

# **Social Capital, Civil Society and Peace: Reflections on Conflict Transformation in the Philippines<sup>#</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

Civil society is recognised as comprising complex and multifaceted entities, resilient to and yet responsive to both the state apparatus and global market processes. Civil society in the Philippines, long regarded as one of the most vibrant, diverse and innovative in Asia, has emerged as a significant actor in the field of conflict resolution and peace-building. In thinking about the work of peace, this paper engages with the effectiveness of civil society in mobilising societal awareness for a 'just and lasting peace' in the southern Philippines. Shaped by development paradigms that privilege concepts such as social capital, the paper aims to interrogate how such concepts situated within the development–security nexus proposed by the Philippine government and funding agencies have influenced conflict-transformation initiatives in Mindanao, Philippines.

## **Keywords**

Civil society, peace-building, social capital, conflict intervention, Mindanao

## **Introduction: A brief word on peace**

In the Philippines, peace has emerged as a formative construct through which people seek to critically examine their relations with each other and the institutions that affect their lives. This awareness has been shaped by people's reflections on the suffering and hardship they experienced during and after war and periods of social unrest. It has also been informed by a critique of the state's use of force and the potentiality for violation of civil liberties. This critique, which emerged during the martial law period, became increasingly influential in shaping many civil society organisations' (CSOs) relations with the state. Long regarded as one of the most vibrant, diverse and innovative in Asia, civil society has emerged as a significant actor in the field of conflict resolution and peace-building. How such a process is conceptualised by the different stakeholders involved in reaching and sustaining peace may be open to debate. However, the inter-connective process-like nature of peace work is recognised by all. This process, which is commonly accepted by many diverse political groupings, may be described as the actualisation towards a 'just and lasting peace'.

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Peace emerged as a crucial idea during the post-EDSA era. This period was associated with the emergence of activist non-government organisations (NGOs) and people's organisations (POs) that strategically formed enduring cross-society linkages, often coalescing around social justice issues. Linked to national networks, these groups established important peace-oriented coalitions such as the Coalition for Peace, the Multi-Sectorial Peace Advocates, the Philippine Independence Peace Advocates, the Philippine Peace Consortium and the National Peace Conference. Many organisations and coalitions involved in the peace movement recognised that innovative approaches conducive to fostering a just and lasting peace were needed if long-standing insurgencies were to be resolved (Coronel-Ferrer 1997). Formalised engagements with armed insurgency groups were undertaken by the Philippine government, leading to multifaceted negotiations between the government and different groups. With regard to the conflict in Mindanao, negotiations were undertaken between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Philippine government resulting in the 1996 Peace Agreement; negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) are currently ongoing. Historically, the conflict in Mindanao has been concentrated in the Muslim-majority regions of south-western and central Mindanao, commonly referred to as Muslim-Mindanao.

Secondly, the conceptualisation of peace is itself instructive in interrogating the ways through which the Philippine government and organised armed groups that are resistant to the state (as it currently exists) or wish to fundamentally change the nature of the state or markedly redefine their relationship to the state (via sovereignty or constitutional amendment), are intrinsic to the workings of the state. Understanding the processes through which both the Philippine state and such groups have sought to engage constructively with each other, deepens our appreciation of the complexities of such encounters through time. Such insights can only increase our knowledge about some of the underlying determinants that people attribute to armed conflict and war and provide us with a more sensitive and inclusive approach towards conflict transformation in the Asia-Pacific region. Recent research on intrastate conflicts has led to complex analyses on the types, causes and impact of these different conflicts, particularly in securing peace. This paper does not deal with the theoretical frameworks posited by political scientists to understand intrastate conflict and conflict resolution (Hoddie and Hartzell 2005). Instead, my interest focuses on the ways through which the different entities that comprise society, such as civil society organisations, engage with the state, and how the nature of this process is shaped by and constrained by the engagement itself. Conflict transformation draws on the idea of building on constructive change in settings of deep-rooted conflict through innovative processes that recognise a certain way of imagining. This is John Paul Lederarch's moral imagination, which he defines as the "capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist" (2005, p. ix). Lederarch's approach is helpful in recognising the possibilities of peace that do not draw on closure and alert us to the process-like nature of this type of engagement.

This paper has a number of limitations. I do not examine whether development assistance channelled through CSOs perpetuated, increased or lessened inequalities within and between communities living in post-conflict areas. Nor do I discuss important issues pertaining to civil society and Islam, associational life in Mindanao prior to the 1990s or whether intra-communal and/or inter-communal associations directly or indirectly fostered practices of exclusion and discrimination. These issues are the subject of a forthcoming paper.

