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PERY

PREVENTING ELECTION RELATED VIOLENCE



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Mediation for peace

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*“**F**or almost ten years I’ve been with my armed men, striving and fighting with conviction and belief that I can be an instrument in reaching everyone’s aim to have peace. But I realized it was the other way around. I became an instrument of your displacement, of instability that badly affected the studies of our children, and a cause of damage for your farms.”*



Abtajir Tingkasan

A commander of the Moro National Liberation Front’s Sulu State Revolutionary Committee, and now a community leader of Barangay Silangkan in Parang Municipality, Sulu Province, which was recently declared a Peace Centered Community assisted by the PERV-Sulu Initiative.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Preventing Election Related Violence (PERV) - Sulu Program

In the island province of Sulu in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the problem of election related violence is prevalent and deep-rooted. Often, this is aggravated by widespread armed violence which due to the lack of law and order and prevalence of weapons is used to solve all conflicts in Sulu including those over land, money, drugs, clan conflicts, love and marriage, business, etc. More often than not it is also used in elections.

Unfortunately, the capacity of local authorities to undertake election monitoring activities and prevent violence is limited, and there is great reliance on the Philippine military and police establishments to fill the void. However, the plethora of weapons and armed actors, coupled with underdevelopment, insurgency, and poor governance contributes to a vicious cycle of violence. As a result, public security in Sulu has been progressively weakened, policing less-effective, and local government struggles to provide basic services in a polarized environment.

While the snow-ball effect of all this seems to present a dire and hopeless situation for Sulu, in fact, many piecemeal efforts actually offer hope. These include support given for the improvement of local

PERV-Sulu raises awareness among concerned sectors about the relationship between violence and politics and helps empower people to prevent and resolve it.

government, capacity-building for the police, peace and cultural sensitivity training for the military, security-sector reform, dialogue involving non-state actors in Sulu, advocacy for reduction in armed violence, and others. One such effort is the Preventing Election Related Violence (PERV) program in Sulu, overseen by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and funded by the Australian Agency for International Development.

PERV-Sulu was formally established in May 2010, just before the National and Local Elections, and since then has closely monitored, assessed, and reported on the incidences of election-related violence in the province, as well as other incidents that could be linked to political rivalries.

The reports of PERV-Sulu have been useful to civil society groups that seek to address local conflicts, Government authorities that need to instill law and order, and the concerned parties and communities working to prevent and resolve hostilities.

Most effectively, PERV-Sulu provides weekly reports on the security situation in Sulu to the *Tumikang Sama Sama*, meaning 'together we move forward' in the local Tausug language. The *Tumikang Sama Sama*, or TSS, is a group of eminent persons also supported by the HD Centre in partnership with the Office of the Mufti of Sulu which helps resolve local conflicts. The reports of PERV-Sulu are reviewed by the TSS which then decide how to take action. This includes discussing an incident with the parties to a conflict, local leaders, the military and police, and in some cases mediating or identifying local mediators to resolve the conflicts.

The work of PERV-Sulu is carried out by 25 volunteers deployed in the 19 municipalities of Sulu, and a four-member secretariat. Their aim is to:

- Create a local network to identify, document, and monitor violence
- Resource and educate various local actors with training to robustly collect and interpret data on election violence
- Share information about election violence and responses with all stakeholders
- Mobilize the community to reduce, prevent and resolve election related violence

To-date, PERV-Sulu has provided up-to-the-minute monitoring and reporting of pre-election-related violence (for both the May 2010 National and Local Elections and the October 2010 Barangay and *Sangguniang Kabataan* Elections), election-day violence, and post-election-related violence. The program has also analyzed how these incidents have transitioned into (or began as) family, clan, extremist, or other types of conflicts.

PERV-Sulu, in partnership with members of the *Tumikang Sama Sama* have figured centrally in addressing and putting an end to six major conflicts that have erupted last year. The program, in partnership with HD Centre has likewise organized a rare conference in September 2010 for major clans involved in armed conflict with other clans. These included follow-up activities and constant coordination with the clans since the conference. PERV-Sulu also conducts advocacy activities called *Speak-Outs* and weekly radio shows meant at informing audiences about election-related violence in Sulu and what can be done about it.

This major transformation of the electoral system in the entire country was seen as a strengthening of the electorate's role in the Philippine democratic system.

THE POST ELECTION ASSESSMENT ON THE MAY 2010 NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS, CONDUCTED AT THE SULU STATE COLLEGE HOSTEL, JOLO, SULU. PARTICIPANTS CAME FROM THREE MUNICIPALITIES OF SULU PROVINCE, NAMELY, INDANAN, JOLO, AND PATIKUL. THE PERV-SULU VOLUNTEERS ARE SHOWN HERE FACILITATING THE SMALL GROUP WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS.



II. THE PERV-SULU PROGRAM IN ACTION

Election Automation and the Post Election Assessment

The PERV-Sulu Program was created in time for the holding of the May 2010 National and Local Elections. This particular election marked an important chapter in Philippine history and in particular in the electoral process in Sulu, as it was the first time the country was to undergo a fully-automated election.

This meant that voters would be filling up machine-readable ballots, after which they would insert them into the Precinct Count Optical Scanner, or PCOS machine, provided for every two or more precincts clustered together usually in a single room. As its name implies, the PCOS machine would then scan the ballot and once voting hours closed it would electronically tabulate all results for the clustered-precincts for which it was used. Hard copies of results were then furnished to those concerned and the results were likewise transmitted electronically to the higher canvassing bodies.

Thus as early as a few hours after voting closed, results at the Provincial, City, Municipal, and Congressional District Representative levels were already known. Within 24 hours, a general trend could already be seen for the Presidential, Vice-Presidential, Senatorial, and Congressional Partylist Representative levels. Within 72 hours these were just about final.

The speed in which these results were arrived at was truly impressive and left many amazed at the efficiency and speed of automated elections. This was in stark contrast to previous elections that were entirely done manually. Then it took days to weeks for the winners of local level positions to be determined and weeks to about two or three months for the national level winners to be proclaimed.

This major transformation of the electoral system in the entire country was seen as a strengthening of the electorate's role in Philippine democracy. It fortified the people's right to vote because this offered the assurance that the vote of each individual would be counted both quickly and correctly. Although in many parts of the country, the major instrument of automation, the PCOS machine, suffered some challenges in terms of delivery, power supply, and electronic transmission of results, the automated election process nonetheless eventually triumphed. For Sulu Province in particular, a major indication of this has been the reduction of election related violence as a result of the significantly decreased human involvement in the counting of votes and canvassing of election results, and the unprecedented speed with which the results were arrived at.

During these elections, the HD Centre and the PERV-Sulu Program were involved in monitoring and reporting activities in all of the province's 19 municipalities.

In addition to the election automation, the Commission on Elections Gun Ban was also firmly in place throughout the election period. Moreover, the monitoring of polling stations in Sulu by PERV volunteers and other NGOs in collaboration with the AFP helped ensure greater transparency and security.

During these elections, the HD Centre and the PERV-Sulu Program were involved in monitoring and reporting activities in all of the province's 19 municipalities. Preparations began weeks prior to the elections when the PERV-Sulu was established by the HD Centre with funding from AusAID, and an initial 20 volunteers were selected and hired, followed in the succeeding months by 5 more. These volunteers include:

1. Rosemain Abduraji, Jolo
2. Satra Mahamud, Indanan (Lower)
3. Mughrin Mahang, Indanan (Upper)
4. Midzfar Mukarram, Patikul (Latih)
5. Jul-Astah Salamuddin, Patikul (Taglibi)
6. Alex Mariamin, Parang (West)
7. Al-Sadar Mukammali, Parang (East)
8. Mercilina Gadjali, Maimbung (West)
9. Berkis Bassaluddin, Maimbung (East)
10. Phyrleen Awang, Talipao
11. Alfadzrey Asgari, Panglima Tahil
12. Juvaira Hambali, Panglima Estino
13. Nelson Sarahan, Panamao
14. Ahmad Sah Sanaani, Panamao
15. Junsar Ahamad, Luuk
16. Abdulhamid Basa, Kalingalang Caluang
17. Almajar Usman, Omar
18. Fadzrimar Sahipa, Lugus
19. Modzar Aukasa, Tapul
20. Reyn Hambali, Pata
21. Bash Jundam, Pata
22. Al-Ameen Sampang, Pandami

23. Alquino Aradais, Siasi
24. Nur-in Hapas, Pangutaran
25. Marcus Haradji, Bangingi (Tongkil)

To support the volunteers, a secretariat was also organized. Their members include:

1. Lincoln T. Tulawie
2. Al-kamar A. Jidin
3. Jocelyn Basaluddin
4. Khamar Allama

These volunteers were selected among those shortlisted during previous hiring processes by HD's other programs in Sulu, and those recommended by partner stakeholders. A key factor in the screening process was that they were actually residing and based in the municipalities and had a personal orientation towards peace.

On 07 May 2010, a general meeting and orientation was held at the HD office in Sulu. Communications equipment, special Commission on Elections recognition papers, and identification cards were issued to the volunteers. Formal introductory meetings with the ground commanders of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines assigned in the various municipalities were also arranged as a formal courtesy and for proper coordination. Finally, a secretariat was organized to receive and process all monitoring reports as soon as these were sent from the field, and to liaise with the COMELEC, PNP, and AFP for the purposes of information dissemination and validation of the reports. The volunteers and the secretariat were all given training on proper documentation and report writing skills, as well as basic news writing. They were also taught how to briefly and concisely do these thru mobile phone text messaging, since this was the project's main means of communications.

Beginning Election Day, 10th of May 2010, the volunteers of PERV-Sulu were in their assigned areas where they carefully monitored and reported on events surrounding the conduct of the country's first fully automated elections. The following two pages give an example of a compilation of the results of their monitoring and reporting. These covered Election Day and the succeeding day, May 11th.

