

The Aftermath of Ethnic Violence — Post War Reconstruction in the Southern Philippines : A Preliminary Assessment of the Role of the International Community

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Abstract

A peace accord was signed between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) on September 2, 1996 to put an end to nearly three-decades of bloodletting in the southern Philippines. Soon after, several international donors converged in the Special Zone of Peace and Development or SZOPAD to establish an “aid industry.” This paper examines the role of donors in the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD)-National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)-United Nations (UN)/Multi-Donor Programme or the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme. The main goal is to draw some lessons rather than render judgement on performance. The paper argues that while the multi-donor programme has achieved many “development” breakthroughs, it failed to maximize the opportunity to integrate peace-building and development initiatives.

The SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme is among the many mechanisms of donor-GRP & MNLF cooperation and is considered a major breakthrough as local actors now coordinate ODA instead of national actors. The construction of the programme was based on the convergence of interest among the actors involved. The programme has attained considerable success and is even said to have “hijacked” the peace accord. This is especially so in the context of the failure of the government to deliver on its promises due to the financial crisis that swept the country ; lack of coordination between government agencies ; and lack of participation of the local government units. However, the programme’s contribution to the peace-building efforts or even to the immediate political objective of the peace agreement, which is the formation of an autonomous region as a power-sharing mechanism, are debatable. By only attending to the concerns of the MNLF, instead of undertaking projects that constructively engage Muslims, Christians, and *Lumad* (non-Muslim indigenous peoples) to reduce existing prejudices, the programme is arguably deepening the gap between these groups.

Valuable lessons that emerge are the need to distinguish the difference between peace-building and development initiatives, to establish a clear basis for the construction of discourse, to strengthen coordination especially among all local stakeholders, and to

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develop good social preparation. To firmly establish peace and development, the parties involved must take full ownership of the process, which the donor community can only complement but never take full responsibility for.

INTRODUCTION

Many areas of tension in the world are grounded in local ethnic conflicts. Gurr & Harff (1994, p. 5) described *ethnic* groups as “psychological communities, whose members share a persistent sense of common interest and identity based on combinations of shared historical experience and valued cultural traits — beliefs, language, ways of life, and a common homeland.” Stavenhagen (1996) terms the ‘ethnies’ as those “groups who have not achieved, or expressed, such national consciousness but are nevertheless united through racial, linguistic, cultural or national links that likewise distinguish them from other similar groups and through which their members are aware of sharing a common identity.” The existence of commonly shared attributes and a consciousness of kind are two important constructs of ethnicity.

Interestingly, it is not because peoples are inherently different that conflicts arise among ethnically diverse groups. Multi-ethnic states are in fact more the rule than the exception (Stavenhagen 1996). This reality has multiple implications for democratic governance. Differences in access to social entitlements, often the consequence of differential treatment within a state by the majority ethnic group, cause the emergence of violent conflicts. Tensions arise from the disparity between what a group wants or thinks it deserves and what it actually has or can get (Gurr 1970).

The conflict is therefore driven by the inability of a group of people to satisfy its collective values — its failure, through no fault of its own, to get its due, in the context of an existing political arrangement. In spite of the diversity¹⁾ in origin and forms, Stavenhagen (1996) found the roots of confrontation “in the way a modern state, when originally established, related to the different ethnic groups within its borders, through constitutional arrangements, electoral-systems, legislation or simply political culture and practice.”

The end of the Cold War and its concomitant social and economic disruption, that resulted in widespread poverty, unemployment and insecurity, was considered to be the cause of the post-Cold War rise in ethnic conflicts. Due to “humanist impulsion” and concern for the “maintenance of a stable international order”, peace accords became fashionable and remain of interest to the international community despite their uncertainty (Eide 1996). The reality that the majority of ethnic conflicts have emerged in low-income countries and lower-middle-income countries (Stewart 1997 ; Smith 1993). Therefore, the challenge for the international

community is not only facilitation of peace-building initiatives but also development. The absence of consensus on how to bring peace, and the variety of perceptions regarding what development is, its dimensions and corresponding processes, have made the task much more difficult. Contrary to the common notion, “development” does not necessarily “equal peace,” but often “development” may generate or exacerbate violent conflict (Bush 1998). There is a need for the “integration of peace and conflict concerns” into development thinking to ensure the positive impact of development projects on peace-building.

While the current efforts of the international community are an indication of the commitment to address such issues as conflict prevention, peace building and reconstruction (Carbonnier 1998), a consensus is still forthcoming. For the meantime, competition and lack of coordination prevail in the field as the actors continue to gain experience, learn their lessons, and experiment with policy. As power is involved in the construction of interests, disconnection between intentions and outcomes is evident, at the expense of the society that donors pledged to reconstruct.

Many scholars (e. g., Stiefel 1994 ; Stavenhagen 1996 ; Anderson 1996 ; Bush 1995 ; Marley 1997) are in agreement that the failure of the international community is not due to a lack of good intentions or political will but rather the continuing tendency for international assistance to be formulated, planned and implemented from the top down, rather than from the bottom up, and to a lack of coordinated effort and a common policy framework for engagement. Added to this is the tendency of the donor to dominate, rather than facilitate the process of peace-building and development. Within development circles there is a desire to establish a more effective and coherent framework for relief, rehabilitation, and development activities (Stiefel 1994 ; UNDP 1994 & 1995).

The proliferation of ethnic conflicts in the 1990s has given impetus for renewed scholarship on ethnicity. Unlike in the past, the effort is not only to explain and develop theories but also to explore workable options and possibilities in preventing the recurrence of violent ethnic conflicts and for reconstruction of communities.

Various research initiatives are currently being undertaken. The Collaborative for Development Action (CDA) launched in 1993 the Local Capabilities for Peace Project. The project hopes to understand how local and international assistance contributes to local capacities for peace and enables people to disengage from the conflict and overcome their problems through development of alternative systems (Anderson 1996). Fifteen case studies have been conducted since then, all addressing the role of external assistance in peace-building.

In addition, the War-torn Societies Project (WSP) of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) was launched in 1994. The project aims to “assist the

international community and national and local actors to better understand and respond to the complex challenge of re-building war-torn societies". The WSP is primarily policy-oriented and concerned with the issue of complex interaction between peace-keeping, relief, rehabilitation, and development activities. It is now undertaking multi-disciplinary, participatory, action-oriented research in Guatemala, Eritrea, Somalia, and Mozambique. At present, the project is engaged in identifying issues and providing solutions. In some of its project sites, it has recommended decentralization of governance and a greater role for civil society. Whether it will have a real impact on local economic and social development and peace-building remains a subject of future investigation.

Fagen (1995) in her extensive review of literature on rebuilding war-torn societies states that "scholars as well as practitioners have paid too little attention to the period that follows the end of armed conflict, as if the formal resolution of violence, in and of itself, opened the way and provided the means for solving fundamental problems, old and new." She further notes the limited bearing of previous experiences and theories of ethnic conflict in dealing with the current situation. The confusion at the policy and political level in dealing with ethnic conflicts can be attributed to "theoretical deficit".

The paradigm shift in the role of the international community in resolving internal conflicts from an offhand posture to that of direct involvement has resulted in many debates on the role of the international community in facilitating or disrupting these processes. The various discussions on rebuilding war-torn societies generally focused on political, economic, and social aspects concerning local empowerment and capacity-building, and on the reform of social structures.

In the case of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines much of the existing research is primarily mono-disciplinary. The historians dwell extensively on the evolution of the conflict (*e. g.* Che Man 1990 ; Gowing, *et. al.* 1994 ; Majul 1973 ; Rodil 1994 ; Tan 1993, 1977). Sociologists and anthropologists try to describe the nature of various ethnic groups and identify the existing structure of majority-minority relations (*e. g.* Canacan 1991 ; Gowing 1988 ; Ongkiko & Inocencio 1979). Those in public administration propose solutions (*e. g.* Muslim 1994 ; Tanggol 1993), and, those in national security administration view the problems and solutions from a national security perspective (*e. g.* Cojuanco 1988 ; Nuñez 1997 ; Mercado 1993)

Surprisingly, since the signing of the peace accord in 1996 between the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front(MNFL) no major scholarly paper has been written about the unfolding Mindanao peace process, as if scholars are taking a "wait and see" attitude, and will begin their investigation again when something goes wrong. In fact, most of the recent papers written are either providing a description of the recent

peace process or the accord. In the midst of wide media mileage generated by the donor community in support of the peace process, and as the international community continues its experiment in peace-building, it is but timely to investigate their contribution in the southern Philippines to identify constraints and best practices. It is hoped that this research will make a contribution in this direction.

The Challenge of Peace-Building : The Case of the Southern Philippines

Like many members of the global community who are trying to emerge from the vicious cycle of underdevelopment, the Philippines too has its share of internal conflict. In the southern part of the Philippines lies the Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan Region or better known as the MINSUPALA region (*see* Philippine Map). In this region, the *Moros*²⁾ and Christians have been at odds for centuries. By virtue of its rich natural resources and gentle environment, Mindanao is known as the “Land of Promise” but it would seem more appropriate under the current circumstances to call it the land of “Land of Unfulfilled Promise”. It will be difficult to realize the region’s development potential until the ethnic conflict is finally resolved (Turner *et al.* 1992).

