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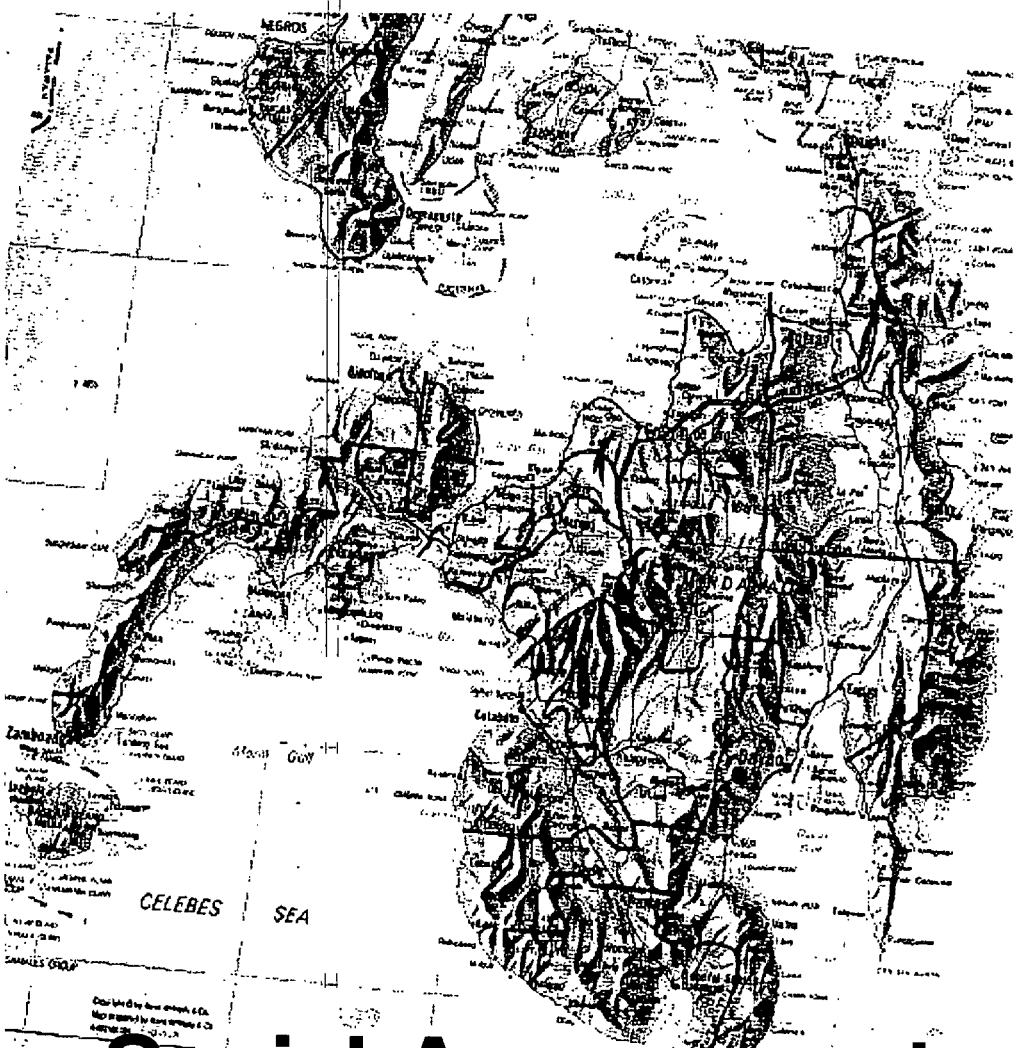
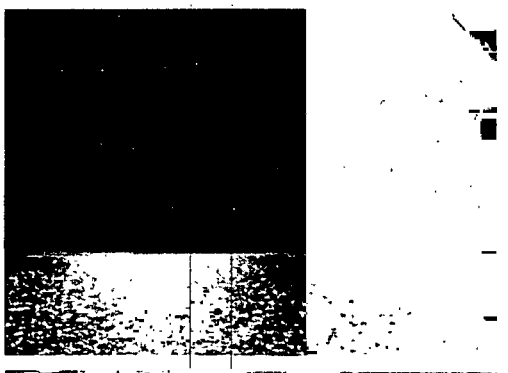
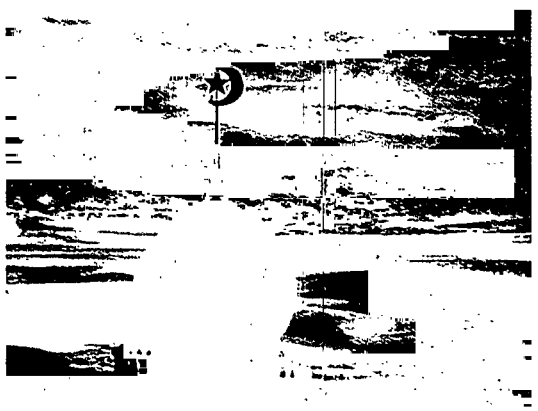
March 3, 2003

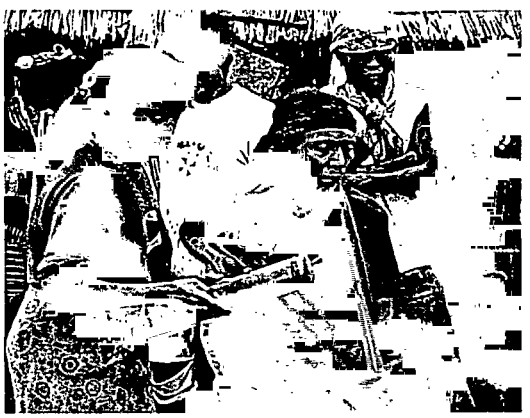
The World Bank

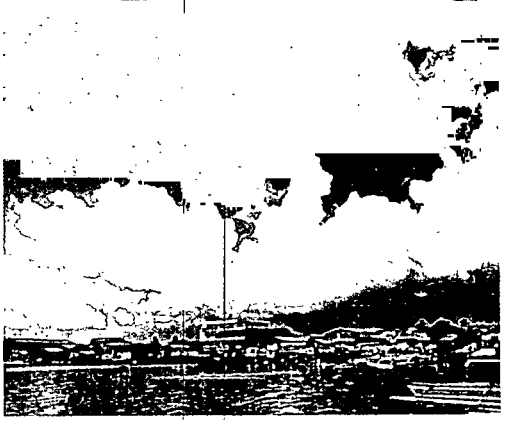




Social Assessment of Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao







SOCIAL ASSESSMENT OF CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS IN MINDANAO

SUMMARY

The World Bank

Environment and Social Development Unit
East Asia and Pacific Region

Environment and Social Development Unit
East Asia and Pacific Region

***Philippines Post Conflict Series* #1**

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Foreword

THE PHILIPPINE government's military offensive to dislodge the secessionist MILF from its camps in the year 2000 drew to a halt in the early part of the following year. The government succeeded in capturing the most strategic camps of the MILF. The rebels, having been significantly weakened, were forced to retreat and to negotiate for peace. Ceasefire declarations from both the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Philippine Armed Forces followed soon after the signing of a General Framework for the Resumption of Peace Talks in March 2001. This end to the hostilities also signaled the end to the displacement of entire communities that were caught in the crossfire.

Further agreements on the mechanics of the cessation of hostilities were also forged to manage tensions in the field between the still heavily-armed contingents of the MILF and the government troops. This encouraged the return of displaced populations to their homes and made it feasible to start the rehabilitation of communities even as a stable peace settlement was still being worked out. This also bolstered hopes that even as the peace was yet to be finally negotiated, its basis in economic hopefulness could already start to be laid.

This was the hopeful milieu that gave impetus for the World Bank to commission social assessments for conflict-affected regions of Central Mindanao and for the islands of Basilan and Sulu. The field work for the social assessments were conducted from the second half of 2001 to the early months of the year 2002. The social assessments sought to inform the development work that the Bank was planning to undertake in post-conflict setting of Mindanao.

While this quickening of the resolution of the conflict created the preconditions for reconstruction and development in the war-affected areas, it was also reconfiguring social reality away from that which was observed by the social assessment teams in the evacuation sites and in the resettlement sites. The increasing predictability of the security situation was leading more and more people to take the trip back home to confront war's aftermath or to establish new roots in less dangerous locations. The social assessments tried to probe into some of the things that would be taking place by examining the motivations and eliciting the sentiments of people in the field. This is informative only up to a point. Yet, perhaps, this is the best that social investigators can do in a fluid setting like post-conflict Mindanao.

Just as this summary of the social assessments was being finalized a new episode of armed confrontation between the MILF and the Philippine Armed Forces was opened in February 2003. Displacement and exhaustion and the sheer requirements of physical survival have again unsettled hopefulness in Mindanao. One can only hope that the conflict will not be an extended one. In an unfortunate sort of way, the events of February 2003 in Mindanao may have made this report even more relevant.

Robert Vance Pulley
Country Director, Philippines
East Asia and Pacific Region
The World Bank

Acknowledgements

THE MINDANAO Social Assessment was prepared by a team under the task management of Mary Judd. The team was led by Dr. Fermin Adriano and comprised of members of three groups: Foundation for Rural Institutions, Economics and Development (FRIEND); Mindanao Land Foundation (MinLand); and MinPhil International (MinPhil). The findings from another assessment undertaken by University of the Philippines Planning and Development Research Foundation (UP PLANADES) were integrated into this report.

This document brings together some of the key findings from the "Mindanao Social Assessment: Final Report" prepared by FRIEND, "Mindanao Social Assessment: A People-Centered Needs Assessment and Community-Driven Institutional Analysis in Conflict-Affected Areas"– composed of two reports prepared separately by MinLand and MinPhil, and "Social Assessment for Basilan and Sulu" prepared by UP PLANADES.

Funding came from the Post Conflict Fund of the World Bank. The terms of reference for the assessment was drafted jointly by the Government of the Philippines (NEDA) and the World Bank.

The report greatly benefited from a peer review undertaken by the following people: Cyprian Fisiy (EASES WB), Per Wam (SDVCP WB), Steven Holtzman (ECSSD WB), Leonora Gonzales (EACPF WB), Ernesto Garilao (AIM Philippines), and Steven Muncy (CFSI Philippines). Jude Esguerra integrated the various reports and prepared the summary. Larry Lopez provided graphics, layout design and photographs. Additional photographs were from Moving Concepts, Incorporated.

The findings, interpretations and conclusions are those of the report team and should not be attributed to the World Bank, its Board of Directors or any of its member countries.

