MINDANAO YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Building Building Bridges, Strengthening Solidarity

The Young People's Summit and this publication were made possible through the support of the following organizations:

UNICEF FDF Copenhagen Misereor

The Danish Church Aid (DCA) is especially acknowledged for its solidarity to Balay and for facilitating fund generation for this undertaking.

# MINDANAO YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

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# Mindanao Young People's Summit for Peace and Development

Building Dridges,
Strengthening OLIDARITY

ESPITE ITS historical intricacies, Mindanao has now been considered a land shared by various peoples. Present-day reality shows that the lives of the Moros, indigenous peoples (Lumads) and the Mindanaoan descendants of settlers from Luzon

and Visayas have intertwined through years of living together. In the midst of their multi-ethnic and inter-religious setting, their relationships have been punctuated by misunderstanding, biases, conflict and memories of a traumatic past. But in time, a zone of dialogue, respect and cooperation have emerged between them. As each one strives to preserve their distinct identity as a people, a growing acceptance of each others diversity through affirmative engagements, kinship, and reciprocal effort of nurturing cooperation has



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However, the efforts towards the full-blossoming of a new history woven by a culture of understanding, acceptance, and solidarity among the peoples in Mindanao is facing a tough challenge. The government campaign against terrorism and the recurrent armed clashes in many areas have been putting tremendous pressure on civilian communities.

# Critical Options

IN TIMES OF conflict, the peoples in Mindanao feel the suffering, especially the vulnerable communities caught in the crossfire. Everybody loses something for every bomb, mortar shell, and rifle fired in hatred. Among the casualties of war, the hardest hit are the youth and

# A Gathering for PEACE

HE YOUNG People's Summit was a 3-day undertaking of the youth. They have been in the midst of all activities—from the finalization of the concept, the de-

children whose future grows dimmer each time violence erupts in their midst. Growing up with the sight of guns and casual exposure to violence, their path has already been paved towards a culture of hostility and aggression. Some who are fortunate enough to continue their education and enjoy a relatively secure economic and social environment may stand a chance of having better options in life. But for those who are caught in the web of deprivation, aggression, and coercion the violent path offers a tempting alternative.

Over the years, the young people have demonstrated their resilience. Bound by common experiences, youths from communities of Moro, Lumad and settlers have learned to get together. In many instances they expressed their collective longing to enjoy their youth in a climate free from fear and want. But in times of emergencies and during a lull in

signing of the activities, and the actual conduct of the event itself. Since the activity is shaped by them, they have taken it upon themselves to bear responsibility in sustaining the consensus that they arrive at.

Balay had conceived of the idea to facilitate the organizing of the event due to the enthusiastic response of young participants who joined the series of peace camps and dialogue that it initiated in Cotabato. Later on, other youth organizations and peace groups with strong advocacy with the young people from different regions in Mndanao joined in making it a reality. Those who served as the summit's co-convenors are the following:

- Mindanao Integrity of Muslim Association (MIMA)
- Mindanao People's Caucus (MPC)

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armed confrontation, their specific needs are hardly addressed during negotiations. Participation of young people is also rarely allowed in formal discussions and decision-making in different levels. Their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations are hardly ventilated in forums and occasions dominated by adults. In occasions where they are allowed to convey their position on their own terms, they are rarely taken seriously nor recognized as a distinct community of young people who have their own views,



- Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference Youth Secretariat (MSPC-YS)
- Peace Advocates Zamboanga Foundation (PAZ)
- United Youth for Peace and Development (Unypad)
- United Youth of the Philippines (Unyphil)
- Nasavakan Tarigunay du't Kalindaan Federation (Natabukfed)

needs and desires. Advocates for children, including leaders of women's' groups or parents' groups are seldom involved in determining the agenda of negotiations.

# Protective Factors

YOUNG PEOPLE represents a significant number of civilians affected by exposure to armed conflict. Citing a report of the UNICEF, the Global IDP Project has placed the number of displaced persons below 18 years old in Mindanao at 30,000 every year between 1988 and 1998. A survey conducted by Balay in evacuation centers in Pikit at the heels of the military operations in the so-called Buliok complex showed that 43 percent are youth and children. The absolute number of chil-

- C AKMK Sumpay Mindanao
- Task Force Kalilintad

# Regional Caucus

These convenors worked to bring together young peace advocates in different regional caucus. Those who joined are participants aged 16-30 years old who belong to around 30 different youth organizations involved in peace, human rights and development work. From September to October 2004, caucuses were held in Iligan City, Kibawe in Bukidnon, Cotabato City, Midsayap in North Cotabato, Davao City, and Zamboanga City. Altogether, more than 240 youth leaders from Moro, Lumad and settler communities attended those gatherings, with an average of 35 participants joining each area caucus. Among them, 42 percent are female, and 58 percent are male. The meetings lasted from 1 to 2 days. They discussed issues pertaining to rights of children and young

dren caught in situation of violence in other places in Mindanao is likely to grow unless the parties in conflict finally find a way to resolve the fundamental issues behind the armed hostilities.

Youth and children are affected by armed conflict in various ways. The threats which they face are directly related to their vulnerability as young people. They are least able to protect themselves when social networks — the cohesive family, community, schools



people, the issues confronting their population, and their views on peace and development. Each group was able to come up with their respective positions or agenda to be raised during the Young People's Summit which their chosen representative will bring.

Among the issues they raised are problems related to war or armed conflict, poverty, illiteracy or lack of access to formal and rising number of out-of-school youth. They also expressed concern over the mounting problems on drug addiction, gangsterism, child labor, and exposure or participation of children to armed violence. They are bothered by the

and social services — which normally assure their care and well-being are destroyed in armed conflict. There are a number of specific situations which may arise for young people affected by armed conflict. These are:

- Marcased atmosphere of tension and undercurrents of violence
- 2 Psychological trauma, physical violence, casualties and death
- Social networks disrupted and destroyed, changes in family structures and composition
- 12 Heightened misunderstanding and mistrust between peoples
- Mobilization of young people for community defense
- Life, work, education, socialization disrupted

perceived persecution by law enforcers (eg. "Davao death squads"); the lack of opportunities for expression and development of the youth; and the lack of support from government. They also lamented the weak involvement of the youth on social and community concerns. They decried the persistent incidence of discrimination especially to Muslims and Lumads. They have noted the declining moral values among their rank; early marriage, child/youth trafficking, prostitution, pornography, and identity crisis.

On the other hand, they affirmed the positive characteristics of the youth such as described by the following traits, attitudes, values and knowledge: strong faith in God/Allah, eagerness to help others, sincere, confident, determined, open-minded, forward looking, flexible and versatile, rational, multi-skilled, leadership ability, sensitive, keen observer, willingness to develop and change, diligent, creative and talented, committed, responsible, resourceful, politically and socially aware.

