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The Challenges of Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance in Ongoing Conflict: A Mindanao Case

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ABSTRACT. Following an analysis of humanitarian-assistance principles and of the roots of the Mindanao conflict, this paper contrasts the relief and rehabilitation strategy of the government with civil-society efforts in building the "Space for Peace" in Nalapaan, Pikit, North Cotabato. It identifies how the conflict's dynamics and actors shape the character of relief and rehabilitation assistance, and how the dynamics of relief and rehabilitation assistance feed the conflict or help address its roots. It also presents the potentials and limitations of relief and rehabilitation initiatives of government and civil society (in Nalapaan) in providing meaningful humanitarian assistance that addresses the conflict's roots and preventing the conflict from getting worse. The paper concludes by building a framework for carrying out a more meaningful relief and rehabilitation strategy in the context of the ongoing conflict in Mindanao, which puts an emphasis on strategizing beyond disaster management, incorporating the value of local capacities and fostering meaningful partnerships among stakeholders, and addressing the roots of the conflict and promoting a "culture of peace."

KEYWORDS. relief · rehabilitation · humanitarian assistance · Mindanao

INTRODUCTION

In the past, discussions on humanitarian assistance focused on describing its altruism and intrinsic goodness, thereby shielding it from scrutiny and critical analysis. More recently, however, humanitarian assistance has become a topic of academic, practical, and political concern. Various factors led to this greater interest: a disenchantment with results, the lack of organizational and institutional learning, little documented improvement in operations over the years, the lack of accountability to the public and the beneficiaries, and in some cases, their problematic impact. Other concerns revolve around the varying interpretations of relief and rehabilitation by different humanitarian

organizations that lead to differences in the content, scope, and impact of humanitarian assistance provided.

Uncovering Gaps in Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance

Generally, relief operations are primarily concerned with the physical survival of individuals, or "life-saving" for people in exceptionally high-risk situations (Apthorpe 1997, 86). The role of relief assistance is to sustain people through short periods of stress until the crisis is over (Macrae et al. 1997, 224-25). This includes the provision of food, water, health services, and temporary shelter for the displaced peoples (De Zeeuw 2001, 12), with the presumption that upon provision of such, things will return to normal. However, in cases of ongoing conflicts, relief activities are deemed inadequate and "complex situations are seen to suggest the need for complex responses" (Pieterse 1998, 7).

Therefore, the idea of rehabilitation, which comprises short- to medium-term reconstruction activities with a developmental concern for promoting livelihoods and reducing future vulnerability beyond saving lives and providing relief, came about. It assumes that a "normal life or process of development can be reconstructed" (Macrae et al. 1997, 225). From the 1960s onward, humanitarian action was based on a linear model focusing on relief assistance, and when the conflict was over, development assistance would then be provided. In the 1980s, the continuum model of relief and development was formulated, bringing about the concept of rehabilitation, which bridges the gap between relief and development activities. Some, who see rehabilitation as a link between relief and development, increase the scope of rehabilitation to activities in the field of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, and institutional and political reform (De Zeeuw 2001, 12).

Nonetheless, definitions of "rehabilitation" remain varied across different organizations (Macrae et al. 1997, 224). For some agencies, rehabilitation constitutes the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, while others view it as an integrated process—one that encompasses the provision of livelihood opportunities, peacebuilding, and psychosocial interventions. However, budgetary constraints, inadequate political will, and weak governments in war-torn situations contribute to the practicability question faced by the relief-rehabilitation-development continuum.

Some argue that notwithstanding the context of ongoing conflicts, an integrated rehabilitation initiative should be pursued for its potential to prevent the worsening of conflicts, considering the close linkages among food shortages/famine, population displacement, and war. This is with the assertion that long-term reconstruction/development is not possible without a sufficient degree of renewal of the communities that will help transform the conflict.

Aside from debates on the scope of relief and rehabilitation assistance, the implications of humanitarian assistance have also been subject to critical scrutiny, because of assumptions and evidence pointing out that such initiatives do more harm than good. There are varied ways through which relief and rehabilitation can feed an ongoing conflict (Anderson 1999, 37-66). Since these represent economic wealth and political power, people engaged in war want to exercise control over these resources. Access to and distribution of resources can be manipulated by warring parties for their own benefits. Due to shortages in their own supply, warring parties could steal or trade a considerable part of humanitarian assistance for weapons. While humanitarian assistance can create its own industries where profits and wages can be earned, it can also feed the war economy and undermine peacetime production and productivity. Inconsistencies in the levels of assistance to different communities can also feed existing tensions.

Further, insufficiency in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance can feed the conflict or breed new tensions. Especially in ongoing conflicts, the focus on saving lives fails to address more concealed needs, such as the reconstruction of worsening socioeconomic conditions. This is crucial as failure to address tense social conditions more directly feeds the war economy,[1] while the inability to provide a sufficient economic base heightens frustrations that could trigger further grievances. The increased activity and exposure of international humanitarian-assistance organizations in both relief and rehabilitation also contribute to the doubts of affected communities on the government's capabilities.

Despite empirical evidence showing how relief and rehabilitation could feed conflicts, moral and humanitarian principles nonetheless dictate the need to continue humanitarian action (Anderson 1999; Moore 2001; Slim 1997a). Thus, aside from identifying ways on how relief and rehabilitation assistance could feed ongoing conflicts, attention has been directed toward improving relief and rehabilitation strategies that support peace rather than feed the war. This also opened

avenues for critical reflection by humanitarian agencies for opportunities to improve on their craft.

Based on lessons learned from previous humanitarian practice, voluminous studies focused on how humanitarian assistance from the international community could be more effectively undertaken (Quinn 2002; Nyheim, Leonhardt, and Gaigals 2001; Anderson 1999; Vaux 2001; Bryer and Cairns 1997; Frerks and Hilhorst 1999; De Zeeuw 2001; Slim 1997a, 1997b; Christoplos 1998; Apthorpe 1997). Nonetheless, from the experience of humanitarian organizations, it turned out that there was no single story to tell of what entails an effective relief and rehabilitation strategy. Evaluations and scholarly studies looked at strategies as applied in specific contexts (i.e., Ofstad 2002 on Sri Lanka, Apthorpe 1997 on the Horn of Africa, Pausewang 1999 in Somalia). Many studies dwelt on the applicability of humanitarian approaches based on the roots of the ethnic conflicts, the kind of politics and governance in the recipient state, and potentials for partnerships with local organizations. Further, as humanitarian-assistance agencies are continually adopting ingenious strategies to lessen the negative impact of their actions (Anderson 1999), it is also imperative to emphasize strategies being carried out to attack the unintended negative implications of humanitarian assistance. For example, the principle that underlies humanitarian assistance—impartiality—dictates the provision of humanitarian assistance to anyone on the basis of the "the urgency of need" (Slim 1997b), thus relief and rehabilitation resources may be provided to families of rebel groups who may in turn sell or trade such resources for arms and weapons.