Mary Judd
Manila, Philippines
March 3, 2003

Acronyms

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AI	Amnesty International
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ASFP	ARMM Social Fund Project
BEC	Basic Ecclesial Communities
CAFGU	Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit
CARP	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program
CFSI	Community and Family Services International
CIDA	Canadian International Development Authority
CMR	Child Mortality Rate
DA	Department of Agriculture
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
DOH	Department of Health
DepEd	Department of Education
ECs	Evacuation Centers
ESA	Emergency Shelter Assistance
FIES	Family Income and Expenditure Survey
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
HDI	Human Development Index
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally-Displaced Person
IP	Indigenous People
IPRA	Indigenous Peoples Rights Act
KALAHI	Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan
LGU	Local Government Unit
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MRDP	Mindanao Rural Development Program
NCR	National Capital Region
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
P	Peso
PHDR	Philippine Human Development Report
PO	People's Organization
SPCPD	Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development
SWIFT-ELAP	Support With Implementing Fast Transition-Emergency Livelihood Assistance Program
SZOPAD	Special Zone of Peace and Development
UNDP	United Nation Development Program

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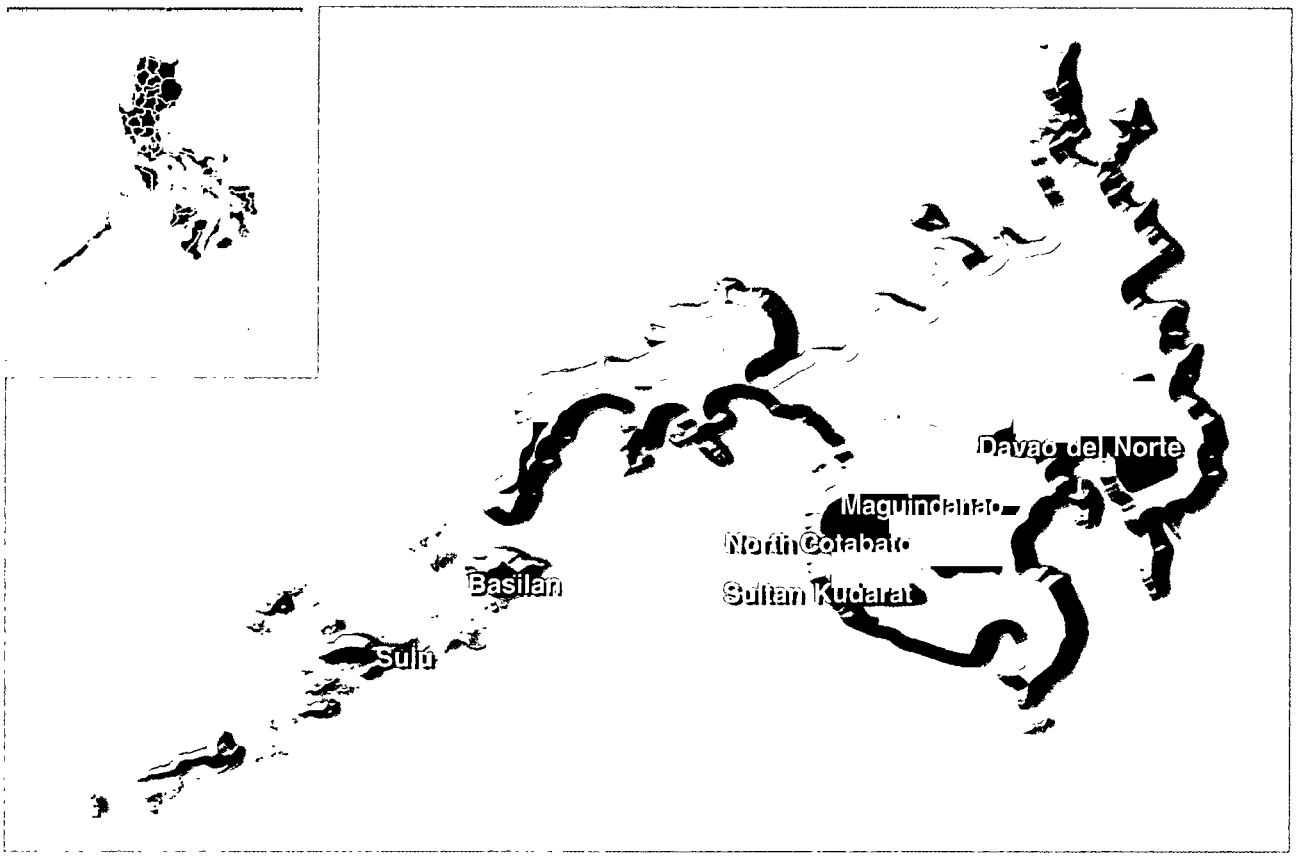


A. Overview

> The conflict is "*really exhausting. We are able to escape from the deafening mayhem only with our lives. We walk for days in search of a place of safety. No water, no food and certainly no time to cry. Family members also get separated Most of us have experienced it at least twice in our lives. The conflict of 2000, being the latest, has so far also been the most tumultuous.*"
>
> -- A villager who sought refuge in the town of Kabacan in North Cotabato.

Objectives of the Social Assessments

THIS PUBLICATION highlights a number of findings from a social assessment of selected Mindanao communities. The Social Assessment was supported by the Post-Conflict Fund of the World Bank. It surveyed selected communities in Basilan, Sulu, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Davao del Norte and North Cotabato. Information used was gathered from the second half of 2001 up to the early months of 2002. The primary aim of the Social Assessment is to provide background information necessary for the design of effective medium-term development interventions in the complex setting of Mindanao, particularly in the areas affected by the eruption of conflict beginning in 2001.

The World Bank is supporting development initiatives in Mindanao primarily through Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) Social Fund Project, Mindanao Rural Development Program, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Social Fund, and Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI) Project.

The report does not present a comprehensive view of the needs and situations of all the different communities in Mindanao. However, it draws attention to key similarities and contrasts in situations faced by communities: whether these are in conflict or non-conflict situations, hosts to settlers who cannot return home, or mixed communities where social bonds have been damaged.

Crucial to the design of development programs is an understanding of cultural traditions and political institutions that normally structure exchanges between

and within communities as well as the behavior of private and public providers of services. It will be important to harness and even strengthen those predispositions that can enhance the sustainability, cost-effectiveness, accountability and fairness of development interventions. On the other hand, information from the Social Assessment should also find its way to proposals for introducing innovations in formal institutions of governance and service delivery, especially in instances where market imperfections as well as "community imperfections" might hamper program effectiveness.

This report therefore draws from existing material produced by scholars and development agencies to provide readings of the data that are grounded in the historical and cultural milieu of the different communities of Mindanao. Thus, in addition to highlighting new data from the field, this report attempts to put together facets of the multi-dimensional reality on the ground using different sources, in order to help inform the urgent work of development in Mindanao.

B. General Demographic, Poverty Situation in ARMM and the Social Assessment Survey Areas

Muslims and the Influx of Settlers

FROM MAKING up 76 percent of the population in 1903, the Muslim population in Mindanao had declined to only 19 percent by 1990 (W.K. Che Man, 1990: 25). This is a direct result of colonial and post-colonial state policy of opening Mindanao to settlers from the islands of Luzon and the Visayas (Rodil, 1994). There is multi-ethnicity at the regional, provincial and municipal levels but at the village level one will mostly find homogenous ethnic communities. Muslim ethnic groups in Mindanao speak related languages, and practice many customs that are similar. Many Muslim ethnic communities – also collectively called Moros – live in close proximity to Christian and other non-Muslim Filipino groups. However, these Muslim ethnic groups remain separate from the "majority" in the Philippine nation-state not only by religion but also by the presence of political movements animated by the idea of belonging to a "Bangsa Moro" – a separate Moro nation (Gowing 1979). This distinction is enhanced by an imbalance in economic development. The Muslim ethnic groups of Mindanao have been largely marginalized by the pace and form of development carried out by the colonial governments and during the republic's post-colonial period (Fianza, 1999).

Muslim Ethnic Affiliations

OF THE 13 Moro ethnic groups, the Tausug and the Maguindanao have been the most politically dominant for it is from them that the Mindanao Sultanates emerged. The spheres of influence of their early sultanates extended over the communities of the other Moro groups (Kiefer, 1972; Laarhoven, 1989) and the *Lumads* or non-Muslim indigenous groups. The smaller groups are: the Samal, Yakan, Badjao and the Jama Mapun, of the Sulu archipelago who were once subject peoples of the (Tausug) Sulu sultanate; the Kalagan, Sangil, Kalibugan and Iranun whose settlements were once under the sphere of influence of the Maguindanao sultans; and the Palawani and Molbog of South Palawan.

The Tausug inhabit the volcanic island comprising the Sulu province while the Maguindanaoans live in the often inundated plains of the Cotabato provinces

along the Rio Grande of Maguindanao. The Maranao comprise the largest Moro group in terms of population. They live in the plains around Lake Lanao. The smaller groups occupy more or less distinct territories scattered in Mindanao and the Sulu islands, though in some instances their living spaces are penetrated by families belonging to the larger groups (Fianza, 1999).

Approximately five percent of the total population of the region, the Lumad groups are individually known, as: Ata (or Ata Manobo), Bagobo, Banua-on, Batak, Bla-an, Bukidnon, Dibabawon, Higaunon, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Mangguwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Matigsalug, Pala'wan, Subanen, Tagakaolo, Tagbanua, T'boli, Teduray and Ubo.

Table 1
Population, Poverty[2] Incidence and Depth (1997, 2000)

	Population (Census 2000)	Poverty Incidence		Poverty Depth*	
		1997	2000	1997	2000
Philippines	**76,498,735**	25.1	27.5	6.4	7.2
Metro Manila	**9,932,560**	3.5	5 6	0.6	0.9
Lanao del Sur	669,072	40 8	48.1	10.4	9 7
Maguindanao	801,102	24.0	36 2	4.0	9 2
Sulu	619,668	87.5	92 0	33 1	37.3
Tawi-Tawi	322,317	52.1	75.3	13 4	25.8
Basilan	332,828	30 2	63.0	5.9	16.7
North Cotabato	958,643	42.7	34 8	13.4	8.8
Sultan Kudarat	586,505	21.6	35 3	3.2	5 8
Davao del Norte	743,811	26.2	27.3	6 4	7 1

Source: 1997 and 2000 FIES in PHDR 2002

* Poverty depth measures how far below the poverty line the poor are. It measures the poors' average income shortfall (expressed in proportion to the poverty line) relative to the non-poor. Thus, the data shows that the average income of the poor in Lanao del Sur is 10 percent below the poverty line The poor in Sulu have average incomes that are more than 30 percent short of the poverty line. In other words, the income of the poor in Sulu has to rise by an average of 30 percent in order for them to rise above poverty

Table 2
Average Annual Per Capita Incomes, Human Development Rank (1997 and 2000)

	Per Capita Income (NCR 1997 pesos)		HDI Provincial Rank	
	1997	2000	1997	2000
Metro Manila	52,704	48,816		
Lanao del Sur	16,145	15,936	73	74
Maguindanao	21,915	19,967	72	73
Sulu*	8,994	7,850	77	77
Tawi-Tawi	19,794	11,349	76	76
Basilan	22,269	13,193	68	75
North Cotabato	19,649	19,443	49	41
Sultan Kudarat	23,737	18,653	36	61
Davao del Norte	24,315	22,668	42	47

* [illegible] Sulu [illegible] human development among the country's [illegible] provinces

Poverty in ARMM and the Conflict-Affected Areas

THE CONFLICT-affected areas in Mindanao are the poorest among the 77 provinces of the Philippines. These are also the poorest provinces in Mindanao. With the exception of North Cotabato and Davao del Norte, the incidence of people falling below the poverty line[1] and depth of poverty in these provinces rose dramatically from 1997 to the year 2000 (Table 1). The El Niño phenomenon and the fall in the price of copra and rubber contributed to the worsening of poverty in the region.

