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**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN SECURITY:
ADDRESSING THE GAPS**
“Peacebuilding Experiences and Knowledge from Asia to the World”

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1. The Human Security Philippine Context

1.1 Human development indicators

The Philippines is an archipelago consists of 7,100 islands with a land area of 300,000 square km. It is composed of 3 major islands – Luzon in the north where the country’s capital is located, the Visayan group of islands in the middle, and Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago in the south. The country has rich natural and human resources, but these resources are compromised by a number of factors, including population pressures, environmental degradation and poverty.

High population growth

The country’s population of 85.2 million (NCSO, 2005) is increasing more rapidly than most countries in Southeast Asia. The Washington-based Population Resources Bureau (PRB) warned that if the 2000 growth rate of 2.4% were to remain unchanged, the country’s population would double in just 30 years.

As a result, our cities are becoming more crowded and polluted, and the reliability of food and water supplies is more uncertain than a generation ago. As

urban centers in the Philippines have grown, water and air pollution problems have expanded. These problems are particularly pressing in the National Capital Region (NCR), where approximately 13% of the country's population resides.

Environmental degradation

Numerous studies have shown how the productivity of the country's agricultural lands and fisheries is declining as these areas become increasingly degraded and pushed beyond their production capacity. Plant and animal species are also disappearing as a result of the loss of the country's forests and the destruction of its coral reefs.

Today, the Philippines already lost almost 90% of its mangroves, the vast majority since 1970. Between 1990 and 2000, the country has also lost more than 800,000 hectares of forests; only about 7% of the nation's original lowland forest remains.

The risk to human life from natural disasters has increased dramatically over the past generation: From 1971 to 2000, natural disasters killed 34,000 Filipinos; between 1990 and 2000, natural disasters affected 35 million people

Poverty and hunger

Today, around one-quarter of Philippine families live below the poverty threshold, reflecting broad social inequity and other social challenges. The fast-growing population and the failure of household incomes to rise as fast as commodity prices have resulted in more poor Filipino families, according to the recent 2006 Official Poverty Statistics report released by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB).

The report said 4.7 million families – equivalent to 26.9 percent of the total number of Filipino families – were poor in 2006, marking an increase from 4 million poor families in 2003. Poverty incidence rose despite the average economic growth of 5.4 percent that the Philippines posted from 2004 to 2006.

The NSCB said that in 2006, the average poverty line for a family of five was determined to be at P6,274 a month. This meant that a family of five earning less than that amount was considered poor. It also said a family of five could live on the minimum wage of P9,100 a month in 2006 without being poor.

The poverty threshold rose from P5,129 in 2003 because of inflation, or the increase in consumer prices. In 2006, as many as 1.9 million families – from 1.7 million in 2003 – were considered “food-poor” or those whose incomes fell below the minimum requirement for food expenditure set by the government, the NSCB said.

The food poverty incidence worsened from 10.2 percent of the total number of families in 2003 to 11 percent. On an individual basis, 32.9 percent of the population, or 27.6 million Filipinos, were poor in 2006, the NSCB said. The figures showed a deterioration from the 30 percent and 23.8 million, respectively in 2003.

There were 12.2 million Filipinos – equivalent to 14.6 percent of the population-who were food poor in 2006, showing a deterioration from 10.8 million and 13.5 percent, respectively, in 2003.

From the statistics, it may be concluded that the benefits of a growing economy are not trickling down to the poor, Poverty incidence rose despite the average economic growth of 5.4 percent that the Philippines posted from 2004 to 2006.

This is most glaring in the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) where all of its 5 provinces are in the top 10 provinces in the country with the lowest human development index.

Some 11 million Filipinos are living on less than \$1 a day, according to the Institute for Food Production Research, Inc. (IPRI). Among the 119 developing countries and countries in transition, the Philippines was ranked 72nd, the highest among the SEA nations included in the study. It's Global Hunger Index (GHI) of 77.55 also indicates "a serious problem in hunger."