- Material shortage (food, healthcare, water, etc.)
- Displaced children, separation from family and social protective factors

# Stakeholders of Peace

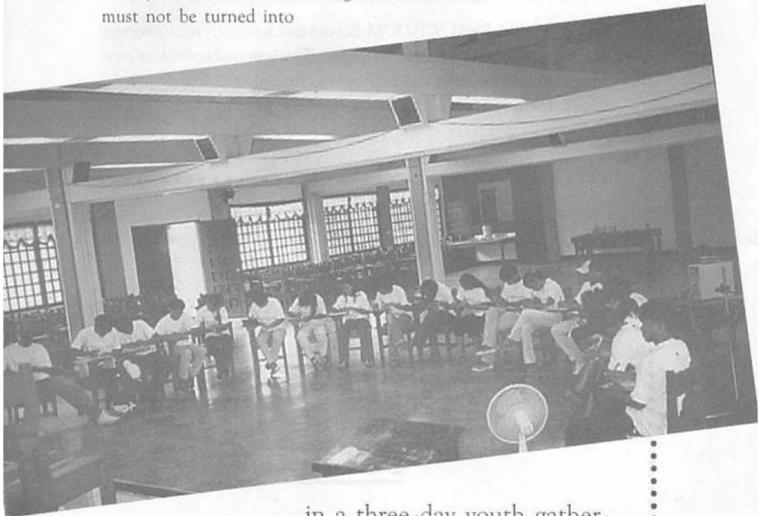
UNIVERSAL WISDOM dictates that humanity has to nurture and protect the young people from harm. This is to enable them to continue the quest for peace and development that others before them have began. The noted poet Khalil Gibran had once described the children as

# YOUTH Participation

HE CAUCUSES finally culminated in a Mindanao-wide summit of young people. More than 50 youth organizations representing the Lumad, Moro and the settler communities in Mindanao have converged

the "sons and daughters of life's longing for itself." A fitting illustration of the young people as the spawns of the human race – the *salinlahi* – which has inspired the UNICEF to issue the reminder that it takes a community to raise a child.

Rising from the horrors of wars and violence, the human community has learned to acknowledge that the children



in a three-day youth gathering in Davao City to draft a youth peace agenda which they want included in the on-going peace negotiations between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The gathering, held October 26-28 at Eden Nature Park and Resort, was capped by the drafting of the

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battle grounds. Young people are humans, too. As stakeholders in life, they have basic rights that must be respected and upheld. Though they belong to their respective family, clan or community, they should be given space to articulate their positions and to initiate moves for the advancement of their welfare. Thus, the rights of the young people must be recognized regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, religion, creed, or economic status.

# A Place to Stand

A GROWING NUMBER of young people have been asserting their place in society. More and more youth organizations in the commu-

Young People's Summit Declaration which pushed, among others, for "a greater participation of young people in the grassroots monitoring of the ceasefire agreement between the GRP and the MILF."

William Banzali, president of the United Youth of the Philippines- Davao Oriental Chapter said that being the victims of armed hostilities in conflict-affected areas, young people are facing a big responsibility in ensuring that warring forces comply with the signed GRP-MILF ceasefire agreement.

The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities by the military and the MILF was signed in 1998 and reaffirmed through an interim agreement in 2001 by both parties but has been violated through either major or minor offensives and counter-offensives in the provinces of Davao Oriental, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and Zamboanga Sibugay.

nities and schools are taking actions and making their voices heard. Youth leaders and peace advocates are joining various arenas of advocacy where a few of them before used to tread, integrating the rights of young people into all peace-building activities.



Banzali said young people will ally with other sectors in their communities to call on warring forces to follow the ceasefire agreement while the two panels are on the negotiating table. This will protect innocent civilians from being caught in the crossfire.

Atty. Datu Jun Mantawil, head of the MILF negotiating panel who had a dialogue with the youth leaders, has admitted that ceasefire agreements "are always the hardest to follow" in any peace negotiations anywhere in the world. But he expressed optimism that with the coming

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ing the children and young people as zones of peace is urgent. But nobody can articulate this better than the young people themselves. Someone once asked that young people be given a place to stand and they will change the world. It was true then. It remains true and an imperative now. The holding of a Mindanao Young People's Summit is an attempt help them to widen their space. This undertaking intends to support them to consolidate and advance their initiatives for peace, human rights and development. In particular, the aims of the gathering are:

- To look into the common conditions and experiences from the lenses and perspectives of the young people;
- 12 To provide a forum to discuss particular and common issues af-

of an international monitoring team composed of representatives from at least seven countries, these agreements can be strictly observed.

The two panels have so far agreed on two major agenda including cessation of hostilities and rehabilitation and development of Internally-Displaced Persons (IDPs). They are presently talking on resolving the ancestral domain issues involving lumads and Moro communities. Summit participants also urged both the negotiating parties to "be more transparent on the peace process and agreements reached" by conducting updates and dialogues with communities including the young people.

Leaders from the peace and development organizations extolled the gathering. Guiamel Alim of the Bangsamoro Consosrtium of Civil society (CBCS) urged the participants to infuse the "wisdom of the youth into the foolishness of the older generations." Datu Al Saliling, a Manobo who sits in the technical working committee on ancestral domain of the GRP-MILF peace talks, inspired the gathering to join the elders in the journey to peace-building.

Dr. Mac Tiu, a historian, challenged the audience to work towards the rectification of "historical injustices" in order to build the



foundation for a just and lasting peace. Speaking in behalf of Senator Aquilino Pimenetel who hails from Cagayan de Oro, Prof. Popoy de Vera said that the youth has to seize the chance to contribute in shaping a new future of understanding, respect and co-existence in Mindanao.

# Speaking up

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PARTICIPANTS LAMENTED what they considered as government's shortcomings in dealing with the issues of the youth. They listed 12 agenda points that the government must attend to, including a review of existing school curriculum to correct what they considered the lack of a true historical account of the tri-people in the schools' learning materials.

fecting the toung people and to articulate their rights, needs and desires;

- To serve as a learning event to share ideas, stories, culture and struggles;
- To serve as a network for enhancing mutual understanding, respect and solidarity;
- Consolidation of the youth efforts towards peace promotion, leadership and capability building;
- To raise a youth platform for peace and development.

Noel Maningula, a youth leader from the Teduray Lambangian Tribal Youth and Students Association in Maguindanao, said the existing education curriculum has not helped in preserving the indigenous culture but has further eroded the sense of tribal identity of the new generation.

"It is very important that our people are made to understand what their culture is all about," Maningula said. "Our indigenous culture has only become visible in exhibits, festivals but not in the normal life of the people in our community."

They also urged the national government, through the GRP panel to reposition military troops away from civilian communities consistent with their commitments with the ceasefire agreement on security aspect; implement culturally-appropriate and children-sensitive rehabilitation programs; ensure the mandatory recognition and representation of the indigenous peoples in the local councils as mandated in RA 8371; conduct proper consultation among the stakeholders regarding their plan to integrate the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples to the Department of Land Reform; hold information campaign and consider the position of the affected communities, including the young people, on the



impact of the dam projects (Polangui Dam 5 in

Bukidnon and 6 in Cotabato); intensify action against illegal logging and for environmental protection; improve policies and programs that address the needs of the Out of School Youth; conduct consultations with the youth to create or develop culture specific and culturally responsive curriculum; and urge the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) and the Commission on Human Rights-Child's Rights Center (CHR-CRC) and other relevant government agency to take action on the monitoring and protection of children and young people in Mindanao.

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The Summit Declaration, which forms what the participants called the Mindanao Youth Peace Agenda was formally submitted to both the government panel and the MILF negotiators. It also contains various concerns and recommendations which the participants want reflected in the peace agreements.

# ACTION

OWARDS THE end of the summit, the participants identifed those who will sit in the YPS steering committee to sustain the links they established with each organization. They are also tasked to represent the participants when occasions call for it, and to coordinate with the convenors and monitor activities of the different respective regional links.