However, most of the studies on how to more effectively carry out relief and rehabilitation are externally driven (i.e., focusing on how to improve the international communities' humanitarian-assistance strategies). While more recent studies (De Zeeuw 2001; Anderson 1999; Nyheim, Leonhardt, and Gaigals 2001; Quinn 2002) now take note of local capacities, the focus has remained "deductive" and allowed international organizations to determine opportunities for intervention by the recipient state and civil-society organizations in relief and rehabilitation with them, instead of the other way around. Such could be because in the study of interstate conflicts, weak state, poor socioeconomic conditions, and weakened civil-society and institutional structures are assumed to be part of the conflict's roots or as factors exacerbating the ongoing conflict. While such considerations

probably contribute to an underestimation of what local initiatives can do, it is nonetheless imperative to look at how relief and rehabilitation could be more effectively carried out through national and local initiatives, with mechanisms for determining opportunities for the participation of the international humanitarian-assistance community.

Like other intrastate ethnic conflicts, the Mindanao conflict has caused severe damages not only to life and property. The armed skirmishes in 2000 alone displaced an estimated half a million people, destroyed 6,229 houses, and damaged 2,115 homes (Oxfam cited in Norwegian Refugee Coucil [NRC] 2005). The reconstruction of conflict-affected areas had not yet even been completed when the war in February 2003 broke out, which again required funds for relief and rehabilitation. While the conflict has also raised questions on state legitimacy, the credibility of systems and institutions, as well as distress in people's relations and capabilities, government and national civil society continue to undertake relief and rehabilitation. However, while state and civil-society initiatives are most intermediate and crucial, there is no sufficient critical reflection on whether relief and rehabilitation based on these initiatives are doing good or creating more harm. As sporadic clashes continue to erupt and destroy communities, huge amounts of resources are mobilized to continue relief and rehabilitation assistance without critical scrutiny. There is minimal knowledge if relief and rehabilitation indeed address the needs, or contribute to the sustainability, of the affected community, or if the resources feed the ongoing conflict and breed further grievances. There is also a need for greater understanding of the potentials of already institutionalized initiatives and applying alternative approaches in coming up with an effective model for relief and rehabilitation in Mindanao. It is of value to maximize national capacity through a strategy that harnesses the potentials of local and national civil-society initiatives and at the same time determines avenues for relevant partnerships with the international humanitarian-assistance community. Noting the crucial role that relief and rehabilitation play in ongoing conflict, this paper presents lessons from the experiences in relief and rehabilitation assistance provided in response to the 2000 war in Mindanao, with the aim of building a relief and rehabilitation strategy attuned to the context of the ongoing conflict.

The Conflict in Mindanao

Understanding the nature of the Mindanao conflict is crucial in determining how to more effectively carry out relief and rehabilitation. An analysis of the actors involved, the roots of the armed struggle, and the political dynamics of the conflict are important in both understanding the character of existing relief and rehabilitation initiatives and in coming up with an integrated and more effective relief and rehabilitation strategy. Many studies already provide a comprehensive analysis of the roots of the Mindanao conflict,[2] and the analysis provided in this paper takes guidance from these works.

The armed conflict in Mindanao is historical, dynamic, and multidimensional, with multiple roots and consequences. While historical and economic factors played an important role in triggering grievances and discontent, the political dimension revolving around issues of bogus power sharing, exclusionary democracy, and poor governance is seen as a major contributor in mobilizing the transition from common grievances to collective violence.

Behind the government's efforts to forge peace agreements with the rebel groups, there has been a failure to provide meaningful autonomy to the Muslim communities and allow them to rule their own people and resources. The government executed the Tripoli Agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)[3] in 1976, establishing autonomy for Muslims in thirteen provinces. The MNLF signed another peace agreement with the Aquino government in 1987–the Jeddah Accord–but talks to work out the details failed. The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was created on August 1, 1989 by virtue of Republic Act 6734. In the 1996 ARMM elections, former MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari was elected governor, while MNLF leaders were elected as members of the Regional Legislative Assembly.

Moreover, the 1996 Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP)-MNLF Peace Agreement and Executive Order 371 promised to expand the powers and territory of the ARMM and proclaimed the administrative regions of Southern, Western, and Central Mindanao and the ARMM as the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD). The agreement created the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), led by the MNLF, and the Consultative Assembly to coordinate, promote, and accelerate peace and development efforts in the SZOPAD (Mercado cited in Gutierrez 1999). However, the SPCPD and Consultative Assembly "had limited

funding, no police powers, no control over national projects and programs that were supposed to be within their remit, no jurisdiction over significant sectors of the bureaucracy in the region" and therefore were "too powerless to make an impact" (Gutierrez 1999).

To date, the ARMM remains to have one of the highest poverty incidences in the country and the lowest functional literacy rates. Further, notwithstanding the MNLF's negotiations with the government for a Muslim autonomous region, the ARMM caused insecurity within the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which is becoming the biggest insurgent force in the Philippines. From about 8,000 members in 1996, its membership has increased to about 15,600 in 1999, according to the Department of National Defense (DND). While the government also forged separate peace negotiations with the MILF, hostilities did not cease and militarization remained the main ingredient in the government's strategy. It is important to note that the failure of the political autonomy-based GRP-MNLF Peace Agreements may affect the peace negotiations with the MILF in terms of their response to any new agreement that includes the issue of political autonomy. It is perceived that if the MILF would not see political autonomy as a viable option, this would lead them to push for complete independence and the establishment of a separate Islamic state.

The destruction created by the conflict, together with the failure to actualize the "development effort," also worsened the situation in Mindanao. Piecemeal efforts in facilitating power and resource sharing increase the level of frustration of the Muslims, and the failure to forge lasting peace with the rebels hinders the economic development of Mindanao. At the same time, billions of funds, which could be channeled toward the development of Mindanao, go to military spending and to relief and rehabilitation (NRC 2005). The prominence of humanitarian aid programs also siphon off much of the capacities of local nongovernment organizations (NGOs).

