

# The Impact of Armed Conflict on Male Youth in Mindanao, Philippines

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## Summary Findings

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This study is a companion to an earlier study on Gender and Conflict in Mindanao that was heavily focused on the impact of armed conflict on women (including young women), and stems from a need to understand the situation of young men in the context of the conflict in Mindanao. It also complements a study conducted in early 2005 that examines the impact of the conflict on men, women and youth in five provinces of Mindanao. The specific objectives of this study are:

- To gain an increased understanding of how the conflict has affected male youth; and
- To develop recommendations that respond to their most immediate needs.

The study covered seven provinces in four out of the six regions in Mindanao. The field research focused on communities heavily affected by years of conflict. The research was based on qualitative data collection, including focus group discussions with male youth, individual interviews, and key informant interviews with national and local experts.

The study shows that despite growing up in an environment shaped by violence, young males in Mindanao continue to hope for change for a better life. Despite popular perception that the male youth are militarized, a large majority do not get involved in the violence. In fact, the conflict has propelled many of them into roles for which they were not prepared but are coping with to the best of their ability. The harrowing experiences they have been through, such as destruction of their homes and communities, loss of a parent or sibling, repeated displacement, life as a refugee in their own country and the associated loss of self esteem, have not

stopped them from hoping for lasting peace in Mindanao. Most of them have managed to stay out of the cycle of violence and revenge and display considerable courage and resilience in the face of grave threats to their lives and aspirations. They yearn for opportunities to equip themselves with the education and skills that their peer in other parts of the country have access to. They are very receptive to new ideas and approaches, and constitute an important resource group impatiently waiting to participate in rebuilding their communities.

The study notes a number of ongoing interventions in the education, health, and agriculture sectors, but only a few of them are youth focused. In an attempt to be gender sensitive many of these interventions are women-oriented and tend to ignore male youth. Further, until very recently, male youth were viewed as combatants and perpetrators of violence, and therefore part of the problem. The unique situation of young males in the context of armed conflict still remains to be addressed by most programs. While the Peace Agreement between the Government and the MILF will no doubt be the first step in any effort to address the problems of the conflict-affected population of Mindanao, including its male youth, it is important that immediate efforts are undertaken to demonstrate to the young people, especially young men, in conflict-affected areas of Mindanao that they have not been forgotten.

The study concludes by offering a number of suggestions on the kinds of interventions to address the marginalization of male youth, especially in education, livelihoods and labor markets.

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# Table of Contents

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Acknowledgements.....	iii
Acronyms.....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Objectives, Scope and Methodology .....	3
3. Findings .....	4
4. Education .....	4
5. Poverty and Livelihood.....	8
6. Security Concerns .....	10
7. Psychosocial Concerns.....	13
8. Examples of Noteworthy Initiatives .....	15
9. Conclusions and Recommendations .....	17
References.....	22
Annex 1: Provinces Most Affected by the Moro (MILF/MNLF) Conflict (by number of encounters and number of casualties), 1986-2004.....	25
Annex 2: Conflict Affected Areas and Joint Needs Assessment in Mindanao.....	26
Annex 3: Focus Group Discussions and Individual Interviews .....	27
Annex 4: Key Informants Interviewed.....	28
Annex 5: Excerpts from Researchers' Field Notes.....	29

## Tables

Table 1: Male Youth Population in Mindanao, 2000.....	2
Table 2: Geographical Scope of the Study.....	3
Table 3: Basic Literacy Rate of Male Youth by Region in Mindanao, 2003.....	4
Table 4: Out-of-School Children and Youth Aged 6-24, Mindanao, 2002.....	5

## Boxes

Box 1: Bouldon Municipality.....	7
Box 2: Before and After the All-Out-War.....	8
Box 3: The Travails of a Young Farmer.....	9
Box 4: Abuse of Human Rights.....	11
Box 5: Easy Access to Drugs.....	11
Box 6: Landmines.....	12
Box 7: Combatants.....	13
Box 8: The Youth Pack Model.....	18
Box 9: Public/Private Partnership.....	19

Box 10: The Grameen Phone Program.....	19
Box 11: The Pro-Child Care Project.....	20
Box 12: Youth Clubs for Peace and Development.....	21

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## Acronyms

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AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
DepEd	Department of Education
FGD	Focus group discussion
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
HDR	Human Development Report
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
PBSP	Philippine Business for Social Progress



# THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON MALE YOUTH IN MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES

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*“There is no armed conflict without youth participation.”*

United Nations World Youth Report 2003

## 1. Introduction

The history of armed conflict in the island of Mindanao in southern Philippines is over three decades old. The conflict has its roots in the systematic marginalization of the Moros<sup>1</sup> of Mindanao by the national government, in favor of the Catholic Filipinos whose families migrated to Mindanao from other parts of the Philippines as part of a deliberate resettlement policy<sup>2</sup>. Hostility between the two groups intensified in the seventies when the Moros were subjected to ruthless discrimination by the Marcos dictatorship and led to a violent uprising among the Moro groups led by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) who demanded complete autonomy. Nearly a decade after the Marcos government was overthrown, the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was created following a Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the MNLF. Autonomy did not appease certain groups within the MNLF who in 1984 had broken away to form the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). As their name suggests, their demand was independence to establish an Islamic State. Autonomy also did not meet the aspirations of the people in terms of poverty alleviation and economic development, and the ARMM government was seen as “too weak to address even basic human development needs.”<sup>3</sup> This set the stage for sporadic outbreaks of conflict through the end of the last century and the emergence of the MILF as the more powerful faction. GRP attempted to thwart its efforts and cut it down to size, which led to the ‘all-out-war’ against the MILF in June 2000, and again in 2003. A tenuous ceasefire has held since then in anticipation of peace talks and peace itself.

Recurrent armed conflict—particularly the wars of 2000 and 2003—has uprooted entire communities and has resulted in extensive damage to infrastructure and the social fabric of Mindanao. While efforts were undertaken to help the displaced people and others affected by the conflict to reconstruct their communities, the impact of the armed conflict on youth, especially young men, has not received sufficient attention. This reflects worldwide trends where women and children are perceived as the worst affected groups, and have therefore been the focus of attention and funding by humanitarian groups and bilateral and multilateral agencies. Youth<sup>4</sup>, considered less dependent and generally cast in the role of combatants, have until very recently not generated interest on a comparable scale.

Studies on the impact of armed conflicts on youth are barely a decade old. Most of them agree that, while youth may not “suffer death and disease to the same extent as young children they are more susceptible to

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<sup>1</sup> Members of any of the 13 ethno-linguistic groups in Mindanao.

<sup>2</sup> According to the 2005 Philippine Human Development Report (HDR), “The original Moro peoples have been reduced from 76 percent of the population at the turn of the century to 18 percent at its end”. The HDR 2005 provides a detailed historical and analytical account of the conflict.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Definitions of youth vary and are determined by cultural, institutional and political factors. In Africa youth is seen as the stage stretching from puberty to the acceptance of responsibilities of marriage and family. In the Philippines the “Youth in Nation Building Act” (RA 8044) enacted in 1995 defines Filipino youth as those in the age group 15 to 30. For purposes of this study the standard adopted was the United Nations definition: youth are those in the age group 15-24.

a wide range of immediate and long term threats to personal safety.”<sup>5</sup> Several recent studies also conclude that there is a strong correlation between “youth bulges” in the demographic profile of a country (usually defined as a high proportion of 15-to-29 year olds relative to the adult population) and risks of outbreak of civil conflict and violence, especially when large numbers of male youth are alienated, displaced, out-of-school, and jobless. Such youth are also regarded as a readily available pool of recruits for groups seeking to express their resentment by taking up arms. While this view of youth as active perpetrators of violence finds mention in conflict studies<sup>6</sup>, several others have pointed out that this is not the only role that young people have adopted in conflict-affected regions around the world. Many of them cope as best as they can with their disrupted lives by trying to eke out a livelihood to support their families, by parenting their siblings, and by taking on other adult roles even though they are completely unprepared for such responsibilities.

As in other developing countries the Philippines, too, has a relatively young population. According to the 2000 Census the youth are 15 million strong (from 5 million in 1950) with a projected population of 20 million by 2020. In Central Mindanao youth constitute a fifth of the population, while in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) they account for 22.3 percent of the total population<sup>7</sup>. In all the regions of Mindanao, except Region XIII, male youth make up one tenth of the total population (Table 1).

