See Visits” also allow them to note damaged or destroyed properties as well as to begin thinking about what would be required in order to return home.

Upon their return late the same day to the evacuation centers, CFSI begins helping the participants to process the physical, intellectual, and emotional experiences associated with the “Go and See Visit”. Shortly thereafter, CFSI helps the participants of each “Go and See Visit” determine what would be necessary for a successful return as well as to formulate plans for site development in their communities of origin. With their newly obtained first-hand knowledge of the conditions in their communities of origin, the IDPs start the process of making informed decisions on whether they should return, remain in the evacuation center for the time being, or aim to settle elsewhere.

CFSI facilitated four “Go and See Visits” during the reporting period, each involving large numbers of IDPs accompanied by local government officials and representatives of both government and private organizations. These included visits to: Barangay Malapag and Barangay Liliongan in Carmen as well as Barangay Kudal and Barangay Bangoenged in Pagalungan. In the case of the visit to Barangay Liliongan, the staff of the Municipal Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Rural Health Unit (RHU), and representatives from the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Carmen, North Cotabato and Region XII participated. CFSI’s advocacy efforts with the Local Government Units (LGUs) resulted in strengthening the close linkage and coordination necessary to ensure that returning IDPs remain in their communities of origin. CFSI’s partner—the Mindanao Network for Disaster Response (MNDR)—publicized some of the “Go and See Visits” through stories and photos in the newspapers of Mindanao. This helped build a supportive environment for IDP returns.

It should be noted that much effort was made to ensure the safety of the IDPs, CFSI personnel, and representatives of various government agencies and nongovernmental organizations participating in the “Go and See Visits”. CFSI personnel, community-based “Peace-Makers”, and the members of the community-based Peace Committees liaised with both the Government’s armed forces and the armed forces of other groups prior to the start of any “Go and See Visit”. Where necessary, security clearances were secured. Throughout the visit, banners, special shirts, balloons, and musical instruments were used to alert others to the peaceful purpose of the participants. That being said, “Go and See Visits” are risky and often physically challenging as the participants walk up mountains and through muddy fields. The large numbers of IDP participants in each of the past “Go and See Visit” is a testament to their appreciation for their community of origin, if not their strong desire to return home.

Significant numbers of IDPs acted on their desire to return home during the reporting period. For example, in November CFSI accompanied 46 families (246 persons) from evacuation centers back to their community of origin in Barangay Nangaan in the municipality of Kabacan, North Cotabato. CFSI worked closely with DSWD in assisting the returnees to obtain food, temporary shelter, and supplementary funds from the appropriate agencies.

In follow up of “Go and See Visits” as well as safe returns and in support of the Government’s desire to make it possible for as many IDPs as possible to return home by the end of 2001, CFSI organized two “Visioning Workshops” for returnees. These were held in Barangay Liliongan and Sitio Kibudtungan, both in the municipality of Carmen.

The aim of the one-day “Visioning Workshops” was a review, on the part of the returnees, of past experience followed by an assessment of future possibilities. The workshops employed strategies and methodologies to assist the participants to come up with individual and community visions for the future, including plans to bring these about. Also discussed were their ideas on peace and their roles as peace advocates in their communities. The participants indicated that these workshops helped them speak out about their concerns and share their experiences. Further, they suggested that these workshops had the potential to contribute to the healing process at the community level.

The viewing of the documentary film produced by CFSI in mid-2001 entitled “Women Displaced by War” was included on the agenda of the “Visioning Workshops”. It was also shown in a variety of evacuation centers. The film proved to be an effective tool for promoting discussion about the need for peace and reconciliation at the community level.

### **Livelihood Assistance**

CFSI’s livelihood assistance programme was developed in response to the urgent financial needs and concerns of the IDPs, both those still in the evacuation centers and those who had already returned or were about to return to their communities of origin. Two (2) livelihood assistance schemes were formulated in consultation with the target beneficiaries.