Entitlement Failure and the Tyranny of the Majority

The persistence of the conflict illuminates a tyranny of the majority (Salih 2000). As the government fails to cater to the Muslims' aspirations of gaining access to power and of fully controlling their resources, the Muslims view the Philippine state as only capable of protecting the interests of the Filipino-Christian majority. As false autonomy is experienced, the government's policy of keeping the

Muslims formally integrated into the Philippine territory is seen as a means of oppression by the state (as the representative of the majority).

The differential access to government resources and services also emphasizes the advantages that Christians have over the other religious minorities. Philippine democracy, which is supposed to institutionalize mechanisms for equal access to resources and opportunity, remains exclusionary, with a dominant majority, state, laws, and institutions unprepared to share power with the Muslim minority. Violent opposition is seen as the only available option, given the inability of the Philippine political system to equitably distribute power and resources to the minority Muslims, and with peace negotiations failing one after the other.

The failure of political solutions to the problem is coupled with a minimal economic counterpart. While peace talks are being formulated, millions of poor Mindanaoans are hungry and vulnerable to join collective action against government or become involved in banditry. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), a Muslim terrorist group that was previously a faction within the MNLF, was founded in the province of Basilan in Mindanao, to pursue a more fundamentalist battle against the Philippine authorities (British Broadcasting Corporation 2000). Their stated goal is to promote an independent Islamic state in western Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago (areas in the southern Philippines heavily populated by Muslims), but the ASG has primarily used terror for financial profit, and engages in kidnappings for ransom, bombings, beheadings, assassinations, and extortion. The ASG operates in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and the Zamboanga peninsula, and has expanded its operational reach to Malaysia in 2000 when it abducted foreigners from a tourist resort. In mid-2003, the group started operating in the major city of Cotabato and on the coast of Sultan Kudarat province in Mindanao. The ASG is estimated to have 200-500 members and it continually recruits poor young Muslims with promises of wealth and access to arms.

Consequently, the existence of such banditry among the Muslims strengthens the anti-Muslim bias in Philippine society. This further contributes to the overall political and economic instability of the country, which severely affects the country's tourism industry and discourages large investments that could spur economic growth.

The Moro armed struggle is also rooted in varied sources of entitlement failure. There are several kinds of entitlement systems: access to resources as well as to the fruits of production, state-arranged

(and state subsystems-arranged) entitlements, and entitlements arising from the international legal order through regional and international cooperation among states (Fortman 1999, 44-52). These systems represent regularized arrangements for establishing legitimate claims. Behind these systems hides a particular system of beliefs, order, and resulting institutions that constitute rules and arrangements and create positions for people. The state is responsible for arranging and rearranging entitlement positions through administrative policies and law, if people do not evenly gain access to resources and fruits of production. At the same time, regional and international cooperation among states may also bring forth a rearrangement of entitlement systems.

The "land" (Mindanao) that the Muslim rebels claim has been "taken away from them" through the transmigration of Christians in Mindanao and the establishment of multinational companies in the region represent such entitlement failure. The institutions and systems governing them had also been threatened as they shared Mindanao, including the resources and fruits of production therein with non-Christians. This later on minoritized them in the region, which they formerly dominated. The claims to ancestral domain of the Muslims are fundamental in coming up with a binding peace agreement, but to date, these have not been sufficiently addressed by a succession of peace agreements and government administrations, or by the major Muslim revolutionary organizations. According to Gutierrez and Borras (2004, 43), "neither the MNLF nor the MILF has so far specified a clear program of action to break the concentration of wealth and ownership of resources in the claimed Moro land–hence the failure of the Bangsamoro revolution to deliver socioeconomic equity and justice to its constituency." It is noted that this issue of enforcing ancestral domain claims involves not only Muslims but other indigenous communities such as the *Lumad* (non-Muslim and non-Christian), which have been displaced by these resettlements of Christians, and continue to be displaced by the ongoing conflict (Gutierrez and Borras 2004).

Similarly, an entitlement gap in exchange and distribution is apparent in the Mindanao conflict. The Muslims resents the strong regional economic disparities and the uneven rate of social and economic change in the country. The five provinces with the highest concentration of Muslims occupy the lowest rankings in the Human Development Index in the Human Development Report of 1997.

Sulu is the lowest in education and income, while Maguindanao ranked very low in health and education (Gutierrez and Borras 2004, 19). The provinces in Mindanao that are predominantly Muslim lag behind the rest of the island in almost all aspects of socioeconomic development (NRC 2005).

Moreover, entitlement presupposes a "protected command over resources," and the conflict creates an environment in which a system to protect these entitlements is broken, such as the reckless burning of houses, livelihood, and property (Fortman 1999). The reconstruction of broken entitlement systems requires a long struggle for the cessation of hostilities and, ultimately, the resolution of the conflict.

Deteriorating socioeconomic conditions caused by the persistence of the conflict seriously affect all aspects of life and society (i.e., physical well-being due to health problems and lack of access to education for skills development). The persistence of the conflict, therefore, creates more immediate needs: new homes, reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, and restoration of destroyed livelihood systems. Basilan, Maguindanao, and Sulu, usually heavily hit by armed conflicts, have the least access to basic services, and development efforts in the area have been stalled for a long time. Furthermore, in a report by the Presidential Executive Task Force for Relief and Rehabilitation (PETFRR) of Central Mindanao, the ravages of the 2000 war alone required at least PHP 417.35 million for the immediate relief and short-term rehabilitation of municipalities heavily affected by the conflict.[4] The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) released PHP 79.78 million (on September 4, 2000) and PHP 126.32 million (on November 16, 2000) from the President's Social Fund for the immediate relief and rehabilitation activities of the PETFRR in Mindanao. Accompanying these immediate needs is a clamor for aid programs that are sensitized to priority needs and constraints, and a restoration of social relations with other ethnic groups.

The conflict-affected areas in Mindanao are the poorest among the seventy-seven provinces in the country. All conflict-affected areas experienced a fall in per capita incomes from 1997 to 2000. The Filipino Report Card also found that the highest levels of dissatisfaction with government services are in Mindanao, especially in the conflict-affected areas. It is also notable that 80 percent of those displaced by the 2000 war are Muslims as infighting centers on rebel camps are usually located in Muslim-dominated settlements (World Bank 2003, 11-13).

Decades of blockage in entitlement gap and the "tyranny of the majority" created grievances and alienated the Muslims, pushing them to demand for change and to organize collective violence against the state. Islam as a major element of the Moro ethnic identity, magnified by shared historic experiences, served as a mobilizing factor for them to demand for change, form a "will-in-action," and resort to collective violence. Underlying this is their goal for meaningful autonomy, or separatism, from the Philippine nation-state. The defensive reaction on the part of the state has led to violent clashes that ignite the continuous cycle of violence. Violent clashes led to a further weakening of systems and institutions, and a great loss of resources that has created further entitlement gaps and deprivations. These deprivations again mobilize a "will-in-action" that sustains the already violent conflict.