**Table 1: Male Youth Population in Mindanao, 2000**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Total Youth Population</b>	<b>Male Youth Population (%)</b>
Region IX: Western Mindanao	3,091,208	603,291	9.8
Region X: Northern Mindanao	2,747,585	540,916	9.9
Region XI: Southern Mindanao	5,189,335	1,051,958	10.1
Region XII: Central Mindanao	2,598,210	529,847	10.1
Region XIII: CARAGA	2,095,367	396,098	18.0
ARMM	2,412,159	536,725	10.8
PHILIPPINES	76,504,077	15,086,701	9.8

**Source:** Government of the Republic of the Philippines (2003) “Census of Population and Housing—2000,” National Statistics Office, Manila, Philippines

<sup>5</sup> Newman, Jesse (2005) “Protection through Participation: Young People Affected by Forced Migration and Political Crisis,” RSC Working Paper Series No. 20, The Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford University, Oxford.

<sup>6</sup> Barker, Gary and Ricardo, Christine (2005) “Young Men and the Construction of Masculinity in Sub Saharan Africa: Implications for HIV/AIDS, Conflict and Violence,” Working Paper No. 26, Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>7</sup> Government of the Philippines (2003), “Census of Population and Housing—2000”, National Statistics Office, Manila, Philippines.

## 2. Objectives, Scope and Methodology

This study is a companion to an earlier study on Gender and Conflict in Mindanao that was heavily focused on the impact of armed conflict on women (including young women), and stems from a need to understand the situation of young men in the context of the conflict in Mindanao. It also complements a study<sup>8</sup> conducted in early 2005 that examines the impact of the conflict on men, women and youth in five provinces of Mindanao. The specific objectives of this study are:

- To gain an increased understanding of how the conflict has affected male youth; and
- To develop recommendations that respond to their most immediate needs.

The geographical scope of the study extends over seven provinces in four out of the six regions in Mindanao (Table 2). The field research focused on communities affected intensively by years of conflict (Appendices 1 and 2). The field research team comprised a researcher and a documenter, who were both local people with the requisite language skills and knowledge of the area.

The research method used in the study was qualitative data collection, which included focus group discussions (FGD) with male youth, and individual interviews with selected people (Appendix 3). Key informant interviews with national and local experts were also held (Appendix 4). The FGDs were held over a six-month period from July to December 2005 in thirty-two barangays in the study area. Individual interviews were used to augment the data generated from the FGDs. The FGDs and the individual interviews together covered 319 male youth aged 15-24. Besides field work, a desk review of published and unpublished literature related to the subject was also undertaken to understand the impact of conflicts on youth in the global and Mindanao contexts, and the current discussions on the subject in the development community.

**Table 2:** Geographical Scope of the Study

Region	Provinces Selected
Region IX: Western Mindanao	Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga Sibugay
Region X: Northern Mindanao	Lanao del Norte
Region XI: Southern Mindanao	None selected
Region XII: Central Mindanao	Cotabato, Lanao del Norte, Sultan Kudarat
Region XIII: Caraga	None selected
ARMM	Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao

**Limitations.** The geographical coverage of the study, although extensive, was limited in scope due to ongoing insecurity and logistical constraints (Appendix 5). In all locations the FGDs had to be conducted in the presence of barangay leaders and other non-youth community members. The FGD participants were not entirely comfortable voicing their thoughts in such a public forum and were therefore somewhat guarded in their responses. In some locations it was not possible to restrict the number of male youth participants in the FGDs while in a few others very few male youth were available to participate in the discussions. In some FGD sites the field research team encountered considerable suspicion among the local people that the government or the Armed Forces (AFP) may use the findings of the study to ‘harass’

<sup>8</sup> Barth, Elise Fredrikke (2005), “How they are influenced: An assessment of the situation in the conflict affected areas of Mindanao” World Bank, Manila, Philippines. A substantial amount of fieldwork for this study was carried out (March-June 2005) using the research team employed for the current study.

them. All communities visited exhibited considerable survey fatigue and were initially reluctant to participate in the FGDs which they felt were a ‘waste of time.’

### 3. Findings

The male youth participants in the FGDs are eagerly awaiting the Peace Agreement between the Government of the Philippines and the MILF. They were generally dismissive of government intentions and appreciative of the help they had received from NGOs at the evacuation centers and in their communities. Despite popular perception that the male youth are militarized, a large majority do not get involved in the violence. In fact, the conflict has propelled many of them into roles for which they were not prepared but are coping with to the best of their ability. The top concerns of the youth surveyed included lack of opportunities for education and a decent livelihood. Physical insecurity and threats of violence were also a commonly expressed concern. It is noteworthy that despite the years of violence and destruction that they have been through, the young men in the communities visited still long for peace and are eager to cooperate with agencies or organizations and engage in activities that can accelerate the peace process. These findings are discussed in detail in the following sections.

### 4. Education

Studies on education in Mindanao have repeatedly asserted that poverty exacerbated by recurrent armed conflict is the single most important factor affecting education in the region. While the country as a whole boasts a literacy rate of 93.7 percent for males and 94 percent for females, Mindanao presents a very different picture. In 2003 the literacy rates for Central Mindanao were 85.9 percent for males and 88.8 percent for females, while in ARMM it dropped to 71 percent for males and 69.4 percent for females<sup>9</sup> (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Basic Literacy Rate of Male Youth (%) by Region in Mindanao, 2003

	10-14 Years	15-19 Years	20-24 years	All Males
Region IX: Western Mindanao	89.3	90.7	91.4	86.8
Region X: Northern Mindanao	89.5	92.6	95.5	90.1
Region XI: Southern Mindanao	89.5	93.8	92.3	88.0
Region XII: Central Mindanao	84.2	91.2	95.2	85.9
Region XIII: Caraga	92.8	93.1	94.7	89.5
ARMM	73.0	84.1	78.1	71.0
PHILIPPINES	93.1	95.6	95.4	92.6

**Source:** Government of the Republic of the Philippines (2003). “The Functional Literacy and Mass Media Survey,” National Statistical Office, Manila, Philippines.

The elementary net enrollment rate in 2001 was 82 percent as compared with the national average of 96 percent, while the completion rate of 40 percent is just above half that of the rest of the country. The secondary school enrollment rate was the lowest in the country at 39 percent as compared with the

<sup>9</sup> Government of the Republic of the Philippines (2003), “The Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey”, National Statistical Office, Manila, Philippines.

national average of 72 percent<sup>10</sup>. The overall dropout rates for Mindanao are the highest in the country at 12 percent, compared to 6.1 percent and 7.3 percent respectively for Luzon and Visayas. Conflict affected parts of Mindanao and ARMM have dropout rates of 23 percent. A study on education in Mindanao conducted by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP)<sup>11</sup> observes that in any given year, only three to four out of ten children enrolled will finish high school. In ARMM only one out of ten children is likely to complete high school on time. Most of them will probably manage to complete only Grades 1 and 2<sup>12</sup>. Out-of-school youth as a percentage of the 6-24 year old population (23.1 percent) is also the highest in Mindanao<sup>13</sup> (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Out-of-School Children and Youth Aged 6-24, Mindanao, 2002

<b>Region</b>	<b>Total Population 6-24 ('000)</b>	<b>Proportion Out-of-school (%)</b>
Region IX: Western Mindanao	1432	15.1
Region X: Northern Mindanao	1244	11.3
Region XI: Southern Mindanao	2362	14.7
Region XII: Central Mindanao	1231	12.2
Region XIII: Caraga	997	13.6
ARMM	1085	23.1
PHILIPPINES	32,965	14.7

**Source:** Government of the Republic of the Philippines (2002) "Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS)," National Statistics Office, Manila, Philippines.

<sup>10</sup> Asian Development Bank (2004), "Technical Assistance to the Philippines for the Mindanao Basic Education Development Project", ADB, Manila.

<sup>11</sup> The PBSP is a thirty-year old institution that facilitates implementation of self-help programs across the Philippines. It is supported by some of the top private corporations in the country.

<sup>12</sup> Tacandong, Protacio, T. (2004), "Bringing Back the Promise: Improving Education in Mindanao", The SGV Review, September 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Government of the Philippines (2003), "2002 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS)", National Statistics Office, Manila, Philippines.