### **The concept of civil society**

While the concept of civil society has been the subject of considerable debate, such discussions have been overwhelmingly determined by political discourses on participatory processes, particularly within liberal–democratic states. Thus, John Keane’s argument (cited in Edwards 2004, p. 20) that civil society can be considered “an ideal-typical category that both describes and envisages a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-government institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organising, self-reflexive and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions that frame, construct and enable their activities”, fits within this conceptualisation. For many theorists, civil society emerged with the formation of the ‘modern’ in political and social life with the emphasis placed on individualism and voluntarism; for others, particularly those engaged in analysing associational groupings in non-Western societies, the purposes of activity rather than the forms of organisations, a classification that recognises ‘ascriptive’ (ascribable) associations, has been highlighted. For example, Varshney (2002, p. 46) argues that “informal group activities as well as ascriptive associations should be considered part of civil society so long as they connect individuals, build trust, encourage reciprocity and facilitate exchange of views on matters of public concern — economic, political, cultural and social.”

Embedded within these debates is the perceived relationship between civil society and democracy as conceptualised through the idea of association. In her analysis of the significance of associations in contemporary societies, Rudolph (2004, p. 68) traces the influence of de Tocqueville who, in his writings on American society, considered that the associational experience (one that is conducive of respect and trust of the other) fosters an interest in, and a capacity to cooperate in, pursuit of the general or common good. Theorists such as Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993) have drawn on the idea of the capacity to participate, trust and influence others in their respective formulations of social capital. Putnam (1993) defines social capital as those features of social organisation such as networks of individuals or households, and the associational norms and values that create externalities for the community as a whole (Grootaert and Bastelar 2002, p. 2). Such externalities invariably relate to the cohesiveness and strength of a society (degree of trust, rules of civic behaviour practiced, and level of association). Coleman’s (1988, p. 98) conceptualisation of social capital encompasses “a variety of different entities [which] all consist of some aspect of social

structure and [which] facilitate certain actions of actors — whether personal or corporate actors — within the structure”. Rudolph (2004, p. 69) points out that Putnam, as does de Tocqueville, posits a “causal relationship between the social capital constituted by associational practices and the capacity for civic participation and self-government”. These ideas have also been developed by neo-liberal theorists such as Fukuyama (1995) and have increasingly been incorporated into multilateral agencies’ development policies. These policies seek to foster social capital-generating associational forms across the society through enhancing specific qualities within civil society organisations that interface with, and as a consequence of this interaction, strengthen relations with the market.

Recognising that civil society encompasses a diversity of associational forms, many theorists have focussed on the commonalities rather than differences between groups. Edwards (2004) suggests a number of common features: membership is consensual rather than legal, exit is possible without loss of status or public rights or benefits and voluntaristic mechanisms are used to achieve objectives, and dialogue, bargaining or persuasion are used instead of enforced compliance by governments or market incentives by firms. Such a definition recognises civil society’s positive engagement to civic life and implicitly, social cohesion. While helpful in theorising associational relations within communities, particularly within sectarian communities, such conceptualisations of civil society does call into question the identification of civil society as having non-violent tendencies. As Cochrane (2005, pp. 2-3) notes, an inclusive definition of civil society should recognise groups and organisations that might be perceived as having negative and destructive influences, and that civil society itself can be used to justify and defend a multiplicity of political values and objectives.

It is important to acknowledge that these debates concerning the conceptualisation of civil society are also applicable in the Philippine context, with the qualification that the mobilisation of quite diverse civil society organisations during the 1980s and 1990s, meant that such groups while sharing an interest in socio-political transformation, had markedly different perceptions on what this transformation entailed (David 1997). Thus, civil society’s contribution to Philippine social life has been the subject of considerable debate and analyses by researchers and activists. As a working definition in the Philippine context, Presidential Executive Order 370, *Strengthening the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development*, 26 September 1996, specified civil society as comprising people’s organisations, non-government organisations and sectoral/major groups with representatives selected by their community from the following designated groupings: women, farmers, fisher-folk, Indigenous people, Moro and Cordillera people, urban poor, elderly citizens, disabled people and youth, academe, professionals, media, religious groups and NGOs. This categorisation is important in that the specification does not necessarily exclude ‘ascriptive’ associations from the processes through which representation is selected within the sectoral/major groups. Qualification should also be given to the distinction between the market and civil society in

that while business and labour were categorised separately, labour groups, particularly trade unions, have commonly be regarded as aligned with civil society interests as have cooperatives. Qualification should also be made with regard to party-list groups, as many are affiliated with sectoral groups actively involved in civil society concerns.