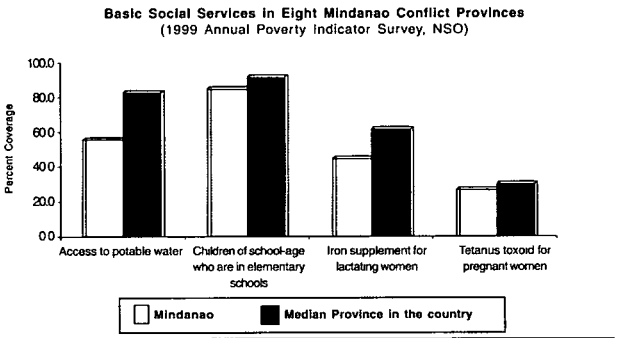
Without exception, all the conflict-affected areas experienced a fall in average per capita incomes from 1997 to 2000. The fall in average incomes of both the poor and non-poor populations was most severe in Basilan and Tawi-Tawi (Table 2).

[1] The poverty line is the level of income below which a household is considered poor because it will then be unable to procure sufficient food and other minimum necessities of life.

[2] The poverty measurement methodology used by the Philippine Human Development Report is consistent with that used in the World Bank's two-volume Philippine Poverty Assessment published in May 2001.

The Annual Poverty Indicator Survey conducted in October 1999 shows that social service coverage in the conflict-affected provinces of Mindanao compare unfavorably with the typical or median province in the country (Figure 2). The recently completed Filipino Report Card (World Bank, 2001) found the highest levels of dissatisfaction with government services in Mindanao, especially in the conflict-affected areas.

Figure 2



C. Impact of the Conflict and Prospects of Return to Homes

Displaced Persons Were Predominantly Muslims

MAJORITY OF people who were displaced as a result of the conflict in Mindanao that erupted in 2000 were Muslims. Oxfam (January 2001[3]) estimates that 85 percent of those affected by conflict in the year 2000 were Muslims, 17 percent were Christians and seven percent were from non-Muslim indigenous populations. The reason for this pattern is that much of the fighting between the Philippine troops and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) were in camps that were located in towns that had predominantly Muslim populations.

Table 3
Evacuees Moving to Places of Relocation or Returning to Their Homes (November 2001)

Region	Province	Evacuees Leaving Evacuation Areas and Returning Home or Relocating Elsewhere		Total
		From Inside ECs	Outside ECs	
Total		**500,276**	**348,737**	**849,013**
ARMM		**199,733**	**156,548**	**356,281**
	Maguindanao	142,966	64,620	207,586
	Sulu	29,094	89,272	118,366
	Lanao del Sur	17,064	2,656	19,720
	Tawi-Tawi	10,609	-	10,609
IX		**5,804**	**16,706**	**22,510**
	Basilan[3]	903	16,432	17,335
	Zamboanga del Norte	4,901	-	4,901
	Zamboanga del Sur	-	257	257
	Zamboanga City	-	17	17
XI		**39,791**	**12,388**	**52,179**
	South Cotabato	17,501	1,669	19,170
	Gen. Santos City	1,055	1,091	2,146
	Compostela Valley	2,640	36	2,676
	Davao Oriental	8,119	5,520	13,369
	Davao del Sur	-	1,023	1,028
	Davao City	125	679	804
	Saranganı	10,351	2,365	12,716
XII		**254,948**	**163,095**	**418,043**
	Lanao del Norte	55,377	58,891	115,268
	North Cotabato	105,727	32,189	137,916
	Marawi City	40,839	52,944	93,783
	Sultan Kudarat	41,640	1,423	43,063
	Cotabato City	10,520	13,659	24,179
	Iligan City	754	2,989	3,743
	Kidapawan City	91	-	91

Source: Disaster Response Operations Monitoring Information Center, DSWD 5 November 2001

[3] Basilan, minus the capital town of Isabela, subsequently became part of the ARMM.

The displacement by Philippine military personnel of communities has also created a new kind of tension and is one reason why Muslims find it hard to return to their homes. There are also Christians that stayed in government evacuation centers, but they were able to return to their homes more easily. This is partly because the evacuation centers had to be located farther away from Muslim communities and were logically nearer the Christian settlements.

Areas of Major Population Displacement

THE MOST significant displacement was recorded in Maguindanao, Sulu, Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato and Marawi City. In November 2001, the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD) reported that 71 percent of the displaced were in these areas of Region 12 and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). At that time 90 percent or 849,000 of the estimated 932,000 people displaced by the conflict have already either returned to their homes or moved to other places of relocation (see Table 3).

These reports, however, predate the conflict in Basilan, Sulu[4] in and in other places from November 2001 and onwards that resulted from the pursuit by the Philippine military of the Abu Sayyaf group and in clashes involving troops loyal to former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Chairman and ARMM Governor Nur Misuari. By April 2002, Amnesty International[5] reports that close to 300,000 people have been displaced as a result of government operations in Sulu.

In Basilan, in contrast, Christians were the victims of acts of atrocity by the Abu Sayyaf. Initially, displacement was mainly among Christians. But subsequently, with government military forces going after the Abu Sayyaf and as Christian communities armed themselves, the story of displacement became more complicated.

Displaced Persons Hesitate to Return to Their Places of Origin

GOVERNMENT DATA does not provide a sense of the number of affected populations that have not returned to their places of origin. Results of the Social Assessment provide some indication (see Table 4).

Table 4
Plans, Reasons and Conditions for Return to Place of Origin*

	Muslim Dominated Areas	
	Number	Percent
Plan Of Going Back To Place Of Origin		
Yes	171	42 75
No	229	57.25
Total	**400**	**100.0**
		0
Reasons For Going Back To Place Of Origin		
No Answer	1	0 58
Life is peaceful and it's where we have a livelihood	17	9.94
Life situation there is good	8	4.68
It's my birthplace and I have a farm there	129	75 44
I have my family and relatives there	4	2.34
I have my properties there (e.g. house)	4	2 34
We earn higher income there than here	6	3.51
It is a solution to our problem	2	1.17
Total	**171**	**100.0**
		0
Reasons For Not Going Back To Place Of Origin		
No Answer	1	0 44
It is not peaceful yet and conflict may arise again	122	53.28
I lost my house	47	20 52
I am used to living in the evacuation centers	4	1.75
Living condition here is better than in place of origin	22	9.61
I've already established a source of livelihood here	8	3 49
Livelihood and properties lost in the place of origin	18	7.86
Tired of evacuating	7	3 06
Total	**229**	**100.0**
		0
Conditions Necessary To Make IDPs Go Back To Their Place Of Origin		
None	80	20 00
If there is good source of livelihood there	40	10.00
Peace and security	233	58 25
If soldiers leave the place	3	0.75
If given house, lot, farmland or farm animals	15	3.75
If the leaders and residents don't want us to stay on	6	1 50
If my neighbors will return there	6	1.50
If leaders are united	9	2.25
If given farmland	6	1.50
If advised that it is now possible to back	1	0 25
If given capital for small business	1	0.25
Total	**400**	**100.0**
		0

* IDPs clustered around Barangays Pedtad, Molao, Natutungan, Ilian In North Cotabato and Maguindanao

In November and December 2001 internally displaced persons (IDPs) coming predominantly from the North Cotabato towns of Kabacan, Carmen and Pikit were clustered around the Muslim-dominated barangays of Pedtad, Molao, Natutungan and Ilian. More than 60 percent were in resettlements sites while the rest were in evacuation centers and rehabilitation sites. Fifty-seven percent of these IDPs said they did

[4] Sulu being the Tausug homeland is a stronghold of the MNLF. The MILF, on the other is a split from the MNLF and is led by Maguindanao fighters and *ulama*, starting with Hashim Salamat himself.

[5] Amnesty International (AI), 2 April 2002, "Human Rights Must Be Respected to Secure Peace and Stability in Southern Philippines".

not have plans to return to their places of origin, while the remaining forty-three percent said they still had plans of going back. Those who had no plans of going back to their places of original were those clustered around the barangays of Natutungan and Ilian in North Cotabato.

Majority of survey respondents with no plans of going back said that the absence of peace and security led them to their decision. Loss of homes accounted for decisions of 20.5 percent. The comfort experienced living in their current residences relative to their places of origin and the loss of livelihood and property in the area of origin convinced the others to avoid going back.

Among those who still had plans of returning to their original homes, around three-fourths said they wanted to go back because it was "their place of birth and they have a farm there".

Twenty percent of the respondents said that nothing would convince them to return to their original communities. Ten percent of the respondents said that going back would depend on whether there is a good source of livelihood in their place of origin.

Women are Affected Differently

IN DALENGAOEN in Pikit North Cotabato, after the November 11, 2000 attack, the collective opinion of men was shaped in favor of arming themselves. The men disregarded the voice of the community's women, who argued that a resort to arms would attract more violence. Small arms ordinarily cost the equivalent a few months of a poor family's income.

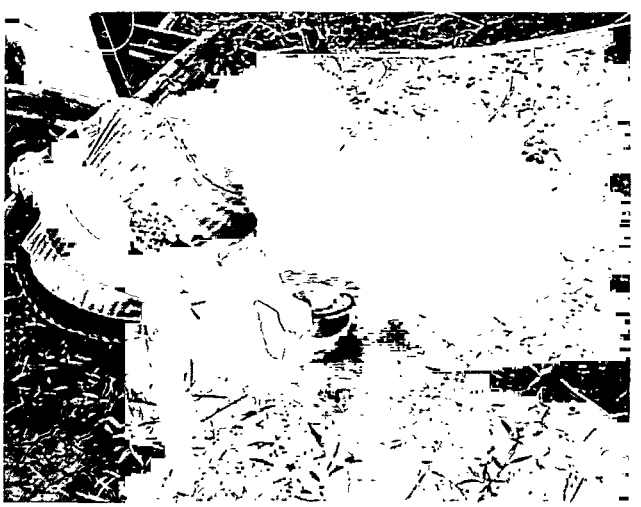
Two Aromanon widows in the Macatactac evacuation center narrate how their lives have become more difficult after their husbands were killed during the AFP-MILF skirmishes on May 19, 2001. Apart from caring for their children and taking responsibility over their farms, they also have to seek work to supplement their income.