On September 2, 1996 the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) signed a peace-accord. The signing is in itself a historic challenge to all parties involved. Historic in the sense that the current peace accord emerges with a back-drop of failed negotiations in the past. It is a challenge in the sense that neither the GRP nor the MNLF has a history of rebuilding a war-torn society. The essence of the peace accord lies in the transformation that must come to Mindanao through development. Transforming the peace accord to a lasting peace remains a formidable challenge. With the Philippine economy in a state of crisis, and with factions in Philippine society opposed to the accord, the breaching of peace is not a remote possibility.

With the concluding of the peace agreement and the subsequent cessation of hostilities, the government as well as multi-lateral and bilateral donors poured resources into Mindanao in the name of “peace and development.” However, with the political, psycho-social and economic dimensions of the Mindanao conflict, one may wonder the function that different aid programmes aimed at. How was the aid constructed? Was each programme aimed at addressing the causes of the Mindanao problem and bringing a lasting peace and development or a mere response to the opportunities that the temporal peace in Mindanao has brought? Do donors’ initiatives manifest concerted efforts in bringing peace and development? In this light, it is therefore essential not only to look at the root cause of the Mindanao conflict, which many scholars have already dealt with extensively, but also to look as well at the

various responses by the international community to the Mindanao peace accord. This remains another arena of competition and policy experiment for the international community as they “collectively” confront the challenge of peace-building. It is only by inquiring into the role played by the international community that one may be able to analyze the impact of their responses, whether intended or not.

This paper seeks to describe the role of the international community in support of the peace accord on September 2, 1996 between the GRP and the MNLF. Specifically, it presents and examines the assistance of the international community to the **SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme** in order to understand its contribution to the much needed promotion of peace and development in the region. It hopes to draw relevant lessons. Two points have been taken into account in preparing this paper. First, it is focused on the activities of the international community as part of the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme. Actors who are not part of this arrangement are not included in the present study. These are the donors who were undertaking *direct* bilateral assistance (e. g. Japan, USA, etc.) and multilateral assistance (e. g. World Bank, Asian Development Bank) with the Philippine government. Finally, this study does not try to assess the needs of the programme. Its ultimate aim is to draw lessons to be learned rather than to pass judgement on performance.

As a whole, this paper argues that the **SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor** initiatives have accomplished considerable “development” breakthroughs in Mindanao. However, the programme failed to use the same opportunity to construct a bridge that links peace-building (i. e. the strengthening of mutual trust among diverse ethnic groups) and development (i. e. the establishment of socio-economic and political structures based on equity and participation where different multi-ethnic groups can interact) initiatives that hopefully serve as building blocks for a lasting peace.

Research Method

My being from Mindanao provided me an opportunity to have a deeper understanding of the problem in the southern Philippines. As an academician, access to formal institutions was not difficult. Linkage to the MNLF was facilitated by my membership in the MNLF Secretariat during the peace negotiations.

I carefully perused the writings of Mindanao scholars who presented the background of the Mindanao problem. For the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme, I utilized official documents, especially the reports during the donors’ meeting, the 1st Programme Management Advisory Meeting (PMAG) meeting in November 1998. I also had the opportu-

nity to interview key informants : programme managers, MNLF combatants, government officials, scholars and religious leaders during my two-month sojourn as UN Intern at the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme, Project Management Team (PMT) Office in Cotabato City, Philippines. Among the tasks assigned to me during my internship were the documentation of the 1st PMAG meeting, assistance to the Technical Working Group's (TWG) discussions on convergence and sustainability strategy, and the documentation of the Executive Committee meetings including the special meeting with the MNLF State Chairmen. As a UN intern I was privy to formal and not so formal, official and not so official information regarding the programme.

The paper is divided into three parts. Part one provides the background of the conflict in the southern Philippines. An overview of the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme is provided in part two. Part three deals with problems and prospects of the programme vis-à-vis the peace and development efforts in SZOPAD. The recommendations and lessons to be learned are also included in this section.

I. BACKGROUND

The Mindanao problem has its roots in the way the Philippine nation-state was organized by the colonial powers and subsequently in the manner by which the independent Philippine state marginalized the people of Mindanao. The socioeconomic and political marginalization of the Muslims, coupled with the deep-seated prejudice between Muslims and Christians during the height of the Mindanao war, served as a potent motive for the continued quest for a *Bangsa Moro*³⁾ (Moro Nation), led by the MNLF. While various initiatives were explored to bring peace and development to the MINSUPALA region, the past and present initiatives failed to strengthen mutual trust. This is reflected in the absence of programmes that promote true and broader participation of the stakeholders. Amidst the complexity of the conflict, military solutions were often sought. Likewise power sharing, though merely a token gesture, was tried and "development" was considered to be the magical solution that would resolve the history-old conflict. By heavily relying on military-politico and economic options, the equally important and powerful cultural dimension was relegated to the sidelines.

1. Brief History

Prior to Spanish colonization in 1521, the Philippines was composed of independent communities. Most were pagan except for the Muslims who were already practicing a syncretic form of Islam (Cardenas 1976). The Moros lived in established communities in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan. The Sultanate of Sulu, a state in its own right, was estab-

lished in 1450. They fought the Spaniards for 333 years and remained free until 1898 when the Republic of the Philippines declared its independence. The Sultanate of Maguindanao, formed in 1619 by Sultan Kudarat from the two powerful datuships of Rajah Buayan and Maguindanao, also fought the Spanish colonizers and remained independent until 1898. The political leaders of the United States were aware of the three independent states but preferred to ignore their existence. When the US paid the 20 million Mexican dollars to Spain for the purchase of the Philippine archipelago, they claimed that there were no other nations in existence at that time, only scattered tribes fighting one another, thereby deflecting any possible accusation of invading free nation states (Rodil 1998).

In 1946, independence was given back to the Republic of the Philippines, but not to the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao. The indigenous peoples in the Philippines did not have any social structures meriting the status of state, in the western sense, but contributed immensely to the anti-colonial struggle. The peoples of the Cordillera fought off the Spaniards successfully until 1898 and were never colonized. The Aetas of Luzon, Mangyans of Mindoro, the indigenous peoples of Palawan, and the *Lumad*⁴⁾ of Mindanao evaded contact with the Spaniards and remained free. Those who were colonized and became Christians fought to eventually realize the Republic of the Philippines. Those who fought the Spanish and were never colonized and those who remained free by evading contact with the colonizers all now suffer the status of cultural minorities (Rodil 1998).

Even after the colonizers left, the marginalization of the Moros in their homeland continued. Between 1950 and 1960, Christian prospectors, industrialists, loggers, and politicians, in collaboration with the Moro elite, dispossessed Moros and Lumad of their lands through fraudulent land titles, tedious application procedures, and costly legal processes (Tan 1977). The policy of land registration, judicial system, and resettlement of Mindanao by Christians resulted in the minoritization of Moros and Lumad in their ancestral land. Dispossessed of their lands by law, and alienated from their Islamic laws and customary legal practices, the minorities turned to ethnonationalism.

2. The Conflict

The postwar resurgence of Islam in the 1960s, through the missions of Muslim preachers to Mindanao and the offering of scholarships to young *Moros* to attend Islamic universities in Cairo and Medina, had a significant effect on Moro social and cultural awareness. Since then, mosques, *madaris* (Islamic schools), and *Moro* associations have flourish. The sense of *Moro* nationalism strengthened, and the term *Bangsa Moro* came into being (Che Man 1990). As Moro nationalism grew, so did the awareness of the need to defend the Islamic way of life and the Moro communities in Mindanao (Nunez 1997). However, the height of *Moro*

nationalism and its eventual systematic campaign against the Manila government for the establishment of a *Bangsa Moro* took place after the Jabidah massacre on Corregidor Island on 18 March, 1968.⁵⁾

The incident incensed *Moro* aristocrats, politicians, and youth, as well as the Islamic countries. Muslims believed that the unfortunate tragedy that befell the youthful trainees, hidden from the public, happened only because they were Muslims (Tan 1993). It served as an impetus for the formation of the *Bangsa Moro* Liberation Organization (BMLO). Though ethnically divided, leaders of the movement decided to create a united front of the three largest Muslim groups in the archipelago : the Maranao, Maguindanao, and the Tausug (including Sama). The first batch of Moro youth sent to Sabah, Malaysia for combat and military training came from these three major groups. Three of these youths emerged as leaders of the three ethnic components of what later became the Moro National Liberation Front : Nur Misuari, a Tausug who became the chairperson ; Hashim Salamat, a Maguindanao ; and Dimas Pundato, a Maranao.

The emergence of the MNLF resulted in a systematic military counter campaign by the national government coupled with Christian countermoves. In the province of Cotabato, the *Ilaga*, a paramilitary organization that became known for its uncompromising anti-Muslim sentiments was organized. It was composed initially, as reported in the media, of Ilongo (natives of Panay) underworld characters. The founders, too, were all Ilongos. Moros suspected that the *Ilaga* had links with the Philippine military. On the other hand, the Moros organized the *Blackshirts* of Maguindanao and Cotabato and the *Barracudas* of Lanao del Sur. Christians tagged these as members of the Bangsa Moro Army of the MNLF. The fights between the Christian *Ilaga* and the Moro *Blackshirts* and *Barracudas*, in addition to the war waged by the MNLF against the Philippine military, resulted in numerous violent deaths on both sides and the dislocation of many, causing a wave of internal refugees. These paramilitary groups sowed fear and hatred and fanned the biases and prejudices between Christians and Moros.