The first scheme was designed for implementation in the evacuation centers and was referred to as “Start Up Capital Assistance” or SUCA. The aim was to provide immediate sources of income for those IDP families who, due to reasons beyond their control, were not yet able or would not be able to return to their communities of origin in the immediate future. Continuing incidents of armed conflict or the presence of armed groups in their areas, including those belonging to the government’s armed forces, were the most common reasons for the inability to return. The focus of this livelihood scheme was primarily directed to vulnerable sectors of the IDP population, particularly female-headed households, widows, and single women. It had been observed that in the evacuation centers and in not a few cases, women carried the sole responsibility of looking after their families.

The first release for the SUCA amounted to P15,290 to the benefit of fifty-seven (57) female IDPs coming from Sitio Gantong, Barangay Inug-ug, municipality of Pagalungan. The releases were coursed through a bank in Midsayap, North Cotabato at no cost to the beneficiaries. The assistance allowed the women to start small income-generating projects in the evacuation centers that would help meet their basic needs and/or augment the relief goods that were sporadically distributed. Examples of their small business ventures were the selling of fish, fruits, and vegetables which required very small capital outlays, some for as little as P500 per member or P1,500 for a “Team” made up of three (3) women. Others sold “malongs”, locally woven skirts routinely worn by most of the women in the community.

The second scheme was called “Livelihood Assistance upon Return” or LAUR. It placed greater emphasis on building social cohesion through a group-work approach. The aim was to support the return to, and reintegration of, displaced families



in their communities of origin. Assistance was available as start-up capital for “Teams” comprised of four (4) to five (5) members who were heads of families or represented individual families. “Teams” were grouped according to their identified livelihood projects. Three (3) teams comprised a “Group” and a “Cluster” is comprised of all the “Groups” in one sitio. This livelihood assistance package was significantly larger than that of the SUCA with the maximum amount per project and per group being P25,000.

The LAUR served as a “pull” factor of sorts for the IDPs. In other words, it encouraged those who could, to return to their communities of origin and begin rebuilding their lives rather than remain in the evacuation centers dependent upon relief assistance. For example, the first recipients of the LAUR were 77 IDP families (roughly 385 persons) who were scheduled to return within the month to their community of origin known as Sitio Agakan in the province of Maguindanao, Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Sitio Agakan is situated at the outer edge of Barangay Inug-Ug in Pagalungan. The opposite boundary is the Liguasan Marsh. As such, fishing was principal source of livelihood prior to displacement. Most heads of families and members possessed good skills in fishing, with farming serving as their alternate source of income. Incidentally, Sitio Agakan was the first sitio in the area to be immediately affected by the government’s all-out war against the MILF. Furthermore, it had been adversely affected by frequent flooding as a result of overflows from the marsh. Less than ten (10%) percent of the population was believed to be literate.

Through a series of consultations and planning sessions with the IDPs, five (5) “Groups” were organized and assisted in developing project proposals related to their skills and resources. Each “Group” was made up of three (3) “Teams” representing four (4) or five (5) families each. Four (4) of the “Groups” proposed fishing, using varied types of fishing gear from nets to fish traps. The other group proposed to raise ducks. The abundance of water in the area provided the families with good opportunities to support and sustain both types of projects. It was envisaged that, through the income derived from these projects, they would be able to engage at the same time in initiating their farming activities and rebuilding their homes. In total, the five (5) groups comprised of nineteen (19) teams representing 77 families (385 persons) received a total P101,891 from CFSI or roughly P20,396 per group (P5,363 per team and P1,324 per family).



In both the LAUR and SUCA livelihood schemes, an intensive orientation and group formation process preceded the processing of proposals. The IDP leaders were oriented by CFSI personnel on the overall aim of the livelihood assistance program which was to provide their community with start-up capital to enable them to gradually establish a sustainable source of income and thus gain self-sufficiency through group and community cooperation. The succeeding group formation processes guided the IDPs in evaluating their priorities, assessing their needs, and matching their skills and resources. In Agakan, for example, the IDPs had skills and some resources for farming but at the same time had immediate needs for their daily and weekly income. Most of the groups eventually opted for fishing where income to support their families' daily needs could be expected at least on a weekly basis. Moreover, from such income, savings could be generated from which they could later finance their needed farm inputs.