There are many places where the MILF has the support of the civilian population, especially in Maguindanao and Cotabato. In these places Muslim men are conscripted to join the MILF forces and this, according to informants, is the reason there have been periods when not many adult Muslim men were to be found in evacuation centers (Quitoriano and Libre, 2001). The Muslim men were not around either because they were combatants, they were suspected of being combatants and so feared for their safety, or they left their families to avoid conscription. The situation is complicated where government soldiers remain stationed in the communities affected by conflict. Adult male members of the returning population are vulnerable to being tagged as active supporters of the MILF.

On returning to their communities women will encounter the absence of water and health facilities. This goes with their care-giving roles. In addition, however, the loss of productive assets, experienced by the households as a continuing income shock, will compel women including young mothers, to engage in directly compensated work.

Chronic Uncertainty and Its Economic Consequences

"Evacuating and conflict is very tiring. Whenever new armed groups enter our communities, tensions immediately mount. The community becomes unstable even if violent confrontations do not occur yet. We are always in a constant state of alertness and our deep fright prevents us from engaging in farming or other forms of livelihood. How can we sustain any economic activity? They always barge into our communities when it's harvest season. At any rate, gunfire exchange soon erupts and we are forced to leave everything." A villager who settled temporarily in barangay Pedtad in Kabacan, North Cotabato.



IN GENERAL the difficult return to normalcy will be indicated by the hesitation of populations to make investments with long gestation periods. Hence, it may happen that poverty can rise significantly where the decision to return remains tentative for extended periods. Public interventions in these areas will probably have to be a mix of continuing relief, confidence building and development initiatives. Intermittent return will, however, be important because communities need to re-establish claims over their homes and farms as soon as possible. It has happened in the past, (Quitoriano and Libre, 2001), that local government officials, military men and other ethnic groups have squatted, and subsequently, established a claim on land that was not theirs.

The sporadic and protracted nature of the conflict in Mindanao means that refugees and displaced people are returning to situations of ongoing uncertainty and insecurity. The greater the uncertainty and insecurity, the longer it will take for private investment to resume. Joblessness, especially in Mindanao, where light weapons proliferate, feeds continuing violence, social dislocation, family breakdown, and insecurity.

Some of the young people in the Buluan cluster interviewed for the Social Assessment think that the construction of permanent structures of houses will change the attitude of people. The prospect of losing an investment could strengthen the waivering commitment of some elders to peaceful solutions to the conflict.

D. Problems Encountered by Displaced Populations Returning to Their Homes

THE SOCIAL Assessment results show various dimensions of the poverty among displaced communities. The population's employable skill set is limited; public services are unavailable; limited education

and isolation from important urban labor markets virtually remove temporary migration from the set of risk mitigation mechanisms that people affected by an income shock can normally tap; inputs markets are monopolized by a few traders who also happen to be the main source of credit[6] for rice and corn production; farm implements are rudimentary; and non-farm income comes mainly in the form of raising ducks, swine (in Lumad areas), chicken, goats and carabaos in the yard to augment farm incomes. Within communities indebtedness is also very high with farms and home lots being mortgaged to creditors.

Displacement Overloaded Informal Systems of Mutual Support

THERE IS a weakening of mutual support systems as communities are dispersed. Significant numbers of individuals report being separated from their families for months. A villager narrates that the conflict is "*really exhausting. We are able to escape from the deafening mayhem only with our lives. We walk for days in search of a place of safety. No water, no food and certainly no time to cry. Family members also get separated. Most of us have experienced it at least twice in our lives. The conflict of 2000, being the latest, has so far also been the most tumultuous.*"

The immediate economic trauma of the war is felt as an income shock, in terms of incomes lost when unharvested crops were abandoned and when planting seasons passed by with workers unable to work their farms. One direct consequence of this war-induced crop failure is that loans advanced by traders could not

[6] A P2,000 loan from a trader is paid with two sacks of rice at the end of the cropping season, about 2-3 months. At an estimated price of P400 per sack of rice, the interest is P800 on a P2,000 loan. This translates into 40 percent in three months or 160 percent per annum (Heard and Magno, 2000).

be paid. The extent to which this might cause the flow of credit to be disrupted is not clear. What is clear is that both the manner and amounts of loans from outsiders given for farm production purposes have been reduced.

Even where communities are intact, the mutual support systems will have been exhausted at some point, because the need for support arose nearly concurrently for all families that had to give up their livelihoods all at the same time. In peaceful times, misfortunes like sickness or loss of income seldom happens to everyone at the same time. Neighbors or families belonging to the same clan have occasion for borrowing funds from each other to buy food or medicine. The impact of the war on systems of mutual support within communities is seen in the fact that of 1,526 people surveyed, the number of people who borrow funds for food went down from 733 before the conflict to only 538 after the conflict (Table 5).

Before the war, 67.6 percent of the families in the Muslim-dominated areas had availed of credit. After the conflict, this figure dramatically went down to 49.3 percent (Table 5). Average amounts borrowed by IDPs clustered around Barangays Pedtad, Molao, Natutungan, Ilian in North Cotabato and Maguindanao before the conflict was P2,394. This figure went down significantly to P1,571 after the conflict.

Productive Assets were Destroyed Because of the War

Before the conflict, some of the farmers in Lower D'lag owned carabaos for farming. During the conflict, they had to evacuate, leaving their carabaos behind. These work animals were either killed by stray bullets, or may have died due to starvation or slaughtered for food by the armed groups. The few farmers who were able to bring their carabaos eventually had to sell the animals in order to buy food for their families.

A NUTRITION and Household Economy Survey among IDPs in Central Mindanao[7] conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in June 2001, reveals that the loss of livestock continued to happen even when displaced families were already staying in evacuation centers. In the ICRC's survey, the number of households owning carabaos was 20.7

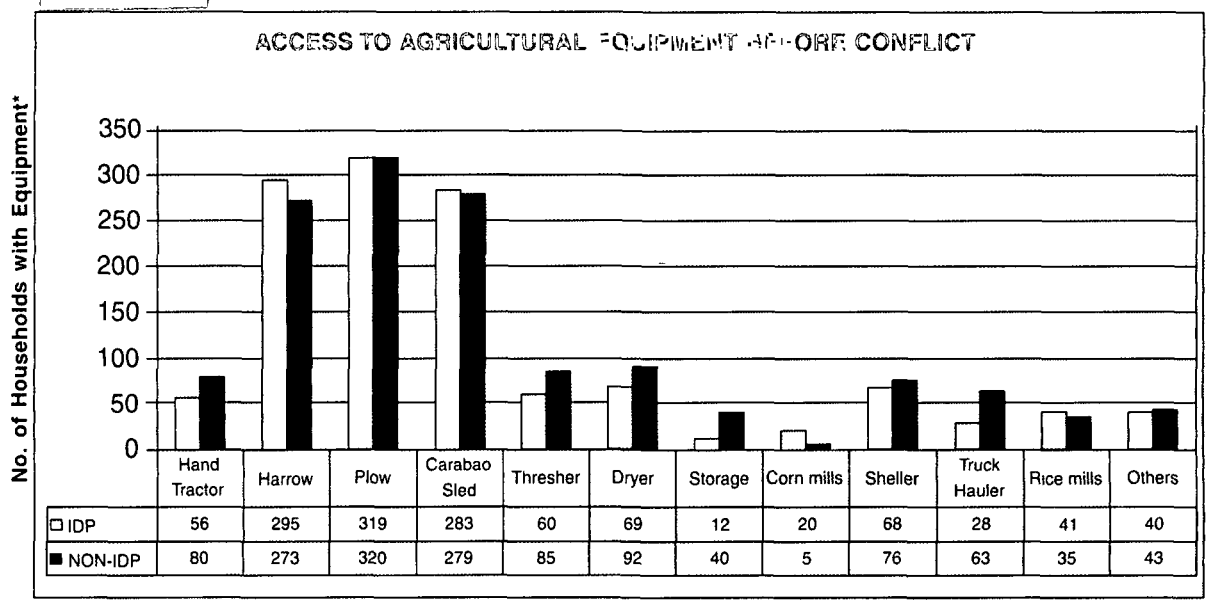
Table 5
Profile of Credit Availment Before and After the Conflict – IDPs, Non-IDPs, IPs

Access to Credit	Muslim Dominated Areas				Indigenous Peoples	
	Before Conflict		After Conflict			
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Credit Availment						
Yes	1,031	67.60	753	49 30	262	60.60
No	495	32.40	773	50 70	170	39.40
Total	**1,526**	**100.00**	**1,526**	**100.00**	**432**	**100.00**
Purpose of Credit						
Food	766	74 30	538	71.40	185	70 60
Farming	614	59.60	383	50.90	87	33.20
Education	52	5.00	29	3.90	18	6.90
Medicine	84	8.10	73	9.70	10	3 80
Others	33	3.20	35	4.60	9	3 40
Total	**1,031***		**753***		**262***	
Sources of Credit						
Within Barangay	804	78.00	583	77.40	239	91.20
Outside Barangay	477	46 30	347	46.10	70	26.70
Within and Outside Barangay	1	0.10	1	0.10	0	0.00
Total	**1,031***		**753***		**262***	

* Some respondents had more than one response.

[7] The survey was conducted in the evacuation centers of Parang, Sultan Kudarat, Pagalungan, Pagagawan , S.K. Pendatun (all in Maguindanao), and the municipalities of Aleosan, Pikit, Carmen, Kabacan and Matalam (all in Cotabato).