Simultaneously, the inability to arrive at acceptable political solutions and poor economic conditions have been breeding a culture of hatred among some of the Muslims against the government and the Christians. These parts of Mindanao have become a recruitment ground for collective violence in the future. Many Muslims whose relatives have been killed or injured in the war form hatred of the entire government, not only the military. Non-Muslims directly affected by the conflict develop fear and hatred of the Muslim rebels and prejudices against the Muslims, which are passed on to future generations.

As political, economic, societal, and interpersonal dimensions interplay in causing and sustaining the conflict, they should also be taken as a package when coming up with conflict-resolution strategies. This means that while political (i.e., peace negotiations, grant of autonomy) and economic solutions (i.e., rehabilitation and promotion of growth in Mindanao) are undertaken, prejudices against the Muslims, misunderstanding of the Mindanao conflict, and the culture of violence escalating among the victims of war in Mindanao should also be given concern. As piecemeal solutions to the conflict are offered, without sufficient mechanisms for equitable power and resource sharing, new grievances are bred, which could fuel the upsurge of worse conflicts in the future.

The above discussion presented the dynamics of the Mindanao conflict and the role that various actors in Philippine society play in both fuelling and sustaining the conflict. As these actors take a role in the conflict dynamics, they also participate in shaping the outcome of relief and rehabilitation. For instance, despite the role taken by the government as a party to the conflict, it also continues to play an active

role in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance. At the same time, national civil society, despite its representation of the "majority," also actively participates in relief and rehabilitation. This paper then leads us to the succeeding discussion of relief and rehabilitation practice in Mindanao where actors directly or indirectly engaged in the conflict take an active role. It is through such practices in the midst of ongoing conflict that we hope to pick up lessons on which to build a more meaningful relief and rehabilitation strategy.

Government-Led Relief and Rehabilitation in Mindanao

The conflict in Mindanao has persisted for more than three decades now, and communities affected by the conflict continually need relief and rehabilitation. Given this seemingly unending cycle of war, relief, and rehabilitation, one would hope that the government has come up with a more responsive operational framework and institutional setting for humanitarian assistance in the region.

At the national level, the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) has the mandate to "direct, control, and coordinate" the country's resources to address major disasters (natural or man-made), including the Mindanao conflict. As such, the conflict is managed with a common framework used for managing natural disasters such as typhoons, floods, and volcanic eruptions (Arieta 2002; Cabrera 2002).

The NDCC organizes multisectoral disaster councils at every level of government,[5] including local governments, to allow linkages with relevant agencies and organizations and mobilize resources needed to manage disasters. This responsibility of local officials in disaster management is strengthened by the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991, which tasked local governments to include disaster management in local development planning. Five percent of the estimated revenue from the regular sources of local government units (LGUs) may also be set aside as a Local Calamity Fund for relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and other works or services in connection with calamities. Within this institutional framework, the Office of Civil Defense, a technical support to the NDCC, coordinates the activities and functions of various agencies to implement NDCC policies relevant to disaster management.

The framework for disaster management has four components: disaster mitigation, which aims to minimize the impact of a disaster in

terms of casualties and damages; disaster preparedness, which aims to reduce risk vulnerability through hazard analysis and community preparation; disaster response, which covers relief operations; and rehabilitation and reconstruction, which aims to revert the communities to normalcy. Within the said framework, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is responsible for extending emergency relief assistance to the victims of all disasters and undertake social services with the aim of "immediately restoring them to rehabilitation and a life of normalcy," according to Presidential Decree 1566.

Other interagency bodies were later created to improve the institutional framework for relief and rehabilitation in Mindanao. As an aftermath of the 2000 war in Mindanao, the Mindanao Coordinating Council (MCC) was created to manage and coordinate all government efforts for relief and rehabilitation. Chaired by the president and with cabinet secretaries as members, the MCC was a top-level body, which took on functions more ceremonial than actual. Later on, the PETFRR was created as the implementing arm of the MCC to oversee and coordinate the immediate relief and short-term rehabilitation of the conflict-affected areas (i.e., provision of food, sanitation facilities, livelihood, housing, etc.), and ensure that primary schools are operating and basic infrastructure and health services are adequate.

The creation of the MCC and PETFRR solicited a negative reaction from the MNLF. Misuari, in one meeting of the MCC, stated that the formation of the MCC and the PETFRR undermined the peace agreement, sidelining the institutions created to manage autonomy. This was reinforced by the resignations of key officials from the SPCPD for "marginalizing the institutions and all transitory mechanisms provided for by the 1996 Peace Agreement." NGOs also criticized the composition of the MCC for its lack of representatives from Mindanao, and for its failure to adequately represent civil society, the indigenous peoples, and Muslim communities.

When the Estrada government was replaced by that of Arroyo, the Inter-Agency Committee for Relief, Rehabilitation and Development of Areas Affected by Armed Conflict in Mindanao (INTERACT-Mindanao) was created in 2001 to synchronize and integrate relief, rehabilitation, and community-based development in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. INTERACT-Mindanao attempted to institutionalize mechanisms to address gaps in the previous relief and rehabilitation framework: local consultations, concept of community-based

development, and synthesis of civil-society initiatives. However, INTERACT-Mindanao lacked a clear operational framework and a system of complementarity with the NDCC and the DSWD and was abolished after only seven months of operation (*Manila Times*, September 23, 2001). Moreover, as the MCC, PETFRR, and INTERACT-Mindanao were not created by law, they served coterminous purposes and were easily abolished by political influences and events. And despite the creation of such interagency bodies, many other government agencies have been conducting their respective initiatives to rehabilitate and develop Mindanao according to their specific mandates. There is a need to rationalize the roles of government bodies to coordinate and synchronize efforts and optimize the use of resources for relief and rehabilitation in Mindanao.

Indeed, government-led relief and rehabilitation initiatives in Mindanao create opportunities for feeding the conflict and breeding new tensions, and fall short of the three major principles guiding humanitarian assistance:[6] humanity, neutrality, and impartiality.