## FGD Responses

*“Education is one wealth that nobody can take away from us.”*

*FGD Bugasan Norte, Matanog, Maguindanao*

*“An educated person has a lot of opportunities and chances for a better life.”*

*FGD Magduap, Ipil, Zamboanga-Sibugay*

*“People from all walks of life respect and rely upon an educated person who has a better understanding ...”*

*FGD Bangkerohan, Ipil, Zamboanga-Sibugay*

*“An educated person can become a leader and bring about changes for the better in his or her community or province.”*

*FGD Dalabayan, Butig, Lanao del Sur*

The youth surveyed placed education at the very top of their list of priorities. They consider it the main solution to their problems and the passport to a better future. They view education as the only means of securing the skills and qualifications necessary to achieve gainful employment and a better quality of life for themselves and their families. Education, according to them, will also help them earn respect and prestige in their communities, will give them better opportunities to participate in community organizations and aspire to leadership positions, increase their self esteem and self confidence, and act as a catalyst for change and promote peace. Many FGD participants expressed an interest in resuming their studies and sought help from the government and NGOs. Older youth were keen on non-formal education and skills training that would help them get remunerative employment.

The chief barriers to schooling identified by the FGD participants are:

- Threats of violence posed by the continuing low intensity conflict in various locations in the region discourage parents from sending their wards to school. Parents also fear that schools may serve as popular recruiting grounds for the MILF or the other armed groups.
- Impoverishment caused by the long drawn out conflict is a major deterrent. The financial burden imposed by schooling in the form of books, uniforms, transport costs, etc. are unaffordable. Further, youth, especially male youth, are required to contribute to the family income in whatever manner they can. Some youth who have lost both parents have become *de facto* heads of their families and would prefer to concentrate on making a living.
- Schools are too far from home and transportation is often not available, or unaffordable. The other structural obstacles highlighted include inadequate and overcrowded classrooms with as many as four classes taught in the same classroom, irregular attendance by teachers and poor quality of teaching, and irrelevant curriculum (Box 1).

**Box 1: Bouldon Municipality**

Buldon was one of the municipalities hardest hit by intermittent clashes between Moro dissidents and the military in the all-out-war in 2000. The AFP took over the local high school and turned it into a military base, complete with armed personnel carriers, a launching pad for military maneuvers against an MILF stronghold. The school's 300 students crowded into four makeshift, poorly ventilated, classrooms with no chairs—students had to sit on the floor or stand for the duration of classes—until World Vision facilitated a private donation of 300 chairs, teachers' tables and blackboards. Another barangay of Buldon has been in existence for 41 years but has yet to see even a single classroom built; children have to walk for three kilometers to school in a neighboring barangay.

**Source:** World Vision (2001), "Children and Peacebuilding: Experiences and Perspectives," World Vision discussion papers. <http://www.wvi.org/imagine/pdf/Childpeace.pdf>

- Teachers are often absent and the quality of teaching has deteriorated. The perceived marginal return of education is an important deterrent.
- Many of the older youth who have missed out on several years of schooling are uncomfortable about attending school with classmates who are far younger.

The FGD groups offered the following suggestions to improve enrolment and attendance in schools:

- Complete cessation of hostilities;
- Financial incentives such as scholarships, subsidized school lunches, uniforms, textbooks and supplies, and transportation allowances;
- Construction of additional school buildings and classrooms, provision of improved facilities, and improved training of teachers;
- Adoption of flexible timings and schedules so that students have the option to work and study; and
- Revisions of the curriculum so that it is relevant to their cultural and religious values and will help them get remunerative employment after graduation.

**Madrasah Education**

An important aspect of education in Mindanao is the Madrasah that offers religious and cultural teaching with Arabic as the medium of instruction. There are 440 such schools in Mindanao with a pupil population of 90,000. A small proportion of these schools (44) are accredited by the government and offer the national basic education curriculum along with traditional religious education. The large majority, however, concentrate only on Islamic and religious teachings. Graduates of these schools typically find it difficult to find employment because they are weak in Filipino, English and numeracy<sup>14</sup>. The majority of the FGD participants highlighted the importance of Madrasah education and indicated that they consider it essential to ensure the preservation of their religious and cultural values. The common perception among most of the communities visited is that the curriculum followed by the public school system will, over time, submerge their distinctive culture and values beneath the dominant Christian and Western values<sup>15</sup>. An FGD participant from Bangco, Matungao, Lanao del Norte commented, "The DepEd (Department of Education) model of education is actually a trap designed to westernize our young people

<sup>14</sup> Asian Development Bank, op cit.

<sup>15</sup> For an informative discussion on issues relating to curriculum change and the integration of madaris into mainstream education system in Mindanao, see Milligan, Jeffrey Ayala (2004) "Islamization or Secularization? Educational Reform and the Search for Peace in the Southern Philippines", Current Issues in Comparative Education (December 2004), Teachers College, Columbia University.

and wean them away from their culture and traditions. It is a government program to entice Muslim youth away from the teachings of Islam.”

## 5. Poverty and Livelihood

Mindanao has the dubious distinction of having four of the five poorest regions and six of the ten poorest provinces in the Philippines. All the ARMM provinces fall in the latter category. In ARMM alone poverty has increased from 50.7 percent in 1991 to 66 percent in 2000<sup>16</sup>. Disruption of agricultural production, and destruction of infrastructure, both social and economic, have deterred economic activity at all levels and thereby impoverished an already poor region. Agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood in the study area, has been seriously affected by repeated conflict and the uncertain peace and order situation. For instance, nearly half the farm animals and agricultural implements were destroyed or lost in the conflict affected barangays<sup>17</sup>. In the coastal barangays, and those located around the Ligawasan marsh, where fishing is the most important activity, most communities have reported loss or destruction of the tools of their trade.

### FGD Findings

*“The conflict has destroyed our lives...everything is lost. We are always hungry. We lost all our farm animals, and whatever was not lost had to be sold for next to nothing so that we could buy food.”*

FGDs Raja Muda and Talitay, Pikit, Cotobato

*“After returning from the evacuation center we had to start from zero... we will never be able to get back the life we lost.”*

FGD, Basagad, Balo-i, Lanao del Norte

*“The year 2000 changed our lives upside down. Before the war that year, we led reasonably normal lives. We ate well... Fish and kangkong (water lily) were freely available in the Ligawasan Marsh. Our routine was to go fishing early in the morning, and work on our farms, with a short break in between. We even managed to save some money after every harvest season. After the ‘all-out-war,’ we were forced to abandon our farm for almost five years, during which time it turned into a muddy marsh where nothing grows. As a result, we don’t earn much, and can not afford even one decent meal a day.”*

Excerpt from an individual interview, Sitio Proper, Inug-Ug

All youth, whether in school or out-of-school, are working to supplement the income of their families. (According to the Department of Agriculture statistics more than a third of the household members aged 10 – 24 are engaged in agriculture in Western Mindanao, 44.6% in Central Mindanao and 15% in ARMM.) Most of them are engaged in agriculture, either in their own family farms or as agricultural labor. They also try to supplement the household income by working at nearby rice mills, as skylab<sup>18</sup> or tricycle drivers, as sidewalk vendors, or as contractual labor.

#### **Box 2: Before and After the All-Out-War**

*“Before the war of 2000, we had a fairly decent life. My parents could send us to school. The war changed everything—we had to leave our home to live in an evacuation center, my father’s health deteriorated, our property had to be sold little by little to meet basic needs, and school became unaffordable. Two of my sisters became sidewalk vendors and I became a motorcycle driver. I still do not have a regular source of income.”*

Excerpt from an individual interview, Sitio Proper, Inug-Ug, Pagalungan, Maguindanao



Recurrent armed conflict has adversely affected livelihood and earning capacity as described in Box 2 and detailed below:

- Losses of farm animals in the conflicts of 2000 and 2003 have significantly affected livelihoods. Those who do not own water buffaloes, for example, are forced to rent them at high costs, or resort to planting late and risk losing their crop due to seasonal flooding.
- Similarly, in barangays where fishing is the main source of livelihood, bancas (small boats without outriggers), fishing gear (fishhooks and fish lines), and fishnets were destroyed during the conflict. Many FGD participants reported that they had to enter into disadvantageous rental arrangements with fish traders by promising them a portion of the catch.
- Inputs such as fertilizer, pesticides and good quality seeds are beyond their reach.
- They do not have access to post harvest facilities such as corn shellers, solar dryers or warehousing.
- The absence of link roads denies them access to nearby markets.
- Water for irrigation was frequently mentioned as a problem in the upland barangays.
- In some barangays unexploded ordnance lying buried in the fields makes farming a very risky activity.
- The only credit available to them is from local moneylenders who charge usurious rates of interest. Several FGD participants narrated their experiences in this regard and consider access to credit facilities as the single most important requirement to improve their livelihoods (Box 3).