3. The Causes of the Conflict

The causes of the Mindanao conflict were stated to be economic deprivation, lack of political participation, inadequate or poor delivery of health and social services, lack of infrastructure, and minority-majority structural distractions (Cojuanco 1988). From the Moro perspective, Macapado Muslim (1994) identified six major grievances, namely, economic marginalization and destitution ; political marginalization ; non-preservation of Muslim identity ; general feeling of physical insecurity (individually and collectively) ; the perception that the government was responsible or the party to blame for much of their

suffering and insecurity ; and a feeling of hopelessness under the existing political and economic order.

On the other hand, Nunez (1997) sees the cause of the Mindanao conflict as beyond economics and politics. By studying the Muslim and Christian perceptions, she argues that the roots of the conflict go deep into the collective consciousness of the people in the island and the country. She finds that the level of interpersonal values (i. e., need for status, recognition, and community) is the most fundamental dimension of the Mindanao conflict. This is the Moro's perceived discrepancy between what they desire for themselves and their children and what they feel they can realistically achieve. She calls for the creation of equal opportunities for the attainment of values common to both Moro and Christian, and for tolerance of differences and empathy for each other's commonalities. As conflict begins in the minds of men, she states, it is where the solution should first aim. Nunez believes that the existing political and economic attempts to bring peace in Mindanao will fall short in the long term, if the existing prejudices between Mindanao Muslims and Christians are not immediately addressed. Using a semantic differential scale Nunez (1997 p. 84) found out that "Christians have stronger biases and prejudices against Muslims than Muslims have against Christians." Of the fourteen pairs of opposite attributes used by Nunez in her study, Christians rated the Muslims positive on five attributes (slightly intelligent, slightly strong, slightly humble, slightly warm, and slightly rich) and negative on nine attributes (slightly extravagant, slightly dirty, slightly traditional, slightly easygoing, slightly stingy, slightly hostile, slightly bad, slightly troublesome). On the other hand, Muslims rated the Christians positive on ten attributes (very intelligent, very strong, very industrious, very clean, very progressive, slightly friendly, slightly good, slightly peaceful, slightly warm, slightly rich) and negative on two attributes (slightly extravagant, slightly proud). Though commonly perceived as ugly, uneducated and dirty by both Christians and Muslims, little, if any attention, is given to systematically exploring the perception of the Lumad. This is partly due to their "insignificance" in terms of number, economic and political power in the Mindanao landscape. Unlike the Christians and Muslims who are perceived as protagonists and antagonists, the Lumad are considered as victims. In times of conflict, both Muslims and Christians have tried to woo the Lumad to their sides. Apart from the above, several other factors emerge now and then to further complicate the conflict. What started as a struggle for territorial integrity, in the course of its long history, the conflict in Mindanao took an economic, political and cultural dimension among the *ethnies*, too difficult to sort out.

4. The Costs of the Conflict

Since the Mindanao war erupted in 1972, it is estimated that 120,000 lives have been lost,

countless more people wounded, and billions of pesos lost in the damage to property (Nunez 1997). Moreover, there emerged a generation of orphans today concentrated in war-torn areas of Mindanao. Likewise, more than one million persons were rendered homeless and destitute, and 200,000 to 300,000 Muslim refugees from this region were reported to be in Sabah, Malaysia (Muslim 1994). Many more migrated to Metro Manila (estimated to be about 50,000) and other safer parts of the country. At the height of the conflict, it was reported that about 80 per cent of the entire military strength of the country was in Mindanao. The late President Marcos claimed that about 11,000 soldiers were killed during the first eight years of the war in Mindanao.

Economic and social costs were also huge. To counter the secessionist movement in Mindanao, the Marcos administration increased its military spending to twice that spent on health or education. Due to the conflict, many arable lands were left unproductive and communities abandoned in Mindanao. Investors were scared. Properties were destroyed and many communities deprived of basic social services. Local political and social institutions were weakened as the military and the national government took charge. The psychological damage to communities where Moros and Christians had peacefully co-existed was immeasurable. The cost of the Mindanao war is reflected in the present unequal development of various communities in Mindanao. In areas where the fighting was intense such as Cotabato, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-tawi, and Basilan, development is limited, governance is weak, if not absent and poverty is endemic.

5. The Mindanao Peace Initiatives

a. Early Initiatives

From independence in 1946 until 1968, Filipino leaders presumed that the Mindanao problem could be resolved by rapid integration of the Muslims into the new Filipino republic (Tan 1993). Many Muslim leaders shared this view and actively participated in national governance. Muslims, Christians, and non-Muslims participated in national and local elections. There were cases of Christians being elected in predominantly Muslim areas. To integrate the Muslims into the nation's body politic, venues were created for Muslim leadership to project their political and intellectual profiles in Philippine society. In 1957, the Commission on National Integration (CNI) was organized, followed by the establishment of the Mindanao State University (MSU) in 1968. Many Muslims and Christians benefited from these institutions. Several young leaders in the Muslim struggle emerged through scholarships offered by the CNI or through MSU's academic activities (Tan 1993). However, the marginalization of the Moros did not end. Only the Moro elites were able to maintain their status, and benefited from the system. This pattern of integration continued until 1968 when

the Jabidah massacre occurred.

In response to the massacre, the Moros waged a war of secession. The ideology of the time was that the Moros were Filipinos and therefore, belonged to the Philippine State. Alledging long neglect by the government, they said they were compelled to seek independence. The government mobilized its military might to suppress the Moros' struggle. Clashes between the military and the MNLF took place in Lanao, Cotabato, Zamboanga, and Basilan. The bloodiest confrontation took place in Sulu in 1974, razing the area to the ground. Hundreds of military men and *mujahedeen* (freedom fighters) were killed. Residents were reduced to poverty resulting in their leaving the area. Many of them fled to Sabah, Malaysia. Sulu, once a powerful sultanate and a prosperous venue of international trade, became a "no man's land."

With both sides suffering heavy losses, the government and the MNLF searched for a pragmatic way of dealing with the issues. After a stalemate in 1975 the Marcos government tried a political settlement. It concluded a peace accord, the Tripoli Agreement, on 23 December 1976, under the mediation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The accord defined the substantive principles for the establishment of autonomy and cease-fire among the thirteen provinces and nine cities of Mindanao, without damaging Philippine sovereignty (Tan 1993). However, there were disagreements regarding implementation of the accord (Rodil 1994). The government argued and pushed for the holding of a plebiscite to determine which of the thirteen provinces and nine cities were willing to be part of the autonomous region. Only ten provinces opted for autonomy. The MNLF did not accept the government position and reverted to its secessionist stand. War resumed, mostly calculated and for propaganda. While the MNLF campaigned for regular membership to the OIC, the Marcos administration continued its military campaign and its co-optation of Muslim leaders.

The MNLF, a considerable force to reckon with in the 1980s, fragmented along ethnic lines : the Maranao faction under Dimas Pundato organized the MNLF-Reformist Group (RG) in 1982 and represents the traditional stream, and Hashim Salamat's Maguindanao faction formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1984 and represents the Islamic revivalist group. The MNLF under Nur Misuari remained and represents the secular wing of the Moro people.

When Corazon Aquino was elected President in 1986, she tried to negotiate peace with the MNLF but failed. Due to uncertainties in the Aquino formula to resolve the Mindanao conflict, the MNLF charged her government with insincerity, further creating suspicions. The government expressed willingness to negotiate, but only with a unified Muslim group. Misuari was unable to forge a unified front due to differences among the leaders of the MILF

and MNLF-RG. The government, however, succeeded in softening the leadership of the other factions (Tan 1993). It established a patron-client relationship with the MNLF-RG and MILF and divided the Moro revolutionaries by provision of choice political positions and economic opportunities, including access to financial resources.

The Aquino government (1986-1992) also included in the 1987 constitution the State's recognition of the rights of the Muslims of Mindanao and of the indigenous peoples of Cordillera (Article X, Section 15 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution). It provided specific steps for the establishment of an autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao, which resulted in the passage of the Republic Act 6734, the organic act creating the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). After the plebiscite in the thirteen cities and nine provinces covered by the Tripoli Agreement, only the four provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, and Tawi-tawi opted to join. The ARMM was inaugurated in 1991. The MNLF rejected the autonomy. It remained steadfast in its original proposition of "all (of the thirteen provinces and nine cities) or nothing."

b. The September 2, 1996 Agreement

Former President Fidel Ramos (president from 1992-1998) pursued the peace option out of the conviction that development could thrive only in an environment of peace. After four years of negotiation, the GRP and the MNLF, with the participation of the OIC concluded another peace agreement on 2 September 1996. The opening line is "the final agreement on the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement," illustrating the motive to reach an agreement on the implementation of the agreement signed on 23 December 1976. There are 154 points of consensus in the agreement and it is divided into two phases. The salient features are as follows :

Phase 1 (1996-99) shall cover a three-year transition period starting after the signing of the peace agreement with the establishment of the Special Zone of Peace and Development in Southern Philippines (SZOPAD), the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), and the SPCPD Consultative Assembly. During this phase, the process of integration of MNLF elements with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) will commence.