The diaspora of 8.1 million Filipinos all over the world is also pushed by lack of or limited opportunities in their home country.

1.2 The armed conflict in the country

The Philippines plays host to two longest-running armed conflicts in the region -- the communist-led rebellion under the banner of Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and the Moro insurgency in the South then spearheaded by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under Nur Misuari and now by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The communist insurgency traces its roots to the agrarian struggle immediately after the World War II which burst-out into a popular national democratic mass movement in late 60s and especially during the -14-year dictatorial regime of Marcos.

Since 1969, the CPP, its military arm the New People's Army (NPA), and its political wing the New Democratic Front (NDF), have fought the national government for political control and land reform. The NPA's armed struggle against military forces, police, and civilian militia units resulted in heavy

casualties during the 1980s. Failed 1986 peace talks with the NDF were not revived until after the government's 1992 National Unification Commission (NUC) established an amnesty and negotiation process. In 1998, a month after newly elected President Joseph Estrada signed an August human rights accord with communist rebels, the government postponed planned peace talks. In spite of renewed efforts in 1999 and 2001, the peace process remains stalled.

In the South, the more than 400-year Bangsamoro struggle for right to self-determination (RSD) has continued to catch fire despite the signing of two peace accords between the Philippine government and the MNLF, and the formation of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 1989. The conflict, which has reached its height in the early 70s, has claimed 12,000 lives from the 1970s to present [Schiavo-Campo and Judd: 2005]. Moreover, it has resulted to the displacement of 2 million people, almost a half of whom during the 2000 'all-out' war of the then Estrada government against the MILF.

The MILF has now now taken the lead in „reasserting the Bangsamoro right to self-determination and freedom“ under an „Islamic paradigm.“ Despite the capture of its main camps by the AFP in the 2000 war, it has remained politically and militarily strong with an estimated armed strength of 15,000 and has even extended its influence to Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi island provinces.

1.3 Political Instability

The Philippines is noted for its being the most corrupt country in Asia. The present administration is accused of spearheading scandals after scandals the latest of which is the controversial ZTE- NBN which now leads to massive protest and political instability in the country. Several coup attempts were done by young officers in the Armed Forces of the Philippines to protest what they considered massive corruption in the government. Included in the protests is the massive

election fraud which put to question the legitimacy of the present Arroyo administration.

In a recently concluded survey of the Makati Business Club in Manila, it was found out that five of every six of the country's major corporations belonging to the Makati Business Club said graft and corruption worsened in the past year.

"Nobody said they felt graft and corruption decrease or improve last year and the remaining 15 percent said there was no change," MBC chair Ramon del Rosario Jr. said Thursday.

Surveyed on Feb. 27-28, some 100 respondents were asked five questions, including how they felt about irregularities in government. The MBC has 700 member organizations, among them the country's biggest corporations.

Last month, after Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. testified at the Senate about a \$130-million overprice in the \$329-million broadband deal with China's ZTE Corp., the MBC said P21.1 billion may have been lost to corruption in 2006 considering that the government allocated P105 billion of its P1.04-trillion budget that year for infrastructure.

The MBC cited a 2000 World Bank study, titled "Combating Corruption in the Philippines," which found that a fifth of government funds for projects in 1998 ended up as kickbacks -- the same level that Lozada described as the "permissible" overprice in government contracts.

The group also said that if 20 percent of public funds was lost to corruption yearly, then the wastage from the national coffers would have been P24.5 billion in 2007 and P29.5 billion in 2008.

The peace process in Mindanao

Through the mediation of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Philippine government (under Marcos) and the MNLF signed the 1976 Tripoli Agreement in Libya which granted autonomy to the 13 provinces in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan. Marcos, however, invoked 'constitutional process' and subjected the 13 provinces into a plebiscite. He also created two 'Autonomous' Regions -- IX (Western Mindanao) and XII (Central Mindanao) instead of one as provided for in the Tripoli Agreement.