**Box 3: The Travails of a Young Farmer**

*“Farming has become more difficult and less rewarding since the war in 2000. We lost all our livestock and our tools and implements and now we have to resort to ‘manual farming.’ Inputs such as seeds and fertilizers have become very expensive. Before 2000 we managed to raise three decent crops a year. In 2004 we had only one good crop of corn...the other two crops suffered because the rains failed. We could not get anyone to buy our corn and could not pay our creditors. Now we have to wait for the next harvest... in the meanwhile our debts are mounting.”*

FGD, Ampuan, Buldon, Maguindanao

The FGD groups offered the following suggestions to increase and improve livelihood options:

- Access to credit and resources was identified as the single most important factor that would help expand livelihood options.
- All FGD groups expressed keen interest in opportunities for livelihood skills training. The skills identified as required are tailoring, soap-making, slipper/sandal-making, printing, signboard-making, carpentry, driving (to work abroad), radio and television repair, jeepney, bicycle and tricycle repair, cell phone repair, poultry farming, computer skills, native products making, sari-sari stores, seaweed farming and marketing, and better farming techniques.
- Construction of farm to market roads and irrigation facilities were suggested by a number of groups, particularly those in remote areas and in the uplands where availability of water for irrigation and other purposes posed serious challenges.

Several FGD groups asked for both technical and financial assistance for creating farmer cooperatives in their communities.

## 6. Security Concerns

In Mindanao, various types of violence—the ‘main conflict’, rido,<sup>19</sup> political and economic rivalries and inter-ethnic conflicts—fuel security issues. The presence of a large number of armed groups and the easy availability of arms and ammunition are two major factors that have a bearing on security issues. These conditions create a very unsafe environment that discourages normal economic activity and the delivery of services such as health and education. As in most other conflict-affected areas, it is the poorest that are most severely affected. Many have had to leave their homes or even migrate in search of work, while others join one of the several armed groups in the region or get recruited as drug peddlers and eventually adopt a life of crime.

### FGD Findings

*“I was cooking rice for my brothers and sisters when I heard gunfire. When I went out of our home to see what was happening I saw our neighbors fleeing. I decided to wait for a little while and leave after we ate. But my aunt who lived nearby came to warn us and forced us to run. I still remember that night...we had to huddle together under some trees, our stomachs hurting from hunger and fear...”*

FGD participant, Barangay Liliongan, Carmen, Cotabato

*“Our barangay was almost completely destroyed in the war of 2000. The AFP burned down all our homes and other buildings, except Mosques and schools. We had to flee for our lives...we used a dump truck to transport our women and children to the evacuation center. The rest of us had no choice but to walk even though it was not safe to do so. Some of us wanted to join the MILF and fight the Government forces...”*

FGD participant, Upper Igabay, Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur

*“We were always afraid. Mere mention of the term ‘giyera’ (war) made us quake with fear. We could not go back home because it was dangerous. My father and my uncle went back to our farm to collect some coconuts so that we’d have something to eat. They never came back...we learned later that they were shot dead by the AFP.”*

FGD participant, Liliongan, Carmen, Cotabato

Fear in various forms dominates both public and private spheres among the youth surveyed. A majority of them has witnessed the burning of their homes and villages, survived attacks (Box 4) on themselves and their families, and experienced forced displacement and the misery of life in evacuation centers. Describing what he called “hell on earth,” one FGD participant stated, “We were at the municipal hall until some relief organization distributed plastic tents for us to transfer to the municipal grounds. It soon started raining, and rained heavily, and all our tents were submerged in water. We moved once again to higher ground near the highway. We were hungry most of the time. There was never enough food in the evacuation center. We felt like beggars living on alms.” In the absence of a peace agreement, young people continue to live with fears of outbreaks of violence that could shatter the present calm.

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<sup>19</sup> Rido refers to the many feuds between Muslim clans, sub-clans or families. The grounds for such feuds range from land or boundary disputes and irrigation rights, to crimes committed by one clan member against the member of another clan. Revenge is considered the best form of justice in this context, thus ensuring that the cycle never breaks.

**Box 4: Abuse of Human Rights**

A fact finding mission led by Kalinaw Mindanao in March 2005 observed widespread abuse of human rights by the AFP. The mission also noted that civilian communities were deliberately targeted during periods of intense military operations. Indiscriminate aerial bombing and shelling of civilian population, summary executions, desecration of remains, destruction of property, looting, violation of domiciles, threats, intimidation and harassment were reported as routinely employed by the AFP as part of their strategy to contain the conflict.

While most FGD groups agreed that they felt “safer” now, they also identified the following threats to their physical security:

- The presence of the AFP in the region.
- Arbitrary arrests especially of young Muslim males who are all viewed as rebels and terrorists by the government and the AFP. All FGD groups expressed complete lack of trust in the local law enforcement agencies many of which, according to them, are in league with the criminal gangs.
- Increasing militarization and easy availability of firearms. Besides the armed conflict, the region is plagued by clan violence, political and economic rivalry, and a deep-rooted belief in revenge. Since all groups resort to violence to settle their scores the need for self-protection is paramount and hence the availability of cheap firearms. For many young males possessing a gun signifies an easy means to redress their vulnerability and at the same time an opportunity to gain power, status and respect.<sup>20</sup>
- Rising lawlessness. The local governments and their law enforcement systems and agencies have little or no credibility among the groups surveyed who consider them part of the problem.
- Easy access to drugs and rising use of drugs among male youth was highlighted by every FGD group as a major problem (Box 5).

**Box 5: Easy Access to Drugs**

*“Some of our friends are unemployed and have nothing to do. They have started using illegal drugs such as shabu and marijuana, which they get from Parang (a nearby town). Some friends have also taken to alcohol...”*

FGDs Bagasan Sur and Bagasan Norte, Matanog, Maguindanao

- Unexploded ordnance especially in farms is yet another major threat to security in the region. Communities most affected are those that were the scenes of heavy shelling such as Pikit in North Cotabato. News reports of casualties are fairly common and add to the level of insecurity of the population (Box 6).

<sup>20</sup> Camacho, Agnes Zenaida, V and others (2004) ‘Children and Youth in Organised Armed Violence in the Philippines: Contextualisation, Personal Histories and Policy Options’, University of the Philippines, Center for Integrative and Development Studies, Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program.

**Box 6: Landmines**

Eighteen-year-old Norhamin Toga and his elder brother Solayman aged 22, were ploughing their field when their plough hit an unexploded bomb, which was buried in their farm. Solayman was killed instantly while his younger brother sustained serious injuries. Peace advocates and groups working for the rehabilitation of areas torn by the war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in February 2003 have appealed to both the military and the rebels to clear the villages of unexploded bombs and said unless these explosives were removed, the lives of the residents, who agreed to return to their villages, continue to be in danger.

Source: [http://www.inq7.net/reg/2004/mar/19/text/reg\\_3-1-p.htm](http://www.inq7.net/reg/2004/mar/19/text/reg_3-1-p.htm)

**Combatants**

In some of the barangays visited, male youth were of the firm conviction that there are only two ways of becoming influential in their communities: one is through arms and the other is through education. “Adolescents in these war-stricken areas submit themselves to warfare. They learn how to carry guns and how to use them. They are exposed to the danger of being injured and even being killed in battle. For them, this is the only way to survive.”<sup>21</sup> Some of the combatants interviewed reported joining the MILF<sup>22</sup> because of ‘what the government was doing’ to their people, while others said they had ‘to fight the enemies of Islam (Box 7).’ A young man from Buldon, Maguindanao, who is currently a combatant, was encouraged by his parents to join the MILF. He was assigned several tasks including guarding the camp. Despite his convictions he did not wish to encourage others to follow his example, because it is not easy “to sacrifice your future.”