### **The status of peace negotiations**

The *Bangsamoro* struggle for self-determination has been described as a struggle that has spanned the centuries of Spanish, United States, Japanese and Filipino colonisation. The word *Bangsamoro* is itself an evocation of a colonial past. Moro, a derivative of 'moor' was commonly used by Spanish missionaries and colonial government officials to refer to all Muslims regardless of ethno-linguistic and cultural differences. The association of *bangsa* or country with the (derogatory) identity marker, Moro, imbued *Bangsamoro* with nationalist aspirations through the identification of identity with place or homeland, and conveyed the possibility of a return to some form of political autonomy or independence through the struggle for self-determination. An organised, armed resistance group, led by a cadre of young men educated in Islamic political thought, emerged during the 1970s resulting in the formation of the MNLF. The subsequent fragmentation of the MNLF led to the establishment of two additional groups, the MNLF Reform group and the MILF. Following protracted negotiations between the Philippine government and the MNLF, a number of important agreements were reached including the Tripoli Agreement in 1976 under the auspices of the Organisation of Islamic Countries, with peace talks culminating in the 1996 Peace Agreement. In response to criticism regarding the implementation of the elements identified in the settlement, the Philippine government has rejected such claims on the grounds that it has abided by the conditions as set down under previous negotiations (Oquist 2002). The current status of the 1996 agreement is under review, at least by a number of factions within the MNLF who have expressed dissatisfaction with its implementation. This dissatisfaction has been compounded by high levels of poverty in provinces under the regional government of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and at some level, current developments in the MILF peace negotiations. Ongoing discussions between the MNLF and MILF leadership are suggestive of new understandings being forged between these groups in terms of a viable state-like entity.

Shortly after the signing of the 1996 Peace Agreement between the Philippine government (referred to as the Government of the Republic of the Philippines or GRP) and the MNLF, the MILF declared its lack of endorsement and reaffirmed its commitment to independence. Subsequently, negotiations did commence between the Philippine government and the MILF. However, they have been protracted and complex, evolving into a multilayered process requiring the deployment of considerable resources and personnel. Significant agreements that were instrumental in the peace process signed during 1999 included the 'Agreement on the General Cessation of Hostilities', the 'General Framework of Agreement of Intent between

the GRP and the MILF', the 'Implementing Administrative Guidelines on their Agreement on the General Cessation of Hostilities', and in November 1998, the 'Implementing Operational Guidelines of their Agreement on the General Cessation of Hostilities'. During the first half of 1999 a number of agreements were signed, including the 'Joint GRP-MILF Acknowledgment, and an Agreement to Reaffirm the Pursuit of Peace', the 'Joint Statement on the Cessation of Hostilities', and the 'Rules and Procedures in the Determination and Verification of the Coverage of the Cessation of Hostilities'; subsequent agreements included the 'September 1999 Agreement' and the 'Second Joint GRP-MILF Acknowledgment', culminating with the holding of formal talks in late October 1999. However, President Estrada's announcement in January 2000 that a final peace settlement with the MILF must be reached by 30 June 2000, placed additional stress on the negotiations. Armed conflicts in late 1999 escalated into an all-out war during the first five months of 2000 following a military assault on MILF camps, which displaced nearly a million people. After months of armed conflict, the government and MILF peace panels signed agreements pertaining to safety and security in March and April 2000. The continuation of military attacks led to a further deterioration in relations, with the MILF disbanding its peace panel on 21 August 2000, a decision that effectively cancelled pending peace talks. In a climate of mistrust, the MILF subsequently insisted that peace talks be held under the auspices of the OIC or a member of the OIC. Peace negotiations recommenced in 2001 under the auspices of the Malaysian government.

Possibilities for peace improved following the adoption of the 'Six Paths to Peace' by President Macapagal-Arroyo, a plan initially formulated during the Ramos administration. In late March 2001, the agreement for the resumption of peace talks was signed in Malaysia; the important 'Agreement of Peace between the GRP and the MILF', which identified security, rehabilitation and ancestral domain as major agenda items, was signed during June 2001 in Tripoli, Libya. Subsequent agreements signed during 2002 essentially addressed security and implementation guidelines pertaining to humanitarian, rehabilitation and development aspects of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001. However, the situation rapidly deteriorated following the military campaign launched in early February 2003 allegedly against the Pentagon gang that resulted in the death of many MILF members and the displacement of nearly half a million people in central Mindanao. The bombing of Davao International Airport in Davao City on 4 March 2003 and the Sasa wharf bombings on 2 April 2003, which killed 38 people and injured many others, further exacerbated the situation and created considerable ill will towards the MILF. Although the MILF refuted responsibility for the bombings, the government stated that the bombings were the work of the MILF and charged senior members of the MILF with multiple murder and frustrated multiple murder. Presidential Macapagal-Arroyo's order in May 2003 for 'extraordinary punitive force' against 'embedded terrorist cells' in Mindanao was perceived by many to include the MILF as the government had previously claimed that the MILF had links with terrorists groups. In response the MILF issued a statement rejecting terrorism and terrorist links in June 2003. In mid July 2003 the

government and the MILF signed a bilateral ceasefire as part of confidence building measures for the resumption of formal talks. During these hostilities, talks continued resulting in the signing of a Joint Statement during late March 2003, reiterating both parties willingness to achieve a peace settlement. Informal negotiations continued during 2002 to 2004 leading up to the holding of a series of exploratory talks facilitated by the Malaysian government in February 2004 and December 2004. Subsequent exploratory talks held during April 2005 and June 2005 discussed ancestral domain issues and implementation procedures of the Ad-Hoc Joint Action Group. According to media releases, the ninth round of exploratory talks held in Malaysia on 15-16 September 2005 reached agreement on issues pertaining to governance and ancestral domain. Media reports based on leaked documents claim that an agreement-in-principle has been reached on ten major points ranging from territorial to political and administrative powers of a '*Bangsamoro* juridical' entity. The details of the agreement are expected to be released following formal talks between the government and the MILF at a yet to be specified time during late 2005.