The dilemma with neutrality is expected, given the government's role in the armed conflict and in the provision of relief and rehabilitation. Underpinning the humanitarian position, "neutrality" is operationalized as "not taking sides in hostilities or engage anytime in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature" (Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies cited in Slim 1997b, 7). As both the dominant party to the conflict and the coordinator of relief and rehabilitation, the DND's coordination or direct provision of assistance is inevitably not neutral. This institutional framework allows the military to gain control over relief and rehabilitation resources and influence the course of rehabilitation initiatives, thereby gaining the opportunity to strategically use these resources against their enemies, if necessary. At least of PHP 12 million was released by the DBM to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Engineering Brigade for the construction of the community-based shelters in the year 2000, and the same was directed to undertake the construction of damaged infrastructures in the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) also partnered with the AFP for projects to reconstruct damaged roads and infrastructure, amounting to about PHP 190 million.[7] At the same time, the AFP was undertaking measures to respond to MILF guerrilla tactics. Thus, the AFP was implementing the reconstruction of roads, bridges, mosques, and schools while establishing strong points against

the MILF in Central Mindanao and conducting intelligence networking and operations as part of its military strategy. The rationale for the AFP's involvement in reconstruction activities is vague, as the DPWH is mandated to oversee the reconstruction of infrastructure and public works in the conflict-affected areas.

Humanity, as defined by the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, is the desire "to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found ... to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being" (Slim 1997b, 4). As a guiding principle of humanitarian assistance, "humanity" dictates the need to go beyond saving lives by providing essential material needs such as food, water, shelter, and medicine but a wider range of inputs that would facilitate "respect for human being," a realm not reached by existing government initiatives due to lack of resources and efficient coordination mechanisms.

Rehabilitation strategies are oriented toward mere extensions of relief (i.e., evacuation and rebuilding of houses and infrastructure), similar to the scope of assistance provided for calamities or natural disasters. These are based on the aim of "relieving suffering," contrary to "bringing back a state of normalcy,"[8] which is the goal of humanitarian assistance under ongoing conflicts. In the case of fires and typhoons, the building of shelters and reconstruction of damaged infrastructure may be sufficient. However, in ongoing conflicts, not only infrastructure is damaged, but livelihoods, social relations, and personal integrity as well. Thus, there should be a primary understanding of the conflict and the strategies appropriate to the conflict's context or hostile conditions (which differentiate it from responses for peacetime catastrophes) prior to action.

An Oxfam study on poverty in Mindanao notes the immediate needs of the people affected by the conflict: "working animals, seeds, and other farm inputs." These needs are focused on the restoration of livelihoods lost during the conflict and do not even transcend survival needs (Quitoriano 2001, 46). However, government initiatives in the provision of livelihood assistance are limited in providing trickles of seed dispersal and group credits to acquire carabaos. Further, livelihood resources are provided without ample training and opportunities for use. Many resettlement areas are built where farming lands are not accessible, or where fighting continues, thus rendering seed dispersal and credits to acquire a carabao useless. The provision of livelihood resources through group lending is problematic in ongoing conflicts where communities are in distress and social relations are severed.

Those who acquire these resources have doubts if they will be able to pay off the credit, which adds to their stress and tension.[9]

Peacebuilding initiatives are also not incorporated in rehabilitation strategies that could address social tensions escalating within the affected communities (Anderson 1999). Government is unable to mitigate the possible negative unintended effects of the assistance that it provides without genuine peacebuilding initiatives.

Furthermore, LGUs and the ARMM have been provided with powers to undertake disaster management, but they are not provided with the necessary training and fiscal transfer to perform such critical responsibilities. In an interview, ARMM officials said that while they have conducted a detailed needs assessment of ARMM provinces affected by the conflict, they do not even have 50 percent of the funds required to provide for such needs.

Although government applies the principle of impartiality, operationalized as "nondiscrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions" (Slim 1997b, 7-8), it is unable to address the moral and practical dilemmas involved in providing "impartial" humanitarian assistance. For instance, relief and rehabilitation assistance is provided to anyone affected by the conflict, including the rebel families. Inadequate coordination mechanisms in the management of humanitarian assistance often duplicate the provision of assistance to rebel families, which gives them the opportunity to sell or trade goods for arms. A carefully planned strategy is necessary in the provision of humanitarian assistance to curb its negative unintended effects, such as the possibility of feeding the conflict. The AFP, which leads the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in certain areas, has access and control over rehabilitation resources that it could use to weaken the rebel groups/communities or strengthen its own capacity in the conflict.

In addition, evacuation centers are located in Christian settlements to avoid sporadic clashes, which normally occur in Muslim settlements where rebel camps are located. Although probably well-meaning, this allows Christian families to be resettled ahead of Muslim families, causing grievances among those families left in the evacuation centers.

The government encourages humanitarian aid to be coursed through it (i.e., in the form of financial or technical assistance). This represents an inductive approach that could allow it to map out relief and rehabilitation assistance provided, identify unserved areas/peoples, and improve its interventions in unserved areas. However, due to

inadequate government coordination and its role in the conflict, many international and local organizations continue to conduct humanitarian assistance on their own. This allows them to retain neutrality and avoid political influences. These unorchestrated initiatives fail to give a complete picture of served and unserved areas necessary for strategizing and programming interventions. Especially for rehabilitation, different agencies have varied statistical basis for the affected communities and standards of operation (NRC 2005). The government also has no data on how many of those displaced have been resettled, have reverted back to their areas of origin, or have not been resettled. In certain cases, this leads to duplication in the provision of goods, which creates opportunities for beneficiaries to trade excess relief goods with traders or rebels. As various players independently look for their targets without systematic planning, coordination, or standardization of efforts, the levels and coverage of assistance vary in quality and quality, which creates tension and jealousy among the recipient communities.

Conflict containment is critical in the provision of humanitarian assistance under ongoing conflicts to protect rehabilitation efforts and rehabilitated communities from the ongoing war (Pieterse 1998, 8). The government has conducted relief and rehabilitation without containing the conflict and is unable to ensure that areas being rehabilitated shall be freed from sporadic clashes. Thus, shelters constructed in areas where people feel unsafe were left uninhabited. The route for humanitarian assistance was not declared at conflict-free areas either, thereby allowing the warring parties, both the military and the rebels, to gain access and control over humanitarian-assistance goods.

The government's relief and rehabilitation program, despite its shortcomings, has concealed its failure to bring meaningful development to Mindanao and resolve the conflict therein. Relief and rehabilitation efforts have shown that the government exercises its sovereignty, displays a "concern for the minority," and demonstrates its efforts to respond to the urgent needs of the victims of the conflict. Involvement in rehabilitation has allowed the government to announce the revival of the communities after successfully weakening the rebel forces and having "full military control of the situation." At the same time, it has enabled the government to retain control over and access to resources for the rehabilitation and development of Mindanao.