The peace agreement called for the establishment of a SZOPAD covering fourteen (14) provinces namely, Palawan, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Cotabato, Maguindanao, Davao del Sur, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato and Sarangani, and ten (10) cities namely General Santos City, Cotabato City, Kidapawan City, Marawi City, Iligan City, Pagadian City, Dapitan City, Dipolog City, Zamboanga City, and Puerto Princesa (see SZOPAD Map). Its land area covers

68,306.4 square kilometers, representing roughly 23 per cent of the national territory. Only 40.73 per cent of the total land area is classified as alienable and disposable, while the remaining 59.7 percent is forest land. The gross domestic product (GDP) of SZOPAD accounts for only 2.7 percent of the total Philippine output in 1995. Its economy depends highly on the agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors. The economy of SZOPAD is growing at 4.6 percent. It has a total of 27 congressional districts, 267 municipalities and 6,672 *barangays*. Based on the 1990 census, the SZOPAD is home to 9.3 million people or 15 per cent of the country's population, where 26.89 per cent are Moros, 8.37 per cent Lumad or indigenous people, and the remaining 64.74 per cent Christians. The compelling need for development in SZOPAD was brought about by the reality that of the twenty poorest provinces in the Philippines, fourteen are in Mindanao, twelve of these Mindanao provinces are within SZOPAD — with a poverty incidence of 51.2% as of 1991 and 1994. This is a far cry from the national poverty incidence of only 35.7 (Fuentes 1998). Poverty has been a cause and a consequence of decades of armed conflict in the area (SPCPD-NEDA-UN 1998a). The peace agreement designated these areas as the focus of intensive peace and development efforts. It called for the channeling of public and private investments to these areas to spur economic activities and uplift the conditions of the people.

To ensure that peace and development projects and programmes are effectively accomplished in the SZOPAD area, the peace pact calls for the creation of SPCPD, under the Office of the President. It is a three-year transition mechanism that will oversee development efforts in the SZOPAD area. It is tasked to monitor, promote, and coordinate the development efforts in the area, including the attraction of foreign investment, especially from OIC member countries and ASEAN. Prof. Nur Misuari, Chairman of the MNLF and elected Governor of the ARMM, chairs the SPCPD and presides over the Consultative Assembly.

The SPCPD Consultative Assembly was also organized and is composed of 81 members : the Chairman of the SPCPD, the Governor and Vice-Governor of ARMM, the 14 Governors of the provinces and 10 City Mayors in SZOPAD, 44 members from the MNLF and 11 members from various sectors recommended by non-government organizations (NGOs) and peoples' organizations (POs). It is mandated to promote, monitor, and coordinate improvement of peace and order ; focus on peace and development efforts particularly in the depressed areas ; induce the implementation of peace and development projects ; provide support to LGUs as necessary ; assist the COMELEC on election-related matters ; and perform other activities as may be delegated by the president.

During Phase 1, the process of integration of 5,750 MNLF elements in the AFP would take place. The inclusion of additional 1,750 MNLF elements with the PNP as part of the regular police recruitment programme would also take place during this phase.

Furthermore, the agreement (No. 20) calls for “*special socio-economic, cultural and educational programs to cater to MNLF forces not absorbed into the AFP, PNP and SRSF to prepare them and their families for productive endeavors, provide for educational, technical skills and livelihood training and give them priority in development projects*” (emphasis mine). This serves as the entry point and justification for the involvement of the donor community in SZOPAD

Phase 2. While peace and development programmes are being implemented in the SZOPAD, a bill to amend or repeal RA 6734 shall be initiated within Phase 1. The bill shall include the pertinent provisions of the Final Peace Agreement and the expansion of the present ARMM area of autonomy. After a law shall have been passed by Congress and approved by the President, it shall be submitted to the people for approval in a plebiscite in the affected areas, within two years from the establishment of the SPCPD (that is in 1998).

While the signing of the peace agreement and the laying out of plans for SZOPAD lead to optimism for many, the peace accord was not free of problems that would serve as a challenge for the stakeholders. First, there is the development challenge : high incidence of poverty, over exploitation of natural resources and severe degradation of the environment ; inadequate basic social services and livelihood support mechanisms (infrastructure, credit and lending institutions, institutional support) ; limited participation of the poor and the peace and order condition (Fuentes 1998). Of course, good governance remains critical.

Second, the political challenge. What is now clear is that Misuari agreed to settle the Mindanao problem through the constitutional process. It remains debatable whether he and his group will abide by the result of the plebiscite. It also important to add that in the spirit of “dignity for all” the agreement did not call for the demobilization of MNLF forces, nor do the MNLF consider themselves ex-combatants.⁶⁾ On the other hand, it is still uncertain as to what kind of concessions the government can offer the MILF, another faction of the Moro people, with whom it is presently negotiating.

Finally, making the peace agreement succeed requires enormous financial resources, political will, creativity, and patience. MNLF leaders claimed to have been promised by the GRP a mini-Marshall plan for SZOPAD during the negotiations. When the agreement was signed, the economy was in deep crisis. Two years after the signing of the agreement, of the Php41.9 billion appropriated by the Philippine government to develop SZOPAD, only Php2.8 billion had been released (Abidin 1998). Gov. Misuari never missed an opportunity to criticize the national government for its failure to provide adequate funds, even just for the ARMM. In 1997 when he assumed office, ARMM had a budget of only Php3.1 billion, not even enough to pay for its 19,000 employees.

II. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN SZOPAD

Soon after the signing of the 1996 peace agreement, several international donors converged in SZOPAD establishing an “aid industry.” The provisions of the peace agreement transformed into a presidential directive envisioned the transformation of the zone within the following ten years into a vibrant area of economic growth where the Bangsa Moro people — Muslims, Christians and *Lumads* — would live under a culture of peace, unity and prosperity (SPCPD/NEDA 1997).

If there is any visible sign of growth in SZOPAD since the signing of the peace agreement, it is obviously the “aid industry.” Donors are almost everywhere in SZOPAD. The presence and growth of the aid industry was made visible by the opening of offices and sub-offices and operations centers ; numerous meetings/seminars/conferences organized ; missions within SZOPAD by ex-patriate, local staff and consultants aboard their usually beautiful vehicles clearly marked with the name of the agency they represent as they traverse the region’s poorest communities.

To date, the costs to carry out the assistance packages have been shared by the United Nations system (UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, ILO, UNFPA, UNESCO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), European Union, Australia, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden Spain, Switzerland, and Japan. Other allied programmes are those of the World Bank’s Social Fund Project, the USAID Assistance from the Office of Transitional Initiative, Asian Development Bank’s Education Support Programme, and the CIDA Program for Peace and Development in the SZOPAD. Contributions amounting to US\$500 million were announced by the bilateral and multilateral donors at the December 1997 Consultative Group Meeting in Paris. Some donors are implementing their assistance directly, while others are implementing their programmes collectively. The SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme is an example of a mechanism for collective donors’ involvement.

1. The SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme

On April 22, 1997, the UN system, the SPCPD and the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) on behalf of the Philippine government, formed a partnership by signing the document of Project PHI/97/004. The project document was titled *Fact-Finding/Needs Assessment and Pilot Emergency Assistance for Development of Basic Services, Livelihood, and Job Creation Programme for MNLF Soldiers and their Families*. The partnership became popularly known in SZOPAD as the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme. The partnership is in itself considered a major breakthrough as development assistance is now coordinated by local actors (SPCPD and NEDA Region XII) rather than by national

actors (such as by NEDA national, the Department of Budget and Management and Department of Finance) (SPCPD-NEDA-UN 1998a). This marks the beginning of the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme. However, it must be noted that it took almost seven months after the agreement was signed before an organized project in SZOPAD started. At this juncture the MNLF resentment against the accord was becoming high.

As a major donor initiative in SZOPAD, the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme earmarked a total grant of US\$8.7 million. Excluding the UNDP, the biggest donor-countries to the programme were Australia, which gave close to \$1.5 million, Belgium, \$1.1 million ; and the Netherlands, \$1 million. Other donors included Spain, New Zealand, Sweden, Canada, Switzerland and Norway. The programme was divided into two phases. The cost of the Pilot Phase amounted to US\$1.4 million and was cost-shared by the UNDP, the governments of New Zealand, Spain, Australia and the Netherlands. The UNDP shouldered 55% of the total cost of this phase (see Table 1). In an effort to sustain the fragile peace, the programme has expanded both in resources and area of coverage. This is largely due to the knowledge gained during the Pilot Phase, the enthusiastic desire of other donors to be involved, and growing demands from the MNLF. With ten donors, the total amount for the expanded phase was raised to US\$7.3 million, primarily to cover programme expenses in the remaining ten MNLF States not covered in Phase 1. As of October 1998, 16.2 percent of the grant was spent for the Pilot Phase and the remaining 62 percent was appropriated for

Table 1. SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme Pilot & Expanded Phases' Fund Source (as of October 1998)

Donor	Pilot Phase		Expanded Phase		Grand Total	
	Amount (in US\$)	% of total	Amount (in US\$)	% of total	Amount (in US\$)	% of total
Australia	152,672	11	1,307,190	19	1,459,862	16.7
Netherlands	21,661	2	1,000,000	12	1,021,661	11.7
New Zealand	239,122	17	157,539	2	396,661	4.5
Spain	215,000	15	592,105	7	807,105	9.2
UNDP	791,459	55	1,926,721	36	2,718,180	31.2
Belgium (UNDP)			1,158,668	14	1,158,668	13.3
Belgium (FAO)			533,000	6	533,000	6.1
Canada			179,856	2	179,856	2.1
Norway			100,000	1	100,000	1.1
Switzerland			140,000	2	140,000	1.6
Sweden			205,128	2	205,128	2.3
Total	1,419,914	100	7,300,207	100	8,720,121	100

Source : 1st PMAG Meeting Reports, October 1998

the Expanded Phase.