The following are the plans arrived at by the respective regional organizations for the last quarter of 2004 and onwards:

# Lanao Region Youth Cluster

- # COP/peace education
- Information drive/press release and phamplets/leaflets distribution

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- Proposal making/ training

  PACES-workshops participatory governance, art and culture empowerment, sustainable development

  CRC/IHL/HR training/ education

  Community exposure-IDPS

  Dialogue-special groups

  Outreach programs (young children, juvenile youth)

  HRO- human rights orientation

  Capability building(LST, etc.)

  Street parliaments/ peace rallies

  Environment & ecological preservation campaign

  Socio-economics development trainings

  Inter-sectoral & inter-cultural integration

  Awareness raising issue-base

  Community immersion

  Organizing & networking

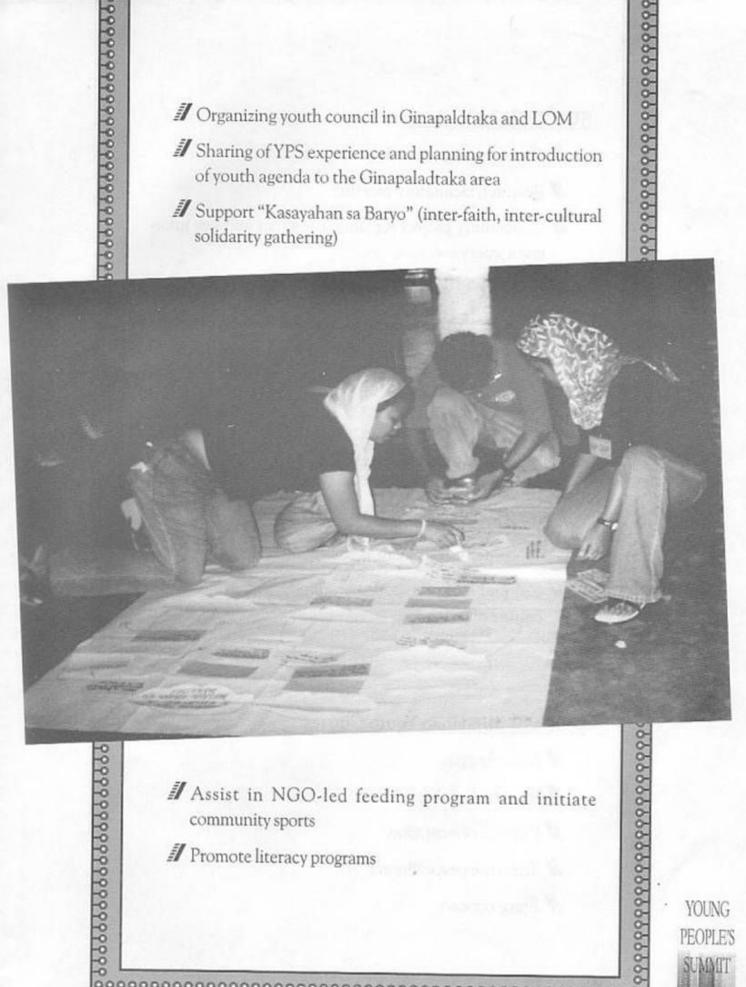
  GINAPALADTAKA and Lavog Old Mosque
  Youth Cluster (Pikit and Pagalungan)

  Participation in the declaration of the Space for Peace in Pikit, Cotabato

  Participation in other Mindanao Week of Peace activities

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- Organizing youth council in Ginapaldtaka and LOM
- Sharing of YPS experience and planning for introduction of youth agenda to the Ginapaladtaka area
- Support "Kasayahan sa Baryo" (inter-faith, inter-cultural solidarity gathering)



- Assist in NGO-led feeding program and initiate community sports

  Promote literacy programs

YOUNG PEOPLES

- SUBTRIYO-Cotabato

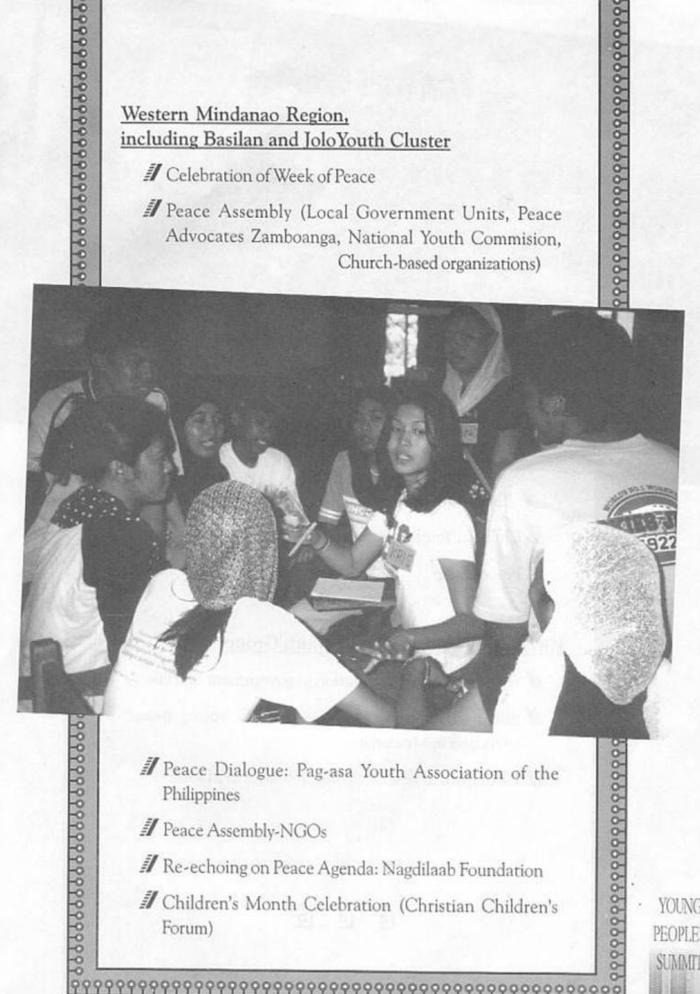
  | Outeach program in Brgy. Angaan
  | Research facilitators' meeting
  | Community project research assesment and key informant interview
  | SUBTRIYO year-end party
  | Re-echo of Young People's Summit in Bukidnon and Cotabato

  | Central Mindanao Youth Cluster
  | Forum
  | Packaging of youth peace proposals and lobby work to concerned government agencies and organization
  | Cultural and arts workshop for the campaign of the culture of peace

  | Southern Mindanao Youth Cluster
  | Radio-hopping
  | Inter-faith dialogue
  | Cultural presentation
  | Tripartite peace summit
  | Peace concert