Table 1: Examples of some PERV-Sulu Monitoring Reports
(as of 11 May 2010, 7:00 pm)

PLACE OF INCIDENT	TIME REPORTED	DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT/SITUATION
Tongkil	Early morning	Proclamation undertaken. Tension in the island is still volatile. The opposing mayoralty candidate was not given the chance to vote with his supporters since the clustered precincts were located in the controlled area of incumbent mayor Wahid Sahidulla, who was reelected.
Pata		Normal situation. Given the presence of a peacekeeping force deployed by JTF Comet, election was orderly in this municipality that usually has election-related conflicts. But even with the presence of the AFP and PNP, at least 40% of the opposition were unable to vote because of fear given that the clustered precincts were located at the area of their rivals. No election related armed violence recorded on the day of election.
Talipao	9:30 am	Proclamation undertaken at around 7:00 am. After all the tension and high expectations of violence in Talipao, no armed violence was reported, except for isolated fist fights that were immediately pacified by the peacekeeping forces deployed in the area.
Luuk	3:00 pm	No untoward situation despite the heightened tension brought about by Hadja Amina Buclao's candidacy. Buclao is a leading contender in Luuk's local election and is linked to leading politicians at Sulu's provincial level. She was served a warrant of arrest by the PNP with a criminal charge filed against her for the violent incidents in Barangay Tulayan, Luuk Municipality dating back to the last Barangay Elections in 2007. Her arrest has resulted in a relatively peaceful election environment in Luuk.
Tapul		Normal situation reported for Tapul. Tapul Island is a municipality politically controlled by the Daud clan, with no opposing candidates. The Dauds are linked to leading politician's at the Sulu provincial level.
Panglima Estino		No additional shelling of artillery was reported from the mayoralty candidates, with the situation being effectively managed by the AFP. The election was successfully conducted with no skirmishes and no victims of armed violence. The winning mayor, incumbent Municipal Mayor Hadji Munib Estino, was officially proclaimed early morning of May 11.
Kalinggalang Caluang	5:00 pm	High levels of tension were reported between the supporters of incumbent Municipal Mayor Hadji Piping and his opponent, Rajan. Both are know to be aligned with rival politicians at the Sulu provincial level. Fortunately, no untoward incidents of armed violence took place due to the full AFP control of the situation in the municipality.
Panglima Tahil	6:30am	Overall situation in Panglima Tahil is peaceful. Incumbent Municipal Mayor Jess Burahan ran unopposed, and was able to concentrate on the supervision of the elections at all levels. Burahan is known to be a strong ally and supporter of a leading politician at the Sulu provincial level. Panglima Tahil is an island municipality visible from the capital town of Jolo, with more or less 4,000 registered voters.
Parang		Members of the leading political clan of Parang Municipality, the Loong clan, ran for various positions under opposing parties. This led to altercations among clan members and tension among their supporters. Fortunately the elections in the municipality ended with no armed violence recorded. All members of the Loong clan won their respective contests, headed by the new Sulu 1st District Congressional Representative, Habib Tupay Loong, who ran under the party of incumbent Provincial Governor Abusakur Tan, who also got reelected. Former Sulu Governor Benjamin Loong, who ran as Vice-Gubernatorial candidate to outgoing Sulu 2nd District Congressional Representative Munir Arbison, also won.

PLACE OF INCIDENT	TIME REPORTED	DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT/SITUATION
Omar	6:00PM	Omar's incumbent Muncipal Mayor, Hadji Ahamad, delivered 95% of total votes in his municipality to outgoing Sulu 2nd District Congressional Representative Munir Arbison who ran for Provincial Governor. The only election-related hostilities in Omar were fist fights. Proclamations of winning candidates were held in Omar Municipal Hall with no resistance from losing candidates.
Indanan	6:00 pm	Failure of election was declared in some clustered precincts. One PCOS machine was destroyed by the brother of mayoralty candidate, Hussin Ahajan, in Barangay Bunot. Two other clustered precincts were not opened because of the possibility of violence. As a result, the BEI decided to close these clustered polling precincts and declare a failure of election. No proclamations have yet been made. No armed violence recorded, except for isolated fist fights.
Pangutaran	Report recieved 4:31 pm due to loss of mobile phone network	On the day of the elections, one shooting was recorded wherein three individuals were wounded. This came as a result of squabbles in some of the precincts, and was initiated by Ibnu (son of the Barangay Captain of Bangkilay), some supporters of Sali (mayoralty candidate of Pangutaran), and supporters of incumbent Municipal Mayor, Ahmad Nano, identified as Taha Abdurahim (a.k.a. Kulot) and Sulaiman Abdurahman. As of today (May 11) the victims already filed criminal charges against the perpetrators. The victims were treated at the provincial hospital in Jolo. Canvassing of votes from the precinct level was brought to the MSU- Sulu campus in Jolo, heavily escorted by the AFP.
Maimbung	5:30 pm (May 10)	At around 5:25 pm, gunshots were fired after a harsh argument between two contesting parties in support of the rival Tan and Maldisa clans. Shots coming from an unidentified direction hit the polling place where the wife of Governor Tan was situated. Tensions immediately flared up and voting was disturbed. Fortunately, no casualties were reported. As of late evening today, Samir Tan, son of incumbent Sulu Provincial Governor Abdusakur Tan, is leading in the mayoralty race against incumbent Mayor Najib Maldisa. Potential eruption of armed conflict is now on a very high level. Most of the neighboring Barangays in the area of the Maldisas have been evacuated.
Patikul	2:14 pm	At around 3:00 pm, a supporter of incumbent Municipal Mayor Hayudini, had a fist fight with the sons of opposing mayoral candidate, Datu Bahjin, at Barangay Gandasuli, Patikul. Three of Bahjin's sons were brought to the provincial hospital in Jolo for treatment of head wounds. These incidents may result in a family conflict between the Bahjins and the Julkarnains (Hayudini's supporters), who are relatives.
Pandami	11:57 am	At mid-day of Election Day, supporters of both parties contesting the gubernatorial elections engaged in separate brawls in at least three clustered precincts. Fortunately no one was seriously wounded in any of these.
Lugus	3:00 pm	The Comelec BEIs assigned to the clustered precincts in Larap were slapped by the supporters of Lugus Mayoralty candidate, Aradais. This was allegedly due to the rejection by the BEIs of the order to manipulate the voting process. The BEIs left the machines and election paraphernalia and ran to the town centre of Lugus. Later, the AFP recovered the machines and materials and took these in their custody.
Siasi	8:00 am	No untoward incidents reported. Although commotions were felt in some polling places, pacification efforts were carried out by community leaders. The presence of the AFP and the PNP was also a factor that sustained peace and order during the election.
Jolo		Peaceful elections were observed in all Barangays of Jolo. No untoward incidents took place. Incumbent Mayor Hussin Amin was officially proclaimed winner.

After the elections, PERV-Sulu and HD organized the post election assessment specifically to determine the impact of the automated election on the dramatic reduction in armed violence during election day. Essentially, the program needed to find out what people's thoughts were relative to the automation process and whether or not this actually resulted in a decrease in election-related violence during election day.

Among the interventions materialized was the grassroots consultation from nine identified municipalities in Sulu. Here the experiences and observations of selected participants during election day were recorded. Participants were categorized per sector such as women, youth, farmers/ fisherfolk, religious leaders, senior citizens, people's organizations, traditional leaders, and barangay officials.

The next intervention was the multi-partners' forum on the post election assessment which focused on the sharing of experiences and observations from the different institutions or non-governmental organizations who also conducted monitoring and election-related activities. The participants came from the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), the Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs), the poll watchers, technicians knowledgeable of the automation process, voters, the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), local media, and the radio clubs such as 'd Alert, Suara Lupah Sug and Suara Mahardika.

The consolidated findings of all these interventions were as follows:

a. On the process of automated elections

- The clustering of precincts caused difficulties in finding the names of the voters.
- The electoral process was new for the voters.
- They were not familiar with the machines.
- There was no secrecy folder provided when voting.
- Some BEIs had insufficient knowledge of the new automation process.

- The practice of "command votes" still existed in some areas.
- Insufficient knowledge of the voting process delayed some BEIs and watchers in the use of the PCOS machine.
- Automation is faster compared to the previous manual process of voting.
- The ballots were not always clean so that the PCOS machine could count the vote.
- Most registered voters were not able to vote due to the long list of voters in the clustered precincts.
- Vote buying was still rampant.
- Disenfranchisement was experienced despite the high voter turnout.
- Technicians experienced threats, harassment and pressure in some highly contested areas.
- There was delayed transmission of votes in some areas from the precincts to the Municipal Board of Canvassers to the Provincial Board of Canvassers

b. On the facilities used

- Most of the machines were defective ('hanged', 'paper-jammed', or had no reserve/insufficient batteries).
- Impatient voters failed to vote due to long lines.
- There were no replacements for defective machines.
- BEIs, watchers, and technicians' tasks were significantly made easier with the machines.

c. Overall assessment of the automated elections

- No armed violence due to quick counting of votes.
- Clustering of precincts was a factor that resulted in crowded precincts which caused fist fights.
- Putting Sulu under COMELEC control contributed to the peaceful conduct of the automated elections.
- Lack of voter education resulted in the improper handling of ballots that annulled a considerable number of votes.
- The media had an easier time covering the elections due to the smaller number of voting centers and clustering of precincts.
- Vote buying is already part of the political culture during every election, but given a chance people

who peddled their vote will still vote for his/her chosen candidate.

- The automation process and the PCOS machine had a great impact on the early proclamation of winning candidates.
- With the clustering of precincts, the deployment of policemen and troops was more manageable for the PNP and the AFP.
- The National Power Corporation and the Sulu Electric Cooperative gave 100% service. No brownouts occurred.
- COMELEC's policy on quick security action at the polling precincts required written complaints from the BEIs. There were times that the military could not act quick enough.

d. Recommendations

- Maintain the Automated Election; Biometric System of voting should follow in the next COMELEC modernization program for future elections.
- Improve the clustering of precincts. This should be done in proper consultation with the constituents affected.
- COMELEC should reduce the capacity of PCOS machines from 1000 to 500 voters per machine.
- The COMELEC should provide adequate time for election preparation, especially for BEI's training and voter's education, and include a desired values and moral enhancement program to maintain an atmosphere of peace and integrity at the polling precincts.
- Maintain intensive security measures from the PNP and the AFP.
- Sustain the gun ban beyond the election period.
- Improve and sustain CSO partnerships and support towards improvement of electoral systems through information and education campaigns and calls for the electorate to go out and vote.
- Vote buying and peddling should be strictly penalized by law.
- Conduct campaigns to discourage vote buying and selling.
- Strengthen COMELEC networks with media, CSOs, and other stakeholders.
- The security sector should intervene as the need arises even without the request from the

The major finding of the post-election assessment was the very strong recommendation that future elections continue to be automated.

BEI. COMELEC policies on security and risk management should be reviewed.

- There is a need for critical assessments on the availability of telecommunications signals. This should include back-up and portable provisions for acquiring signals.

e. Factors that contributed to the prevention of armed violence during election day

- Preventing Election Related Violence program from multi-stakeholders that monitored and reported regularly from all the polling areas
- Visibility of the military and the police in each polling center
- The Sulu Peace Covenant
- The H.O.P.E. caravan
- "Go out and vote campaigns" by CSOs contributed to the high turnout of votes
- CSO, AFP and PNP cooperation
- The gun ban

f. Conclusion

Clearly the automated election system along with the gun ban, military and police presence, and civilian monitoring helped reduce violence on election day. However the problem is what happens after election day, when the gun ban ends, and the military and police leave.

Fortunately, the monitors remain in the form of the PERV-Sulu volunteers and the *Tumikang Sama Sama* to help prevent and resolve conflicts. They are perhaps not a solution but hopefully can inspire others and create an environment conducive for others to engage.



HD CENTRE SULU PROJECT OFFICER, VANDRAZEL BIROWA, FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS DURING THE SULU YOUTH FORUM CONDUCTED ON 30 JUNE 2010 IN JOLO. THIRTY YOUTH LEADERS FROM 5 LOCAL COLLEGES PARTICIPATED.

