

Programme Area Summary

Country: Philippines

Programme Area: VSO Peace Building 2001 -2010

What is the aim of the programme area?

To contribute towards peace building between and amongst Muslim and Christian communities in Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur.

Why is VSO working in this particular programme area and region?

Continuing conflict has exacerbated the already-desperate situation of poverty in Mindanao. In 2003 alone, the outbreak of war between rebel and government forces displaced close to half a million people in the two Lanao provinces. Land conflict in Lanao was the spark that led to the conflagration of war in 2001. During the strategic planning process and reviews the peace programme came out strongly as a key area of need and clear opportunities; context and needs analysis supported this. There were also partners who VSO could work with and link with in peace building. There are cross cutting linkages with gender, education and advocacy.

The programme had been funded by the European Union from 2001 - 04 under the name of VSO-TOSCADAR. New co-financing from the EC and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) of the UK has been secured under the name of VSO-PEACE Mindanao (Peace Enabling Actions for Community Empowerment in North Central Mindanao) from February 2005 until June 2008.

Key beneficiaries and partners

Beneficiaries are civil society organizations (NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs)) and state institutions (Local Government Authorities). PEACE Mindanao works with 14 partners with programmes in more than 20 municipalities in the two Lanao provinces.

Specific Objectives/Outcomes

- A “culture of peace” is fostered within and between communities affected by displacement
- Communities affected by displacement manage resources in a way that is equitable and sustainable and which address the socio-economic and emotional recovery needs of displaced people
- Government agencies, NGOs, traditional leaders and communities affected by displacement fulfil well-defined and mutually respected roles and responsibilities within a collaborative rights-based approach to IDP support
- NGOs, traditional leaders and other civil society representatives accurately represent the voice of Muslim and Christian communities affected by displacement in local, regional and national media, government communities, peace networks and other discussion forums

Current Programme activities

Focus of International Volunteer Placements

Technical and organisational assistance to NGOs through provision of internationally-recruited volunteer professionals is a key strategy for achieving the capacity development objectives of partner NGOs. The skills set identified as priorities include:

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- Organizational Development
- Agro-forestry
- Aquatic and Coastal Resources Management
- Advocacy
- Gender Mainstreaming
- Trauma Healing
- Micro-enterprise development

Workshops, training & conferences

The Programme identified a substantial number of training sessions to be provided to partner NGOs to enhance their work. These trainings were to be provided by international volunteers, partner organisations or occasional consultants. Among the training sessions identified were: Advocacy and Media Management, Emotional Recovery, Relief and Humanitarian Crisis Management, Gender, Promoting Culture of Peace, and Organisational Development and Management.

Providing grants and/or equipment for partners

Two funding mechanisms were devised to support NGOs and communities in their effort to implement community-based peace building and developmental interventions. The Partnership Support Funds are two-year partnerships designed for strategic partners. The Small-scale Innovative Fund, on the other hand, was envisioned to support the implementation of innovative approaches to IDP-related issues either by partner NGOs, volunteer professionals and community groups.

Other partnership activities

Networking and sharing mechanisms were envisioned to create and strengthen a pool of committed organisations that could provide mutual mentoring support to each other. Other networking and learning mechanisms identified in the programme are exchange visits, documentation, dialogues, south-south and south-north international study tours, etc.

What makes VSO's work in this programme area special?

Work in the Lanao provinces means working in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and inter-faith setting. The *Maranaws*, or the 'people of the lake' as the indigenous people of Lanao are called, are among the three major Muslim tribes in the Philippines. Over the years, these fiercely proud people have struggled to keep their identity against minoritization resulting from migration of Christian settlers from the north and central part of the country. This complex cultural, ethnic, religious and political dynamic has become a greenhouse for conflict. Yet it has also shown how people of such diverse origin can co-exist peacefully. Peace building is the key development issue in this area – and civil society in both Muslim and Christian communities has shown the way to grassroots peace building. The VSO PEACE Mindanao supports this development process. In this exciting milieu, a multi-national, multi-racial group of volunteers from all the VSO federation member countries have found fulfilling work and life-changing experiences.