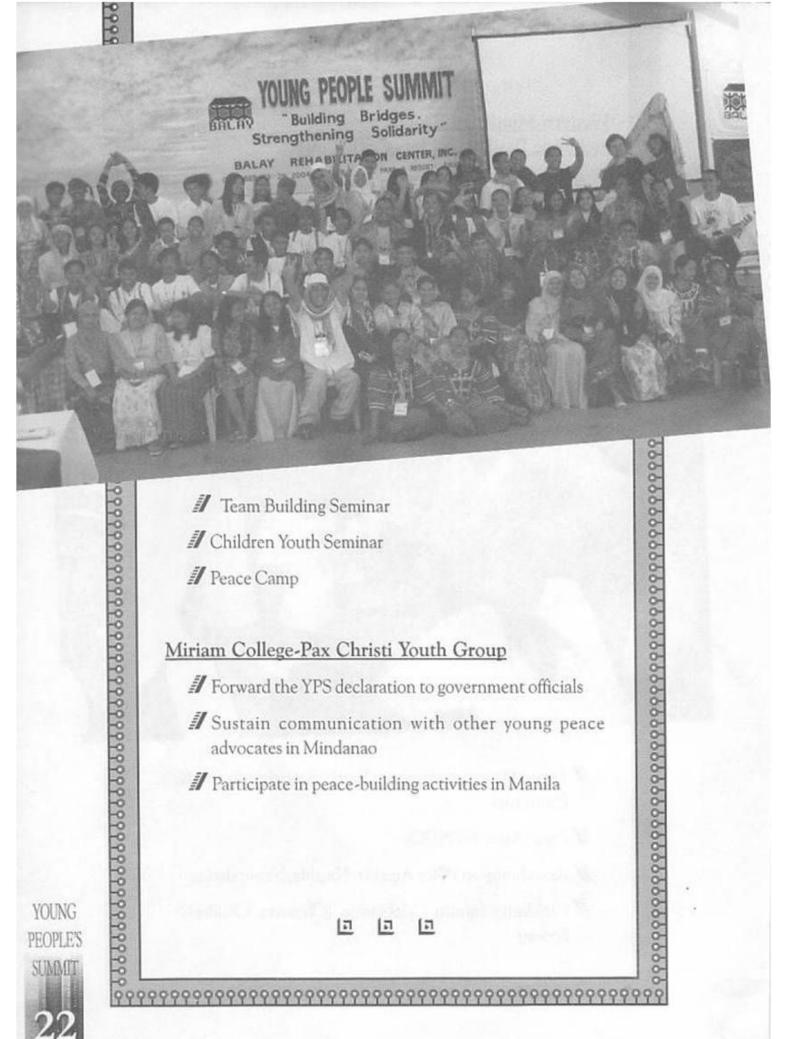
# Western Mindanao Region, including Basilan and JoloYouth Cluster

- Celebration of Week of Peace
- Peace Assembly (Local Government Units, Peace Advocates Zamboanga, National Youth Commision, Church-based organizations)



- Peace Dialogue: Pag-asa Youth Association of the Philippines
- Peace Assembly-NGOs
- Re-echoing on Peace Agenda: Nagdilaab Foundation
- # Children's Month Celebration (Christian Children's Forum)

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# The Way Forward: YPS Initiatives in Review

T HAS BEEN six months since around 100 youth leaders representing some 50 organizations from all over Mindanao and Sulu participated in the Young People's Summit (YPS) in October 2004; did something came out of that gathering?

This question and more found their answers in the meeting of the YPS Steering Committee held in Cagayan de Oro City from April 23-24, 2005.

Initiated by Balay, the meeting was attended by representatives of nine youth organizations in Mindanao. They were chosen by the YPS Summit to monitor and steer forward the peace and development initiatives that the youth had arrived at during the summit.

A member of the YPS Convenors, the Alyansa ng Kabataang Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan (AKMK), also joined the meeting.

The Steering Committee representatives were from Ginapaladtaka Youth Council (Pikit, Cotabato), Peace Advocates



Zamboanga, Nagdilaab Foundation (Basilan), Alyansa ng Kabataang Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan (AKMK-Iligan), Teduray Lambangian Youth and Students Association (TYLA), Southern Bukidnon Tribal Youth Organization (Subtriyo), United Youth for Peace and Development (Unypad), Mindanao Integrity of Muslim Association (MIMA).

Based on reports and discussions of the committee members, the following may be considered as the gains of the YPS:

# Recognition of the youth as stakeholder in peace-building

THE YPS WAS welcomed by no less than the illustrious peace advocates and civil society leaders of the Moro, Lumad, and Settler communities who delivered their messages before the youth gathering in

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Davao (See pages 9-14). The summit was covered by ABS-CBN, one of the largest media network in Mindanao, and the Philippines; the Philippine Daily Inquirer ran a news story about it in October.

The youth leaders from Pikit, Cotabato were interviewed by Radyolinaw in Kidapawan where they shared the highlights of the YPS and the youth agenda in November. The YPS participants from Pax Christi of Miriam College in Manila were interviewed over DZRH in December. YPS delegates from Iligan and Zamboanga also shared to the media the summit agenda and actions.

The Mindanao Peaceweavers, which is perhaps the largest network of peace movements in Mindanao, has invited the YPS to represent the youth sector in peace advocacy.

# Response to YPS Declaration

THE GOVERNMENT AND the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have both acknowledged the recommendations raised by the YPS and welcomed any proposal from the youth to strengthen the peace process. Atty. Datu Jun Montawil of the MILF held a dialog with the YPS in Davao.

The response of both peace panels to the youth agenda was made known through Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr of the GRP Peace Panel (See page 32).

Both panels recognize the need for greater accountability and transparency in the peace process. They instituted stronger ceasefire monitoring mechanisms which allow direct community participation and international support. The peace panels have considered the reports and recommendations submitted by civil society organizations to promote the ceasefire and the peace negotiaioths. Many YPS participant-organizations are aligned to these organizations and networks.

Members of both panels hold active information drive. The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and

some members of MILF peace panel have, in many occasions, met and discussed with civil society groups, such as the Mindanao Peaceweavers, Mindanao People's Caucus, and Bantay Ceasefire. Most of the youth organizations who joined the YPS are members of these networks.

- The government and the MILF peace panel have expressed support to the peoples' declaration of a Space for Peace in Pikit, Cotabato and other peace zones and peace sanctuaries initiated by the communities elsewhere in Mindanao.
- There has been a repositioning of troops in the so-called Buliok complex in accordance with the agreement on security aspects.

# Promotion of the Youth Agenda

THE YPS DECLARATION was discussed at the Sub-Task Force on Displaced Children where Balay serves as lead agency under the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC). The STDC was reorganized to combine the concerns of displaced children with those of the children and young people of indigenous peoples and the Moro.

Balay has submitted the YPS Declaration to the National Youth Commission-National Office. The NYC expressed interest to discuss the youth agenda with YPS participants.

The Department of Education Region XII has approved of the enhanced Makabayan module for elementary and high school students that include the themes of tri-people perspective in Mindanao history, healing, conflict resolution, disaster management, and children's rights. Balay has introduced the modules in 14 schools in Pikit, Cotabato.

The DepEd has pulled out a controversial textbook that contained erroneous information about Islam and other historical fallacies and factual errors following the expose of a concerned educator in Manila. The Peace Educators Network (PEN), where Balay sits as a member, has written Education Secretary Florencio Abad to consider the promotion of peace education in school curriculum.



The government has acknowledged "children as zones of peace." It was formally declared in November 2004 in Pikit, Cotabato alongside the proclamation of the Space for Peace.

Balay also organized forums in three big schools in Manila to discuss Mindanao peace issues, and to invite them to dialog with young people in Mindanao. Miriam College has already established links with students and faculty members of the Rajahmuda High School in Pikit.

# Regional Youth Initiatives

THE YPS PARTICIPANTS in Manila and Mindanao have maintained links through exchange of information and updates in their respective peace initiatives.