### **The entry of civil society**

The signing of the GRP-MNLF 1996 Peace Agreement provided opportunities for civil society groups to participate more actively in the peace process via multilateral and bilateral funding for post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. Of particular significance was the UN Multi-Donor Umbrella Programme, which aimed to provide funding assistance to post-conflict communities within the Special Zones of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) and in particular, the Autonomous Area of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The Agreement created new spaces within which civil society groups could enter and a new constituency identified as the potential recipients of services and training. In many instances, the communities affected by or displaced by violence had limited POs or NGOs participation and thus lacked the expertise to avail of civil and, in many instances, government assistance. Compounding these organisational challenges were linguistic, religious, social and cultural differences, as many NGO personnel had little, if any, contact with the local communities including the MILF. In these circumstances it is not unexpected that many of the underlying precepts concerning the work of peace are more aligned with Christian views of the world.

CSOs worked to established linkages with local and provincial governments, including the regional government of ARMM, and sought to create new linkages between communities and government through the formation and/or strengthening of NGOs and POs participation in governance and development at the local government level. To avail of funding opportunities Manila-based NGOs set up regional offices or formed linkages with other CSOs and/or government agencies. Retaining their national face, they became important conducts for project development design and funding in SZOPAD. Local NGOs in conjunction with national NGOs successfully sourced for international and national funds for peace-building and development, further strengthening individual NGOs and POs and the networks between

them. Civil society groups with large Muslim memberships or NGOs and POs set up by local Muslim or Indigenous groups were favourably positioned to avail of funding opportunities.

In addition, connections were established between newly-formed and well-established CSOs, facilitating dialogue and networking within and across different sectors. Existing political and social structures under the Local Government Code of 1991 have facilitated civil society's entry into peace work and conflict resolution at the level of local, municipal and provincial levels of government. In turn, national, provincial and local governments are supportive of peace-building interventions by NGOs to grassroots organisations. Complementing such initiatives were training and capability building programmes held for local government administrators and other personnel that were designed by bilateral aid agencies such as CIDA. In addition, CSOs have engaged with informal groupings at the community level through dialogue with 'traditional' leaders or community elders and/or the local *ulama*, although there has been a tendency by multilateral agencies and some NGOs to formalise these 'informal' groupings for the purposes of aid delivery.

As the number of local and national NGOs working on conflict intervention and peace-related concerns increased, the landscape of civil life in central and south-western Mindanao changed dramatically. Accompanying this transition were new formations between CSOs and international civil society organisations (ICSOs). Interestingly, the entry of ICSOs had been limited up until the mid 1990s, with the exception of a number of key organisations such as Catholic Relief Services, the International Red Cross and the Mennonite Central Committee. Since the signing of the 1996 Peace Agreement, a number of ICSOs have established country-based offices with services delivered by their own personnel or indirectly funding local NGOs. World Vision, Amnesty International and Oxfam are among the many ICSOs active in Mindanao. ICSOs such as Catholic Relief Services and the Mennonite Central Committee or peace institutes affiliated with local or national universities have also provided training courses and workshops on conflict prevention and intervention to local NGOs and POs, further strengthening the institutional capacity of civil society organisations in the region.

### **The role of CSOs in conflict intervention and peace-building**

CSOs working on peace in the Philippines have drawn on a diversity of sources and resources in the implementation of conflict intervention strategies and peace-building. In addition, ICSOs and foreign donor countries have incorporated into their various programs, ideas on peace-building developed by theorists working in peace studies, such as John Galtung, John Paul Lederach and Toh Swee Hin. Filipino writers and peace practitioners have drawn on their own personal experiences as activists during the martial law era and post-EDSA period and on their ongoing engagement with peace in all its multiplicities. Thus, the field of peace studies in the Philippines has historical depth, cultural richness and practical

applicability, and encompasses a broad spectrum of peoples and communities from all sectors of Philippine society.

Peace-building in the most general sense, encompasses all dimensions of the peace process. In a specific sense, peace-building is often associated with an identifiable intervention strategy within the peace process itself. Johan Galtung (1996, p. 103) writing on ways to prevent conflict and resolve conflict peacefully, suggested three interventions: peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building. As these interventions are recognised (to some extent) by individuals, armed groups and the Philippine government, they are helpful in understanding the 'recognisable protocols' entailed in the transformation of conflict towards stable or sustainable peace. The three types are regarded as interrelated and intervention strategies are applied concurrently in order to lessen the possibility of conflict reoccurring. At the risk of simplification, categorising peace work on the basis of these three intervention types is helpful for contextualising the different strategies and activities implemented by CSOs. Also, formalised procedures and guidelines developed by the United Nations and the World Bank in identifying and dealing with conflict have been incorporated into government and donor development programs funded under multilateral and bilateral agreements. It is important to note that such strategies are invariably based on Western models of conflict resolution, determined by international diplomatic and military protocols rather than more culturally appropriate processes for the settlement of disputes and conflict as recognised by Indigenous communities in the region.