In terms of fund utilization, a huge percentage (63%) was utilized for various forms of assistance, namely : livelihood/community assistance (42%) ; technical assistance (20%) ; and, food assistance (1 %). The remaining 37% was used to support activities such as missions (12%), training (10%), equipment (8 %), operations (4 %) administrative support (2 %), and the remaining one percent was utilized for NAS/CAP (Need Assessment Survey/Community Action Planning). However, within a short period of time, the appropriation of funds has drastically changed. Vitug & Gloria (2000, p. 266) revealed that “a hefty chunk... went to overhead expenses.” They found out that as of June 30, 1999, 40 percent of the actual expenses had gone to “administrative support”, 28 percent to “technical assistance” ; 23 percent to “direct support” ; and 6 percent to training.

A. Programme Construction

The way the programme was constructed could be understood in the context of the convergence of interests among different actors. The MNLF, having campaigned for its constituents to support a peace agreement that called for autonomy and not secession, promised to deliver the “peace dividends.” After the signing of the agreement, it was in the MNLF’s best interest to have its promise of “peace dividends” delivered to its constituents or face the consequence of having its leadership among the Moro people undermined, and the agreement it signed put in jeopardy. It was political survival and sheer pragmatism that led the MNLF, through the SPCPD, to join the programme. The GRP, specifically under the Ramos administration, aside from its effort to claim a legacy as a peace maker, was in dire need of the cessation of hostilities in Mindanao. With the silencing of the guns, Mindanao’s resources (especially its natural resources preserved by the war) could be cashed-in by prospective foreign investors to lift the country from the economic doldrums. Luring of foreign investors to the Philippines served as the main strategy of the Philippines 2000 economic program of the Ramos administration. In order to prove to the MNLF that it is committed to peace and development in the southern Philippines and is fulfilling its promise given to the community of nations, especially to the members of the OIC, the GRP has been in need of the donors’ resources and expertise because of its cash-strapped economy. It has been a mixture of political, economic and diplomatic interests that has made the GRP an active player of the programme. On the part of the multi-donors, involvement in peace building and reconstruction activities in war-torn societies has remained fashionable and politically correct since the end of the Cold War. No less a person than the Secretary General of the United Nations appealed for such involvement in his *Agenda for Peace* and it is what the donor communities preach in the DAC-OECD document entitled *Conflict, Peace and*

Development Cooperation on the threshold of the 21st Century. The Poverty in SZOPAD is endemic. Pragmatically, the SPCPD also serves as a convenient channel for the donor community to deliver its “humanitarian” services to peoples and communities who are in dire need of assistance but at the same time remain suspicious of “outsiders.” Targeting the MNLF communities as its clients is but practical given the donors’ limited resources. Of course, the donors’ partnership with GRP is a gesture of political goodwill as well as a pursuit of their own interests.

Given the above convergence of interests among diverse actors, the provision in the agreement which calls for “*a special socioeconomic, cultural and educational program to cater to MNLF who were not absorbed into the AFP, PNP and the SRSF, to prepare them and their families for productive endeavors, provide for educational, technical skills and livelihood training and give them priority for hiring in development projects*” serves as the most convenient basis of unity of the multi-donor programme. It is at the same time the source of its own limitations.

B. Phases of the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme

1. The Pilot Phase

The objective of the pilot phase was to assess the needs of the MNLF, their families and communities, and ascertain their situation ; assist the SPCPD in meeting short-term basic services and livelihood needs ; facilitate community-based structures for managing and delivering assistance and design a programme package for mobilization (SPCPD-NEDA-UN 1998a). It was essentially a need assessment survey (NAS) to get to know the MNLF and to establish a baseline survey of their socio-economic and demographic profile, and to have the MNLFs direct participation in the implementation of the programme. Through an agreed sampling procedure, MNLF combatants were selected and interviewed. Focused group discussions were held to complement the personal interviews. The NAS was piloted in six (6) MNLF states namely, Lupah Sug State Revolutionary Committee (SRC), Zamboanga del Sur SRC, North Palawan SRC, South Palawan SRC, Selatan Kutawato SRC and the Western Kutawato SRC (see map of MNLF states).

The results of the NAS revealed the ugly reality of the MINSUPALA region as a result of the long neglect of the national government and the nearly three decades of war. For the first time, the profiles of the MNLF combatants, their families and communities were revealed — 64 percent were unemployed or did not engage in livelihood activities ; 36 percent were engaged in farming, fishing, driving, vending and carpentry ; and “on duty” MNLF were not paid salaries ; their priority needs were food security, clothing & shelter, and livelihood and their current capacities, aside from soldiering, were farming, fishing and, for women,

sewing, food processing and weaving. As to the problems faced by the MNLF families, the lack of jobs, education, and limited livelihood activities were often cited. The absence of technical and financial resources coupled by high fertility rate, high infant and maternal mortality, and poor housing mirrored the difficulties in life that the Moro people were suffering. Such poverty was not by chance but reflective of their communities characterized by lack of potable water, poor sanitation, poor access roads, inadequate schools, poor community health services, poor reproduction support facilities, low productivity and displacement and absence of governance.

While effective, the process of analysis and interpretation of the NAS was long and tedious. In its place, the stakeholders recommended the Need Assessment Survey cum Community Action Planning (NAS/CAP) method as a quicker method of needs appraisal with a concrete and more actionable outcome. Fast paced, highly participative two-day planning workshops were held in the remaining ten (10) MNLF states. Unlike NAS, NAS/CAP is primarily interested in identifying community priority needs and projects. Issues regarding assistance were also raised.

Side by side with the NAS was the delivery of food emergency assistance, though delayed. The provision of emergency assistance was deemed necessary “to stem the tide of restlessness and demoralization that were gripping the MNLF communities” due to the absence of any peace-dividend from the peace agreement eight months after it was signed (SPCPD-NEDA-UN 1998a). Because it was an urgent response, the much needed social preparation of beneficiaries in development endeavors was not fully emphasized, if undertaken at all. The emergency assistance came in the form of food items, mostly rice and supplementary items like sugar, canned goods, coffee and medicines. The assistance was distributed to 1,600 MNLF beneficiaries in six (6) states and cost PhP2.2 million (SPCPD-NEDA-UN 1998a).

The delivery of basic services and the implementation of livelihood projects were likewise undertaken as a confidence building program between the MNLF, the donor community and the Philippine government. Livelihood assistance was extended to economic endeavors identified by the MNLF communities. These productive endeavors ranged from trading activities, animal raising, agriculture and aqua-culture production, and handicrafts, to consumer cooperatives and transport services. The assistance came in the form of working capital, provision of animals and working animals, purchase of implements and agriculture and fishery production inputs, construction of business centers and procurement of consumer and agricultural products, and rental and/or acquisition of equipment. The programme assisted forty (40) livelihood projects in six (6) states with PhP14.6 million (US\$587,294) worth of inputs directly benefiting 2,600 MNLF soldiers and family members.

The SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme likewise facilitated the construction/

rehabilitation of community infrastructure including communal and school toilets, potable water systems school buildings, etc. in some of the pilot areas ; and conducted training programs and other related activities.

2. The Expanded Phase

The Expanded Phase is composed of six (6) programme components, namely : 1) **Support to the Expanded Assistance for Delivery of Basic Services, Livelihood and Enterprise Development, Skills Training and Capacity Building for MNLF Soldiers, their Families and Communities** (Project PHI/97/021). The project supports the SPCPD in the overall management and coordination of implementation of an expanded programme of assistance for delivery of basic services, agricultural livelihood development, information referral services and capability building for the MNLF. It builds upon the previous project expanding assistance to ten (10) additional areas to cover all sixteen (16) MNLF states. The coordination and management of the entire programme is being done by UNDP with a budget of US\$2.2 million ; 2) **Agri-based Livelihood for MNLF Soldiers and their Families in the SZOPAD** (Project PHI/97/025) being implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN. The project started in April 1998 and has a duration of 18 months costing US\$1.1 million (15% of the total Phase 2 budget). As part of the expanded UN/Multi-donor programme, the project was expected to create livelihood opportunities through provision of critical agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture inputs, poultry and complementary training in agriculture production and marketing ; 3) **Vocational Skills Training and Enterprise/Cooperative Development for MNLF Soldiers, Their Families and Their Communities** (Project PHI/97/026) implemented by International Labour Organization (ILO) amounting to US\$1.5 million. The project is designed to provide new socio-economic opportunities and occupational alternatives to MNLF members in the area of off-farm employment, self-employment, or community enterprise development through vocational skills training and enterprise formation. The project will be implemented for 24 months and started in Aug. 1998 ; 4) **Confidence Building in SZOPAD through the Mobile Information Referral and Community Assistance Service (MIRCAS)** (Project PHI/97/027) by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The 18-month project cost US\$1.1 million and started in April 1998. The project sought to build confidence among MNLF soldiers and communities, government instrumentality and civil society at large in the SZOPAD by providing timely and accurate information about ongoing initiatives for peace and development, including assistance available from Government and donors, and bringing feedback from the target beneficiaries to programme implementors and fostering opportunities for cooperation among various stakeholders. MIRCAS pursued information dissemination with the MNLF soldiers and