A number of YPS participant-organizations have joined ceasefire monitoring and peace missions in Cotabato, Maguindanao, Carmen, and Lanao in 2004, under the auspices of the Mindanao Peaceweavers and Bantay Ceasefire. This served to assist the GRP-MILF peace panels to observe the truce and raise the community concerns while the peace talk is ongoing.

A YPS delegate from Zamboanga has joined the peace assessment mission in Sulu in April 2005 that offered recommendations to civilian authorities and the military to address the resolution of the conflict in the area.

Other initiatives of regional youth clusters and organizations are the following:

# Lanao Youth Cluster

The Alyansa ng Kabataang Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan (AKMK) and its allied youth associations in Iligan and Upi such as the Teduray Lambangian Youth and Students Association (TYLA) have undertaken a series of peace education activities; they held information campaigns, and organized forums on anti-terrorism bill in their areas of operations. They also sustained their exposure programs for youth to widen solidarity among indigenous peoples, the settlers and the Moros

They also organized peace camps and held a concert for peace in Kauswagan. They supported campaigns against mining and logging operations in homelands of indigenous communities. They joined the transport strikes to call for the rollback in prices of oil. Recently, the Mindanao Tri-people Youth Center was established in Iligan.

### Bukidnon Youth

The Southern Bukidnon Tribal Youth Organization (Subtriyo) and other Lumad associations under the Nasavakan Tarigunay Du't Kalindaan Federation (Natabukfed) organized a forum for a "kulahi" – a call to action – to address the issues confronting the indigenous communities in Bukidnon and nearby towns. One such forum was to promote

the environmental campaign in relation to the impending Polangi dam projects that threaten to displace indigenous communities and destroy sacred ancestral lands.

The projects, which are being pushed by the National Power Corporation, have offered housing alternatives and electricity to the affected communities. But the right of the indigenous peoples to preserve their homeland is something they do not wish to give up. The forum was attended by local government representatives, community leaders, church officials, and school authorities. The Natabukfed also organized local consultations among the affected communities.

# Ginapaladtaka Youth Cluster

A youth council was formed in Space for Peace Areas in Pikit, Cotabato following the YPS. This was initiated by youth leaders who participated in the Davao summit. The council mobilized youth support for the declaration of the Space for Peace in November 2004.

They also convened a youth meeting in Brgy. Dalengaoen to share what transpired in the YPS. Youth leaders were interviewed over *Radyolinaw* in Kidapawan regarding the youth declaration. They also organized a basketball game to draw closer the Moro, Lumad and Christian youth in Pikit.

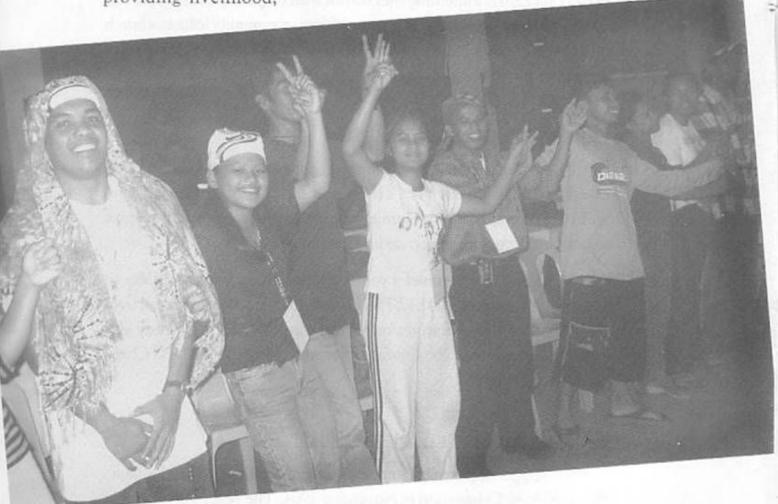
### Western Mindanao Youth Cluster

YPS participants in Zamboanga and Basilan joined the Mindanao Week of Peace Celebration in November 2004. The Peace Advocates of Zamboanga-Youth supported peace assemblies and "culture of peace" seminars. They have joined peace camps and team-building seminars.

Nagdilaab Foundation has supported out-of-school youth in Basilan through its educational assistance. Its community assistance through housing projects and water system improvement are continuing. The Christian Children Fund-Basilan has also been active in pursuing peace-building activities and community support through water system development.

# Central Mindanao Youth Groups

Members of the United Youth for Development (Unypad) who attended the YPS shared to their members the outcome of the gathering. They were also active in local conflict mediation in communities that they served in Cotabato and Maguindanao. In cooperation with other development agencies, Unypad is involved in providing livelihood,



sanitation, and organizing assistance for

development in conflict-affected areas. They take part in the Bantay Ceasefire activities, just like the members of the United Youth of the Philippines (Unyphil) and other peace organizations.

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The Mindanao Integrity of Muslim Association (MIMA) has supported campaigns against child-trafficking and joined a movement for the protection of journalists. Expressing concern over the reported abduction of Muslim youth leaders, they participated in the civil society efforts for human rights protection. On the service side, they facilitated the acceleration to college of some high school students whose education were affected by the war.

# **Enhancing Solidarity**

THE YPS HAS ACCOMPLISHED many things in a short period of time.

This was the assessment made by Musalik Kabunto, a representative of MIMA who co-chaired the YPS Steering Committee meeting with Nerissa Piamonte of AKMK. Though still a loose forum of young people, a closer bond of solidarity and independent yet common actions for peace-building and development is taking shape among the YPS participants and the convenor organizations.

Nevertheless, a lot still has to be done to get the youth agenda going. Each YPS participant-organization and network are encouraged to continue their respective peace and development initiatives. At the same time, the steering committee has agreed to propose the following common activities for the YPS for 2005.

- Writeshop and development of a youth-oriented module on culture of peace (COP)
- 2. Trainers training for COP workshops
- 3. Support to peace camps of YPS network members
- Forum on youth and environment issues (e.g. mining, dams, logging)
- Dialog with government agencies on YPS Declaration (i.e. NYC, DepEd, etc)
- 6. Leadership and skills training

# REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER

ON THE PEACE PROCESS

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
PEACE NEGOTIATING PANEL FOR THE TALKS WITH THE
MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT
(GPNP FOR THE TALKS WITH THE MILF)

February 16, 2005

### MS. LORENA B. DE LA CRUZ

Executive Director

BALAY Rehabilitation Center, Inc.

25 Maalindog St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City

Dear Executive Director De la Cruz

Greetings of Peace!

I would like to express our gratitude for providing us a copy of the Declaration adopted by the youth representatives who attended the Young People's Summit (YPS) which you organized last October 26-29, 2005.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUMMIT

It is unfortunate that the Panel was not able to attend the Davao YPS Summit and personally hear the views expressed by our youth. At that time, the International Monitoring Team (IMT) tasked to observe the implementation of the GRP-MILF ceasefire agreement has just commenced its formal deployment process in Mindanao. Moreover, our joint GRP-MILF Ceasefire Committee also held its 22nd meeting along with the IMT representative period during the indicated dates.

Please be assured that the current efforts of both Peace Panels reflect the recommendations made by our youth representatives in regard to the peace negotiations, particularly along the following areas:

- Both Panels recognize the need for greater accountability and transparency in the peace process. Under this, we endeavor to continually strengthen our existing coordinative and monitoring mechanisms on the ground (i.e. Joint CCCH, Local Monitoring Teams. IMT) so that we may ensure the credibility of joint fact-finding missions, creatively resolve situations of unpeace on the ground, and allow more opportunities for direct community participation in our ceasefire undertakings.
- Both Panels, in coordination with the Joint CCCH and the IMT, had been undertaking regular advocacy/information drive and the consultation activities aimed at broadening public awareness on the latest development in the peace process.