The First PERV-Sulu Speak Out - a Forum with the Youth of Sulu

A month after the May 2010 National and Local Elections, the PERV-Sulu Program launched its outreach activities called Speak-Outs, a forum whereby the observations and findings of the PERV-Sulu Program are echoed to concerned audiences after which their reactions are then elicited. This first Speak-Out assessed the security situation that led to the dramatic reduction in armed violence in the province during election day. The first Speak-Out was on the youth, which is one of the most vulnerable sectors suffering from conflict.

Thirty young leaders from different schools and colleges in Sulu were invited. These included Notre Dame of Jolo College, Mindanao State University-Jolo, Hadji Butu School of Arts and Trades, Southwestern Mindanao Islamic Institute, and Sulu State College. Thirteen women and seventeen men attended the Speak-Out.

The aim of the first PERV-Sulu Speak-Out was to get the youth's shared experiences and observations on the conduct of the May 2010 Elections. The main result of the forum was the belief of the youth that the most important factor that contributed to the dramatic reduction of armed violence and election-related violence was the strong implementation of the gun

The aim of the First PERV-Sulu Speak-Out was to get the youth's shared experiences and observations on the conduct of the May 2010 Elections.

ban and the increased visibility of the PNP and AFP. Asked if they felt this was more of a factor than the automation process itself, the youth said yes, since for them security is the main concern in elections in Sulu, whether it is automated or manual. By security they meant the gun ban, heightened police and military presence, and peace and order especially during election season.

During the workshop session that followed, recommendations were drawn on suggested steps forward for the government and the local authorities in Sulu, including the PNP and AFP.

Part of the Speak-Out was for the youth to come up with their initiatives and contributions. They organized

themselves as a young leaders group coming from different schools and colleges, and planned joint activities that call on the attention of the local government and national authorities present in Sulu Province.

Among the doables were the following:

- A policy paper outlining increased PNP and AFP visibility in conflict areas
- A dialogue with the LGUs and the security sector (AFP and PNP) on the peace and order situation in Sulu Province, strengthening the implementation of the gun ban, and need for more police and military visibility in identified critical areas
- Conducting information and education campaigns among the youth, especially on

advocacy in support of the gun ban and increased AFP and PNP visibility

The implementation of these planned initiatives of the youth are being supported by the PERV-Sulu and the HD Centre as part of their advocacy program, and will be implemented within the duration of the PERV-Sulu Program.

One of the major impacts drawn from this Speak-Out has been the voluntary participation of the youth leaders in PERV-Sulu's incident monitoring, wherein they obliged themselves to send reports of any armed violence that may happen in their areas. This they did in recognition of the value of on-time reporting in preventing untoward violence, avoiding destruction of properties, and saving human life.

The PERV Hour: Advocacy on Air

On June 2010, a weekly on-air radio program entitled 'PERV Hour' was launched aimed at reaching a larger audience through Sulu Province-wide A.M. radio. A.M. radio is the most commonly used medium relied upon by the people of Sulu, especially those in remote areas, for the purpose of gathering news.

Because it could be picked-up anywhere from Zamboanga to southern Palawan to Sabah, PERV Hour was designed to widen the reporting audience of the monitoring results gathered by the PERV-Sulu volunteers in the 19 municipalities of the province.

It was also designed to discuss issues that relate to the security situation, election-related violence, and interventions made by the HD Centre through its *Tumikang Sama Sama*.

Since then, the PERV-Sulu radio program discussed the May 2010 National and Local Elections, the outputs of the post-election assessment covering the 9 identified municipalities, and the young leaders' perspectives on reduction of election-related violence. In addition, ongoing and finalized clan conflict mediation initiatives were also discussed to give insights to the public listeners as to how the different

PERV SECRETARIAT MEMBERS ALKAMAR JIDIN AND LINCOLN TULAWIE DURING THE WEEKLY RADIO HOUR AT DXMM AM STATION.



PERV Hour was designed to widen the reporting audience of the monitoring results gathered by the PERV-Sulu volunteers in the 19 municipalities of the province.

mediation processes were adopted by HD, TSS, and the PERV-Sulu team. In the lead-up to the October 2010 Barangay and *Sangguniang Kabataan* (Youth Council) Elections, PERV-Sulu, as part of the advocacy aspect of the radio program, called for “Zero Violence”.

Typically, the first half of each hour-long radio program was allotted to live reporting from PERV volunteers on the security situation in their respective municipalities. These reports helped the audience become aware of what is happening in other municipalities, especially in Sulu’s many islands.

As a tool to measure the radio program’s effectiveness and coverage, a ‘Q and A Portion’ was designed to achieve greater audience participation. PHP 300.00 worth of cellphone load was given to winners drawn during succeeding radio programs. No less than thirty listeners participated in the Q and A each week, and it is estimated that listenership was one hundred times that.

Some listeners phoned-in encouraging comments. One listener stated that he “... *had peace of mind while at work in Jolo, knowing the security situation in his hometown.*” He further added that the result of this information “... *is a big factor for me knowing that my family is safe.*”

The assessments aired in the program both serve timely and informative purposes. Furthermore the program is entertaining because it is interactive, hence reactions from other listeners are heard on air. Likewise, it also features Tausug songs on peace, culture and history, as produced by local artists. These songs are played regularly throughout the program. According to one listener, the PERV Hour is the first program of its kind that tackles the incidents of violence and hostilities in Sulu, with the added dimension of music.

A listener from Maimbung commented that every week they look forward to PERV Hour, especially for the discussion on the incidents which he said should be known to people, especially those who need to be away from their families for work.

One interesting thought that was shared by a listener dealt with the perception on the intensity of the conflicts discussed. According to him, how grave or serious, or how irrelevant a conflict is, is reflective of one’s self. He said that conflict actually starts within the self. If it bursts out uncontrollably from an individual, then others will be engaged. This, he argued, was often the case in Sulu. Conflict flares-up when an individual cannot control himself or herself. It then passes on to his or her family and relatives, then to their supporters, until it eventually becomes a clan conflict. If at the start, the conflict within one’s self had been pacified, then there would have been no resulting violence borne out of the conflict.

PERV Hour is truly the first of its kind, a radio program that not only delivers security on each municipality in Sulu Province on a weekly basis, but also elicits reactions and thoughts of the people on this important matter.

HD CENTRE STAFF AND PERV-SULU VOLUNTEERS AND SECRETARIAT MEMBERS AT HD'S OFFICE IN JOLO, SULU, OCTOBER 2010.



III. PERV-SULU CONTRIBUTES TO RESOLVING SULU'S CONFLICTS

PERV-Sulu and Tumikang Sama Sama

In addition to addressing election-related violence, PERV-Sulu and the *Tumikang Sama Sama*, HD Centre's other program in Sulu, worked closely on initiatives seeking to resolve the various types of conflict prevalent in Sulu Province.

The *Tumikang Sama Sama*, or TSS, Tausug for 'together we move forward', is a small body of well-respected local individuals who meet regularly to help address Sulu's security concerns by providing good offices for the people of Sulu to resolve their conflicts. The TSS includes as its permanent members, Ustadz Yahiya Abdulla, Retired Police Colonel Ibrohashim Undug, and Engineer Sahiron Amirul. The TSS also consists of non-permanent members who are tasked over specific periods to lead in the facilitation and mediation of particular clan conflicts. Among these are Ustadz Abdulpatta Radjaie, Hadji Akili Palahuddin, Hadja Sitti Aisa Tulawie, Abtajir Tingkasan, and Hajan Abduhasad. The TSS component of the program is funded by the European Union.

Acting as a group of 'eminent persons', the TSS helps prevent and resolve conflicts in Sulu by offering advice, facilitating and mediating conflicts, or simply providing the space for belligerents to resolve their conflicts in a peaceful, neutral, conducive environment.

Coming together as one team, PERV-Sulu, the HD Centre's organic staff in Sulu and Manila, and TSS, have constantly worked in unison to help all sectors in addressing the many conflicts in Sulu.

In addition, the TSS also helps identify and assess the potential for local conflicts and provides early warning to concerned entities especially those eager to help prevent them. For its part, the HD Centre provides the TSS with advice, technical, secretarial and logistical support, and office space. But it is the TSS as a group and its members as individuals who take the lead and genuinely pursue efforts on its own initiative and accord, in cognizance of the desire of the authorities, civil society, and the general public in Sulu to resolve their issues especially on security.



SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS REPRESENTING SULU'S MAJOR CLANS WHO ATTENDED THE CLAN LEADERS' CONFERENCE ON SECURITY ISSUES IN SULU, HELD IN ZAMBOANGA CITY ON SEPTEMBER 2010.

Clan Leaders' Conference on Security Issues in Sulu

A key initiative which PERV-Sulu and TSS organized was the *Clan Leaders' Conference on Security Issues in Sulu* held in Zamboanga City on 21-22 September 2010.

Prior to this conference, PERV-Sulu reported on over 30 civilian killings in the previous months of July and August 2010. Interestingly all were related to violent clan conflicts in Sulu. This finding was in contrast with the more popular perception of Sulu as an area frequented by extremists, kidnappings, and Muslim separatist rebellions.

In fact, PERV-Sulu findings reveal that most violence in Sulu stems from clan conflicts. Thus, such a conference focusing on clan conflicts was clearly long overdue. Surprisingly this was only the first time that representatives of the most prominent clans put aside their guns and grievances and came together to try to put a stop to clan conflict-related violence.

Convened by the Office of the Mufti of Sulu and the HD Centre through its programs in Sulu, the conference allowed clan representatives to meet and dialogue with each other over the course of two days. The conference began with messages from the Mufti of Sulu, Sharif Jul Asri J. Abirin, The HD Centre Mediation Advisor and Philippines Country Representative David Gorman, AFP Western Mindanao Commander, Lieutenant General Mohammad Benjamin Dolorfino, and National Commission on Muslim Filipinos Commissioner Moner Bajunaid.

After listening to the speakers the clan representatives engaged in workshop sessions where they cooperated with their rivals in trying to identify methods of resolving their conflicts. Perhaps as a sign of good things to come, two clan conflicts were resolved during the conference. At the end of the conference, all clan representatives in attendance signed a declaration committing themselves to the following:

- Promote peace thru dialogue
- Help settle conflicts they are involved in
- Take part in third party (peace facilitator) aided efforts to resolve clan conflicts in their areas
- Work in partnership with all other stakeholders to resolve conflict Sulu
- Promote livelihood and economic activities through cooperation
- Become a consultative body in the area
- Promote solidarity and unity among clan members in Sulu
- Act as a mediator, negotiator and a monitoring body
- Uphold Islamic tenets and principles in the resolution of clan conflicts

The clans who signed up to the declaration included representatives from the following clans: Tan, Tulawie, Caluang, Abdurajak, Estino, Kamlon, Tawasil, Undug, Bahjin, Tingkahan, Sangkula, Hayudini, Ammas Mira – Ujan, Omar, Daud, and Sahidulla.

Lt. Gen. Dolorfino reminded the participants, "Signing a piece of paper is not enough. You must also follow

through with what you have committed to.”

David Gorman further asked the participants, “Take advantage of the opportunity this gathering presents to resolve conflicts you need to end.”