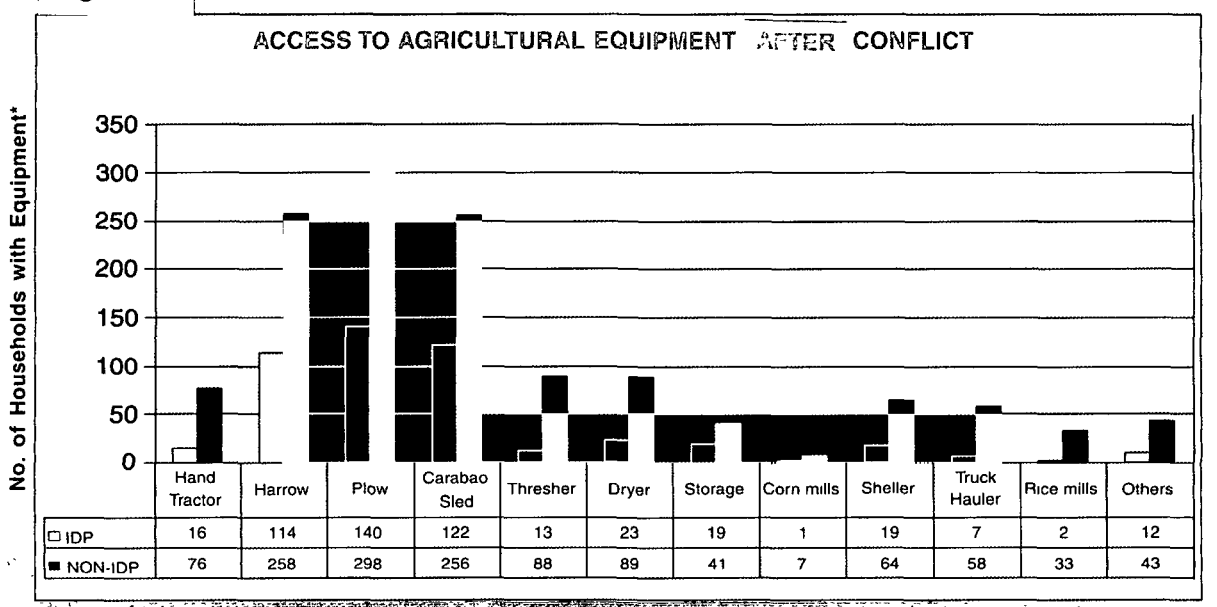
Figure 2a



	Hand Tractor	Harrow	Plow	Carabao Sled	Thresher	Dryer	Storage	Corn mills	Sheller	Truck Hauler	Rice mills	Others
IDP	56	295	319	283	60	69	12	20	68	28	41	40
NON-IDP	80	273	320	279	85	92	40	5	76	63	35	43

*Sample of four hundred IDP and four hundred non-IDP households.

Figure 2b



	Hand Tractor	Harrow	Plow	Carabao Sled	Thresher	Dryer	Storage	Corn mills	Sheller	Truck Hauler	Rice mills	Others
IDP	16	114	140	122	13	23	19	1	19	7	2	12
NON-IDP	76	258	298	256	88	89	41	7	64	58	33	43

*Sample of four hundred IDP and four hundred non-IDP households.

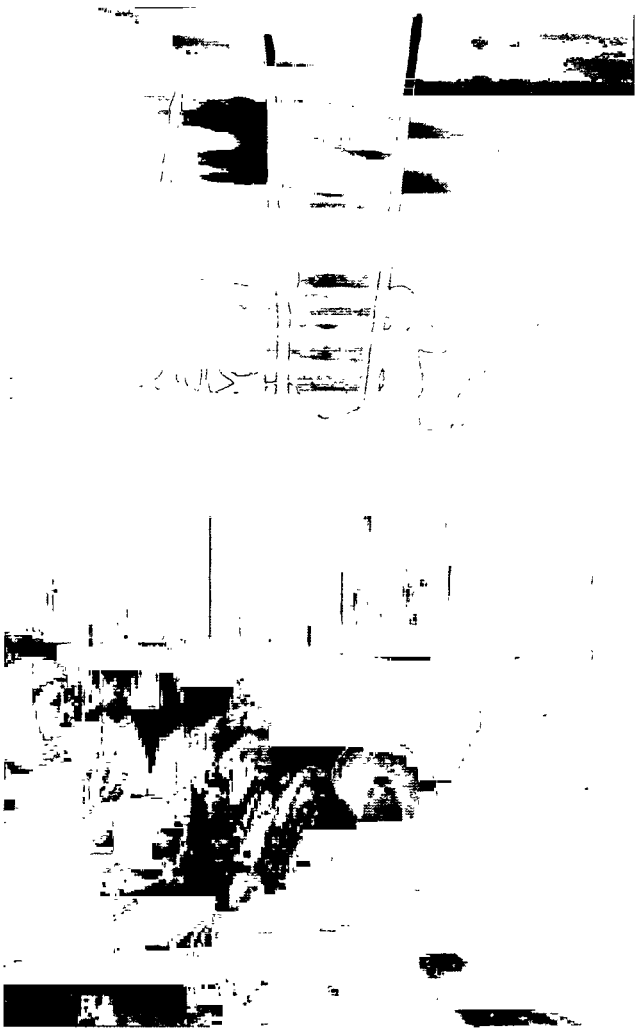
percent right after the conflict in October 2000. However, this number fell to 12.1 percent by June 2001.

The extent of the loss of farm implements is seen by comparing Figure 2a and 2b. Before the conflict, there was basic parity between IDPs and non-IDPs; after the conflict, there was an obvious decline in farm equipment access for the IDPs. The information above is the result of a survey of 400 IDP's and 400 non-IDP households in Maguindanao and North Cotabato.

Key informants revealed that the support coming from government agencies is generally very limited and families sought other ways of coping — distant relatives

provided living space, women and children sought odd jobs. In many instances, assets that were not destroyed by the war also had to be sold. There is some evidence that depletion of productive assets also took place because men-folk decided to exchange these assets for weapons "to protect their women and their property." Thus, in conflict areas and in areas of potential conflict, the civilian population also used up resources to arm itself. The cost of one firearm is an amount equivalent to several months of a poor family's income.

For populations that will return to the war-affected areas, the loss of productive assets makes it unlikely that they will hit the ground running in a manner that allows them to resume the pace of their lives and livelihoods before the eruption of conflict. Second-round economic effects will also be felt in terms of the disruption of the flow of informal credit for production, due both to conflict-related loan defaults and possible perceptions by creditors, that some households may need to divert such loans intended for the purchase of production inputs in favor of more immediate needs, like attending to the needs of the sick, paying-off other loans or repairing houses. The creditors themselves will probably be in distress, with their funds loaned out to families who may be too deep under the surface to be able to offer any prospect of helping improve the creditors' cash position.



Communities Played Host to People Unwilling to Return Home

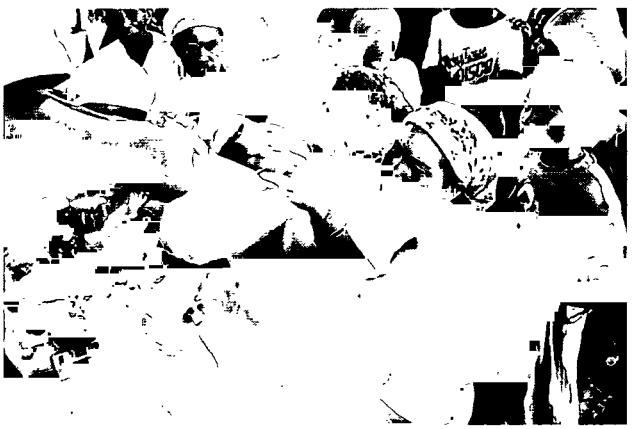
DISPLACED PERSONS unable to return home were forced to call on sources of inter-community systems of support. The Social Assessment revealed the presence of safety nets among groups connected through kin or ethnic affinity. Many communities played host to displaced persons who are unable or unwilling to return to their place of origin. The surveys managed to reveal mostly the immediate economic effects of the crisis. But much less is known about the adequacy of the safety net provided by host communities, about the effects of the new entrants on the well-being of the receiving communities, and about the nature of the reciprocal obligations that the resettled populations will have to bear in acknowledgment of the generosity of their hosts.

The datu-landowners as a class in Maguindanao provided employment to the IDPs as farm workers in a very substantial scale. The datus[8] and IDPs informants observe that people who stayed for prolonged periods in evacuation centers have suffered relatively greater economic displacement because of a complete loss of their livelihood.

The household survey data shows that there was an increase in the number of people who earned incomes from farming after the conflict, but the average household income has decreased. This is consistent

[8] The datu is the local ruler who commands a following by virtue of his noble lineage, his ability to negotiate with central authority or because of a reputation for bravery and violence. Some datus still lay claim to their status by tracing ancestry to royal lineage. But recognition is based largely on signs of leadership and on the proven effectiveness of the leaders' actions.

with accounts about datu-landlords who hired IDPs who resettled in their lands. At the same time, it is also consistent with the intuition that when households are in desperate straits, their members must take whatever work is available to them and even mobilize secondary income earners, including women who used to be fully occupied with care-giving tasks and children who used to be in school. Some landowners say that they expect assistance from the government in order to continue absorbing farm labor workers from the IDPs.



Costs and Risks of Return to Areas of Unconcluded Conflict

THE UNFINISHED and protracted character of the war makes returning home a risky venture. Certainly, the support provided by the government and aid agencies in evacuation centers did much to arrest hunger, to provide a place to sleep and to shield families from the further trauma of being caught amidst gunfire and being separated from each other.

The informants interviewed for the Social Assessment say that the food aid from government agencies was not enough. The support also could not have been expected to come anywhere close to restoring the displaced families and communities to their homes and in resuming their normal lives and livelihoods. One may assume that a decision to return home will even cause hardships before it leads to a return to normalcy. The reasons are stark:

First, leaving the evacuation centers will mean the loss of direct support from government and aid agencies. Even if agencies like the DSWD will try their best to extend support to families returning to their communities, it will always be easier to administer support right at the evacuation centers, where all the displaced families are gathered.

Second, there are also new constraints to delivering services to the original communities of the IDPs. Distance and physical isolation are only the most obvious problems. The home villages of the IDPs are also located very near forward positions of armed combatants on both sides, very near or within areas that used to be camps of the MILF. Inter-ethnic tensions released by the war, for example in the mixed communities of Maguindanao, may yet be heightened as neighbors encounter each other again for the first time since the war. In a Christian-Muslim community in the municipality of Carmen in North Cotabato, Christian communities attacked by the MILF blame their Muslim neighbors "for not having warned them" of what was about to happen. It is also well-known that communities that may have been originally caught between the armed combat between government troops and the MILF have also armed themselves or, in the case of Christian communities, solicited the support of government para-military groups to help them defend themselves.

These problems have in the past contributed to the difficulty of delivering services to these areas. The journey back home will bring the returning communities closer to their sources of livelihoods – their land. But home will bring to the fore the reality of debts, military outposts, unfriendly neighbors, lost carabaos and ruined villages that will have to be repaired before life can go on.