In contrast, displaced families from Sitio Gantong had little or no material resources but had the skills and experience that could be applied to generate income. The proximity of their evacuation centers to the main elementary school and to the Liguasan Marsh provided these families with opportunities to engage in small businesses based on fishing activities and products. During the processes of assessment, prioritisation, and planning, the IDPs initially formed small groupings (i.e., "Teams") wherein the members knew and trusted one another. Eventually, this led to their formation of livelihood "Groups" and a "Cluster". With CFSI assistance, their ideas and aspirations were turned into simple proposals—despite the low literacy level in this community. The whole process ended with a one-day training for the group members wherein they were provided with inputs on the values of savings, teamwork, and participatory leadership. A lot of visual aids and interactive learning strategies were employed throughout the orientation and training process.

Although IDPs were/are not viewed by many in Philippine society as "bankable", CFSI's livelihood assistance programme took the initiative of introducing these people to banking processes. With the full cooperation of the selected banks, the regular banking processes were followed during the release of the funds for their approved livelihood projects. For example, in Kabacan, North Cotabato, these releases took place in the bank. This allowed the IDP group members to experience first-hand the process of claiming, receiving, endorsing and cashing the checks representing their livelihood assistance. All the members of each group became joint payees and signatories on the checks to ensure transparency. Since the group members had already performed the necessary price canvassing activities for their project, all they then had to do was pay for, and pick up, their materials and supplies.

Some of the livelihood projects were launched through the holding of traditional rites and rituals such as the "Kanduli Para sa Kagkayagan". In Sitio Agakan, Barangay Inug-ug, Pagalungan, representatives of local government units (LGUs), bank officials, and representatives from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) came to witness this important event.

The processing of projects for livelihood assistance was intensified during the month of December, including training activities for LAUR beneficiaries prior to fund releases. A total of eleven (11)

“Groups” composed of twenty-four (24) “Teams” representing 125 families (625 persons) coming from Sitio Kabanbanan, Barangay Gli-gli in Pikit Municipality, North Cotabato province and Sitio Sambulawan, Barangay Nabundas, in Pagagawan Municipality, Maguindanao province underwent the training in livelihood assistance. A total of P135,320.00 was processed during the month of December or roughly P12,302 per group (P5,638 per team or P1,083 per family). However, owing to the holidays and security challenges, some of the releases originally scheduled for December had to be deferred until January 2002.

Overall for this three month reporting period, a total of P252,501 was processed and approved for release.

To help ensure greater coverage as well as the sustainability of community-based livelihood initiatives, CFSI established preliminary linkages with the University of Southern Mindanao (USM) in Kabacan, North Cotabato. USM has a programme known as “Pagkain ng Masa” (“Food for the Masses”). This programme promotes household-level food security by using the “Bahay Kubo” or “Nipa Hut” self-contained home concept. The aim is to enable each household to have within its own backyard the technology and materials needed to ensure a sustainable food supply year round. Consultations between CFSI and USM led to an agreement that war-affected communities are eligible for participation in the “Pagkain ng Masa” programme.

### **Peace Education**

By the end of June 2001, CFSI had mobilized and quickly trained 204 community-based “Peace-Makers”. CFSI peace education efforts were intensified during the last quarter of 2001 with the introduction of a new training initiative entitled “Basic Course on Peace Education and Reconciliation”. The objective of this course was skills development and greater capacities vis-à-vis conflict mediation and peace promotion at the community level. Fifty (50) Peace-Makers in, or from, Carmen, North Cotabato participated in the piloting of this course. The feedback they provided will inform the further development of the course. Input from CFSI’s partner—Kadtuntaya Foundation, Inc. (KFI)—will also be taken into consideration.



Many of these and other Peace-Makers participated in a “Peace-Makers’ Consultation and Orientation” organized by CFSI and held in Carmen in December in honour of the 53<sup>rd</sup> International Human Rights Day. Officials from local government units and the DSWD as well as a number of internally displaced persons participated in this gathering.