Among the clan leaders who attended the conference was Al-Hassan Caluang, representing the Caluang Clan, who actively participated in the discussions and workshops. His clan has a long term family conflict with the Tawasil Clan, represented in the conference by Benhar Tawasil. Because of politics, the two clans have been at odds since the early 1990s.

Seeing Tawasil at the conference, Caluang commented “*Wai ako nag-expect kakitaan ko siya ha tempat byaini, hangkanna pagkitah ko kaniya, kimuyag tuod in atay ko despite our misunderstanding and miscommunication, nakapikil ako kalukalu sabab sin conference ini mahinang tiranan hikasulut sin parkalah namuh lagih kami ra mag-family.*” (I did not expect to see him - Ben Tawasil - here, at this type of occasion. But seeing him, I have become enlightened. With this, along with my prayer, despite our misunderstandings and miscommunication, I am hoping that this conference will be a good reason for the settlement of our family conflict. After-all, we ourselves are also related)

Caluang further added, “This conference helped me understand and value the effort of reconciliation and the impact of the conference.”

Convened by the Office of the Mufti of Sulu and the HD Centre through its programs in Sulu, the conference allowed clan representatives to meet and dialogue with each other over the course of two days.

A representative from the Tan clan, Hadji Delfin Tan, whose wife’s clan has an ongoing conflict with Caluang’s in-laws that already resulted in at least four killed in just two years, told their fellow clan leaders and representatives, “We now agree to resolve this conflict through reconciliation.”

The clan representatives committed to meet again in the succeeding months to follow up on the conference and see how they can capitalize on the gains they achieved over the two day gathering. Everyone went home agreeing that the main objective is to contribute to establishing peace and order in Sulu, while ensuring the human security of the people. For the clan representatives, this will ultimately facilitate the social and economic development of the province.

SOME SPEAKERS AND GUESTS AT THE CLAN LEADERS' CONFERENCE, (LEFT TO RIGHT) HD CENTRE MEDIATION ADVISOR DAVID GORMAN, NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MUSLIM FILIPINOS COMMISSIONER MONER BAJUNAID, DR. IBRAHIM Q. BAHJIN (PARAMOUNT SULTAN OF NORTH BORNEO AND SULU ARCHIPELAGO) CLAN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BAHJIN CLAN, CONFERENCE FACILITATOR DR. JAMAIL KAMLIAN, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER ON THE PEACE PROCESS DIRECTOR FOR MINDANAO AFFAIRS SUSANA MARCAIDA, AND ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES WESTERN MINDANAO COMMANDER LIEUTENANT GENERAL MOHAMMAD BENJAMIN DOLORFINO.



Overview of Conflicts Mediated

PERV-Sulu helps resolve the Tingkasan-Sayyadi, Baid-Salikala, and Unding-Cabato conflicts

The HD Centre's PERV-Sulu and TSS programs complement each other very well. In August 2010 alone, three conflicts were successfully mediated by the HD Centre, PERV-Sulu and TSS, greatly contributing to the reduction of peace and security problems in the province.

The successful facilitation and mediation of the Tingkasan-Sayyadi conflict in Silangkan, Parang Municipality shows that given the pure intention of both parties, namely their leaders Abtajir Tingkasan, and MNLF community leader and commander, and Mudz Sayyadi, Barangay Chairman of Kahuy Sinah, an end to conflict is always attainable. This resulted in the bringing of peace back to their community and to the lives of their family and clan members. (See next article for a more comprehensive narration of this conflict's successful facilitation and mediation.)

The Unding – Cabato conflict was endorsed to TSS member, Dr. Sahiron Amiril, and the PERV-Sulu volunteers by an official of the Sulu Provincial Government. This conflict was initially assessed as one potentially resulting in a re-emergence of hostilities. However PERV-Sulu and TSS also saw that there was room for reconciliation, noting that the conflicting parties appeared at the time to be ready for dialogue and settlement.

PERV-Sulu and TSS then arranged a neutral venue for the parties to meet and agree upon a manner of reconciliation. In their first attempt, PERV-Sulu and TSS encountered difficulties dealing with the parties for them to sign a proposed compromise agreement for settlement. Eventually, however, the parties agreed. The Jolo PNP Chief of Police, the Mindanao State University Chancellor, the Barangay Chairman of San Raymundo were the conflicting parties reside, and HD representatives and TSS members witnessed the settlement. They signed a compromise agreement notarized by the Public Attorney of Jolo.

In the same month, in the middle of the Muslim Holy Month of Ramdan, another conflict was endorsed by the Jolo PNP Police Office and the Patikul PNP Police

*In August 2010 alone,
three conflicts were
successfully mediated by HD,
PERV-Sulu and TSS:
The Tingkasan-Sayyadi Conflict
The Baid-Salikala Conflict
The Undig-Cabato Conflict*

Office to the TSS and PERV-Sulu for mediation and reconciliation.

The conflict started when two businessmen, Abdurakib Baid and Jordy Salikala, were preparing their harvested fruits at Jolo Port for shipment to Zamboanga City, the main economic hub of Western Mindanao (which includes Sulu Province). The root of the conflict was the demand by each party that their goods be transported first. Tensions heightened when members of the Baid group started pointing their 45-calibre pistols at the other group, threatening to kill Mr. Salikala. Fortunately, people around them managed to prevent any shooting or further escalation of the violence.

The following day, one of the parties based in Patikul Municipality organized his relatives. Arming themselves, they planned for an attack on their rivals. Luckily, Barangay officials from their village found out about their planned assault and immediately reported the matter to the Police, who then sought the assistance of HD Centre and its programs in Sulu. HD, PERV-Sulu, and TSS immediately began facilitation and mediation efforts, and eventually managed to abruptly end the conflict through spiritual enlightenment from TSS member, Ustadz Yahiya Abdulla.

The Ustadz' words to the parties were, "It is not the warrior who will be tagged with the name *Great Warrior*, instead it is the one who can overtake his anger." A compromise agreement was then entered into by the parties and notarized by the Public Attorney.

The values learned in these initial conflicts resolved by HD, PERV-Sulu and TSS, is that a lot of lives can be saved if an immediate mediation response can be quickly organized, facilitated, and executed properly. For this, a good, neutral venue for dialogue, and the right mediators and facilitators are key factors to consider.

In October 2010, hostilities stemming from an election-related conflict in the Municipality of Bangingi (formerly Tongkil) ended following continuous monitoring and reporting from PERV-Sulu and the intervention of a TSS member, retired Police Senior Superintendent Ibnohasim Undug. This conflict dated back to the May 2010 automated polls, particularly the Mayoralty Elections that pitted incumbent Mayor Abdulwahid Sahidullah and his oponent Radin “Milikan” Ladjamatli. The incumbent was reelected, but not without heavy fighting between the two parties. A deeper analysis of this conflict revealed deep allegiances between the parties and senior political leaders of Sulu Province, and many considered it a ‘proxy war’ between Sulu’s top rival politicians, the Arbisons and the Tans.

That same month, a dispute over land on the same island of Bullaan in Bangingi Municipality resulted in massive hostilities. This again involved Mayor Sahidullah and his supporters, but this time against the occupant of a piece of land owned by Hadji Magdar Jumma and his followers.

As reported by PERV-Sulu weeks prior to these hostilities, the Mayor paid half of the sale amount for the piece of land occupied by Jummah, to Leizzete Gamson, the supposed original land owner. But apparently, Jummah was questioning the sale and was unwilling to evacuate. In early October the Mayor himself went to the area to check on the situation.

Just prior to the hostilities, the Mayor left Bangingi for Zamboanga City where he resides and holds office half of the time. The Mayor sent a very important message to the tenant that they must leave the area. However, Jummah rejected the order and instead prepared for whatever eventuality may arise.

Days later, the conflict exploded. From high noon until late afternoon, heavy gunfighting and mortar

shelling took place between the Mayor’s group and Jummah’s group. Fighting was heard even from the adjacent island of Mamad. Mobile phone cellsites were damaged resulting in a loss of communications, and villagers were forced to flee. Provincial Police authorities intervned and sent a team of sixty policemen to the island.

Together with the team was PERV-Sulu volunteer for Bangingi, Marcus Haradji, who was eventually stranded in the area of conflict due to mis-identification.

By the time the peacekeeping team arrived on the island, no resident could be found. All had evacuated to the nearest islands of Dungun, Luuk-Tongkil, and others. Surprisingly, only a few non-combatants were wounded from the crossfire.

What led to the timely intervention by the Provincial Police authorities was the swift action by HD Centre staff in Sulu and TSS member, retired Police Colonel Ibnohashim Undug. They met with the Sahidullah Clan representative who attended the Clan Conference the previous month, praying for intervention regarding the conflict in Bullaan Island. The party decided to first brief the PNP Provincial Police Director, Police Senior Superintendent Joseph Ramac, and provide suggestions to end the hostilities, if not the conflict itself.

With the urging of Colonel Undug, Provincial Police Director Ramac decided to immediately implement a strict ceasefire in the area of conflict. This move was conceptualized with utmost urgency given that while deliberating on their intervention, more reports were coming into the Provincial Police Headquarters of wounded members from both sides. PD Ramac personally oversaw the implementation of the ceasefire, flying to the area by police helicopter and sending a team of sixty policemen to enforce the ceasefire.

Note: The civilian rank of Police Senior Superintendent used by the Philippine National Police today was formerly the military rank of Colonel used in the defunct Philippine Constabulary (the precursor of the PNP). Today, Police Officer ranks are interchangeably used both in common practice and in formal name titles.