### **Conflict interventions**

Galtung (1996, p. 103) defines *peacekeeping* as an intervention that entails controlling the actors so that they at least stop destroying things, others, and themselves. Peacekeeping strategies focus on conflict prevention strategies in the following areas: bilateral ceasefire agreements, the establishment of military and/or civil monitoring missions, demilitarisation strategies, and codification of the treatment of combatants and non-combatants during war. The following discussion focuses on the ongoing peace negotiations between the government and the MILF, although specific initiatives and activities pertaining to the government and the MNLF 1996 Peace Agreement are also examined.

With regard to the implementation of bilateral ceasefire agreements, CSOs have been extremely important in all areas of peace-keeping and have contributed to the reduction in the level and effect of actual and direct violence. Peace-keeping indicators include: the number of and types of incidents that have occurred within a specified period, the number of persons killed and injured; the number of destroyed properties and extent of damage to property; loss of livestock, crops, etc.; and the number of displaced families. Indicators would most likely record the number and types of human rights violations as well. Mention should be made of ongoing military offensives against groups or individuals designated as terrorist, and the

suffering and hardship incurred by the combatants, families of the combatants and the community during and immediately after such encounters.

Military and/or civil monitoring missions to investigate ceasefire violations play an important role in containing and minimising violence. Civil society groups working in conjunction with the Church, including senior church officials, were instrumental in stopping military attacks on MILF camps and in pressuring the government and the MILF to agree to ceasefire agreements during 2000 and 2003. However, they were not successful in stopping armed conflict instigated by the Abu Sayyaf or factions of the MNLF. With regard to the establishment of monitoring missions, civil society groups built on issues raised in peace talks concerning the creation of monitoring committees, namely the Joint Committee on the Ceasefire of Hostilities (JCCH). An independent monitoring committee known as the Independent Fact Finding Committee — composed of representatives from Notre Dame University, the Maguindanaon Professional and Employees Association, the Protestant Lawyers League and Cotabato City Media Multi-Purpose Cooperative — was established and worked with the Quick Response Team to investigate ceasefire violations. Significant progress was made following the introduction of Local Monitoring Teams at the provincial level during 2003 with assistance provided by the JCCH and the local community. The formation of Bantay Ceasefire, a Mindanao-based NGO, contributed to increased awareness of the role of the monitoring teams and assumed responsibility for undertaking independent fact-finding missions. Finally, the implementation of the International Monitoring Team during October 2004 was regarded by all parties and the local community as an important step in ensuring the observation of the ceasefire agreement. Since then, other NGOs have also assumed monitoring roles.

Many procedures relating to demilitarisation are instigated after a peace settlement is reached, such as the agreement reached with the MNLF relating to the integration of ex-combatants into the armed forces and national police units. One of the more successful strategies currently supported by civil society organisations as well as government, Church and corporately-funded NGOs has been the establishment of peace zones or spaces for peace that are respected by the Armed Forces and their auxiliary units and the MILF. In some instances, peace zones were established by communities at the *barangay* level, often with the support of the Church in an attempt to eliminate armed conflict within specific localities. In other cases, influential NGOs such as Tabang Mindanao (Help Mindanao) have been instrumental in establishing many such zones. Interestingly, linkages have been forged between communities who have established zones of peace, highlighting commonalities of concern as well as promoting advocacy policies on strategies to promote peaceful communities (Santos 2005). A number of NGOs are also very active in promoting programs on the regulation and control of arms and have linked up with ICSOs such as Oxfam, Amnesty International and IANSA (the International Action Network on Small Arms).

Procedures on the codification of the treatment of combatants and non-combatants during war, is relatively recent in the Philippines. The agreement known as the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) signed between the Philippine government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, has been instrumental in shaping subsequent negotiations between the government and the MILF. Precedents as set down under international law and *adat* led to the formalisation of procedures with regard to the care of the dead and treatment of the injured as well as accountability concerning damage to property, in particular mosques. Attention has been directed to the rules of war (including compensation to the families of the dead and injured) and procedures to peacefully resolve human rights violations and abuses of combatants and non-combatants. During the period of conflict, emergency, humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance to non-combatants had been provided by ICSOs and nationally-based NGOs as well as the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

*Peace-making*, according to Galtung (1996, p. 103), seeks to foster the possibility of reaching some form of resolution in the form of an agreement or treaty or settlement between the parties in conflict. In order for this to be achieved, peace-making may entail the transformation of attitudes and assumptions for e.g., self-determination and sovereignty claims held by the MILF. Peace-making processes are facilitated through dialogue, informal and formal negotiations and mediation. Third-party mediation is recognised as one means through which negotiations may be conducted. In the Philippines, foreign governments have played crucial roles in facilitating such arrangements, such as the Norwegian Government's long-standing role with the Philippine government, and the NDFP and the Malaysian government's more recent but important relationship with the Philippine government and the MILF.