The peace process gained new life with the assumption of the Aquino government into power in 1986 and the subsequent enactment of the Organic Act for Muslim Mindanao. In the 1989 plebiscite called to determine which of the 13 provinces would like to join the Muslim autonomous region, however, only 4 provinces where Muslims are the majority, decided to join the autonomous region. The MNLF did not accept the conduct and results of the said plebiscite.

Under the Ramos presidency, the GRP and the MNLF finally inked the 1996 Final Peace Agreement (FPA) after patient negotiations under the auspices of the OIC. The FPA provided for the establishment of Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), a transition body tasked with supervising development projects within Special Zones for Peace and Development (SZOPAD) which encompasses the 13 provinces as provided for in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. A referendum shall be called 3 years later to determine which provinces and cities would like to join the "expanded autonomous region." Due to the poor performance of the ARMM under the leadership of Nur Misuari, only 1 province and 1 city decided to join the ARMM during the 1999 referendum.

With the integration of most of the MNLF leaders and combatants into the government as a result of the 1996 Accord, the MILF has already appeared as

the most serious threat to the Philippine government by the time Estrada assumed presidency in 1998. While also entering into a low profile negotiation with the Ramos administration in 1997 under the single agenda of “solving the Bangsamoro problem,” the MILF has continuously built up ‘camps’ with political-military functions and held a sizeable part of Central Mindanao under its influence and control. And far from decimating it, the ‘all-out’ war unleashed by Estrada against the MILF in 2000 only made the later more formidable especially in the eyes of its followers and the media.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s (GMA) started her administration with an ‘all-out peace’ policy with the MILF; in fact immediately opening up exploratory talks with the latter between 2001 and 2002 under the facilitation of the Malaysian government. During this period, the two parties already were able to conclude 2 major agreements: 1.) on Security, and 2.) on Rehabilitation and Development. The talks were, however, broken when government forces attacked the Buliok Complex in Ligawasan Marsh allegedly to go after criminal elements. The MILF believed that the attack was meant to capture their late Chairman Hashim Salamat who used to have the area as his base.

By mid-2003, the peace process with the MILF finally took off with Malaysia taking the role of a 3rd party mediator. A joint Coordinating Committee for Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) was set up to monitor violations of the ceasefire agreement and Malaysia, as provided in the Agreement, sent its first contingent of International Monitoring Team (IMT) in 2004 to complement the work of the CCCH.

The two parties were already in the process of wrapping up an agreement on Ancestral Domain (the 3rd aspect of the peace process, the other two being Security, and Rehabilitation and Development) when the talks hit a snag in September 2006 over the coverage of the proposed Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE). The impasse was broken on October 2007 and both parties were already

looking forward to the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on the 3 aspects of the peace process before the year-end. This, however, did not materialize after the MILF panel walked out at the opening of their 15th Exploratory Talks in Kuala Lumpur on December 15, 2007 in protest over the GRP's proposed draft of the MOA on Ancestral Domain, highlighting various discrepancies with earlier agreements by both parties.

2.0 The Civil Society Organizations' Approach to Peacebuilding

CSOs in the Philippines have gone a long way in their efforts at peacebuilding and transforming violent conflicts. From being mainly concerned with human rights advocacy during the 70s, they have adjusted their roles and functions to adapt to the changing political situation. In the island of Mindanao where I come from, for example, there is now a growing recognition especially from the international community, of the important role that CSOs play in societal reconstruction.

2.1 Advocacy

Advocacy work -- whether related to the respect for and protection of human rights, promotion of peace, good governance, or to people's participation in the peace process -- has remained one of the key CSO approaches to peacebuilding. Through lobbying, networking, protest actions, public forum, as well as conflict-sensitive journalism, Philippine CSOs are able to raise public awareness and interest on pressing issues related to peace and development. The projection of the Mindanao conflict and peace process to the national and international community, as well as the success of localized peace pacts and mechanisms, could be largely credited to this advocacy work.