Table 2: HD-TSS-PERV Analysis of Conflicts in Sulu

		SERIOUSNESS OF THESE CONFLICTS				
		1 (not serious)	2 (not very serious)	3 (serious)	4 (very serious)	5 (most serious)
LIKELIHOOD FOR HOSTILITIES AND TENSION ROOTED IN THESE CONFLICTS TO RESUME	5 ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tongkil - Brgy. Sigumbal, Sahidulla vs. Hj. Ridzwan Tongkil - Brgy. Tainga Bakkaw (Sifio Duay Bud), Sahidulla vs. Maling 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panamao - Brgy. Parang, Duyan and Kan Sipat vs. Aksan (RESOLVED) Panamao - Brgy. Sikan Haw, Salialam vs. Kudjah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tapul - Brgy. Kamaunggih, Jaka vs. Major Ismael 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kalinggalang Caluang (Political Conflict) - Brgys. Tunggul and Pang, Misuari vs. Alibbun Maimbung - Brgys. Poblacion, Kulasi and Tanduh Patung, Tan vs. Maldisa, Arbison, Nanda
	4 very likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parang - Brgy. Kannaway, Halipa vs. Majidul Parang - Brgy. Kaha, Alih and Tingkahan vs. Abdurahim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patikul - Brgy. Taglibi, Land Grabbing and Rape Case Panamao - Brgy. Suligpang Tayungan, case of the Brgy. Captain of Adjid Siasi - Brgy. West Kuntad, Alam vs. Iddin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pata - Brgy. Kamawi, Hajihil vs. Burahan Omar - Brgy. Niangkaan, Pantasan vs. Tapahing Parang - Brgy. Tikung, Hadjirul vs. Kalah Lugus - Brgy. Bas Mangkallay, Hajad vs. Hassan Lugus - Brgy. Alu, Duyong (Aradais) vs. Hailulla Lugus (Land Dispute) - Maastah vs. Malik Luuk - Brgy. Liyanutan, Binang vs. Rae Indanan - Brgy. Kuppong, Alnasher Talib vs. Sonny Talib Lugus - Brgy. Omlah, Hajan vs. Laha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talipao - Brgy. Lambanah, Uddin & Abduhasan vs. Aldam & Asimuddin Talipao - Brgy. Samak, Kiram vs. Imam Tuan Rajik Bakkal Parang - Brgy. Piyahan (Idjing) vs. Brgy. Igangan (Sampang) Maimbung - Brgy. Bualuh Lahi and Lapa, Ammasita vs. Joko Panamao - Brgy. Tabuh Manok, Undug vs. Pustaham Jolo - Brgy. Kasanyangan (Tulawie) vs. Barangay Kasalamatan (Ajirin) Jolo - Brgy. Walled City (Abduhalim) vs. Brgy. Asturias (Gasman) 	
	3 likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parang - Brgy. Bulih Bawang, Jaam vs. Dahay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jolo - Brgy. Kasanyangan (Tulawie) vs. Brgy. Kasalamatan (Ansao) Patikul - Brgy. Liang, case of the policeman killed by unidentified suspect at large 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panamao - Brgy. Siet Higad, Membol vs. Brgy. Chair Ruben Pandami - Brgy. Subah-Subah, Mamang vs. Naser Indanan - Brgy. Talatak Conflict Area, ASG vs. AFP 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tongkil - Brgy. Kahikukuk Sahidulla vs. Ladjamatti
	2 not very likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panglima Estino - Gasman Amman vs. Estino Pangutaran - Barangay Alu Buna, Monus vs. Posing Kalinggalang Caluang, Barangay Pangdan-Pangdan Political Rivalry Panglima Estino - Barangay Likbah, Akkang vs. Rainer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jolo - Brgy. Kasalamatan (Tulawie) vs. Brgy. Kakuyagan (Nahudan) Indanan - Brgy. Tagbak, Brgy. Captain Jakiram vs. Isnaji Talipao - Brgy. Buntud, Salim vs. Suliban Pata - Brgy. Likud, Masillam vs. Burahan Indanan - Brgy. Bunut, Brgy. Captain Askali vs. Baridji Pata - Brgy. Daungdung, Faujia Sahibil vs. Lucia Group Tapul - Brgy. Hawan, Salip Paang vs. Daud Tapul - Brgy. Kannaway, Sulayman vs. Daud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pata - Brgy. Sangkap, Haddari vs. Rajik & Burahan Parang - Brgy. Lanao Dakula, Sikal vs. Jinnul Indanan - Brgy. Kan Ebis vs. Barangay Andihih Indanan - Brgy. Malimbayah vs. Barangay Tanduh Pugut Luuk - Brgy. Tubig Putih and Barangay Kan Mindus, Maddas vs. Arbison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Siasi - Brgy. Lammin, Jerry vs. Anni Panamao - Barangay Election for Association of Barangay Captains on December 13, 2010 	
	1 not likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pangutaran - Brgy. Pandanniog, Logo vs. Residents of Poblacion 				

With the PNP intervention in place, Colonel Undug called the attention of Mayor Sahidulla asking for an end to the hostilities and seeking a possible peaceful resolution to the conflict. The Mayor, in due recognition of Colonel Undug and the efforts of the HD Centre and its programs in Sulu, agreed and called on his men to stand down.

In hindsight, HD, TSS and PERV-Sulu saw in this experience that immediate intervention is always key to stopping the hostilities. This effectively paves the way for resolving the conflict and reconciliation to come next.

On the previous page, one can see a chart (Table 2) developed by the PERV-Sulu which maps conflicts they have analyzed and in some cases were addressing. The TSS PERV Sulu review each of these cases regularly through the chart, sharing information with the AFP and PNP and discussing which cases they should engage immediately and which ones they

may be able to solve. The chart maps conflicts based on the seriousness of the conflict and the likelihood of violence. Indicators of seriousness include:

1. Not Serious: no killing, no displacement, no one evacuated
2. Not Very Serious: no killing, no displacement, but has potential for worse
3. Serious: some wounded, no killing, no displacement, affecting 1 Barangay
4. Very Serious: some killed, some displaced, affects 3 or more Barangays
5. Most Serious: some killed, some wounded, affects entire province

Indicators of likelihood of violence to resume include:

1. Not Likely: no incidents in more than a year
2. Not Very Likely: no incidents for some time
3. Likely: incidents in past month, but stable
4. Very Likely: incidents in previous months, getting worse
5. Ongoing: incidents ongoing

A Case Study on the Alaluddin - Kudjah Conflict

Background

In the Barangay of Seit Higad Panamao, a small village in Sulu province, Aynan Abdurahman was doing her laundry outside her house while her husband, Bijin Abdurahman, a member of the Alaluddin clan was inside their house working. Along came Mahmud Hassan, a member of the Kudjah clan, second cousin to Bijin and also Aynan's former suitor and sometime boyfriend. Mahmud, who carried an M16 automatic assault rifle, was on his way to harvest native Mangoes. As he passed by Aynan's house he called out playfully to his former lover, 'it is better you come with me to harvest mangoes' - "manglapud mampallam". Aynan warned him not to make such an invitation for he knows she is already married and with child. He should forget what happened between them before, she said, and besides her husband might hear them. Mahmud Hassan let it go and carried on his way. However, Aynan's husband Bijin had heard their exchange and came out and confronted his wife. The two fought and Bijin beat his wife. Still not content, Bijin grabbed his own M16, followed Mahmud down the road, and shot him dead without remorse.

Note - This case study highlights the need for creativity in facilitation, ownership by the parties and the community most-affected by the conflict, and focus throughout the entire task of mediating the conflict to its successful conclusion.

Mahmud's killing sparked a series of violent attacks and counterattacks between the Alaluddin and Kudjah clans and their allies. Over the next eight months, twelve people died, four were wounded, and hundreds were displaced, their livelihoods ruined. The Barangay was on edge and families lived in fear of when the next attack might come. Children stayed home from school and few went to the market or even harvested their crops from their fields for fear of being ambushed.

The events described here are not that unusual. On average fifteen to twenty people a month are killed in Sulu due to clan conflicts. And quite often these clan conflicts erupt over the most seemingly innocuous event, which then spirals out of control drawing in allied and enemy clans, separatist political movements, and even the Abu Sayyaf all looking to settle old scores. This in turn draws in the military and the police, which

On average fifteen to twenty people a month are killed in Sulu due to clan conflicts. And quite often these clan conflicts erupt over the most seemingly innocuous event, which then spirals out of control drawing in allied and enemy clans, separatist political movements, and even the Abu Sayyaf all looking to settle old scores. This in turn draws in the military and the police, which then turns personal grievances into full blown political conflicts.

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The challenge in Sulu, where endemic clan violence doesn't just claim lives but disrupts livelihoods and holds back development, is to build effective peacemaking and violence reduction mechanisms. Recognizing this, the HD Centre began training, advising and supporting local eminent persons to help more effectively mediate local conflicts. Over the last several months the strategy has paid off. Six local conflicts have been resolved through support to the *Tumikang Sama Sama*, or TSS, a group of eminent persons the HD Centre oversees. Most have been smaller conflicts, relatively easy to settle. But their resolution has built the group's credibility and with increased success more and more clans and local leaders are asking for the group to intervene. While clearly it will take much more than this group to sort out Sulu's myriad conflicts, hopefully, the TSS has begun to demonstrate to the people of Sulu that there is a way to resolve these conflicts and there is much they can do to help themselves. The Alaluddin – Kudjah clan conflict, and how it was resolved, amply illustrates the benefits of local mediation.

Very soon after the killing of Mahmud, the Mayor of Panamao, the municipality where Barangay Seit Higad

is located met with his family in a bid to prevent a revenge attack. Then he met with the perpetrator's family from the Alaluddin clan. At first the victim's family appeared willing to settle for a financial payout, and the perpetrator's family arranged for blood money from a neighboring clan. However, clearly this wasn't enough; the Kudjah clan then demanded that the perpetrator spend at least some time in jail. This angered the Alaluddin clan and the talks broke down.

Tensions reigned in the Barangay as residents expected violence at any time. It took a while, but six months later the Kudjah clan retaliated, initiating an ambush that killed three members of the Alaluddin clan. One month later, the Alaluddin clan counter-attacked with an assault on some members of the Kudjah clan in a neighboring Barangay, killing five and losing three of their own.

Initiation

It was against this backdrop that the HD Centre, the TSS and the Office of the Mufti held a clan conference bringing together twenty of the most powerful clan leaders from Sulu in September 2010. The conference was initiated following an assassination attempt on the Governor of Sulu by the Abu Sayyaf Group, which most observers suspect was initiated by a rival clan. Sulu was in turmoil so HD decided to bring together as many of the top clans to see what could be done more generally about preventing and resolving clan conflicts. As part of the conference, the clans discussed the effect of clan conflicts on their communities and families, successful efforts at resolving them, what could be done to more successfully resolve them locally and which conflicts could the TSS might help resolve. A clan member from Barangay Seit Higad suggested taking a look at the Alaluddin and Kudjah conflict and offered to help. Initially the TSS was reluctant to take on such a serious conflict, but agreed that they would consider it among others.

After further consultations and meetings, the TSS agreed that the Alaluddin and Kudjah conflict stood out as one with the potential for being resolved. Contacts were important. One TSS member knew an influential Kudjah clan landowner and believed he could act as a potential mediator. His name was Rockefeller Undug.

Over the following weeks, the TSS travelled to Panamao and Zamboanga City meeting with various individuals familiar with the conflict including the rival family members, the landowner, Rockefeller Undug, the military, police and local government officials. The clans did not oppose mediation efforts and Rockefeller was also cooperative and willing to mediate, as he wanted his land to be utilized again. Although he had vested interests with one of the clans, both clans knew Rockefeller as a credible and honest broker who was a highly respected landowner in the community.

Engagement

Although not trained as a mediator, Rockefeller Undug had been involved in mediating other clan conflicts in the past. Furthermore, HD and the TSS were able to provide him with advice and assistance to keep him engaged full time over the coming intense weeks of involvement. Over the next few weeks, Rockefeller shuttled back and forth between the clans and local officials gathering facts and laying out scenarios for what life would be like if the conflict was resolved, as opposed to what it would be like if the conflict continued. He discussed with each clan how their lives had changed as a result of the conflict, how they lived in fear that they or their children would be ambushed, how the children could not go to school as they were all closed down, how no one could go to the fields to harvest crops and neighboring families had been displaced to other Barangays. He shared the suffering of the community with the feuding clans and asked questions such as ‘what do you plan to do next?’ and ‘when do you think this will end?’, ‘do you want this to end’?