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3. We acknowledge the vital role of community-initiated peace-building mechanisms. It is for this reason that both panels, as well as the OPAPP, actively support, recognize and encourage the establishment of peace zones/sanctuaries, as exemplified by our partnership with the seven (7) barangays in Pikit, Cotabato who have declared their areas as the Ginapalad Ta Ka Spaces for Peace last November 2004.

Our Panel will continually look into matters on the peace process that directly bear on the welfare of the youth. We would appreciate receiving constant inputs from our youth on issues and concerns that they believe should be discussed by both Peace Panels.

We shall look forward to building closer coordinative links with your organizations and the youth. Once again, we thank you for your continuing support to the GRP-MILF peace process.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) SILVESTRE C. AFABLE, JR. Chairman, GPNP for Talks with the MILF

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUMMED

# Poung Cleople's Summit Declaration

Eden Nature Park, Toril, Davao City 29 October, 2004

E, THE YOUNG peoples in Mindanao, representing more than 50 organizations of Indigenous Peoples, Moro, and Settlers, after going through a series of democratic consultations and consensus building in Southern Mindanao, Western Mindanao, Northern Mindanao and Central Mindanao Regions that lead to the Young People's Summit, do hereby state the following:

The Young Peoples of Mindanao are significant stakeholders in any peace and development processes that affect YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUMOTT the lives and future of our communities, our respective peoples and the entire Mindanao;

- As young peoples, we have the rights, capabilities and commitment to participate in charting policies and other undertakings that promote our entitlement to survival, protection and development.
- Being the representatives of the future generation, we are concerned of the issues affecting the young people such as poverty, discrimination, lack of access or deprivation of basic social services, militarization, displacement and inadequate recognition of our rights.

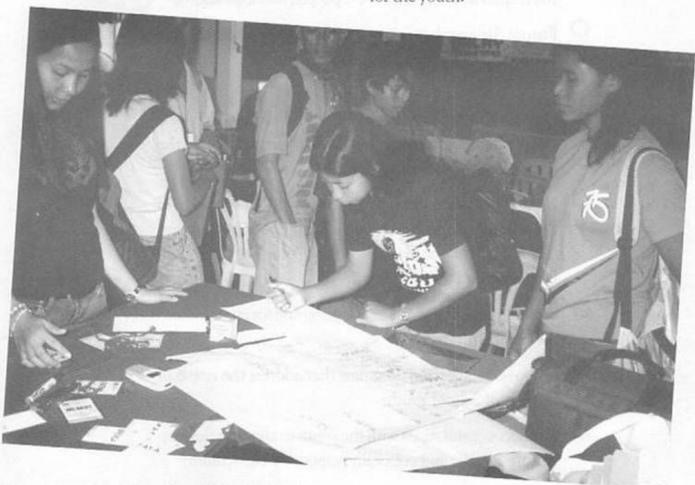
Thus, we do hereby commit ourselves to work together to enhance and widen the solidarity among the Indigenous Peoples, Moro and Settlers towards attaining sustainable peace and development in Mindanao.

In particular, we bind ourselves to work for the following agenda:

#### For the Young People

- Strengthen the link and network of the young people;
- Encourage greater participation of young people to the grassroots ceasefire monitoring, particularly on its implications on young people;
- Promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue, and conduct awareness raising activities;
- Integrate the YPS agenda in the programs and plans of our respective organizations and networks;
- Access to information eg., National Commission on IP for dissemination to the ranks of the young people;
- Assist the Out of School Youth in accessing the government programs and services for OSY;

- Review program and policies and come up with a position paper critiquing the policies on OSY;
- Engage the National Youth Commission (NYC), LGUs, DILG, DSWD, DepEd, DOH, and all other relevant government agencies, and access their programs and services;
- Commit the total participation of the members of the network in enhancing their capacity to implement programs for the youth.



# For the Government of the Republic of the Philippines

- Integrate the history of the peoples of Mindanao in the educational system;
- Promote Culture of Peace;
- Reposition military troops away from civilian communi-

- ties consistent with their commitments with the ceasefire agreement on security aspect;
- Rehabilitation programs and design should be culturally appropriate and child responsive, and in consultation with affected communities;
- Review the textbooks and other learning materials to correct the information indicated therein pertaining to Mindanao history, culture and people, and aspirations;
- Ensure the mandatory recognition and representation of the indigenous peoples in the local councils as mandated in RA 8371;
- Urge the GRP to conduct proper consultation among the stakeholders regarding their plan to integrate NCIP to the Department of Land Reform;
- Hold information campaign and consider the position of the affected communities, including the young people, on the impact of the dam projects (Polangui Dam 5 in Bukidnon and 6 in Cotabato);
- Intensify action against illegal logging and for environmental protection;
- Improve policies and programs that address the needs of the Out of School Youth;
- Conduct consultations with the youth to create or develop culture specific and culturally responsive curriculum;
- Urge the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) and the Commission on Human Rights-Child's Rights Center (CHR-CRC) and other relevant government agency to take action on the monitoring and protection of children and young people in Mindanao.

### For Both the GRP and MILF

- Transparency and accountability on the peace process and agreements;
- Conduct widespread information drive on the peace process to reach out to larger numbers of people especially the young people;
- Access of the young people to information regarding the peace process;
- Encourage both parties in conflict to ensure the inclusion of the concerns of the young people in the agreements;
- Recognize and respect community-based initiatives on peace building including culturally responsive ways of conflict resolution and management;
- Recognize and promote "Children as Zones of Peace"

#### Signed by:

AKMK – Alyansa ng Kabataang Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan

AYM-LAFCCOD - Alliance Youth Movement -Lanao Aquamarine Fisheries Center for Community Development Campus Ministry

BALAY Rehabilitation Center, Inc.,

C-CCM - Campus Catholic Center Ministry - Iligan City

CCF - Christian Children's Fund - Basilan

ChrisLam - Christian Muslim Youth Organization (Pikit)

ChrisMusHigh

CYM - Catholic Youth Ministry

DYL - Democratic Youth League

GYO - Ginatilan Youth Organization

Katilingban sa Kalabuan

KYO - Kalakacan Youth Organization

LKM - Liga ng Kabataang Moro

LIHUK-Youth - Lig-ong Hiniusang Kusog sa Kabus

LMK - Liga ng Makabagong Kabataan

MALUPA – Manobo Lumadnong Panaghiusa sa Arakan Valley

MSPC – Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference - Youth Secretariat

MaguIL - Maguindanao Ilocano Youth Organization

MIYM - Minsupala Islamic Youth Movement

MIMA - Mindanao Integrity Muslim Association

MPC - Mindanao People's Caucus

Nagdilaab Foundation

NIMUSFA- LAFCCOD – Nipa-Nipa Muslim Fisherfolk Association– Lanao Aquamarine Fisheries Center for Community Development