The Mindanao Peaceweavers, a tri-people alliance of diverse peace networks, movements and organizations in Mindanao, has become, since the 2000 'all-out'

war, an effective vehicle for peace advocacy by the Mindanao CSOs. Its member organizations are also responsible, on a rotation basis, for the preparation and coordination of the annual Mindanao Week of Peace which started in 1998.

At the height of the war in 2000, for instance, it was the vibrant CSO-led peace movement which really campaigned for a stop to the war and which pressured the conflict parties to adhere to international humanitarian laws. The CBCS-led series of rallies in key cities of Mindanao after the most recent impasse in the GRP-MILF peace talks last December 2007 is also an example of dramatizing the people's yearning for peace and an end to the decades-old war through a negotiated political settlement.

Their advocacy for the review of the 1996 FPA and for the participation of the "Lumads" in the ongoing GRP-MILF peace negotiations are also examples of CSO attempts at making the peace process more inclusive.

2.2 Monitoring and grassroots peacekeeping

Meanwhile, monitoring the implementation of ceasefire agreements, whether related to the ongoing peace talks or to local peace pacts, has become an integral part of CSO peacebuilding work together with the installation of an early warning system in selected conflict-prone areas. The Bantay Ceasefire (Ceasefire Watch) and Tiyakap Kalilintad (Care for Peace) volunteers, for example, are working closely with the GRP-MILF Coordinating Committee on Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) in Mindanao in monitoring and reporting political tensions as well as violations of existing ceasefire agreements.

2.3 Promoting the Culture of Peace

The prevailing 'culture of war' in conflict areas or regions is being addressed by CSOs through peace education, especially by propagating the Culture of Peace modules. Taking the lead in this effort are the academe, church, media and NGOs. Peace courses at the graduate level are now being offered in selected universities and a lot of researches on the peace process, traditional peace mediation and settlement approaches as well as on grassroots peacebuilding, have already been published. Likewise, peace radios are getting popular and attracting audience, and seminars and trainings on peace, conflict resolution and interfaith dialogue are regularly being conducted in parishes, mosques and communities. Lately, a number of NGOs have embarked on training officers and members of the Philippine military and police on conflict management and transformation

Also for almost a decade now, the Mindanao Peace Institute has been annually conducting its Summer Peace Course aimed at providing local and international participants an in-depth knowledge of and training on the different theories, approaches and praxis of peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

2.4 Service Delivery

Linking community development work with peacebuilding is being done by CSOs through the provision of basic social services to impoverished and conflict-affected communities. Notwithstanding some gaps in organizing work, projects like water and health system, basic education, and livelihood have helped the communities survive grinding poverty and the ravages of war. For many CSOs, the introduction of development projects, or even of emergency relief, is just an entry point for peacebuilding activities and for establishing cooperation with local government agencies.

3.0 The Role of the Funding Agencies

Since the 80s, the international donor community has taken much interest on conflict prevention and management, as well as on peacebuilding in their development policies. From “peace and development” framework, it has further developed into “global security and human security.”

After the signing of the 1996 Peace Accord, the Muslim Mindanao has seen the onslaught of international donors and aid agencies all willing to support post-conflict reconstruction programs and development projects within the SZOPAD areas. While some of these aid packages contributed to the strengthening of autonomous structures, reduction of violence and improvement of lives in selected Moro communities, we also have seen how they, in general, failed in sustaining peace due to some gaps in the implementation of the Accord, as well as in the design and actual delivery of the aid packages themselves.

The fact that 4 of the ARMM provinces topped the list of 10 most poorest provinces in the 2005 Philippine Human Development Report, and are also among the provinces with the highest reported cases of armed encounters, says much how the international community, especially the funding agencies, could have made a difference.

If there is one important lesson to be learned from the role of international donor community in its engagement in Mindanao after the signing of 1996 Peace Accord, it is that partnership alone with the government and the MNLF was not enough; the need to tap and strengthen CSOs in the whole peacebuilding and reconstruction work should also have been given equal importance and priority.