While families in the area were conscious of their suffering, they lacked a credible mediator to discuss the situation with them honestly. Nor had anyone spoken to them about the futility of the violence and about the possibilities for resolution. After a couple of months, it became increasingly clear that the feuding families had had enough and were prepared to reconcile. A meeting was called with the Mayor of Panamao, local officials and the mediator to convey the progress that had been made and to build support. All were in favor of immediately resolving the conflict and agreed to pressure and cajole the families into a lasting settlement. However, it was also clear that due

... there is a way to resolve these conflicts and there is much they can do to help themselves. The Alaluddin-Kudjah clan conflict, and how it was resolved, amply illustrates the benefit of local mediation.

to the loss of livelihood caused by the death of their family members, the killing of cattle and the loss of firearms that had been seized, the clans would insist on compensation as well as the return of any lost or stolen firearms.

Local officials and leaders agreed to support this kind of compensation and put up 150,000 Pesos (3000 USD) to help the families recover their financial losses.

The final arrangements then came into place. The families agreed to sign a covenant declaring that they supported the reconciliation process, and would not revert to violence. They accepted the compensation package on offer from local officials and dropped any and all outstanding claims against the other in addition to the return of seized firearms.

With the parties and the community getting ready for a settlement the facilitator approached the Marines and the Police for assistance in enforcing any agreement and preventing potential problems in the run up to a reconciliation ceremony. The marines and police agreed and also said they would send their top people to the ceremony. The parties agreed to their presence. The HD Centre was asked to host the ceremony and as part of its support HD offered to cover the costs of a reconciliation ceremony, which would bring the clans and local community together.

However, no successful peace process is immune from last minute crisis. Just as arrangements seemed to come together perfectly, the Governor of Sulu offered to host the ceremony. The HD Centre bowed to the Governor’s generous offer.

After some shuttling back and forth by the facilitator, and a bit of luck in that the venue the Governor offered



ABOVE (TOP-BOTTOM); THE BIG CROWD OF MORE THAN 200 PEOPLE THAT ATTENDED THE RECONCILIATION CEREMONY; MEMBERS OF THE ALALUDDIN AND KUDJAH CLANS EMBRACING EACH OTHER DURING THE RECONCILIATION CEREMONY; AND HD CENTRE'S VAND BIROWA AND TSS MEMBER RETIRED POLICE COLONEL IBNUHASIM UNDUG DURING THE RECONCILIATION CEREMONY SIGNING THE COVENANT AS WITNESSES.

for the ceremony was already being used, the two parties agreed to another site, - a conference hall adjoining the Provincial Governor's office that was not actually in his office. This way the Governor saved face, as did the Kudjah clan.

More than 200 people attended the ceremony including the heads of the police and the military, a representative from the Governor, two Mayors, several local officials, the Office of the Mufti, the TSS, HD, the heads of the Alaluddin and Kudjah clans and several of their allied families. In a moving ceremony both clans signed the covenant and then they embraced one another. The Mufti closed the ceremony with a prayer, citing the Koran in calling on warring parties to resolve their conflicts peacefully.

Lessons learned

- The mediator may often have a vested interest in the conflict, but it is more important that he is considered impartial, credible, and effective by the parties.
- Indemnification through blood money will be employed in any conflicts in which there is significant loss for the parties. However, employing local leaders and communities to broadly participate in pulling together the resources for compensation can help enforce an agreement.
- Laying out scenarios with the two parties may be an effective tool in generating awareness of the effects of the conflict on others, future losses to come and opportunities that exist for preventing this.
- Conflicts that are serious but have begun recently (within one year) may be easier to resolve than older outstanding conflicts that have entangled too many rival clans and confused the issues.
- Including local leaders throughout the process is critical.
- Including the military and police when agreed upon by the parties can help significantly.
- HD needs to remain in the background to ensure it maintains its effectiveness and impartiality in the future.
- HD's flexibility, interest and sustained engagement keep the parties and the facilitator focused.
- Never let your guard down especially when you get to the homestretch.

Silangkan, Striving to be Better

Barangay Silangkan in the Municipality of Parang in Sulu is one of the areas that suffered major hostilities during the insurgency of the Moro National Liberation Front in the late 1960s to the 1970s, and during the resurgence of their rebellion from 2001 to 2007. Memories of bombings, mortar and artillery fire, airstrikes, and ambushes still remain fresh in the minds of the members of this community. As if this situation was not bad enough, clan conflicts and activities of the Abu Sayyaf Group are prevalent in Silangkan.

As a result of this violence, residents have constantly experienced displacement. Their properties have been destroyed and rebuilt, only to be abandoned and destroyed again. Children's education has been constantly disrupted and few would invest in the community. With few police and military present, law and order fell into the hands of clans and insurgent commanders.

Out of this seeming hopelessness, a ranking MNLF combatant, considered an elite fighter and commander in the ranks of the Muslim secessionist group's Sulu State Revolutionary Committee, thought that things could be better for his beloved home-Barangay of Silangkan. Commander Abtajir Tingkasan began talking about the possibility of peace for his *bangsa*, his people. Abtajir, as he is more commonly known, was always a respected figure in his community, but because he seldom engaged them publicly, Silangkan always yearned for a community leader. Initially reluctant, he engaged his people in community-level mediation of local grievances through dialogue.

But as is the reality of traditional politics in Sulu, because of the support Abtajir gave to a particular politician in the area who ran for Municipal Mayor, he was eventually drawn to a clan conflict with the supporters of that politician's opponent during the May 2010 National and Local Election. This conflict pitted Abtajir with Mudz Sayyadi, the Barangay Chairman of Kahoy Sinah, the adjacent Barangay.

This conflict nearly resulted in hostilities when Abtajir's



A MEETING IN SILANGKAN IN AUGUST 2010 BETWEEN ONE OF THE CLANS INVOLVED IN CONFLICT AND A TEAM FROM THE HD CENTRE, THE TSS, AND THE PERV-SULU. AT THE FAR END OF THE TABLE IN WHITE SHIRT IS ABTAJIR TINGKASAN SPEAKING WITH HD CENTRE'S DAVID GORMAN.

group allegedly began taking control of the precincts and voters in the area. A week after the election, tension peaked when they began pointing firearms at each other. Fortunately this did not lead to actual fighting, but legal charges were hurled at each other before the Regional Trial Court in Sulu. It was only a matter of time before the threat of fighting would eventually result in hostilities.

By this time, the HD Centre, the PERV-Sulu, and the TSS commenced facilitation work and began going back and forth between the conflicting parties. Immediately, the side of Abtajir was amenable to the mediation efforts. It was with the other side that more work was needed. For this, HD, PERV-Sulu, and TSS also approached the local authorities and other concerned leaders looking for any other party that could help with the side of Sayyadi.

This facilitation effort taught HD, PERV-Sulu, and TSS ways in which their individual and collective mediation skills could be enhanced. For this particular experience, it was through the employment of an additional third party facilitator or mediator who would

This facilitation effort taught HD, PERV-Sulu, and TSS ways in which their individual and collective mediation skills could be enhanced.

For this particular experience, it was through the employment of an additional third party facilitator or mediator who would be generally acceptable and respected by both sides.

be generally acceptable and respected by both sides, but more importantly accepted by one side that needed more convincing that a mediated settlement is always better than continuing with conflict.

Within two months, the conflict ended. After much lobbying on the issue with local leaders and shuttling between the two parties by HD Centre, PERV-Sulu volunteers and TSS members, a Congressman from Sulu, Tupay Loong, intervened to put pressure on Sayyadi to drop the complaint and reconcile. With Congressman Loong's intervention, the Barangay captain of Kahoy Sinah was prevailed upon to accept the mediation and reconcile with Abtajir's party.

PERV-Sulu's Participation in the Mindanao Week of Peace 2010

The Mindanao Week of Peace (MWP) is celebrated every year from the last Thursday of November to the first Wednesday of December. This has always been a major event in Sulu Province, particularly in the capital town of Jolo and its adjacent municipalities of Patikul and Indanan. Various civil society groups, peoples organizations, Government agencies and other institutions join its many activities and events.

PERV-SULU VOLUNTEERS JOINING THE MINDANAO WEEK OF PEACE PARADE THAT TOOK PLACE ON 26 NOVEMBER 2010. FROM LEFT, PHYRALEEN AWANG (PERV-SULU VOLUNTEER FOR TALIPAO), NUR-IN HAPAS (PANGUTARAN), ALSADAR MUKAMMALI (EAST PARANG), JUVAIRA HAMBALI (PANGLIMA ESTINO), JOCELYN BASALUDDIN (PERV-SULU SECRETARIAT MEMBER), MUGHRIN MAHANG (VOLUNTEER FOR UPPER INDANAN) AND KHAMAR ALLAMA (SECRETARIAT MEMBER).



In 2007, HD Centre through its program at the time, the GRP-MNLF Peace Working Group, spearheaded the Sulu Celebrations of the MWP. In 2008, it was the turn of another former HD Centre program, the Armed Violence Reduction Initiative, to spearhead the MWP Celebrations.

In 2010, HD and its programs focused on two areas not usually reached by the MWP Celebrations in Sulu, Silangkan and Luuk. HD's PERV-Sulu and TSS programs brought the MWP celebrations to Barangay Silangkan in Parang where it successfully facilitated and mediated the resolution of the Abtajir Tingkasan - Mudz Sayyadi conflict. When it could, HD and its programs also participated in the MWP Celebration's other activities.

The 2010 MWP lead convenor for Sulu was the Sulu Provincial Government. They organized various activities, including an opening parade in downtown Jolo that was participated in by PERV-Sulu, a cleanliness drive, and an open forum on peace, security, and other related matters.

As every year the MWP celebrations in Sulu are brought further and further to the other municipalities and islands of the province - as they should - the PERV-Sulu, as mentioned, went to Silangkan.

The activities and events prepared by HD and PERV-Sulu were intended to last only a day. However, due to the eager participation of the residents in the area, both adults and children, the games were constantly extended or repeated, and eventually a second day was needed to complete the programs prepared by HD and PERV-Sulu. These included ballgames for the adults and parlor games for the children. The highlight of the games was the bamboo climbing contest that really caught the interest of everyone due to the greasy bamboo that participants had to climb to grab the prize at the end. There was also a competition ala-*The Amazing Race* wherein the grand prize was a mobile phone.

In the evening of the first day, HD and the PERV-Sulu team conducted a consultation with the people of Silangkan on the Peace Centered Community. During the consultation, an image of Silangkan was illustrated

In 2010, HD and its programs focused on two areas not usually reached by the MWP Celebrations in Sulu, Silangkan and Luuk.

in many ways before the people, and there they realized what the community had become. Immediately they decided that this needed to be changed in order for Silangkan to have a better future. The people believed strongly that this was the right time for this, especially with the presence of third parties that are willing to help.

The following day, the residents of Barangay Silangkan declared their area as a Peace Centered Community.