The aim of this exercise was to encourage the use of a human rights framework for promoting peace in the community and facilitating safe returns from the evacuation centers to the barangays of origin. The consultation also provided the Peace-Makers with the opportunity to come together from different locations, build relationships, share experiences, and make specific plans for their own communities. Many of the Peace-Makers were still displaced and living in evacuation centers whilst others had already returned to their communities of origin. As such, the sharing of experiences was important for both programme development and forward planning.

### **Psychosocial Services**

Recognizing the need for basic psychosocial services in the community of origins—not just in the evacuation centers—CFSI began training and supervising additional “Psychosocial Care-Providers” during the last quarter of 2001. A three-day training workshop for eleven (11) participants was carried out in November in cooperation with the DSWD of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The participants were recommended for training and service as Psychosocial Care-Providers by the Psychosocial Teams in various sites. The criteria for selection included educational attainment, past experiences in helping displaced persons (i.e. as volunteers for government or non-government organizations), previous training, dedication, and commitment to helping others. A Training Needs Assessment was conducted prior to the training workshop.

The training included basic concepts and principles in psychosocial care as well as specific interventions for identified needs. Active listening, diffusing, counselling, and specific activities like songs, games, arts, and other activities that would allow for self-expression were discussed. These new Care-Providers were also trained on how to identify persons in need of specialized care as well as how to make referrals. The importance of networking and collaborating with others was also covered during the workshop.

All 47 CFSI “Psychosocial Care-Providers”—inclusive of those trained before 30 September as well as the 11 trained during the last quarter of 2001—met on a monthly basis during the reporting period. They received support as well as general supervision from CFSI’s Psychosocial Services Officer, a psychiatrist with significant experience with uprooted persons.

In an effort to strengthen as well as expand psychosocial services in the CFSI service sites, the seventy (70) “Sumpats” were provided with training on stress, trauma, and coping. The aim was to increase their sensitivity to normal human reactions to adverse life events (e.g., war, displacement) thereby enhancing their capacity to understand and support the IDPs. Recognizing that their work with CFSI was demanding and, at times very difficult at the personal level, the “Sumpats” were provided with very basic training in stress management. It was believed that this training would help them better understand their own reactions to adverse life experiences as well as the way their hearing of the experience of others could affect them.

Consistent with its domestic and international advocacy efforts, CFSI invested some of its own resources in caring for its workforce—humanitarian care-providers who had been in the field and operating under difficult circumstances since late February/early March 2001. Sheila Platt, CFSI’s

New York City-based Director for External Affairs, conducted two (2) stress management workshops during this reporting period. Thirty-five (35) people participated including CFSI personnel, CFSI interns from the De La Vida College of Social Work in Cotabato City, and representatives of twelve (12) nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working with internally displaced communities in Central Mindanao. The NGOs were members of the Mindanao NGO Forum for which CFSI serves as Convener.

The primary objective of the stress management workshops was to understand how the high-levels of occupational stress inherent to the humanitarian assistance environment impact on the workforce in general and individuals in particular. The workshops provided practical guidance for managing such stress and underscored the importance of fostering, as well as ensuring access to, psychosocial support for the workforce. The ultimate aim of the workshops was enhanced personal and organizational capacities for working effectively in such a challenging environment.

## **Research**

The second general objective of the project involves participatory research activities with the aim being to contribute to the existing knowledge base by developing and testing models that will inform approaches to the transition from conflict to peace. The research component of the project received much attention during the last quarter of 2001.

Consultations between CFSI and its prospective research partners—Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) and Notre Dame University (NDU)—actually began in the last quarter of 2000. From July 2001, planning meetings, consultations, and communications were intensified and moved from the theoretical to the practical. This resulted in draft memoranda of understanding, an agreed upon research design, and draft consultancy service contracts. CFSI's Senior Research Officer at Headquarters played a major role in these developments, particularly in regards to the technical aspects of the research plan as well as the international literature review.