While recruitment of minors is denied by the MILF, several sources<sup>23</sup> emphasize that minors are recruited to undertake a variety of roles for the rebels. The MILF reportedly uses high school students from Cotabato City and Maguindanao to “purchase and transport medicines intended for Muslim rebels who were wounded in the armed hostilities with the government forces. These children used as couriers are mostly third and fourth year high school students, whose parents are regular MILF members.”<sup>24</sup> Schools and colleges were important recruiting grounds for the MILF in the past<sup>25</sup>. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable, especially those who have relatives in the MILF. Many volunteer to take up arms for their homeland or against enemies of Islam, often with the support and encouragement of their families, community elders and relatives who believe that it is sanctioned by their faith. Some parents also feel that besides serving the cause of Islam, their young people will keep occupied and escape the drug trap that is seen as a major problem by all communities visited. The death or arrest of a parent or a close relative by the AFP is also a strong motivating factor.

<sup>21</sup> Commission on Population, “Older Children, Younger Adults, All Filipinos”, June 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Besides those who join the MILF, many young men are part of the ‘civilian volunteers’ armed by the military over the years to fight the MNLF and the MILF. Yet others get caught up in the inter-clan rivalries, rido, that are common here and take up arms to support one side or the other.

<sup>23</sup> Cagoco-Guam, Rufa (2002), “Child Soldiers in Central and Western Mindanao: A Rapid Assessment”, International Program on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), ILO, Geneva.

<sup>24</sup> Makinano, Merliza “Child Soldiers in the Philippines” International Committee of the Red Cross.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

**Box 7: Combatants**

*“I was seventeen when I joined the MILF training sessions. I was in first year of college at that time ... my father, who was a combatant then, supported my decision. I worked with the Special Forces unit of the MILF for five years and fought for my beliefs and rights. I did not do this for any monetary compensation, and neither did my father. It was my responsibility to defend our territory, faith and identity... The MILF leaders, especially those in the field, are heroes. They have given up everything, including their lives, for our homeland. I admire their idealism, selflessness and simple lifestyles ... they are true role models for our youth. However, now that we have a ceasefire and peace talks are going on, I do not see the need to encourage our youngsters to take up arms. We are now focusing on education and are encouraging the new generation to continue their studies in preparation for their future roles.”*

*“I was part of the Blocking Forces of the MILF for six years. We— my cousins and I—decided to join the MILF so that we could get to use firearms. I was eighteen then ... my father did not object to my decision. It was sometime later that I understood the need to protect my people, our way of life ... our identity. During the 2000 war, my group was part of the reinforcements sent to Camp Abubakar in Matanog. Many died, including a close friend and a mentor who was a great support during my initial weeks of training in the MILF. His death reinforced my desire for revenge and motivated me to retaliate with renewed vigor. My involvement in the armed struggle is a decision I do not regret. I feel complete and satisfied. This is my life... it would be an honor to die fighting for Islam like the late Ustadz Salamat Hasim (a former MILF leader). A true believer in every sense of the word, I consider him a role model for Muslim youth in Mindanao and abroad.”*

Excerpts from interviews with young combatants

An overwhelming majority of the male youth in the communities visited was of the opinion that they cannot do much to improve safety and security and it is the task of the national and local governments to ensure their safety. All FGD participants wanted peace to prevail above all and expressed their willingness to volunteer if necessary to help the peace process take roots, and cooperate with barangay leaders and elders in maintaining peace and order. An important step identified by them to improve safety in their communities is withdrawal of the AFP since ‘no one will feel safe as long as the AFP is present in the region.’ A young man in a barangay of Siocon in Zamboanga del Norte was more specific “the continuous harassment by the AFP is making us all desperate. If the government does not heed our pleas to stop the operation it will lead to the formation of a new group searching for the truth.”

Nearly all FGD participants wish to become responsible citizens and contribute to peaceful development of their communities. Cooperative activity and networking with youth and youth organizations was also mentioned as beneficial to peace and security. Many of the youth interviewed said that their faith in God and prayer helped them get over their fears. In some FGD sites, the participants felt that independence and the establishment of an Islamic republic are the only solutions that can ensure lasting peace and security.

## 7. Psychosocial Concerns

Adolescence is a stage in life when individuals undergo significant physical and emotional development. It is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood marked by vulnerability as young people struggle to create their own identity. In conflict-affected areas, this individual vulnerability is aggravated by the insecurity created by the hazardous environment. As observed in several other conflict-affected areas, in Mindanao, too, protracted armed conflict has had far reaching effects on the psychosocial development of its youth. Thus some youth join an armed group to feel safer and satisfy their quest for

identity while others take to a life of crime or to drugs. Many others struggle with their changed circumstances and try to cope with their new responsibilities to the best of their ability.

Young people in Mindanao are growing up in an environment shaped by guns, bombs, killings, and the constant fear of war. No aspect of their young lives has been left untouched by the conflict that has broken down traditional community structures, weakened authority figures, disintegrated cultural norms and coping mechanisms and destroyed community networks that used to provide support in times of crisis. Young people report being constantly worried about losing their homes, their families, and uncertain over their future. The only coping mechanism repeatedly mentioned was faith in Islam and God, and the support of peer groups.

## FGD Findings

*“I would rather not talk about it...I do not want to remember to misery we all went through. The evacuation center we had to stay in was ‘naraka’ (hell).”*

FGD participant, Kakal, Kudal, Pagalungan, Maguindanao

*“We were dependent on the government and NGOs for food. I felt I had become a beggar...”*

FGD participant, Ampuan, Buldon, Maguindanao

*“If only we had a basketball court... we could get together, play, talk and have fun. It would also promote unity amongst all of us.”*

FGD Bagasan Sur, Matanog, Maguindanao

Young males report feelings of hopelessness, isolation, and a diminished sense of self worth that they attribute to a variety of causes as detailed below:

- Trauma caused by loss of family members, especially parents or a relative.
- Destruction of homes and in some cases wholesale destruction of their village.
- Repeated displacement and being forced to live in the evacuation centers for several months.
- Disruption of their education and dreams of a secure future.
- Loss of control over their lives and frustrations over having to start all over ‘from zero.’
- Loss of self esteem and, therefore, of self worth, especially among older youth, and
- Not having ‘anything to do.’

The participants in the FGDs offered the following suggestions to improve the situation:

- Peace, access to education and livelihood opportunities, and livelihood-skills training programs were identified as the first steps in resuming control of their lives.
- A frequently expressed need across all FGD locations was ‘a basketball court and/or other venues for recreational activities, because if youth have something to do then they do not engage in illegal activities like selling or using drugs.’
- They also wished to establish contact with youth in other barangays in the region and network.
- FGD participants in the communities visited were eager to take part in any activity that would improve their lives or enable them to contribute to their communities. Nearly all the FGD groups were willing to volunteer time and effort if required to do so.
- All FGD groups accorded great importance to religion in their lives and expressed a need for spiritual development activities.

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## 8. Examples of Noteworthy Initiatives

**The Responsive Education and Accreditation for Children and Youth in Mindanao Project** is run by the Department of Education, Culture and Sport. Its mission is to help out-of-school youth attain equivalency for their educational level. A separate component of the program teaches 16 to 24-year-olds who are out-of-school the vocational skills and working knowledge needed to operate small businesses. Registration and examination costs are covered by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, while the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, in addition to providing equipment, tools, and utensils needed in the training, is covering the costs of registration and the trade tests. Additional help has also come from the local Rotary Club, which is paying for the cost of supplies and material as well as the trainers’ fees, and the Philippine Business for Social Progress, which has allocated substantial funds to build a Learning Resource Center for the project (Source: <http://www.bpdweb.com/gpyd/gpydnewsbriefapril2001.pdf>).