Civil-Society Initiatives

The Philippine government's policy for the provision of humanitarian assistance by the international community is for resources to be channeled through its governmental institutions. Assistance from the international community is normally provided through donations of goods and supplies, and financial support to government or local civil-society groups. Nonetheless, some international humanitarian organizations (i.e., Red Cross, Oxfam, Accion Contra El Hambre [Action Against Hunger]) still provide direct assistance to the communities through goods, training, technical assistance, and services (Cabrera 2002; Arieta 2002). Among the other local initiatives are Balay Mindanao, which focuses on the provision of relief and peace advocacy, and the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Associations, which advocates the promotion of human rights of the conflict-affected populace. Another is Tabang Mindanaw,[10] a broad national civil-society initiative for relief and rehabilitation, which later launched its Integrated Return and Rehabilitation Program (IRRP) for war-affected areas. The IRRP facilitates the return of the evacuees to their villages and assists them in rebuilding their "Space/Sanctuaries of Peace," where shelters, livelihood opportunities, capacity building, and cultures-for-peace workshops are provided in communities that government and the rebels have agreed to recognize as "peace zones." A discussion on these "spaces for peace" implemented by the Immaculate Conception Parish (ICP) of the Roman Catholic Church, in cooperation with Tabang Mindanaw in Nalapaan, Mindanao, is presented in this paper as an alternative relief and rehabilitation strategy for Mindanao.

From a "No Man's Land" to "Spaces for Peace"

Pikit is one of the most embattled towns in Cotabato, where at least 44,000 individuals were displaced and 717 houses were totally damaged during the 2000 war between the armed forces of the government and the MILF.

Barangay (Village) Nalapaan is one of the forty-two barangays of Pikit. It has a total land area of 1,190 hectares and is located in the boundary of Aleosan and Pikit along the Davao-Cotabato national highway. Nalapaan has a household population of 318 and a total population of 1,579. Of the total population, 60 percent are Muslims, 30 percent are Christians, and 10 percent are indigenous people. Almost all of the inhabitants of the barangay are marginal farmers who

depend on farm produce for survival (National Statistics Office 2000). Barangay Nalapaan is composed of four *sitios* (communities), one of which is Muslim-dominated, another Christian-dominated (San Roque), and the other two composed of the tripeoples (Nalapaan Proper and Baruyan): the Muslims, Christians, and Lumad. Barangay Nalapaan was heavily devastated when it became a battleground during a shooting war between the government troops and the MILF last year. All the residents were forced to flee and ended up in various evacuation centers.

The ICP has been in the municipality of Pikit since the early 1970s. The parish, led by Fr. Roberto Layson has Muslim, Christian, and Lumad volunteer workers who help implement its several projects at the barangay level. The parish has also been the main partner of Tabang Mindanaw in the implementation of its relief and rehabilitation projects in the municipality of Pikit. It has established and strengthened its linkage with both the military and the MILF, the local and even the national government, and NGOs and donor agencies.

In both the 1997 and the 2000 wars in Mindanao, the ICP of Pikit was active in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance in the region. After the 1997 war, the ICP had planned to spearhead an integrated rehabilitation project in the area. But before that could happen, another war broke out in April of 2000. At the height of that conflict, the parish organized a disaster response team to provide relief and rehabilitation assistance to those affected by the 2000 conflict under the IRRP. The strategy used for Nalapaan takes note of the communities' right to return safely to their places of origin, rebuild their communities, and regain their dignity under the framework of "integrated human development" and "peace process."

A component of the IRRP is the employment of the "conflict containment approach" (Pieterse 1998, 8) based on the protection of the "right of the communities to a safe return to their areas of origin/ choice." Securing a community declaration of peace enabled the organizers to maximize their use of resources that may otherwise have been exhausted if relief was pursued for a longer time. Containment of the armed conflict in the area also allowed relief resources to be channeled to the rehabilitation of the communities. At the same time, the declaration of peace encouraged the people to go back to their areas of origin and undertake community rehabilitation without fear of wasting whatever they might rebuild by sporadic clashes.

Furthermore, livelihood systems and inputs were provided, an agricultural system was institutionalized, educational and public health facilities were built/rebuilt, psychosocial interventions were provided, and attempts to address severed social relations were conducted. The project also respected the people's choice to return to their areas of origin, where what was left of their livelihoods was accessible. The processing of land-tenure cases prior to the program's implementation also helped to ensure that the lands to till remained for the communities. This return-framework was aimed at ensuring that shelters and facilities instituted in the rehabilitation area would not go to waste.

The principles of neutrality and impartiality were taken into consideration as the provision of assistance veered away from influences of the warring parties. Instead, the organizers enjoined the participation of all stakeholders in the project, including the government and MILF. With the church as the main project facilitator, the project initially raised the issue of the tendency for partiality to Christian-dominated communities. However, the project also encouraged Muslim and Lumad community leaders to lead the implementation of the project, thus helping encourage the participation of the Muslims, Christians, and Lumad in the project. A standard framework was also implemented across communities, regardless of ethnic composition. Community organizing and peace education sessions helped in enjoining the cooperation of the tripeoples. The presence of a coordinative mechanism and a clearly laid-out integrated framework allowed for coordination of actions with inputs from the government as well as international and local organizations. Also, community involvement in the project encouraged them to protect the resources for both relief and rehabilitation.

Due to its exposure to relief during the war, the parish had the credibility as Tabang Mindanaw's main partner and primary facilitator of the IRRP in Nalapaan. Consultations on the people's needs and a survey of the people's assets and vulnerabilities during evacuation built camaraderie and mutual trust and respect among the beneficiaries. In the process, they also gained the support and participation of the Muslims and Lumads. Trust and mutual respect were built not only among the beneficiaries in the evacuation centers, but between the international humanitarian-assistance community and the local government. By laying down an integrated framework, the IRRP was able to find areas in which local government and the larger humanitarian-

assistance community could participate. Thus, support was generated, and the efforts of local NGOs, international NGOs, volunteers from the beneficiaries, private sector, local government, military, and MILF rebels were synthesized, thereby becoming complementary rather than conflicting.