Silangkan, a Peace Centered Community

After the settlement of the conflict involving Commander Abtajir, the people of the Barangay Silangkan community saw, understood, and fully appreciated his seriousness and his desire to become a peacebuilder. With this, the community pursued ideas on how Silangkan could be turned into a *Peace Centered Community* – a long drawn aspiration of the people after many years of suffering as victims of conflict.

Inspired by the desire of the people to help themselves, HD Centre, PERV-Sulu, and the TSS furthered their assistance to the community and facilitated means with which the people of Silangkan could turn this idea into reality.

A month later, in November 2010 during the Mindanao Week of Peace celebrations, the community of Silangkan assembled and made known their collective willingness to declare Barangay Silangkan as a Peace Centred Community. Plans were put in place for their long march forward to realize the real meaning of peace for Silangkan.

The signing of the Affirmation of Silangkan as a Peace Centered Community took place during a special Mindanao Week of Peace celebration right in Silangkan, organized by HD, PERV-Sulu and the TSS. It was witnessed by many guests, including officials and residents from Silangkan's three neighboring Barangays. As part of the program for this event, a Message of Peace was delivered by Commander Abtajir Tingkasan. This was a source of inspiration for many who actually witnessed this event.

“For almost ten years I’ve been with my armed men, striving and fighting with conviction and belief that I can be an instrument in reaching everyone’s aim to have peace. But I realized it was the other way around. I became an instrument of your displacement, of instability that badly affected the studies of our children, and a cause of damage for your farms.

I remember the time I once came to this community and everyone started packing their things and slowly abandoning their houses. One of you said, ‘Let’s move Abtajir is here. He might be caught by the AFP and we



will be trapped in the crossfire.’

For those things I’ve caused you in past years – I sincerely ask for your forgiveness and I regret what I’ve done and what this has caused you.

Today, let me once again lead the struggle for our future, a struggle for peace through non-violence and through peaceful means. I believe we can do it, if we just open our hearts to dialogue.

Let’s start to be one of the model Barangays/ communities of Parang. Let us unite our efforts, unite our dreams, and unite our aspirations for peace in Silangkan.”

During the MWP consultations with the people of Silangkan, followed by additional consultations with multi-sectoral stakeholders, the need for Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) was identified. A draft was developed by HD, the PERV-Sulu team, and the leaders of the Peace Centered Community (PCC) using inputs from the consultations. This draft is currently undergoing review by the Barangay Officials of Silangkan, in particular, the Barangay Councilors who have been identified to sponsor the Barangay Resolution putting the declaration and the IRR into effect at the level of the Barangay Government.

HD PROJECT OFFICER FOR SULU, VANDRAZEL BIROWA, ON STAGE IN SILANGKAN ADDRESSING THE LOCALS AND EXPLAINING TO THEM THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THEIR DECLARATION OF SILANGKAN AS A PEACE CENTERED COMMUNITY. THIS GATHERING TOOK PLACE JUST BEFORE THE SIGNING OF THE ‘LETTER OF AFFIRMATION’ (SEE FOLLOWING PAGES) DURING THE LAST DAY OF THE MINDANAO WEEK OF PEACE, 27 NOVEMBER 2010.

In the meantime, HD, the PERV-Sulu team, and the PCC leaders have been monitoring the implementation of the declaration and the IRR by the people of Silangkan themselves, in particular how it has been applied and adapted by the constituents in the Peace Centered Community. There have been very positive signs in this regard.

Eventually, HD, the PERV-Sulu team, and the PCC leaders will then engage with the Municipal Legislature (*Sangguniang Bayan*). This is with the intent of having the entire Parang Municipality recognize the existence of the PCC in Silangkan, and its IRR respected.

Finally, engagement with the Provincial Board (*Sangguniang Panlalawigan*) of Sulu will be sought, in order for the Silangkan PCC and its IRR acknowledged, recognized, and respected, not only by the Provincial Government, but also by the other Local Government Units, as well as by the National Government, in particular the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

“ In the name of Allah, Most Gracious the Most Merciful ”

LETTER OF AFFIRMATION

“ AFFIRMING SILANGKAN A PEACE CENTERED COMMUNITY BY ITS PEOPLE TOWARDS BUILDING A TOWNSHIP OF PEACE, PROSPERITY AND RESPONSIBLE LOCAL GOVERNANCE ”

We, the people of Silangkan cognizant of our character in peace building and restoring progressive socio - political structure for the hope and future of our people and our community establish this consensus to affirm Silangkan as “ Peace Centered Community ” marked this 27th day of November 2010.

Recalling the past years of experience of ruthless armed conflict and prevalent devastation, countless people of Silangkan were displaced and suffered in the crossfires; ever since our community have been vulnerable to armed violence, and.

Today, by the will and confidence of our people we must thrive to rebuild our community and improve our way of life, gleaming from a field of sufferings of so many Tausug in this part of Sulu province.

Towards our collective end of addressing family conflict, problems of human security, illiteracy, insufficient basic services and support, as well as poverty, we appeal to the effect of this popular affirmation in the soonest possible time, the earnest support of the Local Government of Sulu, multi stakeholders of peace and development, civil society organization and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue as its the most vulnerable intervention they can perform to make Silangkan a truly “ Peace Centered Community ”.

“ Inshaallah”.

In testimony heretofore, we induct our names and initials upon this communique this 27th day of November 2010, at Silangkan, Municipality of Parang, Province of Sulu, Mindanao.

 Rasdi Rabbani	 Muzni Muzni	 Nick A. Arbut	 Kabin Tingkasan	 Eva Saenz	 FERSADA ALDAM
 Nadguman Julasi	 Alhaji S. Ujiji	 Nick A. Arbut	 Kabin Tingkasan	 Eva Saenz	 FAKHAR MUSTADI
 Al-Quaid U. Sangka	 FERUNNA N. ASAD	 Nick A. Arbut	 Kabin Tingkasan	 Eva Saenz	 JUANITA C. SHARI
 SIMI RAI	 ALIH M. ALI	 Nick A. Arbut	 Kabin Tingkasan	 Eva Saenz	 ROSIMADIAH IRON
 TAMIRIN	 Nurhidayah	 Nick A. Arbut	 Kabin Tingkasan	 Eva Saenz	 IRENE A. MAJAN
 JUL DIN L. HAUK	 Nurhidayah	 Nick A. Arbut	 Kabin Tingkasan	 Eva Saenz	 NARSISA B. ABSARI
 minang samel	 Nurhidayah	 Nick A. Arbut	 Kabin Tingkasan	 Eva Saenz	 ALWAN D. ASIRI



MERCILINA S. GADJALI, PERV-SULU VOLUNTEER FOR MAIMBUNG MUNICIPALITY (WEST SIDE)

IV. WHO WE ARE: SOME PERV-SULU VOLUNTEERS

Sulu Woman Volunteer in Action

Most victims and casualties of war are women and children. But today, women have evolved into playing various lead roles both in starting or waging conflicts, and in resolving them. Not surprisingly, in the Philippines, women are among the movers in pursuing efforts to end conflicts, both at the national as well as community levels.

The HD Centre's PERV-Sulu initiative is a good example of this. Of the twenty-five volunteers deployed all over Sulu Province and the four members of the secretariat, seven are women. During PERV-Sulu meetings and activities, their individual and collective experience in monitoring and reporting violent incidents illustrate the great extent to which women's engagement in peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping has been elevated over the years.

One of these women PERV-Sulu volunteers is Mercilina S. Gadjali of Barangay Bualo, Municipality of Maimbung. Born on 23 September 1980, Gadjali holds a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from the Sulu State College. She recalls one of her most memorable experiences as a PERV-Sulu volunteer.

"There have been constant reports that family feuds and clan conflicts were rampant in Maimbung,

especially those caused by political rivalries resulting in election-related violence. One such conflict had persisted for several decades and in fact led to the filing of charges before the Regional Trial Court.

During the May 2010 Elections, a political rivalry between two prominent clans in Sulu was once again rekindled in Maimbung as each clan had members contesting the mayoralty post of the municipality.

On election day, 10 May 2010, during the first hour of voting alone, tensions flared when one of the parties insisted against the opening of the COMELEC's PCOS machine and other election paraphernalia in some precincts, since these were allegedly 'in the control' of his rivals.

Apprehensive for the threat, the COMELEC ordered the change of polling place to another area which would now favor the other party.

This led to indiscriminate firing of guns all over the vicinity of the original polling place, and to the immediate and chaotic dispersal of people who were already in line ready to vote. I was among those people caught in this melee, trapped in the ensuing crossfire between the two parties together with members of the

Not surprisingly, in the Philippines, women are among the movers in pursuing efforts to end conflicts both at the national as well as community levels.

media, election supervisors, technicians, teachers who were deputized to conduct the elections, and other COMELEC personnel - most of them women.

Fortunately, after the shoot-out all were unharmed.”

According to Gadjali this experience made her a stronger person more committed to her work for peace in Maimbung and the rest of Sulu. It also helped her realize that women and men experience conflict differently. For her, each serve an important role and contribution to resolving conflict and restoring peace.

From Gunsmith to Dedicated Servant of the Community



ALMAJAR USMAN, PERV-SULU VOLUNTEER FOR OMAR MUNICIPALITY

Like father, like son ... so the saying goes. This generational trend almost turned true for one Tausug gunsmith in Sulu. Fortunately, his son ended up becoming a community servant instead. This is the life story of the PERV-Sulu volunteer for the Municipality of Omar, Almajar Usman, 29, son of famous gunsmith Udjaman Usman of Luuk, Sulu.

When Almajar was just about to finish his High School studies, Udjaman passed away. The younger Usman immediately took up his father's trade in gunsmithing which he had been learning since his younger days. This prevented him from pursuing higher studies. By then it is said that his services were engaged by lawless elements who are always in need of such services from the black market.

One year later, the HD Centre began hiring volunteers from all over Sulu for the PERV-Sulu program. Almajar offered himself and was selected as volunteer for the Municipality of Omar, a recently created municipality that was formerly part of the Municipality of Luuk.

For Almajar Usman, being a volunteer for PERV-Sulu is actually doing community service. He added, *“I thought about it for a few days. I told myself I can read and write, but I cannot do other types of office work.”*

Usman reached a critical point of self-doubt when he wondered what if someday his sideline as a

gunsmith would be revealed. He thought this would be devastating as his craft was really contrary to the ideals of the PERV program.

Fortunately, after a few months of dedicating himself to his mandate as a PERV volunteer, and with his deepening engagement with his colleagues in the PERV program and others in the HD Centre and the TSS, Usman realized that his craft as a gunsmith was detrimental to his beloved Sulu. He felt that what he and his father had been doing was wrong.

Usman felt that producing guns and other firearms was wrong when he experienced a family feud in Omar. He came as near as he could to the area of hostilities until he could distinctly hear the sounds of the gunfight.

“Nagdayaw ako sinapang ha bay masouk pa piyagbunuan, lagih dyungug ko pa tuod siulayan in M-203 diyayaw ko.” (I once repaired a gun, an M-203. I knew it was the gun I fixed, I heard the distinct output of my craft when it was aimed and fired at someone).