**The Accreditation and Equivalency Support Program for Out-of-School Children and Youth (ACCESS) Mindanao** is another DepEd alternative learning program being strengthened and supported under the Education Quality and Access for learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS) project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It provides out-of-school youth access to quality basic education through non-formula learning, and an equivalency and accreditation scheme to give qualified participants the equivalent of an elementary or high school diploma, or the opportunity to return to the formal school system at their appropriate level of competency. An important component of the program is enhancement training for teachers who will help learners gain accreditation and equivalency through the DepEd Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency Test (NFE A&E), and the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT). The learning package comprises modules that

integrate basic numeracy and literacy competencies with technical and vocation skills and are designed to be culturally relevant. Job referrals and networking are also part of the learning package to ensure the participants' employability (Source: Malaya, 18 June, 2005).

**The Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance (ELSA)** is a program designed to improve the quality of education and enhance the life and employment skills of young Filipinos in Mindanao. The International Youth Foundation (IYF) in cooperation with an alliance of Filipino non-government organizations, foundations, and private corporations implements the program. Besides addressing the educational and job training needs of out-of school youth, ELSA partners are engaged in teacher training and school infrastructure improvement programs, and in assisting national and local government officials in implementing education policy reform. An important component of ELSA is its leadership training for high school youth to implement community projects. The program benefits the ARMM provinces of Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, Maguindanao, and Lanao del Sur as well as the Zamboanga peninsula, Lanao del Norte, Cotabato City, Cotabato, South Cotabato, and Sarangani (Source: <http://www.ifynet.org>).

**The Re-entry Education Alternative for the Poor (REAP) Program** developed by the Angelicum College, Manila, provides opportunities for out-of-school children and youth from poor families to complete their elementary and secondary education while working. The program allows them to study at home during their free time and at their own pace. The emphasis is on mastery of concepts, determined by periodic achievement tests, and not on grades. The REAP program can be adopted for use by any community that has at least twenty learners (out-of-school children or youth, and adults) who do not benefit from the government education programs, a dedicated volunteer coordinator, and volunteer tutors who can help the learners understand the self-paced learning modules and overcome any learning difficulties they may have (Source: <http://www.angelicumqc.edu.ph>).

**The Learning, Livelihood and Food Sufficiency Project** is one of several poverty alleviation efforts undertaken by the World Bank assisted ARMM Social Fund Project. It aims to help poor women, out-of-school male youth, indigenous people and other vulnerable community members by providing them with opportunities to enhance their capacities for self-improvement, acquire a degree of economic self-reliance, family welfare, peace-building and leadership abilities and environmental awareness through systematic interventions. Following field tests over nearly two years in a few conflict-affected barangays that yielded positive results, the project has recently been expanded to cover many more barangays in the region (Source: Community and Family Services International (2005) "The Learning, Livelihood and Food Sufficiency Project – Completion Report" CFSI, Manila ([headquarters@cfsi.ph](mailto:headquarters@cfsi.ph))).

**KAMINKAP—Kabataang Mindanao Para sa Kapayapaan** (Youth of Mindanao for Peace) is an NGO based in General Santos City. It works with young people in their communities and engages them in promoting peace, justice and development in Mindanao. Their activities including peace education and advocacy, conflict resolution and management, and conflict transformation are conducted within the framework of the Culture of Peace and Non-violence developed and promoted by UNESCO (Source: <http://www.kaminkap.tk/>).

**World Vision (WV) Development Foundation** is one of several NGOs engaged in poverty alleviation projects in several Mindanao communities. An important aspect of WV's work in Mindanao is building capacity for peace involving young people. In several of its development programs WV encourages children and youth to take the lead in conducting activities that promote interaction among them. Training and seminars, sports, fellowships and theatre groups are favorite activities through which children and young people are fostering a deeper sense of camaraderie and solidarity. In one of the Zamboanga barangays, for example, children and youth have acted as bridges to allow better relationships between families from diverse ethnic groups and religious affiliations—Christians and Muslims. Through



a primary school built in the community with support from WV, children and youth of these families had the opportunity to interact with each other, and have been instrumental in bringing about attitudinal changes among adults in the community. Local youth organizations formed with WV support, are at the forefront of activities such as sports competitions that promote inter-faith fellowship among young people (Source: World Vision (2001) 'Children and Peace Building: Experiences and Perspectives' World Vision discussion papers <http://www.wvi.org/imagine/pdf/Childpeace.pdf>).

**The Balay Rehabilitation Center** began its operations in Pikit, North Cotabato, in mid-2000. Since then it has expanded its area of operation to cover conflict-affected communities in Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat. Initially focused on providing the following services, peer counseling, treatment plan and stress management, Balay has now moved beyond the individualized approach to psychosocial services and is involved in peace camps for youth, and education assistance projects to help deserving youth continue their education. Balay also facilitates activities at the community level such as community festivals and gatherings, and fosters social cohesion among the different ethnic and religious groups. Balay's current project 'Promoting Children as Zones of Peace' helps facilitate healing and rehabilitation of the most vulnerable group, children and young people. The psychosocial intervention programs designed for the youth and children are integrated into the school curriculum and with existing community or barangay programs and projects (Source: [http:// www.balay.org.ph](http://www.balay.org.ph)).

**The Development for Peace in Sulu (DPIS) Project** offers a non-violent, community- based model for building trust among different ethnic groups. By assisting community leaders and professionals to improve health, education and livelihood opportunities, the project has contributed to building peace in the city of Jolo. It has bridged the gap between people from different faiths and cultures by engaging them in working for a common goal – the development of their communities. The DPIS project also undertakes collaborative efforts with the local government to reintegrate ex-combatants (Source: <http://www.asiamerica.org/>).

## 9. Conclusions and Recommendations

The FGDs and other interviews conducted as part of this study show that despite growing up in an environment shaped by violence, young males in Mindanao continue to hope for change for a better life. The harrowing experiences they have been through, such as destruction of their homes and communities, loss of a parent or sibling, repeated displacement, life as a refugee in their own country and the associated loss of self esteem, have not stopped them from hoping for lasting peace in Mindanao. Most of them have managed to stay out of the cycle of violence and revenge and display considerable courage and resilience in the face of grave threats to their lives and aspirations. They yearn for opportunities to equip themselves with the education and skills that their peer in other parts of the country have access to. They are very receptive to new ideas and approaches, and constitute an important resource group impatiently waiting to participate in rebuilding their communities.

As discussed above there are a number of interventions in the education, health, and agriculture sectors but only a few of them are youth focused. In an attempt to be gender sensitive many of these interventions are women-oriented and tend to ignore male youth. Further, until very recently, male youth were viewed as combatants and therefore part of the problem. The unique situation of young males in the context of armed conflict still remains to be addressed by most programs. While the Peace Agreement between the GRP and the MILF will no doubt be the first step in any effort to address the problems of the conflict-affected population of Mindanao, including its male youth, it is important that immediate efforts, along the following lines, are undertaken to demonstrate to the young people, especially young men, in conflict-affected areas of Mindanao that they have not been forgotten.

- Education is a key intervention and tops the list of needs of male youth in the study area. It is an excellent means of introducing a daily routine and a sense of purpose and order in their lives. The models already developed by some of the existing programs need to be replicated in areas that are currently not covered by them. It would also be useful to identify other innovative approaches developed and used in conflicted affected countries in other parts of the world<sup>26</sup>, and select a range of models (Box-8) that could be modified for implementation in Mindanao.

**Box 8: The Youth Pack Model**

The ‘Youth Pack’ model was developed by the Norwegian Refugee Council, Action Aid and the Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and piloted in 2003. It is a one-year full-time learning program for young people with little or no formal education, and who cannot or will not go through mainstream education systems. The program package includes literacy, life-skills and skills training, and provides youth with a minimum of important knowledge and skills to improve their quality of life and chances of getting a job. Before the package was adopted for implementation, a pilot group of youth was invited to take part in the testing of selected topics from all modules and to suggest improvements.

The Youth Pack is taught through an interactive and participatory methodology thereby creating an interesting learning environment that provides the youth plenty of opportunities for exchange of ideas. Academic learning is combined with a skills training program in cooperation with Action Aid Sierra Leone and skilled local craftsmen. At the end of the program, participants are allowed to take with them the set of tools they used during the training as a start up package.

Evaluations done after two years of implementation were generally positive and found that as many as 65 percent of the first batch of graduates was successfully self-employed.