communities as primary targets. ; 5) **Human Resource and Institutional Development Program on Leadership and Governance for the SPCPD (Project PHI/98/003)** implemented by UNDP. This 18-month project cost US\$0.8 million. The project was tasked to conduct an in-depth study of the existing human resource capabilities and needs in the areas of governance and management of livelihood projects for the MNLF states. On this basis, it was to draw up an HRD plan which would be relevant to each state/community and acceptable to the LGUs and leaders of other critical sectors of society ; 6) **Delivery of Basic Services** supported by UNFPA and/or UNICEF. Except for the component on the provision of basic services which was solely funded by UNICEF and UNFPA and merely coordinated with the programme, the funding of the rest of the components were provided by the multi-donors.

Consistent with the way the programmes were constructed, the majority of the programme components of the Expanded Phase are *for the immediate and exclusive benefit of the MNLF*, with the exception of MIRCAS and HRD. Among the other objectives of MIRCAS is to “establish a positive environment for peace by making information readily and periodically accessible to all stakeholders, especially feedbacks from communities.” Stakeholders must have meant the tri-people of SZOPAD. The HRD programme has a much more noble intention of cementing peace when it strives to “mainstream MNLF structures into the local governance system through partnership building with government and civil society.”

C. Programme Implementation

During the implementation of the earlier phase of the project, the SPCPD served as the executing agency with management support from the UNDP. The FAO, ILO, and the IOM served as the specialized implementing agencies for agri-based livelihood, for community enterprise development and vocational skills training, and for information dissemination and confidence building, respectively. As the programme expanded, a new management structure emerged. At the top is the Programme Management Advisory Group or PMAG. It is responsible for setting strategic direction relative to confidence-building/political dimensions, approval of programme policy guidelines and resource commitments. It is composed of representatives of the donor community (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland) the UN agencies (UNDP, ILO, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO, ILO, IOM), the SPCPD (Chairman, CA representative, Executive Director) and NEDA. The chairman of the SPCPD serves as the chair while the UN Coordinator in the Philippines and the Regional Director of NEDA XII serve as co-chair. The Executive Committee on the other hand is responsible for the approval of programme operational guidelines, overall programme planning, progress reporting of programme components,

monitoring of area programme implementation, and approval of projects amounting to more the PhP300,000 for PHI/97/021. As well, it recommends policy revision/formulation for PMAG approval. The SPCPD Executive Director serves as its chair. The members are the SPCPD Director of Operations, NEDA XII Regional Director, Team Leaders of FAO, ILO, IOM, UNDP HRD, UNFPA, UNICEF, and the Field Operation and Administrative Officer of the Project Management Team (PMT). The Chief Technical Adviser of the programme provides the needed advice. The PMT serves as its secretariat. The EXECOM reports directly to the PMAG.

Working under the EXECOM are the five Area Management Teams (AMTs) strategically located in SZOPAD (Palawan, Zamboanga City, Iligan City, Cotabato City, and General Santos City), assisted by UN volunteers as Community Development Facilitators. The AMTs provide the coordination and management support for the programme as a whole. They are directly in contact with the MNLF communities through its sixteen states. Assisting the AMTs are the Area Coordination Teams or ACTs, though not yet fully operational in many areas. ACTs are supposed to be responsible for area-based planning, periodic review of area work plan and programme performance, inter-agency coordination, interface and linkaging (GOP, LGUs, and donors) and resource identification and mobilization at area/regional level., and review and approve projects amounting to PhP300,000 or below. The ACT serves as the programme link to other bodies such as regional development councils and other regional bodies and agencies, local government units, and even the civil society. The area representative of the SPCPD serves as chair. The members of the ACT are the regional director of NEDA, a representative of ARMM, UN agencies' area focal person, IOM sub-center managers, and AMT team leaders (see programme management structure).

III. PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

To date, what the multi-donor programme has significantly achieved is the opening of channels of communication with the major parties involved in the peace process. As a revolutionary organization, the MNLF is generally suspicious of outsiders. Dialogue has become an important tool of engagement to clarify issues and settle differences between the MNLF and the GRP and the donor community. The programme has likewise started the socio-economic transformation of the MNLF combatants, their families and communities. Though still limited, resources were mobilized and partnerships forged between the MNLF and government line agencies. MNLF women have become active stakeholders.

However, there are issues that need to be addressed for the peace process to be sustained.

While they are many, I would like to limit my analysis of what I consider problematic to those of the multi-donor programme. Among the major insights of the study that deserve lengthy reflection are as following :

1. Programme Construction

It is obvious from the above discussions that the various components and projects undertaken by the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-donor Programme to date were limited and only reflective of the very premise on which it was constructed : ***to support the MNLF, their families and communities.***

The grim reality revealed by NAS/CAP is not the exclusive domain of the MNLF. As the incidence of poverty in SZOPAD is more than 50%, with a Moro population share of roughly 27%, it is obvious that the Lumads (8.37%) and the remaining Christians accounted for the rest. Instead of taking the opportunity to bridge peace and development with the involvement of the local stakeholders, the programme became an agent of an affirmative action programme to “rectify the error of history”. This gives credence to the earlier speculations that the autonomy is for Islamization and solely for the benefit of the Muslims.

While the multi-donor programme specifically targets the MNLF, their families and communities, its impact has remained negligible, though considered better than nothing. The MNLF still have to see tangible fruits of the peace accord, particularly in depressed communities. The Joint Monitoring Team (JMT) of the OIC which assessed the progress of the implementation of the peace agreement reported that “those development projects that have so far been made have not touched the very needs and interest of the small people... that those MNLFs’ have not been benefited by the peace agreement” (Abidin 1998).

Based on the objectives of the programme, it may have been successful but it is difficult to ascertain whether the said initiatives have contributed to the overall peace-building efforts or even to the immediate political objective of the peace agreement : the formation of an autonomous region that encompasses the 14 provinces and 10 cities constituting SZOPAD. Instead of undertaking projects that promote and broaden Muslim, Christian and Lumad constructive engagement to reduce existing biases and prejudices and to heal the scars that the three decades of war created and plant the seed of peace and development, the programme, by only attending to the concerns of the MNLF, is in fact widening the gap. Should a referendum be called today to decide the scope of the autonomous region, many political observers, including the MNLF, believe that, at best, only the four ARMM provinces will be included ; at worst, only three provinces.

The way the programme was constructed stands contrary to what the donor communities preached in the DAC-OECD document entitled *Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation*

on the threshold of the 21st Century. In the case of fragile transitional situations, as in the case of the southern Philippines, a concerted effort is called for “to help overcome the enduring trauma, promote reconciliation, and help prevent renewed outbreaks of violent conflict” (DAC-OECD 1998, p. 7). As it stands today, the programme has failed to promote reconciliation.

2. Programme Management

The management structure of the programme mirrors the limited/if not the lack of participation or importance of the LGUs and civil society which are supposed to be the major stakeholders in the peace process. It highlights the importance of the donor community because of its “expertise” and resources, the government for lending legitimacy to the programme, and makes the military structure of the MNLF the beneficiary. At the same time it peripherizes various stakeholders in their involvement in the process generating further resentment among LGUs, civil society and many Christians and Lumad who have been very critical of the peace accord since the beginning.

The programme through its Area Management Teams works directly with communities and cooperatives of the MNLF through its (military) leadership, the MNLF State Revolutionary Committee. Programme implementors have rationalized it as a confidence building measure with the objective of having access to MNLF communities and democratizing the MNLF command by actively engaging them in development work. However, many observers believe that it merely strengthened the MNLF military command rather than paving the way for the democratic transition and mainstreaming of the MNLF. This programme structure complicates existing political arrangements as the political boundary of the MNLF State Revolutionary Committee is much wider than that of any legally constituted political subdivision in the Philippines, with the only exception being the ARMM. (*see* Map of MNLF States).

3. “Hijacking”

To pursue the path of peace requires a great political will and corresponding economic investment on the part of the Philippine government for the benefit of its people. However, the GRP has relied heavily on foreign aid, especially from the multi-donor programme, to keep its promise of peace and development in SZOPAD. While it has many problems to cope with such as the financial crisis, the GRP is not devoid of financial resources that could be channeled to SZOPAD if it had only exercised a strong political will. The country continues to automatically appropriate an average of 33.82% of its annual budget from 1990-1997 to service its huge foreign debt (FDC 1998). By limiting its annual appropriation for debt

servicing to even 10 percent a lot of money could be channeled to SZOPAD. In addition, while the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programmes has generated massive media mileage, in reality, its investment of \$8.7 million (about PhP348 million computed at PhP40 a dollar) is small compared to what the GRP is recently spending in its military operations against the MILF. The military campaign in Mindanao from March to May of 2000 was estimated to have cost tax payers PhP20 million a day — enough money to transform Mindanao.