PAZ - Peace Advocates Zamboanga Foundation

PAKABANA – Pakighiusa Kabataan alang sa Bag-ong NAawan

PMCYO - Panicupan Muslim Christian Youth Organization

PYA - Putuan Youth Association

PYAP - Pag-Asa Youth Association of the Philippines

SABITAN



SKM - Sandigan ng Kabataang Moro

SubTriYO - NaTaBukFed - Southern Bukidnon Tribal Youth Organization

Suntuan Youth Association - Jolo

Task Force Kalilintad

TaYO - Takepan Youth Organization

TBYO - Tagabakid - Balay Youth Organization

TLYSA - Teduray Lambangian Youth and Student Association

TUMAHIK - Tumpukan Makanak Hikahap - Basilan

UnYPaD - United Youth for Peace and Development

UnYPhil - United Youth of the Philippines

YPC - Yuhai Peer Club

ZYPO - Zamboanga Youth for Peace Organization

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PSORCIARATION

Padayag

Inag-isang

Pagtitipon ng mga

Kabataan

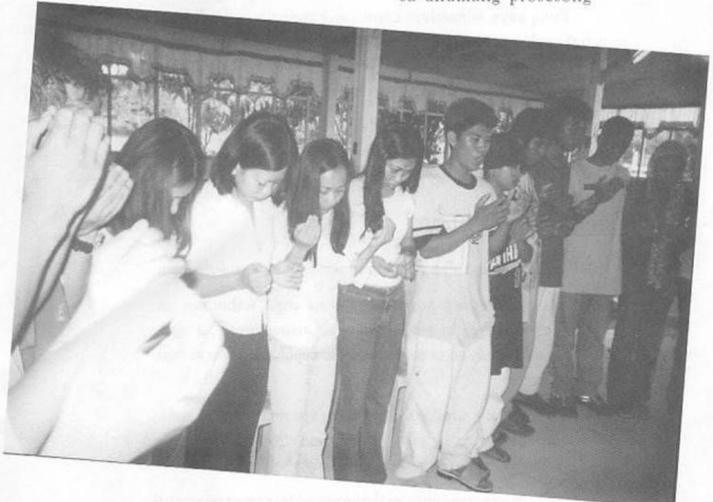
Eden Nature Park, Toril, Davao City Ika-29 ng Oktubre, 2004

AMI, ANG MGA kabataan ng Mindanao, na kumakatawan sa mahigit 50 samahan ng mga Katutubo, Moro, at Settlers; matapos maisagawa ang ilang serye ng demokratikong konsultasyon at pagpapanday ng nagkakaisang pagtingin sa mga

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rehiyon ng Katimugang Mindanao, Kanlurang Mindanao, Hilagang Mindanao, at Gitnang Mindanao, na ngayon ay nagdaraos ng Pinag-isang Pagtitipon ng mga Kabataan, ay nagpapahayag ng mga sumusunod:

Ang mga kabataan ng Mindanao ay mahalagang kalahok sa anumang prosesong



pangkapayapaan at pangkaunlaran na makaka-apekto sa buhay at kinabukasan ng aming mga komunidad, ng aming mga mamamayan, at ng buong Mindanao;

Bilang mga kabataan, kami ay may taglay na karapatan, kakayahan, at pagtatalaga sa sarili na makilahok sa

paghuhubog ng mga patakaran at iba pang gawain na magsusulong ng aming buhay at kaligtasan, proteksiyon, at pag-unlad.

Bilang mga kinatawan ng aming henerasyon sa hinaharap, kami ay nababahala sa mga usapin na nakaka-apekto sa mga kabataan katulad ng kahirapan, diskriminasyon, kawalan ng pagkakataong makinabang sa batayang serbisyong panlipuan, militarisasyon, sapilitang paglilikas, at hindi sapat na pagkilala sa aming mga karapatan.

Kung kaya, itinatalaga namin ang aming mga sarili na samasamang kumilos para pag-ibayuhin at palawakin ang pagkakaisa sa pagitan ng mga Katutubo, Moro, at Settlers para sa pagsusulong ng pangmatagalang kapayapaan at kaunlaran sa Mindanao.

Sa partikular pinagbubuklod namin ang aming mga sarili para sa mga sumusunod na adyenda:

# Para sa mga Kabataan

- Palakasin ang mga samahan at ugnayan ng mga kabataan;
- Pasiglahin ang partisipasyon ng mga kabataan sa pagmamatyag at pagsubaybay ng mamamayan sa tigil-putukan; lalo na sa pagbabantay sa implikasyon nito sa mga kabataan;
- Itaguyod ang dayalogo hinggil sa mga paniniwala at kultura, at magsagawa ng mga gawaing makapagpapalawak ng kamalayan para sa respeto at pakikipagkaisa sa kapwa;
- Ipaloob ang mga laman ng deklarasyong ito sa mga programa at plano ng aming mga samahan at ugnayan;
- Tulungan ang mga kabataang wala sa paaralan (OSY) na magkaroon ng pagkakataong makinabang sa mga programa at serbisyo ng pamahalaan para sa kanila;

- Pag-aralan ang mga programa at patakaran ng gobyerno hinggil sa OSY at maglabas ng mga panukala para maging higit na makabuluhan ito;
- Makiharap sa tanggapan ng National Youth Commission (NYC), LGUs, DILG, DSWD, DepEd, DOH at iba pang ahensiya ng pamahalaan para makinabang sa mga programa at serbisyo nila;
- Italaga ang partisipasyon ng mga miyembro ng mga samahan at ugnayan upang mapalakas ang kanilang kakayahang magtaguyod ng mga programa para sa kabataan.

# Para sa Gobyerno ng Republika ng Pilipinas

- Ipaloob ang kasaysayan ng mga mamamayan ng Mindanao sa sistema ng edukasyon;
- Itaguyod ang Kultura ng Kapayapaan;
- Ilayo ang posisyon ng mga sundalo sa komunidad ng sibilyan, sang-ayon sa itinakda ng kasunduan sa tigil-putukan hinggil sa aspeto ng seguridad;
- Konsultahin ang mga komunidad sa disenyo ng mga programang pang-rehabilitasyon at tiyakin na ito ay angkop sa kultura ng mamamayan at mapag-kalinga sa mga bata;
- Suriin ang mga aklat at gamit sa pagtuturo sa paaralan para maitama ang mga impormasyon na may kaugnayan sa kasaysayan, kultura, at aspirasyon ng mga mamamayan sa Mindanao;
- Tiyakin ang nakatadhanang pagkilala at representasyon ng mga katutubo sa mga lokal na konseho sang-ayon sa RA8371;
- Hikayatin ang pamahalaan na magsagawa ng mga konsultasyon sa mga maapektuhan ng kanilang planong

- ipasailalim ang NCIP sa isang Deparment of Land Reform.
- Magpalaganap ng impormasyon at kilalanin ang posisyon ng mga maaapektuhang komunidad, kabilang na ang mga kabataan, hinggil sa dam projects (Polangui Dam 5 sa Bukidnon at 6 sa Cotabato);
- Paigtingin ang kampanya laban sa illigal na pagtotroso at para sa proteksiyon ng kapaligiran;
- Pag-ibayuhin ang mga patakaran at programa na tumutugon sa mga pangangailangan ng mga kabataang wala sa paaralan (OSY);
- Kunsultahin ang mga kabataan sa pagpapa-unlad ng mga curriculum na sensitibo at akma sa mga kutura ng mamamayan sa Mindana;
- Hikayatin ang Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC),
  National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) at ang Commission on Human Rights-Child's Rights Center (CHR-CRC) at iba pang ahensiya ng pamahalaan na magsagawa ng aksiyon para masubaybayan at mapangalagaan ang mga bata at kabataan sa Mindanao.