Source: [http:// www.id21.org/insights/insights.edu04/insights\\_edn\\_4.pdf](http://www.id21.org/insights/insights.edu04/insights_edn_4.pdf)

- Besides curriculum improvement and teacher training, education projects must include some provision for uniforms, school supplies, nutritious meals and transport subsidies. The inability to meet the costs of these items was identified by every FGD group as an important barrier to schooling.
- Formal education programs need to be structured in a manner that allows adolescents to work while in school. In agricultural communities, such as those in the study area, it would be a good beginning to ensure that there is no conflict between the agricultural and school calendars. Alternative education models being implemented in other parts of the country could also be adapted for use in the Mindanao context
- The livelihood needs of the male youth can be best addressed by adopting an integrated approach combining functional literacy, life-skills training, agricultural skills development and vocational skills training.
- Similarly, partnerships with the local business sector in the form of apprenticeships and mentoring will enable youth to develop the right skill mix required by the labor market (Box 9). Such partnerships could be made an integral part of the skills training package in the form of a ‘practical phase’ to follow the initial learning phase.

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.id21.org/insights/insights-ed04/sse.html> for links to several websites containing information on education in emergencies and post-emergency situations.

**Box 9: Public/Private Partnership**

The Agro-Mechanical Training and Entrepreneurship for Rural Youth Project is a mechanical skills training program focused on promoting skills in repair, maintenance, and fabrication of small farm machinery. The trainees are out-of-school boys between 17-22 years of age who come from poor farming families. The project also engages these young boys in the establishment, management, and operation of local agro service centers. Launched in 1999 at the Don Bosco Training Center, the project has already established working relationships with a number of companies where trainees are placed for employment after graduation. Local agricultural machinery firms have also committed to employing the project's trainees, first as apprentices and then as regular employees. The development of the curriculum and machine prototypes is a joint effort between the Don Bosco Technical School, the International Rice Research Institute, and PhilRice, a well known Philippine government company that links agricultural manufacturing companies with farming cooperatives. The government's Technical Education and Skills Development Authority provided the initial laboratory equipment.

Source: [http:// www.bpdweb.com/gpyd/gpydnewsbriefapril2001.pdf](http://www.bpdweb.com/gpyd/gpydnewsbriefapril2001.pdf)

- Besides training youth for a vocation, skills training programs must include life skills<sup>27</sup> training as well. Training in areas such as business development, marketing and product diversification is also required.
- Realistic assessments of the labor markets in the region are required so that there is no mismatch between skills development and jobs available.
- The applicability of micro-credit programs in the study area needs to be explored. Programs such as the Village Telephone program<sup>28</sup>, that has achieved remarkable success among poor and illiterate rural women of Bangladesh, could be considered for replication on a pilot basis (Box 10).

**Box 10: The Grameen Phone Program**

The Grameen Phone Program in Bangladesh enables entrepreneurial women in rural villages who cannot afford to become regular subscribers, to obtain loans from microfinance institutions to buy mobile phones. The phones are then operated as pay phones, providing shared access to fellow villagers for a fee. Grameen Phone provides airtime to the village phone connections at a 50 percent discount and Grameen Bank (one of Bangladesh's oldest and largest microfinance institutions) provides initial loan packages to borrowers with sound credit histories, to purchase the handset and get connected. The program is managed by Grameen Telephone Company. The village phone operator collects charges for use from customers, and pays a monthly bill to Grameen Telephone Company. With more than six million subscribers, Grameen phone is now the largest telecom operator in Bangladesh. In 2005, its village phone program covered 45 percent of the country's population in around 50 percent of the villages with one phone providing access to multiple users.

Source: "Telecom franchisees can tap fortune at the bottom of the pyramid,"

<http://www.regulateonline.org/content/view/606/32/>

<sup>27</sup> Ranges from health education including reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, violence prevention, to communication skills and critical thinking skills.

<sup>28</sup> Network operators transfer the risk of providing service to marginal users to franchisees, thus providing entrepreneurial women with a means of generating a steady income by reselling telecom services. For more details, see: <http://www.regulateonline.org/content/view/606/32/>

- Tangible improvements in their immediate environment will go a long way in helping young males (and communities) cope with the psychosocial effects of the conflict. Such improvements could be in the form of minor infrastructure projects such as school buildings, community or youth centers, and link roads that could be taken up in partnership with the community with clearly defined roles for the male youth.
- Cooperative endeavors such as community gardens, or contributing towards the building or decoration of a more permanent community structure, have been seen to help young people gain confidence in their ability to plan and shape their future (Box 11).

**Box 11: The Pro-Child Care Project**

The Pro-Child Care project to promote community capacity to care for conflict-affected children in Central Mindanao, implemented by Community and Family Services International (CFSI) with assistance from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is in operation in twenty-five barangays of Central Mindanao. Project components include construction of play centers for pre-school children and training volunteers as care givers. The play centers are constructed with the help of the local youth, who are also invited to decorate the centers with murals (with a peace focus) of their choice. Basic training in mural making and the materials required are provided by the project. A mid-term evaluation of the project revealed that by providing youth opportunities to engage in collective and constructive work, the project has indirectly fostered a sense of camaraderie and solidarity among them.

Source: Community and Family Services International (2005), "The Pro Child Care Project – Completion Report," CFSI, Manila, Philippines (headquarters@cfsi.ph)

- Construction of sports facilities such as basketball courts and provision of basic sport equipment, establishing youth clubs and youth centers will provide 'safe zones' for youth to meet, network and interact among their peer.
- Construction of sports facilities such as basketball courts and provision of basic sport equipment, establishing youth clubs and youth centers will provide 'safe zones' for youth to meet, network and interact among their peer (Box 12).
- Building capacity among local government officials, police, and service providers in peace building and psychosocial skills will enable them to be sensitive to the situation of the youth in general, and use existing avenues to create a supportive and nurturing environment for them.

In conclusion, it is important to note that that programming for conflict-affected youth in general is a relatively new field and does not offer a wide range of successful and replicable models. However, available program experience suggests that interventions designed for conflict-affected youth must have the flexibility to evolve and adapt to changing situations, and involve the primary beneficiaries – young people – in project planning, design, implementation and evaluation. All such interventions must integrate where possible, and be respectful, of local practice, values and knowledge.

**Box 12: Youth Clubs for Peace and Development**

Batticaloa and Amparai are two conflict affected districts in eastern Sri Lanka. In 1999 Save the Children Norway, together with a local partner organization ESCO (Eastern Self-Reliant and Community Awakening Organisation), worked with children and youth of a small village called Sivanthivu in Batticaloa District to establish what is now known as The Vivehananda Children Development Club. The project provided several opportunities for the children and youth of Sivanthivu to engage in the development of their own lives and that of the community. For example, club members mobilized the community to petition the local government to move the military camp away from a main road leading to the local school. The camp was moved out and young people could go to school without fear of being stopped or arrested on flimsy charges. Advocacy efforts by the club members, with support from ESCO and the national NGO consortium, also led to the re-instatement of bus services connecting the village to the nearest town. Another important achievement of the club was the expansion of schooling in Sivanthivu - a new school building was constructed in the village to include grades 6 to 9, and the local director of education was persuaded to provide additional teachers. The new building also includes additional space for club activities, including space, for sports and cultural events for young people and vocational training initiatives aimed particularly at school dropouts. The club won \$1,000 in an international competition for youth action and used the opportunity to begin a drive to raise funds for long-term sustainability. Drawing upon the Sivanthivu experience, similar clubs have emerged in some other conflict affected communities of Sri Lanka, supported by NGO groups working in those areas.