On the other hand, the MNLF Chairman, who is also head of the SPCPD, disillusioned with the lack of resolve of the national government to channel needed resources, and fighting for legitimacy in the eyes of the MNLF constituents and the residents of SZOPAD, went on foreign trips to invite investors and solicit assistance. So far, many promises have been made but actual assistance is only trickling in. Foreign aid has now become the main “medicine” in curing the madness and destitution that is becoming Mindanao. By assuming responsibility for sustaining the flickering peace accord, the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programmes have unintentionally taken over the main responsibility for sustaining the peace process from the GRP and the MNLF.

4. Documentation Culture

The programme has undoubtedly generated much information about the MNLF. However, the “documentation culture” that prevails in the development industry causes some danger to the MNLF. Aside from the usual military intelligence reports about the MNLF as a revolutionary organization, little was known about them as peoples and communities excluded from the wider Philippine society. The NAS/CAP not only revealed the socio-economic characteristics of the MNLF and their families but also the identity of their leaders, members and supporters. Many were even photographed for the consumption of the media every time projects were launched. Likewise, the locations of their camps were pinpointed as details of various projects were illustrated. Never in the past had such beautifully crafted maps of the location of the MNLF camps been published. With the peace process in place, the dire need for investment and foreign aid caused the production of all sorts of data about SZOPAD and MNLF. In fact, the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programmes developed and maintain the SZOPAD Database System (dubbed SZOPADware). Accessible to more or less thirty government line agencies, planning and coordinating bodies, private research outfit and donor agencies, it was considered as a “major breakthrough in information technology and development planning.” Among others, the database contains the profile of 27,288 participants or beneficiaries of the programme. Given the present fragile status of the peace agreement, such revelation has exposes them to extreme danger, should the peace process fail.

5. Social Preparation

In its effort to overcome the impasse since the signing of the agreement, the programme failed to undertake the necessary preparations for its beneficiaries resulting in the difficulty of inventorying the projects (recipients and inputs). Instead of the programme providing an opportunity for the MNLF to demonstrate its capacity and reliability as a partner in development, assistance gave rise to a dole-out mentality. The assistance was viewed as a “peace-dividend” rather than as an opportunity for development. With the dole-out mentality affecting the communities, the multi-donor programme is struggling hard to re-orient its programme to make its beneficiaries more self-reliant. The needed transition towards peace and development now becomes more difficult and the prospect for the emergence of self-reliant communities becomes doubtful.

As has been said, there are problems that urgently need attention if the donor community is to be meaningfully involved in peace-building and development in areas rocked by ethnic conflict. In a situation like the Philippines where the stakeholders are in crisis (economically, politically and culturally), in what ways should the donor community participate in sustaining the peace process, at the same time making the stakeholders active and socially responsible? Given the uncertainty that follows the inking of a peace agreement, should the donor community undertake a piecemeal approach such as relief first then development later, or should it start developing a comprehensive programme of peace and development? Unless these questions are answered, especially with regard to the southern Philippines, current initiatives seem problematic.

IV. CONCLUSION

While there have been considerable “development” breakthroughs accomplished by the programme as a whole, the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme generated problems that could affect the future course of the peace process. Instead of championing the cause of bringing peace and development in SZOPAD, the donor community limits itself by the way it has constructed its assistance. In the midst of a highly fragmented society, the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme became partisan. Worst still, with its army of “development experts” and the financial resources at its disposal, the programme has in a way “hijacked” the peace process from those who have the main stake in keeping it — the Philippine government, the MNLF, the local government units and the civil society. In the rush to implement programmes, the multi-donors failed to secure the needed social preparation of the beneficiaries, leading to a dole-out mentality. The MNLF were not merely poor, they were revolutionaries for a large portion of their lives who laid down their arms due the

promise of peace dividends. Moreover, the “documentation culture” that persists in the development industry exposed the MNLF to a great risk, should the peace process collapse. The convergence of divergent interest accounted to a great extent for the difficulties and failures of the programme.

Difficulties and failures can be avoided in the future if : the “peace and development” programmes strengthen mutual trust ; the tri-people of SZOPAD will clearly perceive, if not enjoy, the benefits of autonomy ; and the local government units, civil society and other local stakeholders, who are usually left in the periphery, will be encouraged and play a vital role in shaping public opinion and directing the course of development and peace-building initiatives rather than leaving it to traditional institutions (e. g. politicians, elites, church, and mass media), who were in some respects parties to be blamed for the conflict.

While it is true that the role of resource rich institutions (donor communities and governments) is crucial in bringing peace and development, the role of local stakeholders (local government units, civil society) is equally important. The national government is in the best position to set an example of provider of political will, of making the issue of peace a national agenda thereby creating a national consciousness. Also, LGUs and civil society can best provide local initiatives in bringing peace and development as they have a clearer understanding of the problem and are therefore in the best position to craft solutions. In the final analysis, it concerns them — their constituencies and communities. The donor community can complement with needed resources and expertise.

One need not emphasize that ensuring people’s participation in peace and development, while arduous and painful, is an investment towards social ownership. The absence of any social ownership of peace and development initiatives among the tri-people of SZOPAD makes the recurrence of conflict inevitable. Because people have been denied their right to self-determination, a culture of mistrust will prevail because of the sense of powerlessness.

POSTSCRIPT

With the tardiness of the thinly spread peace and development projects in SZOPAD and the rising expectations that the agreement generated, many of the members of the MNLF have become weary about the prospect of peace in the southern Philippines. For some, it has not only resulted in loss of faith in the peace process, but even in its leadership. The frequent absence of Prof. Nur Misuari busy soliciting support abroad made him fail to provide the needed leadership that his people were expecting from him in this crucial time. The defection of some MNLF members to the MILF or to Abu Sayyaf or the formation of MNLF lost commands are clear indications of the fragmentation that the peace process is causing in the

once strongly united MNLF.

The failure of the government to deliver on its promise, and the lack of legitimacy of the MNLF to provide the much needed leadership makes bleak the prospect of the creation of a new autonomous region that will approximate the areas designated in the agreement. These three years have merely vindicated those opposed to the accord — for the majority of the inhabitants of the SZOPAD, the SPCPD is the wrong solution and autonomy is not acceptable. These sentiments are overwhelmingly echoed in the deliberations of the ongoing senate hearing of House Bill (HB) 7883 to amend Republic Act 6734 known as the Organic Act for Muslim Mindanao. To a considerable extent, the MNLF is silent in the ongoing senate hearings. They consider HB 7883 to contain “impurities” and “confiscatory riders.” Prof. Misuari called the bill “useless”. During the November 30, 1999 meeting of SPCPD’s consultative assembly, Misuari warned the government that he would oppose the holding of the plebiscite unless it is certain to deliver “genuine autonomy.” In expressing his disappointment, Misuari was quoted by a local paper in Cotabato City to have said “Referendum is suicidal on our part. I’d rather go back to war than have a referendum” (*see* Diaz 2000).

With the rise of complex uncertainties in Mindanao (the bleak prospect of expanded autonomy, the ongoing war between the government and the MILF despite the standing cease-fire agreement, the terrorism committed by the Abu Sayyaf (mis) using the doctrine of *jihad fi sabilillah* (striving in the cause of Allah), the rise of Christian vigilantes and the lack of clarity of policies and the “street-tough” statements of President Estrada) the possibility of the resumption of full scale violence in Mindanao, many observers believe, is only a matter of time. While the prudent involvement of the donor community could make a difference, the difficulty it experiences in sustaining its programs, only jeopardizes the flickering hope for a peaceful Mindanao. Ironically, as the peace process is in peril and with no clear peace and development in sight, the SPCPD-NEDA-UN/Multi-Donor Programme is at the same time scaling down its operation. As of 1999, the FAO and IOM finally concluded its operation in SZOPAD. The IOM recruited many of its local staff for deployment in East Timor and Bosnia. The fate of the remaining components of the programme remain uncertain, so does the promise of peace dividends.

As of the time of writing, Mindanao is again at war. Violence has just escalated in northern, central and southern Mindanao between the government forces and the MILF. More than 60 percent of the military might of the country is now being deployed in Mindanao, as many reservists are called up for training and eventual deployment. Approximately 520,000 people or nearly a 100,000 families are again displaced, cramped in evacuation centers devoid of basic necessities. The gun-toting *Al Harakatul Islamiya* (the new name of the Abu Sayyaf group) has grabbed the headlines by kidnapping a priest, grade school

students and teachers from Basilan, and the subsequent kidnapping of tourists from the Malaysian island-resort of Sipadan. Bombings have taken place in major cities in Mindanao. Metro Manila has not been spared. It is unfortunate that, to this day, peace in Mindanao, as it was in the past, remains elusive.