Box 1
The AFP-MILF War and the Collapse of "Neighborliness" in Mixed Communities

IF ARMED groups from outside just don't come into our community, there would be no trouble" (quoted in Quitoriano and Libre, 2001). The implication is that in many instances, the AFP and the MILF have dragged civilians into the conflict, forcing them to take sides. But the displacement happened not only because there was a war between the AFP and the MILF from which civilians had to seek cover. There were also IDPs that were seeking cover mainly from their neighbors. There were movements across barangays and even within barangays among both Christians and Muslims to keep out of each other's path and to stay beyond each other's reach. The November 11 attack on Dalengaoen in North Cotabato, for instance, was particularly disturbing for Christian residents as it was the first time in many years that civilians from their community had been killed. As a result, local Christians expressed feelings of distrust and disappointment against Muslims because, as one resident said, "they did not warn us of what was going to happen." In Carmen, in a number of mixed communities, residents have settled to areas where they can seek protection of their own ethno-religious group. Muslim residents from the predominantly Christian barangays of Malapag, Aroman and Rancho have moved to the Christian-dominated barangays of Manarapan and Kitulaan. Christian residents from the predominantly Muslim barangay of Kitulaan have moved to Christian-dominated areas of Aroman or to the town center of Carmen. In barangay Katanianan, Christian residents have congregated at the barangay center, while Muslim residents moved to Sitio Pakan. [Quitoriano and Libre (2001) "Reaching for the Gun" Kasarinlan]

Anti-Christian Provocations by the Abu Sayyaf Make Enemies of Friendly Neighbors

CONFLICTS IN Basilan have not always been cast in religious terms. In fact this has not been the case until recently. The provocations of the anti-Christian Abu Sayyaf may have partly succeeded in sparking-off dormant age-old biases of Christians against Muslims. This created distrust and a sudden awareness among Christians of possibilities of victimization that seemed remote in past decades. A resident of the predominantly Christian town of Lamitan in Basilan relates that before beheadings of Christians perpetrated by the Abu Sayyaf, relations between Muslims and Christians were very cordial. Whenever there was an occasion for minor celebrations (e.g., fiesta, birthday, baptism) they would invite the Muslims and these would come with their gifts. Many times, if the Muslims heard the news about an event, they would even come uninvited to join the festivities. After the incident, things changed; the Muslims did not come anymore. Things got worse when some of the Muslims were arrested on suspicion of being part of the group that performed the carnage. The male family and kin of the victims of the 2001 carnage have joined the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) or private armies of politicians to get their hands on weapons needed to exact vengeance. A corner was turned when this became a common response to the activities of the Abu Sayyaf Group. From the Basilan-Sulu Social Assessment

Large-Scale War Has Its Effects on Persistent and Pre-Existing Local Conflicts

CORRECTLY OR not, localized tensions often get cast in terms of the ideological historical narratives of conflicts between Christians and the original Muslim inhabitants of Mindanao. One consequence of this is that parties to localized conflict often had occasion to bring military resources of secessionist movements and of the government to descend upon their enemies. The story of one of the Muslim communities covered by the Social Assessment demonstrates this situation (Box 2).

Pre-Existing Conflict and the War—the Moro Land Issue

THE MORO land issue is a conflict that may be understood in part by attributing it to opposing systems of land use practiced by the indigenous Moro groups and the non-Moro migrant settlers who have occupied or used territories traditionally owned or controlled by the Moros.

Tensions over land rights are both a cause and an outcome of conflict. Community tensions over forest resources, for instance, have been a cause of recent localized fighting that is magnified when the bigger armed groups cast these localized conflicts in the context of their bigger narratives and recruit the local protagonists to fight in the name of the bigger war (Box 2).

Even if the risk of another escalation of armed conflict is eliminated as a result of successful peace accords, the competing claims over land will, without a doubt, have a powerful inhibiting effect on private investments. Settlers whose families have invested labor for two or three generations and indigenous peoples whose attachment to the land reaches back through the centuries will need to be assisted in reaching an acceptable settlement of these claims. Some indigenous groups have been increasingly turning to opportunities provided by the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) to avoid a further erosion of their land claims. Yet others have responded by actually reverting to Moro traditional land concepts (Box 3).

Box 2
War Causes Deepening of Pre-Existing Localized Conflict

THE POPULATION of barangay Molao more than doubled since it hosted people who took flight from the spate of violence in nearby Barangay Pisan during the 2000 war. The history of conflict that led to the flight of people into Molao can be traced to 1996 in barangay Pisan. According to personal accounts, when some Muslims cut a few trees in the nearby forest, the logs were confiscated by CAFGUs (Christian militias) from Pisan who asserted that these should be turned over to the local Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The logs, however, were sold by the CAFGUs. To avoid confronting the CAFGUs directly, the Muslims approached the barangay captain of Pisan to work out a settlement – the payment of cash for the "confiscated" logs. No payment was made. The "all-out war" in 2000 gave occasion for the CAFGUs to fire at the Moro settlers, triggering an armed skirmish that ended any chance of settlement over the "confiscated" logs. The skirmishes in 2000 then led to intensified hostilities and further escalated to battles fought in Pisan, this time involving the AFP. Battles in Pisan between the Muslims on the one hand and the AFP and the small band of CAFGUs on the other, contributed to the overall scenario of the bigger war in nearby Carmen that appeared to spill over to Pisan. Initially, it was just the CAFGUs versus the Muslims, but later the AFP also got involved because the Muslims were reportedly identified as MILF members. The Muslims of Pisan took flight and many of them now live in Molao.

Box 3

Persistence of Traditional Moro Views on Land

IN THE traditional Moro view, land is inherited and held in usufruct by the community. It is non-alienable and held in trust by the *datu* or chief. The datu often has ultimate right of disposition and may invoke it in case of disputes or significant demographic or ecological change. "The land itself may be encumbered but not alienated—that is, it may not be removed from the community's use" (Scott, 1982:140). The dominant perception among ethnic households is that even land assigned to or owned by the household may not be sold or even rented to people who are not one's relatives or who are not from the same ethnic group. Purchase of land is the least recognized among the modes of owning or using land across all the various ethnic groups. Such concepts are founded both on customary law and Islamic land tenure practices. Settlers are confused when Moros who even helped early pioneer settlers clear and break the land later try to reclaim the land on the basis of claims of ancestral domain. Yet one need not conclude bad faith on the part of the Moros, since land to the Moros "belongs to no one but Allah". The land is, in effect, only lent out by the community, which maintains stewardship of the land. There is the expectation that the land will be returned and will always belong to the community.

A survey conducted by Fianza (1999) shows that these indigenous conceptions persist and are still widely regarded as the legitimate basis of land claims and tenure arrangements. Moro ethnic groups, for instance use burial grounds and permanent structures and family genealogies (*sarsila/tarsila)* as customary proof of ownership. The survey results also shows how these basic conceptions vary among the different Muslim ethnic groups.

But things have also been changing. In many Tausug communities in present-day Sulu and among the Maguindanao in North and South Cotabato, the legal requirement on land tenure based on the system of private property and new farming technologies have substantially altered practices. The influx of non-Moro farming migrants, particularly in the first half of the 1900s during American rule, led to the alienation of communal lands. State policy facilitated the encroachment of communal lands by homesteaders, foreign corporate plantations and government projects. The repeated episodes of displacements due to armed conflict, especially beginning in the 1970s have also forced indigenous groups to leave their lands and opened opportunities for further encroachment by outsiders – this is perceived by the respondents in Fianza's survey to be the second most important development in their communities (after outright "land grabbing") that undermined traditional tenurial arrangements and practices. According to Gowing (1979:190) "the Muslims resented the detachment of lands, even those which had gone unused, from the traditional pattern of community land ownership, with its customary (*adat*) and Islamic sanctions. This resentment increased as they saw the steady occupation of good lands by outsiders and faced the prospect that soon there would be insufficient living space for their descendants".

"In Maguindanao and in other places, some datus who were quick to understand the meaning of the new system of private property did obtain titles to their own lands and those of their clansmen, or titled to their own names the lands then occupied by their followers" (Stewart, 1998: 116). This established the legal basis for Moro landlordism today.

Box 4

MILF Presence in Mindanao Before the AFP-MILF War of 2000

Province	MILF Presence in 1997
Basilan	One major camp covering three municipalities in the island
Bukidnon	One major camp straddling the Bukidnon-Lanao del Sur boundary
Davao del Sur	One major camp
Davao Oriental	One major camp
Lanao del Norte	Two Camps in Munai and Upper Kauswagan areas
Lanao del Sur	Camp Bushra and Camp Ali
Maguindanao	Main MILF stronghold with five major camps and ten other sub-camps in Buldon, Sultan Kudarat, Sultan sa Barongis, Ampatuan, Maganoy, Upi, Buluan, Datu Piang, Includes the MILF General Headquarters in Camp Abubakar and Camp Darulaman in Barira and Buldon
North Cotabato	Western half of the province considered an MILF stronghold. Camps include Rajah Muda and Madriagao in Pikit, Camp Usman in Carmen and sub-camps in Kabacan, Matalam, Aleosan and Pagalungan.
South Cotabato and Sarangani	Two major camps
Tawi-Tawi	Camp Salman Farsi
Zamboanga del Sur and del Norte	Two major camps

Source. Interviews with MILF cadres in Maguindanao and Cotabato City in Gutierrez and Guilial (1997)

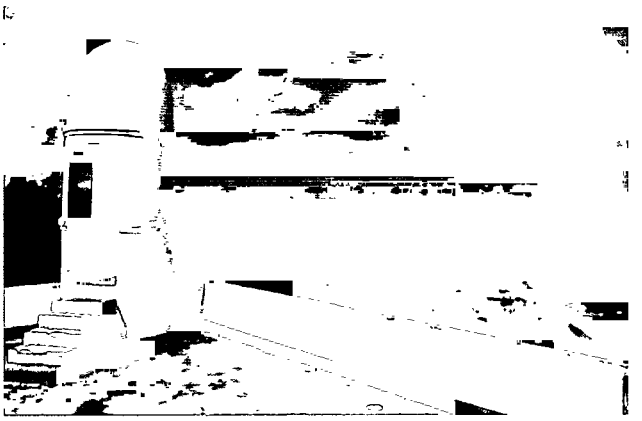
Three Types of Post-Conflict Community Settings

THERE ARE at least three post-conflict community types in Mindanao and each type may require a unique approach to ensure development effectiveness.

Communities found within or close to the tensile points of the conflict between the MILF and the Philippine military. These would be communities in or around what used to be MILF camps (see listing of MILF camps before the conflict in 1997 in Box 4). The Philippine troops continue to be posted in these former MILF camps after these were overrun. The military leadership is logically concerned that the MILF troops, which were merely dispersed, might retake these positions. On the other hand, the presence of government soldiers is one reason internally displaced populations would rather resettle elsewhere, either temporarily or permanently.