4.0 Community Development: Bridging the Gaps

In his speech on human security in Mindanao on September 20, 2006, JICA President Sadako Ogata said that peacebuilding “entails numerous societal reconstruction tasks” far beyond the capacity of official diplomacy and reconstruction programs to address. Recognizing the key and potential role of CSOs on this matter, she stressed the need to “interlink piecemeal projects with the overall context of community development.”

Her observation actually jibes with our own conclusion based on many years of experience that the success and impact of any development and peacebuilding projects in conflict-affected areas largely depend on how these communities are empowered to act on the development and peace-related problems besetting them. Top-down approach in project implementation, as usually had been the case in large foreign-funded assistance programs or projects, have not only reinforced unequal and unjust power structures; they also have reduced the people as mere objects of aid and often leave genuine CSOs to “clean-up the mess.”

The ongoing GRP-MILF peace process has already achieved significant gains in terms of improving the security situation and it has given new hope to the Bangsamoro people that their deep historical grievances would soon be met should a new peace accord be forged. But while the top-level negotiation is reaching its critical stage and is experiencing its usual ups and downs, the need to address the basic socio-economic problems of people in conflict-affected areas must be also done to prevent these problems from developing into another source of conflict.

As the lead institution mandated with the task of reconstruction and development of war-affected areas under the GRP-MILF peace process, the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) should learn some lessons from the SPCPD

experience in the implementation of the 1996 Peace Accord. Instead of repeating the usual top-down approach, exclusivity, and the tendency to create artificial structures in the communities just to corner 'social funds', it should try to reach out to CSOs which already have the experience and capability in implementing and managing development programs – and in more participatory ways -- in poor and war-torn communities.

Kadtuntaya Foundation, Inc (KFI) one of the CSOs I am representing, has recently embarked on a review of our community organizing approaches and strategies in partnership with the Local Governance Support Program (LGSP) for the ARMM. By looking into the lessons learned as well as the gaps in our CO work, we hope to make our community development approach more responsive and sensitive to the socio-economic and security needs of the communities we work with.

We have already seen the need to mainstream peacebuilding and conflict transformation within our community development programs and projects. Our experience has also taught us that “in order to realize peace, we have to transform the society affected by conflict.”

5.0 Conclusion

The peace and security situation in the ARMM, by all indicators, can be safely said to be still intractable in spite of the 1996 Peace Accord between the GRP and the MNLF, and the on-going peace talks between the GRP and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). While some small-scale gains can be observed, especially in the proliferation of socio-economic infrastructure due mainly to ODA and the support of some international NGOs, much has yet to be done to bring the region to a state of stability and social rehabilitation. Since the GRP-MILF peace talks started in 1997, three major violent wars took place. All these violent wars happened amidst the ceasefire entered into by the government and the

rebel group. Major violent clashes also occurred between the MNLF forces and the AFP in Jolo, which many analysts attributed to the unsettled issue of the controversial 1996 peace agreement.

The Abu Sayyaf, an extremist Moro armed faction, is still waging terrorist attacks in some parts of Mindanao. Kidnap for Ransom Groups (KFRGs) still operate in some parts of Mindanao.

In the context of Mindanao, the challenge ahead is how to blend development and sustained cessation of hostilities while working for a more comprehensive political agreement as a condition towards attaining a state of human security where there is a substantial reduction of freedom from want, fear and more respect to the rule of law. Community development becomes strategically relevant when it supports attainment of hostilities and moves to the direction of empowering communities to sustain development process itself. It can prevent armed conflict when it supports equality and justice and self-determination. Development is not only measured in terms of economic growth but also equity in growth. It must promote democracy, good governance, thus peace.

The greater challenge in the country is how to overcome social problems such as corruption, structural injustices, poor governance, disregards to human rights and rule of laws to attain a higher degree of social equity, democracy and equitable economic growth. These are the necessary pre-condition for political stability, human security and peace.