When formal peace talks were established between the MNLF and the government and in subsequent years, between the MILF and the government, many local people as well as a number of civil society groups and Indigenous people's organisations, expressed their misgivings on their exclusion from formal peace talks. In some instances, considerable distrust was generated by the perception that the talks lacked transparency and accountability. The establishment of officially recognised peace panels helped formalise procedures during formal talks as it systematised negotiations resulting in greater transparency and provided more meaningful avenues for interested civil society groups to observe and participate (in a limited and indirect sense) in formal peace talks. Civil society groups' engagement with the peace panels has at times been quite critical and at other times, supportive. For example, civil society groups expressed concerns on the representatives of the government peace panel, specifically referring to the exclusion of Indigenous people and women from the negotiations. These critiques were subsequently addressed by the government peace panel.

Concerns have also been raised with regard to delays in the holding of formal talks and the possibility that 'deals' would be settled informally rather than through formalised procedures. Raising such concerns does highlight the sensitivity between CSOs and the official parties engaged in peace talks, particularly given the claims by CSOs that they act on behalf of a wider constituency, when they themselves may be relatively recent stakeholders in the peace process. Interestingly, the number of NGOs who have sought accreditation with the peace panels to attend the opening ceremonies of the formal peace talks has increased to at least ten groups during 2004–05. Some observers have attributed this increase in accreditation requests as a strategy to claim legitimacy as active participants in the peace talks. However, civil society groups that have sought accreditation have in nearly all instances been involved in peace-building activities and may have submitted submission papers on issues under consideration by the peace panels.

In addition to the formal peace talks, CSOs have engaged with the possibilities of peace-making in a more general sense by examining causes of conflict within the wider community and the ways through which armed groups may be drawn into grievances and feuds at the local level. Interesting interventions have been instigated to address feuding through alternative grievance procedures. Multilateral agencies such as the UNDP have also liaised with the MILF and the wider community to formalise conflict resolution procedures in those cases where the MILF or members of the MILF were drawn into conflict with non-combatant parties. In the past, these incidences had a tendency to escalate into more deadly violence and/or feuding. As well, local NGOs and local universities working with the Asia Foundation, a recipient of USAID funding, have undertaken research on the impact of feuding among local communities.

The third intervention, peace-building, aims, in Galtung's words, to overcome the contradictory aspects inherent within conflict formation and the destructive practices associated with conflict (1996, p. 103). Peace-building can be thought of as a creative approach directed to intensifying efforts to establish lasting peace by focusing on the political and socio-economic context of the conflict rather than on the military or humanitarian aspects (CIDA 2002). While socio-economic reconstruction and development are considered to be one of the more appropriate ways of achieving societal reform, attention has also focused on cultural transformation and creativity. For policy makers, human capital and social capital have emerged as important concepts that if operationalised, it is argued, will promote both knowledge production and organisational capacities within and between CSOs, with positive economic benefits flowing to the state and the market. Thus multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank, are supportive of measures to strengthen social capital at the national level, as it is associated with improved economic welfare of societies as measured by growth, investment, and poverty indicators (Knack 2001, pp. 42, 45).

Drawing from the writings of Putman and Coleman, development analysts such as North (1990) and Olson (1982) have sought to incorporate formalised institutional relationships and structures into their studies (cited by Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2002, p. 3). Other theorists such as Knack (2001, p. 42) argue that it is important to differentiate between civil social capital and government social capital (i.e. institutions that influence people's ability to cooperate for mutual benefit such as the enforceability of contracts, the rule of law, and the extent of civil liberties). Uphoff (2000, pp. 218-21) has argued that social capital can be analysed on the basis of two components: structural social capital (information sharing, collective action and decision-making through established roles and social networks supplemented by rules, procedures and precedents); and cognitive social capital (shared norms, values, trust, attitudes, and beliefs) (Grootaert and van Bastelaer 2002, p. 3). World Bank analysts have identified proxy indicators for measuring these two types of social capital: structural capital is assessed on criteria such as membership in networks, the number and type of interactions in a group, prevalence of social networks, participation in decision-making, associational levels etc.; while cognitive social capital relates to measures of trust, norms of reciprocity and sharing. It can be argued that in spite of the considerable attention devoted to social capital remarkably little attention has been given to the transformative elements within civil social capital and government social capital and between civil social capital and economic capital.