It is important to realize that return to these places will be hindered by the perceived high probability of a resumption of armed conflict in these areas. It may be important to support the phased return of IDPs towards these places via half-way evacuation centers, to allow IDPs to visit their farms, to avoid new local conflict arising from occupation of their properties and to allow them to assess the peace and security situation. A similar program was supported in 2000 by then DSWD Secretary and Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Manila Bulletin, August 11, 2000). The intention, however, was merely to establish these halfway centers, while the houses of the displaced persons were being rebuilt.

Mixed communities. As may be gleaned from the stories in Boxes 1 and 2 (above), the end of armed hostilities between the major protagonists in Mindanao will require more than just the reconstruction of physical infrastructure that was destroyed by the conflict. The social infrastructure, especially in mixed communities of Muslims, Lumads and Christians will also have to be repaired. In mixed ethno-religious communities where the conflict has manifested itself in terms of the physical self-segregation of neighbors, mutual distrust



will be the starting point of any development effort. It may not always be sensible to expect these communities to undertake joint projects, at least not major ones and not immediately. It is also possible that former neighbors would desire to remain separate for an indefinite time. Barangay and other local government officials may not always be perceived to be good mediators in post-conflict settings in mixed communities because their relatives or they themselves may have been involved as protagonists during the recent conflict.

Communities that receive displaced populations. Site development will be an important component in these communities because the new settlers will probably find themselves in the marginal lands. Negotiations with clan leaders, and community elders will probably have to be formalized, to secure some manner of tenurial security, if not outright land ownership. This is essential to creating the incentives for investing in the productivity of the land.

It is undeniable that the newly relocated families should receive assistance to help them resume their normal lives, more so if they are located in marginal lands of existing communities or if their entry makes them indebted to the host community and places them in subordinate positions within the logic of the rural economy. Even in instances where the arrival of these victims of war may have positive economic consequences for the host communities in the long-term (e.g., if they help solve problems of labor shortage in crop sectors where timing of labor availability is extremely important), members of the host community may hold the belief that they too should be given projects.

E. Assessment of Needs in Post-Conflict Areas

Central Mindanao

Basilan and Sulu

THE SURVEY respondents in Sulu identified water supply, livelihood, health services and medicines, school buildings improved lighting/power supply, and roads as the top projects that will alleviate poverty (Table 7). These were the most frequently cited project types that those surveyed in Sulu desired. The demand for projects that would improve water supplies ranked highest and the demand for projects that would create jobs and livelihood ranked a close second.

In Basilan, the same shortlist of project types as in Sulu was elicited from survey respondents, except that housing was frequently cited instead of lighting and power (Table 8). The desire for jobs and livelihoods as well as for road improvements were greatly emphasized in Basilan. The demand for school buildings was lower compared to Sulu.

Table 6
Community Needs and Aspiration as Revealed Through Participatory Planning in Survey Areas in Central Mindanao

Needs and Aspirations	Community Recommendation
A. Economic Recovery	
Lack of livelihood and employment opportunities	Access to credit to start a business, access to land and other productive assets such as farm animals and implements and access to agricultural infrastructure and support services (irrigation system and good seeds and planting materials)
B. Governance	
Education	Establishment of a complete elementary school system in each barangay equipped with basic amenities and scholarship program among youth to attain college education
Shelter	Reconstruction of shelters particularly those destroyed during armed conflicts
Health	Construction of community health centers with adequate supply of medicines and construction of community pumps for safe drinking water
Infrastructure	Rural electrification and basic rural infrastructure to connect them to town centers/markets and community markets for them to engage in other livelihood activities
C. Security	
Relatively unstable peace and order situation	Dialogues among community members; rural electrification to help attain and maintain peace and order
D. Social capital	
Weak social capital, social and recreational facilities	Basic recreation facilities, such as basketball courts, to divert the attention of youth from unproductive and anti-social activities and to foster greater camaraderie and understanding within the community
E. Institutional Arrangement	
Clarification of Institutional arrangement	Array of institutions dealing with peace and development in Mindanao is confusing. Accountability suffers. Clearer arrangements needed.
Formulation of a Mindanao plan	Integration of existing plans for Mindanao to guide government/ODA assistance to the island
Inadequate ODA assistance to social services	Accelerate disbursement (review each project) More assistance to social services

Table 7:
Community Priorities for Sulu Province

SULU Priorities	Percent
Water Supply	19
Livelihood Assistance	14
Improve Health Services	11
Access to Education	9
Electricity	9
Road Improvement	9
Others	30

Table 8:
Community Priorities for Basilan Province

BASILAN Priorities	Percent
Livelihood Assistance	29
Road Improvement	18
Improve Water Supply	14
Improve Health Services	14
Housing	5
Access to Education	4
Others	16

F. Traditional Social Hierarchies and Project Delivery

While the community (Lower D'lag) is grateful for the DSWD housing project, many feel that there are anomalies in the project. First, the beneficiaries were mostly laborers of the datus or friends and relatives of municipal officials. Second, the houses were supposed to be within the communities where the evacuees came from, instead, the houses were built along the highway and/or on private property. Third, the houses were supposed to be worth between P15,000- P25,000 each. However, the residents claim that at most, the materials given to them were worth only P5,000 - P8,000.

Powerful Local Leaders

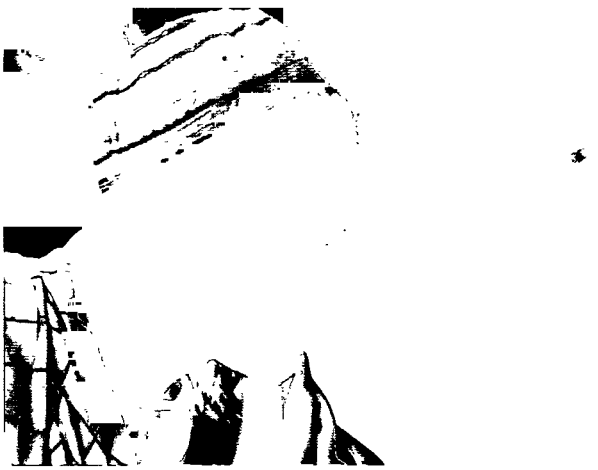
THE MATERIAL needs of poor communities in Mindanao may be quite basic, yet, even when financing might be available, the matter is seldom as simple as setting up a procurement process where "the community" is empowered by project rules to make the key decisions. Because the traditional leaders of a community have always played an important role in regulating the relationship of the members of the community with the outside world, prerogatives claimed by traditional leaders can be expected to exert an important influence on project outcomes.

Especially in places where datu-landlords rule it may be assuming too much to expect ordinary folk to act in ways which might offend the datu. The cultural and religious sanction supporting the nobility's control over who gets to use land is certainly a very important source of the datu's continuing power over his subjects and kinsmen. The respondents of the household surveys in Central Mindanao volunteered the information that they were afraid to give less than a perfect satisfaction rating for the government services provided because their local chief executive is also their datu. Given that the Local Government Unit (LGU) is the primary service provider of the community, they were afraid that a poor satisfaction rating would be wrongly interpreted as a dislike for, or dissatisfaction with their datu.

Table 9
Who Appropriates Land or Its Produce for Individual Use?

Response Categories	For Land Collectively Owned by Clan/Kinship Group (percent)	For Sites Collectively Used/Owned by Village (percent)
Clan Elders	56	-
Head of Family of Household	28	-
All (adult) Family Members	10	2
Sultan	-	33
Datu	3	19
Imam	-	13
Village Elders	-	28
Panglima	2	-
Town Mayor/Local Officials	-	4

Source: Myrthena Fianza (1999). Based on a representative sample of Muslim ethnic groups. Figures have been rounded off.



Specificity of Moro Feudalism

MUSLIM LANDLORD datus are entitled to receive tributes from people who use those lands that he is empowered to dispose on behalf of the community. However, even where there are tributes or fixed land-use payments required of the *sakop* or tenant, the amounts concerned are sometimes small or even fixed regardless of the produce and extent of the lands tilled. Hence, the tribute may not be understood merely as payment for the use of the land.

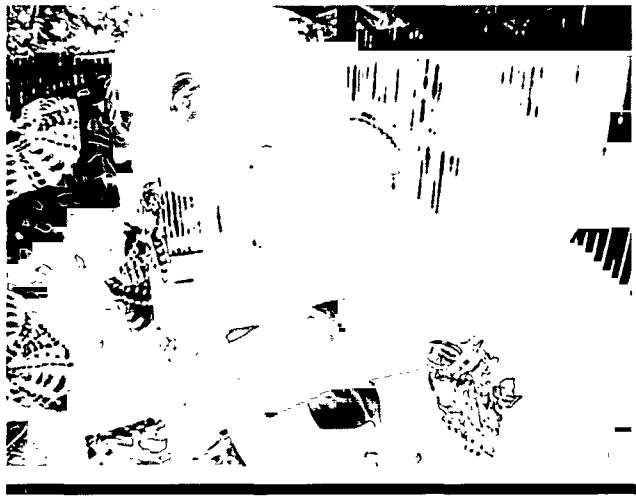
In many ways, tributes are an acknowledgement of the datu's elevated status in relation to the subordinate and dependent status of one who pays the tribute. "In Moro rank society, the Sultan's or the datu's claim to power and prestige was not merely his birth into the nobility and control over real estate, but also his active leadership or control over a large group of followers" (Stewart 1977 as cited in Fianza 1999: 35). Likewise, in the nascent polities of other Moro groups, it was the ability to attract and to possess as many followers or

dependents, and consequently, the accumulation of labor power that enhanced one's power and prestige, more than land ownership itself. This means that political uses of a large followership have to be at the center of any understanding of tenurial relationships between the landlord-datus/sultans and their "sharecropping" *sakop*. It is also important to emphasize therefore that the exchange is not to be conceived around mainly economic terms; there also needs to be an emphasis on loyalty and support from the latter in return for the former's protection and assistance.

Among the smaller Moro groups, tenancy relations did not exist in their settlements on the same level as in the polities of the Tausug, the Maguindanaoans, and the Maranao. "Among the smaller Moro groups — i.e., the Yakan, Samal, Sanguil Kalagan, and Kalibugan — the village or community elders are, for instance, more relied upon for decisions on land related issues in the community. On the other hand, majority of the Maranao, and Maguindanaoans point to the sultan and datu for decisions on the allocation of communally owned land for individual use." This may mean that prerogatives of datus, who are not of the kin group, will be fewer among the "minority Moro" ethnic groups. It also means that in these settings village elders would represent a kind of benign and fatherly authority (Fianza, 1999).