Tapping local capacities and identifying community needs helped in the implementation of the IRRP in containing the conflict outside the spaces for peace. The AFP and MILF were enjoined to cooperate in conflict containment through the request of the grassroots. Further, LGUs were mobilized to participate as the community showed perseverance in implementing the project. Participation of different civil-society groups also helped in addressing funding and resource issues. They also served as participants during the "cultures of peace" and healing sessions that helped the civil-society organizers better understand their needs and aspirations. Participation of some local government officials who were more familiar with the military and rebel group leaders operating in the area helped to encourage the armed groups to sign an agreement of cessation of hostilities and to respect this agreement. This resolved the problem of residents who refuse to go home for fear of the presence of armed vigilantes. A future-oriented programming (i.e., aim for normalcy and sustainable livelihoods) attracted the cooperation of various stakeholders. Through such framework, the IRRP was able to enjoin the international community to participate and coordinate closely with the community leaders for a more synchronized delivery of inputs.

The decision to work with local structures maintained a high degree of transparency in dealings and established a system of protection that did not rely on arms. The focus on building the grassroots' capacity also helped in avoiding the power plays of local government elites. The role of middle players in the community (those recognized by the community and by the major players in the conflict) proved to be important in brokering negotiations and ensuring the cooperation of various stakeholders.

The community ownership of the project also encouraged their participation in planning and decision making on project components and implementation. Consultation with project beneficiaries prior to implementation was crucial in avoiding wastage and allowing more strategic and appropriate interventions to be delivered. Peace education sessions also helped in uncovering local capacities for peace.

However, despite the breakthroughs, the IRRP encountered many difficulties, shortcomings, and dilemmas. First, the Nalapaan case shows that provision of livelihood inputs is not tantamount to efficient output. What is required is a detailed assessment and analysis of the needs and capabilities of the community and the patterning of the livelihood inputs to these needs and capabilities (i.e., more carabaos could have been provided to farming communities instead of goats). It is, therefore, necessary for the organizers to reassess not only the needs but the skills and capabilities of the community.

Moreover, there is a need to strategize the conduct of healing sessions, trainings, and peace seminars to encourage more community members to participate. Some residents said that while they were aware of "cultures of peace" seminars, they could not attend them because they first had to address household chores, earn income, or find lost relatives. Some were constrained by war traumas from active participation in community activities. This is why a thorough assessment of needs should be complemented with sensitive strategies (i.e., regular and informal community visits) that will encourage those affected by the conflict, especially the traumatized, to become more receptive to such interventions.

Tabang Mindanaw's integrated relief and rehabilitation also created tensions and jealousies in other communities that did not enjoy equally comprehensive rehabilitation packages (i.e., government beneficiaries). Moreover, while the needs of the children were specifically addressed, the IRRP had no specific mention of an intervention directed to the aged or the handicapped.

There is also a need to enhance peace education modules, regularize meetings for area coordinators, and provide a follow-through mechanism to not only monitor but further enhance the quality of life of the people in Nalapaan. And while Tabang Mindanaw has allowed the community to gain ownership of the project, there are certain areas that need constant follow-through interventions (i.e., cultures-of-peace seminars, monitoring of military and MILF cooperation, livelihood training, and provision of sustainable agriculture).

The Nalapaan "Space for Peace" was considered as a best practice in the provision of relief and rehabilitation in Mindanao by the humanitarian-assistance community operating in Mindanao, and this provided a framework for replication in other communities. But just when replication of these rehabilitation and peacebuilding initiatives in other communities was being conducted, another war broke out in

2003, not sparing these peace zones. Thus, resources were again diverted back to the provision of relief and reconstruction activities (Rood 2005, 25-26).

This shows that although proactive, pro-reform, and pro-peace advocates dedicate their efforts to build and rebuild these peace zones, more critical is a wider peace agreement that will put a final halt in the clashes between the armed forces and the MILF. If not, the rehabilitated communities will remain at risk and susceptible to devastation. Temporary cessation of hostilities will bring only false hopes, and while peace zones can always be rebuilt, the people will eventually lose trust in the viability of these peace zones to provide sustainable livelihood and a peaceful "space" for their families in the midst of war.

Lessons Learned in Relief and Rehabilitation Practice

Based on the lessons learned from the relief and rehabilitation response of the government and civil society, such as the IRRP in Nalapaan in the context of the ongoing conflict in Mindanao, the following are emphasized as components of a meaningful relief and rehabilitation strategy: real strategies and approaches that go beyond disaster management; the value of local capacities for peace and fostering meaningful partnerships among stakeholders; and, ultimately, addressing the roots of the conflict and introducing a culture of peace.

Strategies, Not Approaches

This paper stresses the need for real strategies, and not just approaches, that embody clear principles as well as integrated, carefully planned, and appropriate systems and processes for relief and rehabilitation. It implies the need to reexamine the principles (i.e., humanity, neutrality, and human rights) underlying relief and rehabilitation initiatives. If not, gaps therefrom could lead to further entitlement demands and grievances that could breed further conflicts.

The analysis of issues and gaps plaguing the government's relief and rehabilitation efforts in Mindanao shows the need to rationalize the role of government bodies providing relief, rehabilitation, and development in Mindanao to optimize resources and facilitate greater coordination. There is also a need to confront the conflict of interest of its institutions, which are mandated to provide relief and rehabilitation. Further studies may be conducted to determine whether

the government indeed uses relief and rehabilitation resources as part of its military strategy.

Beyond Disaster Management

Relief and rehabilitation in the context of the ongoing conflict in Mindanao cannot be conducted within a disaster management framework designed for peacetime catastrophes or, worse, be led by the military. In a conflict environment, there is a complex interplay of actors and events that necessitates careful planning and strategizing of humanitarian-assistance efforts so that these do not do further harm. Therefore, critical are strategies such as those implemented in Nalapaan that incorporate local needs and capacities; provide an opportunity for addressing entitlement failures by facilitating access to resources and the fruits of production, exchange, and distribution; determine and provide for both immediate and special needs; foster partnership and coordination with the wider humanitarian-assistance community; institutionalize comprehensive initiatives that look for opportunities toward longer-term sustainable development; and support a movement toward peace.

Value of Building Local Capacities for Peace

As a local initiative, Nalapaan carries a huge amount of potential for enjoining pro-reform and people-oriented movements within a divided society. The potentials of local capacities as a crucial ingredient to an effective relief and rehabilitation strategy are highlighted in this paper. One of the grassroots' potential is their immersion in the conflict context, as well as their potentials for being "local capacities for peace" themselves, that builds an approach capable of curbing certain negative unintended effects of relief and rehabilitation. Engaging in a relationship with communities and involving them as partners in rebuilding their communities helped the organizers in planning, implementing, coordinating, and monitoring the "spaces for peace" in Nalapaan. The Nalapaan case also opened opportunities for different groups—government, local and international NGOs, church-based and community organizations—to work together for a common goal. Many in the government and humanitarian-assistance community affirmed the IRRP's significant role in bringing hope to war-torn villages.