An implicit assumption of World Bank analysts is that interventions that strengthen social capital will also enhance social cohesion (associational activities that cross societal and cultural differences) and minimise the probability of conflict reoccurring (Colletta and Cullen 2002, pp. 297-9). For example, the displacement and dispersion of previously cohesive communities also contributes to the loss of social capital, although it is important to note that certain types of social capital can be conducive to the building and reproduction of war-oriented and/or criminal economies. As social capital facilitates certain flows of knowledge and information sharing through associational forms, the specific mechanisms through which economic development and growth can be encouraged often focus on the types of relationships (and power dynamics) between NGOs and their beneficiaries/clients. Strengthening the processes inherent in networking in order to enhance institutional structures and the sustainability of development programs oriented to peace are also prioritised. It is to be expected that CSOs and multilateral agencies may differ in the ways they conceptualise social capital. Indicators of social capital have assumed a pivotal role in determining the directionality and forms of financial grants and loans provided by multilateral agencies. This places civil society groups in problematic relations as they are perceived to be the agents of and the embodiment of instruments such as social capital. In conjunction with these practices is a strong emphasis placed on strengthening social capital through development.

The Philippine government has espoused that development should be undertaken in conjunction with the peace process. Invariably, proponents of development such as international financial institutions are supportive of neo-liberal policies that facilitate trade liberalisation and export-oriented industries. Multilateral agencies and aid donor countries have adopted a range of interventions to strengthen economic development in post-conflict communities. Only limited information is currently available on the effectiveness (or not) of CSO's intervention in addressing poverty alleviation, promoting investment and increasing economic growth. Taking into account the considerable level of funds that have been directed to provincial and local governments within designated conflict affected zones, the very high levels of poverty as measured by basic needs indicators must be of concern to both multilateral agencies and CSOs.

The second component of peace-building relates to cultural transformation which encompasses many of the entities associated with cognitive social capital. Cultural transformation essentially relates to value transformation through enhancing trust and civic cooperation by changing negative and/or stereotypical perceptions of the parties in conflict. Interventions focus on culture in the broadest sense and are implicitly supportive of the transferral of the idea of peace to advocacy and socio-economic reform (in an abstract sense). The attention devoted to education and capacity training on peace and conflict resolution by peace-oriented NGOs as well as religious institutes, centres of learning and spiritual/ interfaith groups have proven to be remarkably influential in transforming perceptions towards promoting peace work through the development of materials on peace, value education and democracy. Ideas embodied within the 'culture of peace' paradigm as designed by Toh Swee Hin (2001, 2002) has been widely integrated into the curriculum of many schools as well as training manuals on value transformation through capacity building in the areas of local governance and education. It is difficult to measure how effective the philosophies espoused by peace education has been in peace-building, but in terms of development practitioners' understandings of local community politics and empowerment ideals, it has been effective (with some qualification), minimising the occurrence of violence and strengthening social cohesion within communities.

An important institutional stakeholder in resolving the conflict in Mindanao is the Church. At the risk of condensing the diversity of opinions expressed by the different churches in the Philippines and by different Church officials as members of these congregations, a least one influential church official publicly stated that a conscious effort was made to not make the present war (a reference to armed conflict during the late 1990s) a religious and ethnic war. Through participation on influential Church and inter-faith committees and councils, through the publication of pastoral letters in Church-owned print media and radio and through their supervisory control over various education institutions, the Church has assumed an active

role in advocating for peace. As the 'moral' voice in the Philippine public sphere, it has publicly recognised the *Bangsamoro* right to self-determinations and has supported processes conducive to a just and lasting peace. The mainstreaming of these ideas by Church groups, the academe and to some extent, the media, has significantly increased the level of awareness with respect to the peace process.

CSOs involvement in peace-building interventions, particularly activities focussing on value transformation have been relatively successful. Coalitions and consortiums such as the Mindanao Peace Solidarity Group, Mindanao Peace Educator's Network, Mindanao People's Caucus, Mindanao People's Peace Movement and PeaceWeavers have built enduring networks that have proven to be influential in a variety of arenas. As well, local NGOs and POs have formed networks and consortiums based on ethnicity/identity and commonly shared interests. Two of the more effective networks are the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, the largest CSO composed of Moro NGOs and POs, and the PANAGTAGBO-Mindanao Indigenous Peoples' Consultative Assembly, a broad PO coalition of Indigenous peoples. These consortiums have been successful in mobilising support on particular issues pertaining to conflict prevention, peace-building, local governance and development. However the linkages between the various CSOs within these respective networks may, under different circumstances, be quite fragile.

### **Issues for consideration**

Firstly, civil society has the capacity to exert considerable political pressure on national and provincial governments, the military, the respective peace panels, the combatant parties as well as non-combatants directly or indirectly affected by armed conflict and insurgency. Civil society has proven to be particularly effective in disseminating information pertaining to peace talks and peace-building in general. Information sharing, particularly through ICT has ensured that peace-oriented coalitions are highly conversant of the various strategies and interventions directed to peace-building interventions. The future of civil society in the peace process is in some ways dependent on the government's and international agencies' ongoing recognition that CSOs continue to play an important role in the areas of peace-building and conflict transformation.