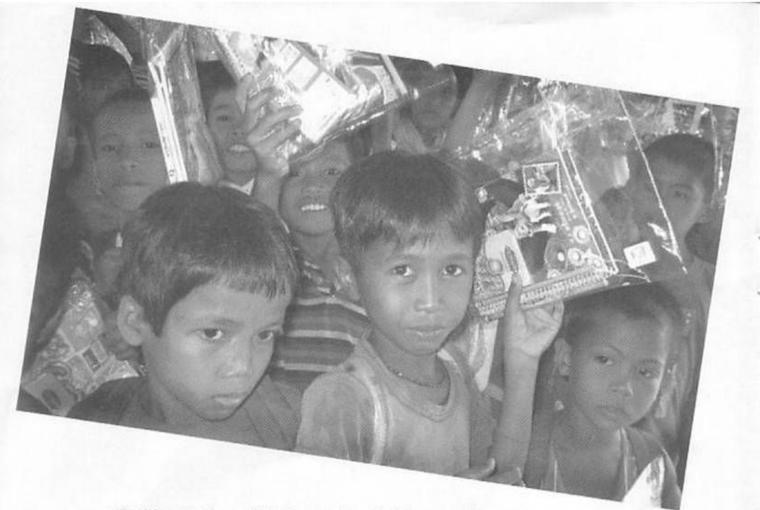
# Para sa MILF at GRP

- Maging bukas at may pananagutan sa prosesong at kasunduan pangkapayapaan;
- Magsagawa ng kampanyang pang-impormasyon tungkol sa prosesong pangkapayapaan para maabot ang pinakamaraming bilang ng mamamayan, lalo na ang mga kabataan;
- Bigyang pagkakataon ang mga kabataan na magkaroon na makakuha ng impormasyon kaugnay nang prosesong pangkapayapaan;

- Hikayatin ang mga sangkot sa usapang pangkapayapaan na isama ang mga usapin ng kabataan sa kanilang mga kasunduan;
- Kilalanin at igalang ang pagsisikap ng mga mamamayan sa komunidad sa pagpapanday ng kapayapaan, kasama ang pagkilala sa mga katutubong pamamaraan sa pag-aayos ng tunggalian na naaayon sa kultura ng mamamayan;
- Kilalanin at itaguyod ang mga bata at kabataan bilang "Sona ng Kapayapaan".

Pinagtibay ngayong ika-29 ng Oktubre, 2004, Eden Nature Park and Resort, Toril, Davao City

(Filipino translation of the original document written in English. Translation by BALAY Rehabilitation Center)



"Building Bridges of Understanding, Solidarity and Peace":

# A Twinning Project between Young People of Mindanao and Manila

noted poet had once described the children as the "sons and daughters of life's longing for itself." A fitting illustration of the young people as the spawns of the human race – the salinlabi – which has inspired the UNICEF to issue the reminder that it takes a community to raise a child.

Unfortunately, real life drama is not always as tranquil as prose and poetry. In many places in Mindanao, armed conflict and internal displacement continue to disrupt the lives of thousands of young people. Children are deprived of their most basic rights to education, food, and shelter. Many of them are gripped by fear. They live in constant threat of danger. Growing up with the sight of guns and casual display of violence, their path has already been paved towards a culture of hostility and aggression. Some who are fortunate enough to continue their education may stand a chance of having better options in life. But for those who don't, the violent path offers a tempting alternative.

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For those living far from the sights and sounds of conflict, the situation of children in situations of armed conflict (CSAC) may be as real only as the image of young boys and girls lining up for soup in evacuation centers that they see on television or the pictures of students sitting on the floor as they continue their education in bullet-riddled schools. Across the seas, the displaced children in armed conflict situations may also painfully watch other children on television and ask why they are not in school and playing like them. And like a silent whisper, we may hear the hint of distress afflicting those children, and yet not really see. Nor comprehend.

But humanist solidarity has a way of reaching out, peace and compassion being a universal longing of the heart. This is the driving motivation behind the "Building Bridges of Understanding, Solidarity and Peace" project. It is an attempt to cross boundaries, tear down the walls of prejudice, and allow the whispers to ring aloud in search of a caring response. It is an initiative to bring young people (and adults too) in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao and their counterparts in Metro Manila in a reciprocal undertaking of sharing experiences, exchanging ideas, and mutual encouragement towards the promotion of children as zones of peace.

#### Objectives

In particular, the Building Bridges project intends to establish linkages between students in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao and those studying in schools in Metro Manila in order to:

- Raise awareness about the Mindanao peoples, the rich and diverse culture and tri-people society; conflicts and paths to peace taken for and by the young people.
- Provide information on the initiatives in Metro Manila towards peace-building (i.e. constituency building, peace education, declaration of schools as zones of peace, peace clubs, workshops, , conferences, study tours, etc)
- Encourage participation of children and youth in peace building as rights holders.
- Encourage direct mutual solidarity actions such as joint or coordinated activities marking the Mindanao Week of Peace (November), International Children's Month (October), International Year of Peace (September)



- Facilitate cultural-exposure program and mutual-learning events on peace education and other developmental undertaking among participants.
- Raise material support for students in conflict-affected areas (such as book donation campaign, support for school fees, pad papers, pencils, bags, etc.)

#### How the Twinning Project Works?

The principal participants for this project shall be the students, schools, peace centers, and individual advocates covered by the Peace Educator's Network (PEN). Their counterparts shall be the schools, students, and teachers covered by the Space for Peace Project and some schools in interior villages in Pikit, North Cotabato and other areas in Mindanao.

- The linkage may be done by grade level, by entire departments, peace clubs or schools, depending on the readiness of concerned school authorities and the students.
- A profile of participating units will be provided for the perusal
  of potential twinning partners. A formal letter of intent shall be
  exchanged between and among the participating units to officially
  signal the formal start of the project.
- 3. Correspondence shall be done through letter writing, exchanges of art works (i.e. posters, drawing, etc.), newsletters. The frequency and themes of which shall be determined mutually by the participants. Exchanges of pictures and video footages may be done eventually, as long as technical and logistical assistance is available.
- Information exchange may be done by and between students or between teachers themselves.

Balay will serve as facilitator of the project until such time that the partners can already sustain the initiative. It can talk to the potential twinning partners, give the orientation and perform other facilitative function until the formal linkage shall have been established. Correspondence may be coursed through Balay in the initial part of the twinning. Later, communication between the partners will be done by them directly through postal service (or email). A system to monitor the progress of the project will have to be agreed upon by the partners.

Interested schools/groups and individuals can email Balay at balayadvocacy@tri-isys.com

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#### YPS CONVENORS

BALAY REHABILITATION CENTER

MINDANAO INTEGRITY OF MUSLIM ASSOCIATION (MIMA)

MINDANAO PEOPLE'S CAUCUS (MPC)

MINDANAO-SULU PASTORAL CONFERENCE YOUTH SECRETARIAT (MSPC-YS)

> PEACE ADVOCATES ZAMBOANGA FOUNDATION (PAZ)

UNITED YOUTH FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNYPAD)

UNITED YOUTH OF THE PHILIPPINES (UNYPHIL)

NASAVAKAN TARIGUNAY DU'T KALINDAAN FEDERATION (NATABUKFED)

AKMK - SUMPAY MINDANAO
TASK FORCE KALILINTAD