On 19 October 2001 in Cotabato City, CFSI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MSU-IIT and a separate MOU with NDU. The MOUs were identical in substance and committed the respective organizations to cooperate on behalf of conflict-affected communities in Central Mindanao through 31 December 2003. The signing ceremony was a major public event, hosted by NDU, and organized in such fashion as to raise awareness within the academic community of the plight of internally displaced persons. The tripartite relationship—CFSI/MSU-IIT/NDU was formally launched. Senior officials from both universities, several members of the Board of Trustees of CFSI, representatives of various government agencies and nongovernmental organizations, students, the media, and others participated in this gathering. CFSI's partner—Mindanao Network for Disaster Response (MNDR)—ensured that stories about this event were included in Mindanao newspapers.

Over the course of the next few weeks, considerable time and energy was devoted to finalizing the consulting services contracts of the research partners. CFSI had to ensure that these were in consonance with the requirements of the World Bank. The consulting contracts were submitted to the World Bank for approval in November 2001. CFSI's Research Partners were prepared to

commence their full-time research activities in the field as soon as the contracts were approved by the World Bank and signed by CFSI.

### **Mindanao Social Assessment**

CFSI maintained close contact, during the reporting period, with the firms contracted by the World Bank to carry out the Mindanao Social Assessment (MSA) and appreciated the opportunity to consult with the MSA Team Leader as well as World Bank officials on issues of mutual as well as CFSI-specific concern. All parties recognized that the data collected and insights of the Social Assessment Team, combined with the community profiling data and field experience of the CFSI Team, could and should inform some of the plans and programmes being developed by the Government, the World Bank, and others for Mindanao. CFSI advocacy efforts were planned with this in mind.

### **External Evaluator**

During the last quarter of 2001, CFSI formalized plans and arrangements for the evaluation of the project by an external evaluator. Long-time CFSI partner La Trobe University of Melbourne, Australia—in the person of Margarita Frederico, MSW, MBA—was engaged for this purpose. Ms. Frederico evaluated previous CFSI projects in Mindanao as well as in Indonesia.

Ms. Frederico spent several weeks at CFSI—both at Headquarters in Manila and in Mindanao—reviewing project documents, interviewing CFSI officials and personnel as well as partners, visiting service sites in Central Mindanao, and—most importantly—talking with internally displaced persons. The evaluation plan was one of the concrete outputs of these efforts. The evaluation proper will be completed by early May and the report submitted to CFSI by 30 June 2002.

### **2002 Operations**

The challenges in the working environment and the impact of the same on project implementation—plus other factors—resulted in less than satisfactory progress on proposal preparations for CFSI operations throughout 2002 and beyond. Nonetheless, the achievements and challenges of 2001 were analysed and the programme plans for early 2002 refined accordingly. In addition, CFSI priorities were re-visited and personnel performances evaluated.

Further, the perspectives of some of the key stakeholders were obtained, during the reporting period, with regards to future CFSI activity in Mindanao. For example, the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Team Leader for the Mindanao Social Assessment, and others not only recommended continued CFSI activity in the existing service sites, but an expansion to other provinces as well. Most frequently recommended were the provinces of Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte.

## **Lessons Learned**

Lessons learned or reinforced during this reporting period included the following.

1. Efforts to address issues contributing to—or arising from—armed conflict must ensure the active and meaningful participation of the different stakeholders. Whilst in theory Government has the paramount responsibility for promoting and ensuring peace, CFSI needs to work very closely with a wide variety of stakeholders in order to effectively assist the IDPs.
2. The importance of culturally sensitive programming cannot be overly emphasized. This is particularly true when the aim is participation and empowerment in communities wherein the leadership structures are traditionally clannish and authoritarian in nature.
3. The almost daily field presence of CFSI in the affected communities contributed to the building of trust and confidence amongst the IDPs as well as amongst those who had already returned to their places of origin. The evidence of this included issues discussed and participation levels. The “Go and See Visits” and “Visioning Workshops” were reported to be instrumental to the healing process at the community level. These activities also provided excellent entry-points for the discussion of causes of conflict as well as measures to help ensure peace and reconciliation. The activities were also believed to have contributed to the empowerment of the affected communities.
4. CFSI’s group-focused livelihood assistance programme was observed to encourage participation, unity, transparency, and accountability amongst the beneficiaries. Such efforts to build or re-build social cohesion should contribute in a significant way to the promotion of return, reintegration, and reconciliation.