Addressing the Conflict's Roots and Building a "Culture of Peace"

The conflict in Mindanao has persisted for many years, characterized by periodic flare-ups and a continuous cycle of war, relief, rehabilitation, and then another war. This cycle has long hampered the development of areas affected by the conflict, wasted relief and rehabilitation resources, and has been taking its toll on the political economy not only of Mindanao but the entire country. It is critical for government, therefore, to strengthen its efforts to address the roots of the conflict and forge a binding peace agreement with the rebel groups. This paper argues, therefore, that forging this peace agreement with the rebel groups and implementation of other community-based peacebuilding activities such as those implemented in Nalapaan are primary components of a meaningful rehabilitation strategy. Until genuine peacebuilding is integrated in the government's approach to relief and rehabilitation, all efforts, albeit by well-meaning social-welfare agencies and volunteers, will remain superficial, insufficient, and can even trigger further conflicts.

Peacemaking in Mindanao has excessively focused on the short-term cessation of hostilities between the parties, without addressing the economy and dealing with structural inequalities persisting therein for decades that underlie the conflict's roots. If these are not addressed, grievances will remain and even multiply, making hollow peace negotiations in which dialogue only serves as a mere hiatus in a never-ending cycle of violence.

Promising cases such as Nalapaan require containment of the conflict not only within the "spaces for peace," but in the entire Mindanao. This means that the people of Nalapaan cannot survive within their peace zones alone, and the community will have to leave their area for necessary activities if they are to enjoy their rights and freedoms and if they are to take part in the development process.

Moreover, without an end to the conflict, even "spaces for peace" are not guaranteed safe from major clashes between the armed forces and the MILF, such as those experienced during the 2003 conflict. Although civil-society groups could continue to rebuild new peace zones after the 2003 conflict, the vulnerability of these "peace zones" to armed hostilities poses questions on the sustainability of the initiatives.

Addressing the conflict's roots requires an understanding of the ideologies and demands of rebel groups, a response to structural injustices, and a formulation of a practicable solution acceptable to

both parties. To regain legitimacy, the government needs to strengthen its institutional capacity to a point that it goes beyond just adequately delivering goods and services to the deprived areas but extends to the enactment of non-exclusionary laws and the establishment of effective institutions for power and resource sharing. These initiatives to distribute power and access to resources such as the settlement of land or ancestral domain issues of Muslim Filipinos must be intertwined with the ancestral domain claims of the other indigenous communities (i.e., Lumad).

It also necessitates a functional economy that addresses the socioeconomic inequalities underlying the persistence of conflict. This includes the need for a coordinated regional development strategy that makes sure that those areas far from the capital city, like some parts of Mindanao, are not economically deprived. The state and the international community need to take on their role of institutionalizing mechanisms for a just rearrangement of entitlements and fiscal/ resource transfers that current systems of access, exchange, and distribution cannot do. There is also a need for government and external development agencies to enhance local capacities in the areas of conflict resolution, livelihoods and enterprise development, and peacebuilding at the community level.

At the same time, civil society plays an essential role. Civil society includes NGOs or community-based groups that will undertake consultations on the needs of deprived people of Mindanao, besides those represented by the MNLF and the MILF. The government's solution has been to forge peace agreements with these two major groups without a full understanding of the entitlement demands of the many other Muslims who may not be affiliated with the MILF and the MNLF, or of the Lumad, who are also affected by the conflict. Government and civil-society efforts to promote dialogue and interethnic harmony are still limited in scope and impact and have yet to penetrate communities. As competing groups are vulnerable to external manipulation because of a weak information base, the media and the academe should cooperate in correcting the existing prejudices of the tripeoples, as well as the many misunderstandings of the Mindanao conflict that only breed further conflicts among the Filipinos.

NOTES

1. Interviews with relief and rehabilitation volunteers of Oxfam Great Britain and Tabang Mindanaw show that the people affected by the war take sides from among the warring parties. When asked to sketch aspirations, many children aim to become members of the warring parties.
2. Studies that influenced the discussions in this paper include those of Abinales (2000), Arellano (2000), Fianza (1999), Tadem (1992), Mc Kenna (1998), and Gutierrez and Borras (2004).
3. In 1972, President Marcos imposed martial law, citing Muslim secessionists as one of the biggest threats to national security. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), set up in 1969 by young Muslim militants, took to the fore of the armed struggle for self-determination and later issued a manifesto declaring their renunciation of the Philippine government and the establishment of the "Bangsamoro Republik" or Islamic government (Quimpo 2001, 275-76). In 1984, a faction was created within the MNLF, which later became the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.
4. PHP 163.6 million for food assistance in evacuation centers, PHP 66.02 million for community-based shelters; PHP 55 million for repair of health centers and provision of medicines; PHP 37.95 million for repair and reconstruction of damaged classrooms and schools; PHP 93.4 million for the repair of roads and bridges, water systems, and other facilities, and PHP 1.0 million for the provision of sanitary and waste-disposal activities (PETFRR 2001).
5. In each administrative region of the country, including the ARMM, Regional Disaster Coordinating Councils are tasked to undertake similar functions as the National Disaster Coordinating Council for the regions, headed by regional chairpersons designated by the president. In each local government unit, the Local Disaster Coordinating Council is headed by the elected local chief executive.
6. These three principles are lifted from the top three of seven guiding principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.
7. PHP 20.1 million for the repair of Narciso Ramos Highway, PHP 0.4 million for the reconstruction of Matanog building, PHP 25.68 million for the reconstruction of roads to Camp Abubakar, PHP 100.00 million for the Banisilian–Libungan Project connecting Sayre Highway and the Gen. Santos-Cotabato City Road (Department of Public Works and Highways report during the cabinet meeting held on August 7, 2000, Malacañang, Manila).
8. References to "normalcy" become problematic as different humanitarian-assistance actors have vague and varying views about what constitutes "normalcy" in Mindanao. In the first place, although generally accepted by many humanitarian-assistance organizations, "return to normalcy" may prove to be an insufficient goal in Mindanao as entitlement failures that ignited the armed struggle were the triggering factors in the conflict under the previously "normal" (nonhostile) conditions.
9. Interviews with residents in the barangays of Bago-Inged, Rajamuda, and Bulol, in Pikit, Cotabato (recipients of government assistance), August 2002.
10. Tabang Mindanaw was formed in 1998 to respond to the food crisis caused by the drought in Mindanao.

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