Notes

- 1) In his survey, Gurr (1993) classified 233 ethno-political conflict groups as follows :
Eighty-one groups as ethnonationalists, pursuing some type of separatist objective ;
Forty-five as ethnoclasses, generally of low status, demanding more equitable treatment ;
Eighty-three indigenous peoples concerned fundamentally with issues of group autonomy,
Forty-nine militant religious sects, almost all of them Muslim, involved in various conflicts ; and,
Sixty-six ethno-political groups classified as communal contenders, advantaged or disadvantaged,
seeking power for themselves.
- 2) The Spaniards named the Muslims of North Africa occupying Spain for nearly eight centuries from 711-1492 A. D, “the *Moros*”. In the Philippines, the *Moro* are Mindanao’s thirteen ethno-linguistic groups : the Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Sama, Sangil, Iranun, Kalagan, Kalibugan, Yakan, Jama Mapun, Palawani, Molbog and Badjao. Most of these groups are Muslims, except for the Kalagan and Palawani, some of whom are Christians and the Badjaos who are non-Muslims but not Christian (Rodil 1998).
- 3) To feed its war campaign for independence, the MNLF defined the *Bangsa Moro* as a national identity of all Southern Philippine ethnic Muslims who shared a common faith, a history of pre-conquest, political organization under the sultanates and colonial experience of an alien power imposing its will on them. When MNLF took the path of negotiations, it required a broader constituency to rally around its bargaining position for autonomy. “*Bangsa Moro*” came to be defined as “all indigenous inhabitants of Mindanao,” i. e. ethnic Muslims plus non-Muslim ethnic tribes or Lumads (Fuentes 1998).
- 4) The word “Lumad” is a Cebuano Bisayan word meaning indigenous which became a collective name for the 18 ethno-linguistic groups of Mindanao, namely : Ata, Bagobo, Banwaon, B’laan, Bukidnon, Dibabawon, Higaunon, Kalagan, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Mangguwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Subanon, Tagakaolo, T’boli, Tiruray, and Ubo (Rodil 1994).
- 5) This was a massacre by the Philippine Army, of twenty-eight to sixty-four Moro youth allegedly among the 180 trainees of the Jabidah forces. The trainees were supposedly part of a secret scheme by Marcos to split the Islamic ranks, provoke a war between Sulu and Sabah, and then invade and reclaim Sabah. The lone survivor of the killing stated that the trainees were shot after they refused to attack Sabah, because the army feared a leakage of the plan.
- 6) In his memorandum to the GRP Panel dated August 26, 1993, then President Ramos instructed that “the conduct of the formal talks shall be in line with the aim of the national comprehensive peace program to seek a principled and peaceful resolution of armed conflict, with neither blame nor surrender, but with dignity for all (Ramos 1996).”

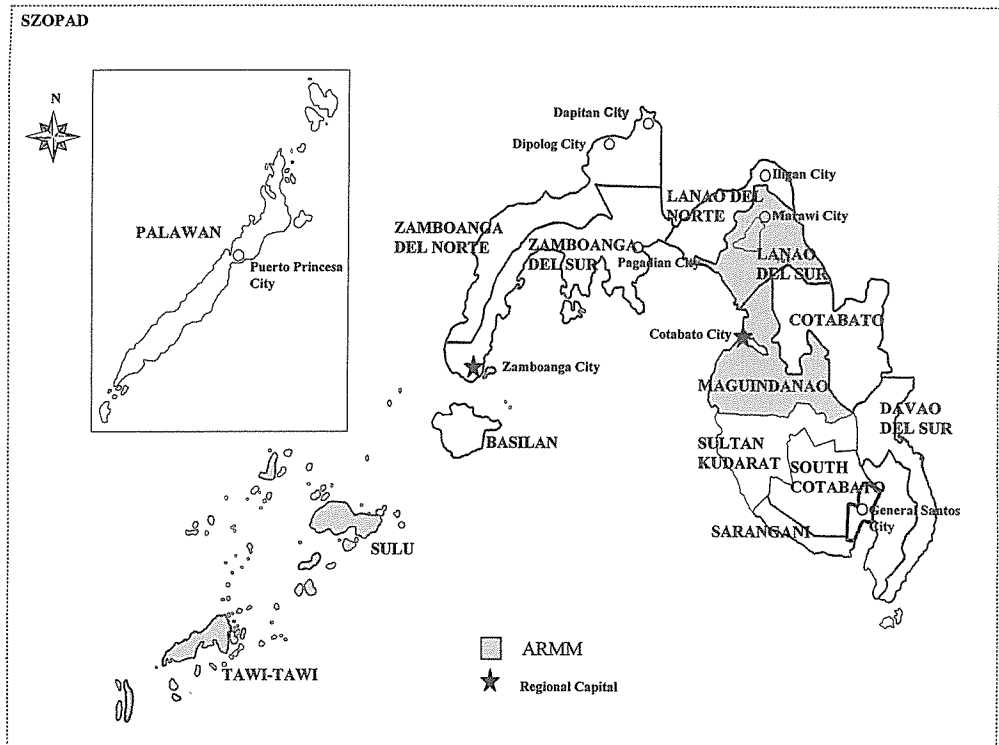
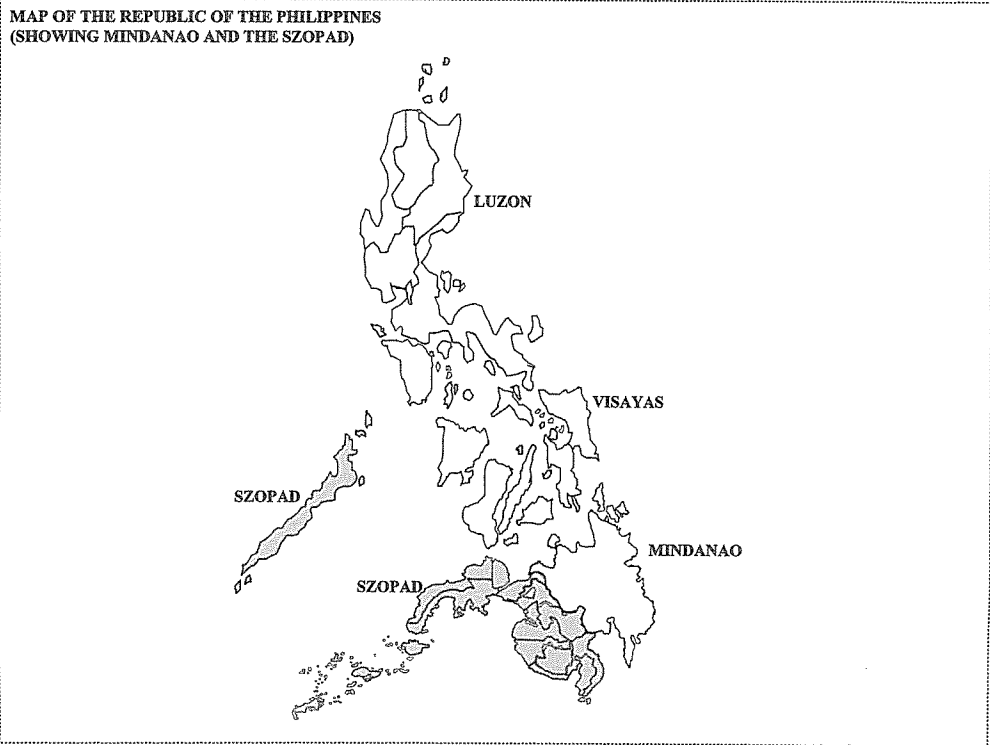
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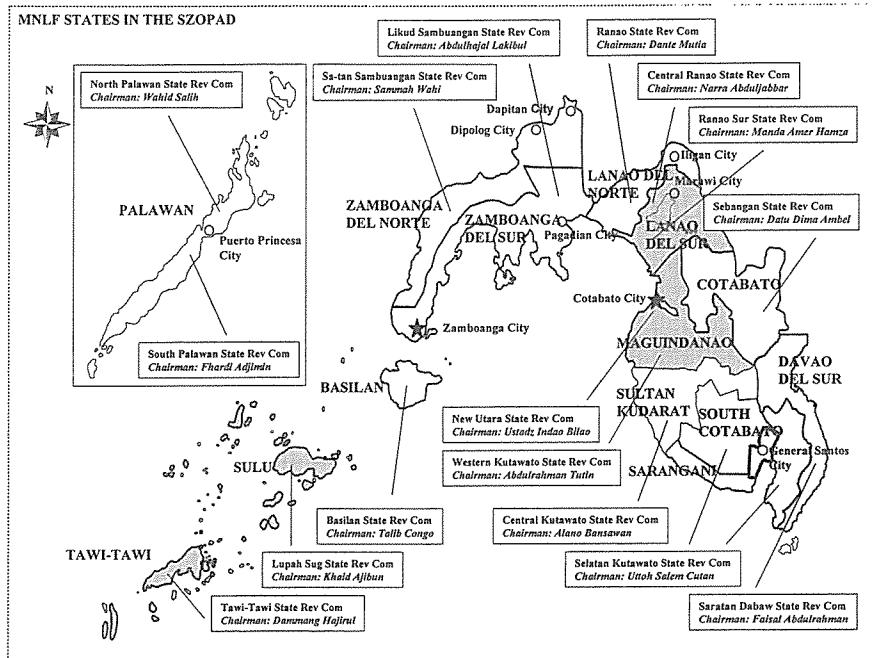
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SPCPD-NEDA-UN/MULTI-DONOR- PROGRAMME

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE
(as revised during the Dec. 14 EXECOM Meeting)