Soon after, Usman said to himself that for sixteen years he was a gunsmith, and for him that is enough. He

Like father, like son ... so the saying goes. This generational trend almost turned true for one Tausug gunsmith. Fortunately, his son ended up becoming a community servant instead.

reflected that due to his expertise in gun repairs, the lives of many people have surely been affected. Usman admitted that in a month he could repair at least five firearms. This meant that in a year he could repair at least sixty. *“Therefore in sixteen years of experience as a gunsmith, more or less 960 firearms passed my hands. I don’t know where those guns are and what they had been used for,”* confessed Usman.

Almajar Usman has regretted those days. He has recently repented, pledging all his support to the PERV-Sulu program for the sake of peace and order in his community.

A PERV-Sulu Volunteer Trapped in the Bullaan Hostilities

The hostilities in the Municipality of Bangingi (formerly Tongkil) in October 2010, just nineteen days before the Barangay and *Sangguniang Kabataan* Elections, resulted in 14 people wounded and six people killed. These hostilities were election-related, taking root from the time of the automated elections in May 2010 when Radin “Milikan” Ladjamatli alleged that transgressions were perpetrated against him and his supporters by his political rivals led by the Municipal Mayor of Bangingi, Abdulwahid Sahidullah. In retaliation, Ladjamatli allegedly ordered an attack on the convoy of motorized boats accompanying winning Municipal Councilor, Malik Sariul and incumbent Barangay Chairman, Hadji Hadis Piyap, back to Barangay Kahikukuk in Bullaan Island. This convoy included members of the Bangingi PNP office who were reportedly ordered by Mayor Sahidullah to escort Sariul and Piyap.

A few meters before landing ashore, gunfire was heard from Sitio Landing directed at the speedboat of the PNP. Aside from the members of the PNP-Bangingi, PERV-Sulu volunteer for Bangingi, Marcus Haradji, was with the party. The convoy contemplated negotiating with their aggressors, the supporters of Ladjamatli. However, due to heavy gun firing, they were trapped in the midst of the houses in Sitio Landing. The bombardment resulted in the wounding of Hadji Ismah Lipae who was with the convoy.

As reported by PERV volunteer Haradji, the stand-off lasted about 30 minutes long with the ceaseless bombardment from the aggressors. It only ended when the armed CVO (Civilian Volunteer Organization) militias of the Mayor arrived to their rescue. With this, the PNP immediately sought the intervention of a negotiator



PERV-SULU VOLUNTEER FOR BANGINGI (TONGKIL), MARCUS HARADJI (STANDING), TOGETHER WITH COLLEAGUES AT HD'S OFFICE IN SULU.

known to them, Retired Police Senior Inspector Hadji Faizal Aukasa, together with PERV volunteer Haradji.

During the standoff, PERV volunteer Haradji was in constant touch with the HD Centre and the PERV secretariat. A report of the incident was then relayed to the TSS member, Retired Police Senior Superintendent Ibnohashim Undug. Colonel Undug immediately notified the Provincial PNP Police Director of Sulu, Police Senior Superintendent Joseph Ramac, asking for a total ceasefire in the conflict area.

This ceasefire was successfully established, as validated by a message sent by PERV volunteer Haradji to the PERV secretariat informing them that the ceasefire had materialized starting the morning of the following day.

A few meters before landing ashore, gunfire was heard from Sitio Landing directed at the speedboat of the PNP. Aside from the members of the PNP-Bangingi, PERV-Sulu volunteer for Bangingi, Marcus Haradji, was with the party.

However, the day after, the ceasefire broke down when sporadic gunfire was reportedly initiated again from the side of Ladjamatli. A huge gunfight ensued with high-calibre explosions being heard. It was later noted that this included mortar shelling and 50-calibre machine guns. Both sides were known to own huge caches of arms. The fighting resulted in one killed and five wounded from the side of Mayor Sahidullah and five killed and eight wounded from the side of Ladjamatli. One of the wounded was the elder brother of the Mayor, Hadji Usman Sahidullah.

For the civilians and non-combatants, they had nowhere to go but to evacuate to the nearest Barangay, Tinutungan, particularly in Sitio Suguran. Even until recently some residents of Barangay Kahikukuk where most of the fighting occurred are still at the said sitio.

In restoring order in the area, the Provincial PNP Office established a peacekeeping force in the area with a detachment in Barangay Kahikukuk, while the AFP through the Philippine Marines set up a detachment at Sitio Landing.

Marcus meanwhile continues to monitor the situation and is now identifying with the TSS ways to resolve the conflict permanently.

The PERV-Sulu Volunteers

- Rosemain Abduraji**
Volunteer for Jolo
- Satra Mahamud**
Volunteer for Indanan (Lower)
- Mughrin Mahang**
Volunteer for Indanan (Upper)
Born on April 5, 1987
A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Major in Management from Sulu State College, Jolo, Sulu
- Midzfar Mukarram**
Volunteer for Patikul (Latih)
Born on November 11, 1975
A graduate of Bachelor of Arts in English at Sulu State College, Jolo, Sulu
- Jul-Astah Salamuddin**
Volunteer for Patikul (Taglibi)
Born on September 19, 1982
- Alex Mariamin**
Volunteer for Parang (West)
A graduate of Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication from Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City
- Al-Sadar Mukammali**
Volunteer for Parang (East)
Born on August 22, 1986
A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from Sulu State College, Jolo, Sulu
- Mercilina Gadjali**
Volunteer for Maimbung (West)
Born on September 23, 1980
A graduate of Bachelor of Elementary Education, from Sulu State College, Jolo, Sulu
- Berkis Bassaluddin**
Volunteer for Maimbung (East)
Born on May 8, 1973
Holder of a Certificate in Community Development from Far Eastern Univ., Manila
- Phyraleen Awang**
Volunteer for Talipao
Born on June 09, 1982
A graduate of Bachelor of Elementary Education from Notre Dame of Jolo College, Jolo, Sulu
- Alfadzrey Asgari**
Volunteer for Panglima Tahil
Born on april 14, 1976
A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Forestry from Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City
- Juvaira Hambali**
Volunteer for Panglima Estino
Born on September 10, 1976
A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Mindanao State Univ., Jolo, Sulu
- Nelson Sarahan**
Volunteer for Panamao
- Ahmad Sah Sanaani**
Volunteer for Panamao
- Junsar Ahamad**
Volunteer for Luuk
Born on January 15, 1993
- Abdulhamid Basa**
Volunteer for Kalingalang Caluang
- Almajar Usman**
Volunteer for Omar
Born on February 5, 1978
A graduate of High School
- Fadzrimar Sahipa**
Volunteer for Lugus
Born on October 1, 1986
A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Computer Science
- Modzar Aukasa**
Volunteer for Tapul
- Reyn Hambali**
Volunteer for Pata
A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City
- Bash Jundam**
Volunteer for Pata
- Al-Ameen Sampang**
Volunteer for Pandami
A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering
- Alquino Aradais**
Volunteer for Siasi
- Nur-in Hapas**
Volunteer for Pangutaran
A graduate of Islamic Studies, Jolo, Sulu
- Marcus Haradji**
Volunteer for Bangingi (Tongkil)
Born on September 11, 1967

PERV-Sulu Secretariat

1. **Lincoln T. Tulawie**
Secretariat
Born on October 18, 1982
A graduate of Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City
2. **Al-kamar A. Jidin**
Secretariat
Born on May 14, 1980
A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City
3. **Jocelyn Basaluddin**
Secretariat
Born on August 30, 1970
A graduate bachelor of Arts in History from Sulu State College, Jolo, Sulu
4. **Khamar Allama**
Volunteer for Jolo
Born on June 01, 1977
A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Electronics and Communication Engineering from Zamboanga Arturo Eustaquio Colleges, Zamboanga City

HD Centre staff in Sulu

- Vandrazel Birowa**
Project Officer for Sulu and Sulu Office Manager
- Sirhan Undug**
Security Advisor

HD Centre staff in Manila

- David Gorman**
Mediation Advisor and Philippines Country Representative
- Michael Frank Alar**
Project Officer
- Milagros Son**
Manila Office Secretary
- Kelum Wadumestrigue**
Intern (June to October 2010)

TSS Members

Permanent members:

1. Ustadz Yahiya Abdulla
2. Retired Police Colonel Ibnohashim Undug
3. Engineer Sahiron Amirul

Non-permanent members:

1. Ustadz Abdulpatta Radjaie
2. Hadji Akili Palahuddin
3. Hadja Sitti Aisa Tulawie
4. Abtajir Tingkasan
5. Hajan Abduhasad



Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue

Mediation for peace

About the HD Centre

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) began operations in August 1999. From its beginning as a venue in Geneva, Switzerland, where discreet discussions took place among those who had a practical impact on humanitarian policy and practice, the HD Centre has evolved into an independent global mediation organisation, with a presence in Europe, North America, Africa and Asia. Its aim is to help alleviate the suffering of individuals and populations caught up in both high-profile and forgotten conflicts, by acting as mediators and by providing other mediators with the support they need to work effectively.

HD Centre in the Philippines

The HD Centre began work in the Philippines in February 2004 when the Royal Norwegian Government requested for the HD Centre's active involvement in support of their role as third party facilitator to the peace process between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front.

In 2005 the HD Centre became involved with the peace process between the GRP and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) when Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Teresita Quintos-Deles requested the HD Centre's involvement in resolving a crisis in Sulu Province between MNLF and AFP forces. The HD Centre held five rounds of informal talks between the two parties and in August 2005, established the GRP-MNLF Peace Working Group. In 2008, HD Centre established the Armed Violence Reduction Initiative which is a multistakeholder response to non-conflict related violence that has been prevalent in Sulu. In 2009, the HD Centre established the Tumikang Sama Sama, a group of six eminent persons in Sulu, that attempts to resolve local conflicts and in 2010, it established the Prevention of Election Related Violence initiative, a group of 25 volunteers who monitor and report on election related violence in Sulu.

In 2007, the HD Centre began involvement in the current Mindanao peace process that involves peace efforts between the GRP and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). HD Centre is a coordinator and member of the International Contact Group (ICG), providing advice to both parties and civil society through eminent persons and experts from around the world. On the ground, the HD Centre established the Mindanao Think Tank, a multi-stakeholder consultative effort aimed at creating an opportunity for communities in Mindanao to be more involved in the peace process. The group conducts consultations at the community level as well as among local experts and officials from key sectors to solicit their advice for the MILF and GRP panels and to keep them abreast of the peace process.

The HD Centre also conducts research through support to the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies.

You may visit us at www.hdcentre.org



GENEVE OFFICE
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Centre pour le Dialogue Humanitaire

114 Rue de Lausanne, CH-1202 Geneve, Switzerland
T +41 (0)22 9081130 | F +41 (0)22 9081140

HD CENTRE MANILA OFFICE

Unit 11-11 Medical Plaza Ortigas,
San Miguel Avenue,
Ortigas Center,
Pasig City
T +632 910 0240

HD CENTRE SULU OFFICE

1224 Buyon Street,
Kakuyagan Village Phase III,
Barangay Upper San Raymundo,
Municipality of Jolo, Sulu Province
T +63905 4248433