Secondly, the strengthening of CSOs capacities in this field enhances the likelihood of the institutionalisation of the peace process, implicitly tying the Philippine peace movement grounded in civil society structures, to the state. If CSOs assume a pivotal role in this process, such an arrangement may lessen the state's financial burden, transferring financial (in)security in terms of project funding, implementation and accountability to CSOs. This type of relationship raises the question of institutional complementarity and dependency, and increases the possibilities for the privatisation and commercialisation of CSOs as their future

sustainability will be dependent on servicing the needs of the constituencies of these agreements and their cooption by the state.

Thirdly, given the importance placed on the benefits of achieving peace in Muslim Mindanao, described in the literature as the peace dividend, we must critically engage with this concept and its applicability in defining and measuring peace. An attempt to identify the potential 'peace dividend', on the assumption that the conflict in Mindanao can be conclusively resolved through a peace settlement, has been undertaken by Schiavo-Campo and Judd (2005) in their report funded by the World Bank. According to Schiavo-Campo and Judd (2005, pp. 7-8), the potential peace dividend holds the promise of a "gradual but massive institutional modernisation in central and south-western Mindanao ..." with economic benefits accruing from foreign equity flows, increased agricultural production, improvements in the national fiscal accounts as a result of a reduction in military spending, a likely reduction in the international interest rate spread on Philippine government paper, exploitation for Mindanao's potential for hydropower, the development of the tourism industry, lowering of costs with regard to security measures and improvements in the provision of basic services. While the report is clearly framed within macro-economic policy guidelines and is complementary to the national government investment plans in the short and medium term, there is no clear indication that such policies as identified as components of the 'peace dividend' will be sensitive to the needs of local communities in the region or that wealth differentials will be meaningfully addressed.

As the term, the peace dividend has been used to highlight the benefits of the 1996 Peace Agreement, it is important to interrogate the benefits that did accrue to the community following the signing of the GRP-MNLF 1996 Peace Agreement. It is difficult to make a comprehensive assessment although one could estimate with relative accuracy the effectiveness of regional government in implementing its mandate through economic indicators, human development indicators and conflict indicators. In their report funded by RAND, Cragin and Chalk (2003, p. 17) note that US\$16 million was pledged to SZOPAD, with approximately US\$100 million pledged annually to support the governing of SZOPAD. Most of these latter funds went towards administrative costs, leaving approximately US\$18 million a year for development costs. In addition, the international community (through the UN and the World Bank) pledged approximately US\$500 million in 1996, although Cragin and Chalk (2003, p. 17) were unable to determine how much of the US\$500 million pledged was received and categorised as Overseas Development Assistance. According to their calculations, social and economic development funds in SZOPAD over the period 1996–2001 were as follows: national government funding was estimated at US\$90 million, with funds from the international community provisionally estimated at US\$200 million. On the basis of their report, they state that the implementation of development funds has been considered not particularly effective, attributing inappropriate funding of high-profile infrastructure projects

and inadequate accountability and oversight mechanisms as partly responsible for this failure (Cragin and Chalk 2003, p. 20). Not unexpectedly, the report does not include a critique on the appropriateness of economic liberalisation policies in this context. As no detailed listing of funds by the international community was given, it is impossible to evaluate the accuracy of the data or the assertions on where it was spent.

The opinion that the 1996 Peace Agreement has delivered little, if any, peace dividend, has also been publicly expressed by community elders, particularly from the Sulu Archipelago during 2004 and 2005. Also of concern is the very high level of poverty in the ARMM, as well as the increasing wealth differential emerging between municipalities (and provinces) in the region. While local Muslims have expressed their unhappiness and disquiet about this situation, what is not as yet evident are the underlying reasons for this marked differential or its impact in terms of peace and security in the future. Another unknown will be the impact of the MILF Peace Agreement on the MNLF Peace Agreement.

Given this situation, it is important that CSOs remain reflexive about their role in conflict intervention and peace-building, and that they continue to exercise sensitivity in their work, particularly with regard to processes that may strengthen rather than lessen inequalities. In addition, CSOs should be alert to how informal associations may be adversely affected by the implementation of and/or strengthening of (ineffective) bureaucratic (and 'democratic') institutional processes at the village level.

### **Conclusion**

While CSOs' involvement in peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building has contributed significantly to the building of goodwill towards a possible peace settlement, we need to reflect on the appropriateness and effectiveness of these types of interventions. Given the high levels of poverty and inequality within the region and increasing concerns about human insecurity, the contemporary challenge facing CSOs relates to the efficacy of interventions that foster equitable development initiatives in the longer term. Despite the considerable success that CSOs have achieved in strengthening conflict transformation in all its complexities, if CSOs' interventions are not accompanied by meaningful government redistributive policies and political reform, then it is likely that their constituencies will become increasingly disillusioned with the promises inherent in the struggle for peace.

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