## **Challenges Ahead**

1. The prevailing security situation—specifically sporadic confrontations between the military, kidnapping for ransom groups, and other armed elements in Central Mindanao—could further threaten staff safety as well as smooth project implementation in the months ahead. More time will have to be devoted by CFSI to security checks, staff well being, and emergency preparedness.
2. Despite the security challenges, more “Go and See Visits” should be organized for those IDPs who have not had the opportunity to see their communities of origin. These visits clearly facilitate decision-making and often lead to departure from the evacuation centers. Corollary activities such as the visioning exercises and peace education activities should reinforce the “Go and See Visits”. As such, CFSI peace and reconciliation efforts, particularly in the communities of return, should be continued as well as expanded.

3. There is a need to accelerate the release of livelihood assistance particularly for IDPs who have returned to their communities. However, it is also important to be aware of the presence of returnees in the communities of origin who did not receive similar assistance when they left the evacuation center. These returnees may in fact need and demand access to the same type of assistance. Who can and will be covered under the livelihood assistance programme is a contentious issue and could spawn conflict in the community if not handled properly. CFSI must be sensitive to these issues and prepared to communicate information and act in a completely transparent manner. Corollary training activities for group value formation and livelihood project planning must be strengthened and sustained.
4. CFSI's Research Partners will have to optimise their presence in the field and maximize their data collection efforts in the evacuation centers and communities of origin during the first quarter of 2002. All of their research activities must be completed by the end of May. CFSI Headquarters as well as the CFSI Team in Mindanao will have to support as well as facilitate the efforts of the Research Partners with the Senior Research Officer at CFSI taking on more responsibility than originally envisaged. The reports of the Research Partners are due on 30 June 2002 and should help inform future CFSI efforts. They should also contribute to the planning and programme development efforts of other stakeholders.
5. A significant number of families remain accommodated in eleven (11) evacuation centers and have legitimate concerns that must be addressed before they can be expected to return to their communities of origin. In addition, the fourteen (14) barangays of origin/return served by CFSI have quite a way to go before they will be ready to attempt to access some of the funds that will become available through other World Bank-funded initiatives expected to begin during the first quarter of 2003. As such, CFSI operations should be extended from 30 June 2002 through March 2003. It will be necessary for CFSI to secure significant funds for this purpose. The achievement of this objective will help ensure that the remarkable gains so far achieved will be sustained.

#### **Priorities for the Next Quarter (January through March 2002)**

- Prepare and disseminate to interested parties the report on the two community profiling efforts undertaken by CFSI and involving 6,759 families (33,550 persons).
- Install the community profiling database in the CFSI Cotabato Operations Center, train specific Staff Members to effectively use the Database, and make available to the World Bank, UNDP, and other key stakeholders, the data that is not personal in nature nor a threat to the safety of any person, family, group, or community.
- Promote durable solutions decision-making and, ideally, returns to the communities of origin by organizing as many "Go and See Visits" as security conditions will permit.

- Accelerate training for livelihood activities as well as the processing and release of livelihood assistance to IDPs still in the evacuation centers, those who are planning to return home within thirty days, and those who have returned to their communities of origin.
- Continue to strengthen and expand peace education and reconciliation efforts in both evacuation centers and communities of origin/return with the emphasis on the latter.
- Strengthen and expand issues-oriented, community-based psychosocial services, particularly in the evacuation centers, but also in the communities of origin/return.
- Help CFSI's Research Partners move forward on participatory action research processes at the field level and continue to support them with lessons learned from post-conflict situations in other countries.
- Enhance the capacity of the Mindanao NGO Forum to play a greater advocacy role on behalf of internally displaced persons in the Philippines.
- Develop advocacy relations and effective linkages with the newly elected and appointed officials of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)
- Facilitate the rigorous evaluation of the project through effective cooperation with the External Evaluator.
- Contribute to the formulation of the World Bank's Mindanao Social Fund that will, ideally, result in assistance to conflict affected communities in Mindanao from 2003 through 2008.
- Move forward on resource generation for future CFSI activity in conflict-affected areas of Central Mindanao.

### **Contact Points**

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