Source: Hart, Jason (2002) "Children's Clubs: New Ways of Working With Conflict Displaced Children in Sri Lanka," Forced Migration Review No.15, October 2002

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### Useful Websites

Child Protection in the Philippines – Philippine Resource Network <http://www.childprotection.org>

Id 21 Communicating Development Research <http://www.id21.org/insights/insights-ed04/index.html>

INEE - Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies <http://www.ineesite.org/>

International Displacement Monitoring Center <http://www.international-displacement.org>

Save The Children USA <http://www.savethechildren.org/technical/resources.asp>

The Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management <http://www.berghof-center.org/english.htm>

The Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/>

USAID Conflict Management [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/conflict/publications/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/)

USAID Microfinance Amid Conflict  
[http://www.microlinks.org/ev\\_en.php?ID=1435\\_201&ID2=DO\\_COMMUNITY](http://www.microlinks.org/ev_en.php?ID=1435_201&ID2=DO_COMMUNITY)

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Children and Adolescents Program  
<http://www.womenscommission.org/projects/children/index.shtml>

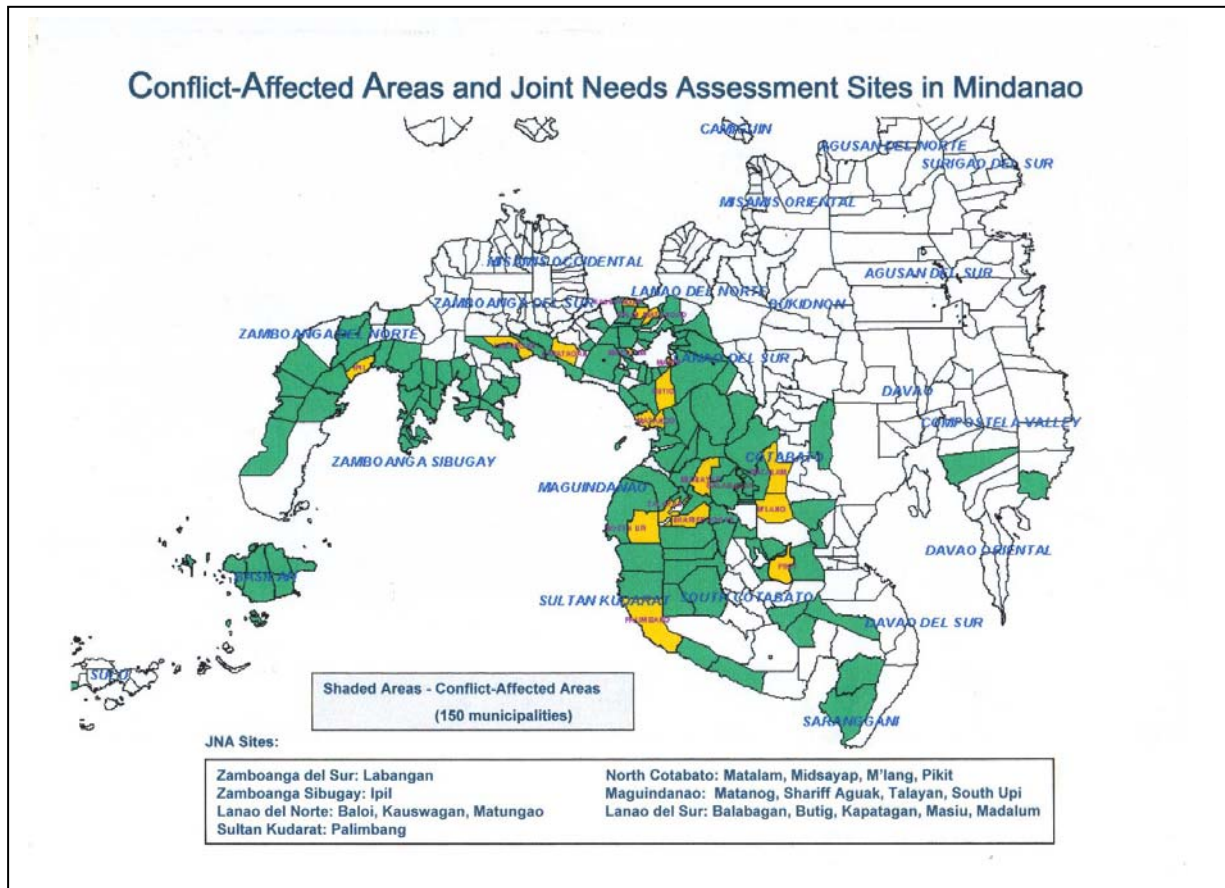


Annex 1: Provinces Most Affected by the Moro (MILF/MNLF) Conflict (by number of encounters and number of casualties), 1986-2004

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By number of encounters	By number of casualties
Maguindanao	Maguindanao
North Cotabato	Lanao del Norte
Basilan	North Cotabato
Lanao del Norte	Lanao del Sur
Lanao del Sur	Basilan
Davao del Sur	Sulu
South Cotabato	Sultan Kudarat
Sultan Kudarat	
Sulu	
Zamboanga del Sur	

## Annex 2: Conflict Affected Areas and Joint Needs Assessment in Mindanao



Source: The World Bank (December 2005) "Joint Needs Assessment"  
The World Bank, Manila, Philippines

## Annex 3: Focus Group Discussions and Individual Interviews

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### Focus Group Discussions and Individual Interviews

Region/Province	Municipality	Barangays where FGDs were held	Number of Male Youth Participants	Number of Individual Interviews
<b>Region IX</b>				
Zamboanga Sibuguey	Ipil	Magadaup	5	1
		Bangkerohan	12	2
Zamboanga del Norte	Siocon	Bucana	7	1
		S. Arabe	4	1
<b>Region X</b>				
Lanao del Norte	Balo-i	Pacalundo	4	1
		Basagad	11	1
		Matampay	2	1
	Matungao	Poblacion	4	1
		Bangco	11	1
<b>Region XII</b>				
Cotabato	Carmen	Malapag	5	
		Liliongan	2	1
	Pikit	Raja Muda	7	
		Talitay	5	
Sultan Kudarat	Palimbang	Kraan	12	3
		Malisbong	24	1
<b>ARMM</b>				
Maguindanao	Datu Montawal	Bulit	7	
		Dungguan	9	
	Pagalungan	Inug-ug	10	1
		Kudal	7	
	North Upi	Borongotan	13	
	Buldon	Ampuan	10	1
		Oring	10	1
		Kabayuan	10	1
	Matanog	Bugasan Sur	12	1
		Bugasan Norte	12	1
		Langkong	10	1
Lanao del Sur	Kapatagan	Daguan	8	1
		Upper Igabay	6	1
		Inudaran	10	1
	Butig	Bayabao	11	1
		Sandab	19	1
		Dalabayan	12	1
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>291</b>	<b>28</b>

## Annex 4: Key Informants Interviewed

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1. Professor Estrella Cantalopez  
Faculty Member and Peace Education Officer  
Peace Center, Notre Dame University  
Cotabato City, Philippines
2. Fr. Roberto Layson  
Parish Priest, Pikit Parish  
Maguindanao, Philippines
3. Ms. Joy Lascano  
Program Officer  
BALAY Incorporated (National Center)  
48 Mapagbigay St., Barangay Central District  
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
4. Mr. Gerard Rixhon  
Faculty Member, Ateneo de Manila University  
Manila, Philippines
5. Professor Rudy B. Rodil  
Faculty Member, Mindanao State University  
Iligan City, Philippines  
  
Member of the GRP Panel for talks with the MNLF from 1992-1996
6. Ms. Nida Vilches  
Program Officer  
Save the Children  
Manila, Philippines
7. Ms. Agnes Camacho Zenaida  
Programme Officer  
Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Programme  
Center for Integrative and Development Studies  
Magsaysay Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines

## Annex 5: Excerpts from Researchers' Field Notes

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- In barangay Sandab, Butig, Lanao del Norte, all the young men wished to participate in the FGD. We had no option but to agree. As a result our focus group was like a community assembly and just as noisy, with the most vocal monopolizing the discussion.
- We ran into a group of combatants in a Barangay in Sultan Kudarat. Our FGD was scheduled for the same day and time and place as their meeting. The chairman of the group questioned us about our research activities and asked if we belonged to the same organization as the nuns who conducted a survey a week back to ascertain the validity of the claim that Muslim values are being eroded by proselytizing Christian groups. He argued that there is no reason to conduct numerous surveys to gather information. It took us more than an hour to allay his suspicions and establish our credentials. We offered to postpone the FGD but they decided to let us complete our work before they held their meeting.
- In Ampuan we met a group of young men carrying guns. They said they were only performing their duty and safeguarding the community. Carrying arms is part of life in this community where most people are involved in family feuds called 'rido.' Many young men here believe that the smartest and most courageous youth are those involved in "ridos."
- A former official's son accompanied us from Ampuan to Oring. We came across two young men on horse-back, armed with guns. They rode on without acknowledging our greetings. We also passed a village with several abandoned houses. Our escort informed us that it used to be a large and thriving village but fell apart because of ceaseless ridos with neighbors taking up arms against each other. We could feel the tension in the air even as we walked through the village.

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