Clan and Village Elders as Community Authorities

BASED ON a representative sample of Muslim ethnic groups, Table 9 shows that aside from village elders and household heads, the clan is a very important institution that assigns the use of land and appropriates their produce. The clan represented by its elders is a basic social unit that has real prerogatives. Clan elders are viewed by majority of respondents to have legitimate authority over the disposition of land collectively owned by the clan or kin group. Village elders, on the other hand, play an important role in decisions concerning sites owned and used commonly by the entire village. It is also notable that while the datu has important powers with respect to resources collectively use and owned by the village, the Sultan (who governs many villages) and the village elders jointly and separately may be far more important stakeholders in governing property collectively owned by the village.



A Role for NGOs and Beneficiary Groups

The Barangay Captain of Malangit appreciated the planning workshop conducted by one of the Social Assessment teams, particularly the presentation of community action plans to the Municipal Mayor and the representatives of various government agencies at the municipal and provincial level. For the first time, this local chief executive committed to support their plans by allocating a portion of his Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) to their proposed project activities.

IN THOSE places where lineage-based and culturally sanctioned hierarchies no longer hold much sway – where the situation has been transformed so that people can at least choose the leader they would support – social space may be created where highly participative modes of decision-making can be installed. Where they exist, non-government organizations (NGOs) can help ensure that all important stakeholders, especially the least influential ones, participate in identifying their needs and in establishing criteria for deciding which areas and groups would benefit first.

Women in the Buluan cluster anticipate that corrupt government officials will be a big hindrance to effective development interventions. But they are confident that in project implementation corruption and the diversion of funds can be avoided if resources are directly controlled by beneficiaries.

Such an approach will probably be ideal for livelihood projects, wherein all the relevant inputs can be controlled by the community. There will be important project categories, however, where communities will

need to be assisted by local governments in making physical surveys and in defining technical design specifications. While speed and transparency in the disbursements and use of grants is immediately achieved when the management of development projects is shaped mainly around what communities want, there will also be trade-offs.

It can happen that local governments that are inadvertently rendered marginal in the decision-making process will be unwilling to support the maintenance of facilities established by an official development assistance facility. Local governments also play an important role in future investments that can complement community-level projects, such as the maintenance of municipal roads connecting to newly-built farm-to-market roads.

While the use of community-centered development should be pursued where it can be, there will be many places that would warrant a second general approach that relies on higher-level agencies to introduce incentives that will guide the participation of local executives. For instance, if local officials tend to prefer large infrastructure projects that pre-empt funds for rural communities, project selection rules might be used to create an offsetting bias for small scale rural infrastructure. Thus, a project can have a rule against locating infrastructure projects in the town center or a rule that the project office will finance only the cost of materials and unskilled labor.

G. Autonomous Organizations

Membership in Organizations in Central Mindanao

DESPITE OR because of the disruption in their lives, people in conflict-affected areas have remained unorganized. Of 1,526 respondents from conflict-affected communities in Davao del Norte, South Cotabato, Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat, 84 percent do not belong to any organized group. Of the remaining 16 percent, around one-third claim affiliation with the MNLF, while the other two-thirds belong to different Islamic, religious, political and youth organizations. Less than one percent belong to cooperatives.

The household survey results in Muslim communities affected by conflict reveal that 93 percent of IDP households and 75 percent of non-IDP households are not involved in any organization. In contrast, almost all of the indigenous people (IP) households surveyed are involved in some group or organization with the majority affiliated nominally to the Manobo Lumadnong Panaghi-usa (MALUPA). In general, those who belong to organizations do not seem to know the objectives and activities of their organizations. Not one person can recall the last organizational meeting they attended. But leaders of the organizations were more responsive to the interviews. At least some could describe the general purpose why their organizations were formed — typically it is to receive assistance.

Many Organizations in Muslim Mindanao are Directly Affiliated with the MNLF

MANY OF the organizations in the Muslim communities are directly or indirectly under the influence of the MNLF. Most of the organizations are headed by the datus or commanders of the MNLF. These are often related to each other by royal blood or through inter-marriage. In the case of the IPs, those related to the datu invariably assume the key positions in organizations and those who have attained relatively higher formal education also take leadership positions in the community. Most of the organizations have no clear organizational structure. Generally, there are only leaders and members.

This information, however, may need to be qualified in three ways. First, information about affiliation with the MILF was probably not revealed. Second, in most instances, communities belong to lineage groups. These affiliations may not have been explicitly perceived by the respondents as constituting organizations. Nevertheless, they are known to be instrumental in facilitating collective action, governing the assignment of common resources, resolving conflict and mobilizing votes during elections. In areas that were historically influenced by the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao (including areas in Sultan Kudarat and North Cotabato) and the confederation of datus around Lake Lanao, communities still acknowledge the claim to authority of powerful datus and of noble families. This kind of information is not specifically captured in the above-

mentioned survey results. Lastly, the above-mentioned survey information pertains only to Central Mindanao and excludes Basilan and Sulu.[9]

Civil Society in Service Provision in Basilan and Sulu

IN BASILAN, survey findings reveal that NGOs and community leaders are relied upon to deliver services to the people, government ranks a close third. The Sulu survey tells a slightly different story. Community leaders, rather than NGOs and government, are the predominant agents through which people gain access to services.

NGO services appear to be more widespread in Basilan compared to Sulu. The survey of households for Sulu covering different municipalities tended to show that it is the informal community leaders, rather than either the NGOs and the government, that have more consistently been able to provide support in the different communities during emergencies. This response included those municipalities outside of the main island of Jolo. NGOs are located mainly in the major island of Jolo and cater to very specific sectors rather than to geographical communities.

Between Basilan and Sulu, it would appear that it is in Sulu where the informal community leaders play a prominent role in responding to the needs of people. The reason for this is that community leaders (ulama, elders, royalty and local bosses) have a more widespread presence at the grassroots level, owing to the traditional role that Islam and the Sultanate assigned to them.

NGOs in Basilan also appear to have a palpable presence in many communities owing to the organizing influence and support of the Catholic Church in thirty-three Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) and to the impetus that agrarian reform has given to the formation of cooperatives such as those being supported by Kasanyangan Foundation in the rubber plantations. These organizations are able to coordinate actions across barangays.

Weakness of Traditional Leadership in Basilan as an Opportunity

BECAUSE BASILAN was merely an area of in-migration, traditional families and leaders sanctioned by Islam are weak in relation either to Sulu or the predominantly Muslim Central Mindanao provinces. The original settlers are the Yakans, who merely came within the influence of the Sulu Sultanate in earlier times. This has allowed an institution like the Catholic Church in Basilan to play a bigger role in provincial affairs than its counterpart in Sulu. The greater activity of Catholics and Christians in Basilan is also understandable because Catholics and other Christians constitute a larger portion of the population in Basilan (around 30 percent) compared to only about two percent of Roman Catholics in Sulu. Christians constitute a significant portion of the population in the *poblacions* or town center. Most of those dwelling in the hinterlands and coastal areas are Muslims.

The Catholic Church has been more active in organizing and promoting BEC. The situation is different in Sulu where the Church is more circumspect about charges of proselytization and conversion because the population is largely Muslim. Understandably, the Church does not have as extensive network of parishes and BEC in Sulu as in Basilan. The Church in both provinces have been active in helping disadvantaged indigenous peoples like the Yakans in Basilan (Claretian missionaries, Sisters of the Rural Mission) and the Badjaos in Sulu (OMI-Notre Dame).

[9] The design of the social assessments for Basilan and Sulu on the one hand and for Central Mindanao on the other hand differ markedly. For instance, information about the role of traditional leadrship in service delivery was more deliberately explored in the Basilan-Sulu study.

H. Some Experiences in Project Implementation in Mindanao

UNDP Experience[10]

IN JANUARY 1998, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) embarked on livelihood assistance and employment-generation activities, particularly training and education. For many of the MNLF combatants, it was their first time to participate in an exercise identifying their needs and planning their own projects. To ease the process, they worked within their own structure, the MNLF hierarchy that remained intact in each of their "states." It was comfortable working within familiar territory since most of them had been with the MNLF half of their lives.

Rivalry among beneficiaries. In the UNDP experience, the greatest threat to the reconstruction program was the intensifying rivalry and suspicion among various groups in the MNLF itself. According to the UNDP, "some MNLF members think that those who got influential positions in the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) and ARMM are people who did not share in the suffering during almost three decades of armed struggle. These relatively young MNLF members are viewed as opportunists and 'fake' rebels who used their education to gain advantage over the rest." UNDP staff have been confronted with questions demanding to know the basis for helping groups that were deemed 'undeserving'.

Corruption. Some MNLF members did not comply faithfully with the terms for gaining access to emergency assistance. A prominent MNLF commander in Lanao del Sur wanted fertilizer delivered to his home rather than to the project site. He sold the fertilizer. Learning from this experience, the donor agency arranged for on-site delivery, direct to the beneficiary. In another instance, this same commander urged that the community fund be deposited in his own bank account. Another commander padded the cost for the transport of fertilizer, practically doubling the rent of the banca. When the donor agency discovered this, it arranged for the supplier to take care of transport. The MNLF commander protested that he was being deprived of a source of income.

Box 5

Interpreting Corruption in Mindanao

GUTIERREZ AND Danguilan-Vitug (1996:203-204) quote a Mindanao State University historian on the theme of corruption in Mindanao both among government officials and traditional leaders:

"The concept of the state is not well-developed in these areas. That is why people find more security in their clan or in their datus. Thus, government becomes an alien structure imposed from Manila. Using public funds and equipment for public use may be seen not as criminal acts, but as the normal and logical exercise of the authority of the datu or politician in dealing with an alien authority."

"Sometimes," this historian argues, "what may be seen as corruption may just be a simple act of defiance against a government perceived as oppressive. If alien standards are imposed on ARMM, majority of local leaders will be lost and sent to jail. Given the instability in the region, these local leaders, whatever limitations they have, provide the only visible semblance of governance in an impoverished and volatile region. The biggest challenge is how they can be trained and transformed from being local bosses to development managers."

[10] This account is not a summary of an evaluation. It uses anecdotes from the project to illustrate situations that development agencies are bound to encounter during project implementation. Based on Danguilan-Vitug and Gloria (2000).

USAID SWIFT/ELAP[11]

THE SUPPORT With Implementing Fast Transition-Emergency Livelihood Assistance Program (SWIFT ELAP) was a targeted livelihood program for ex-combatants of the MNLF. This was intended to create links that will create an external supporting structure for each village and to allow the government to establish credibility in the eyes of the former combatants. Two of its other objectives were: a) to help establish tangible links or alliances between communities of former combatants and local governments and line agencies, and b) to strengthen group capacity to mobilize resources through participatory decision-making.

A major success of the SWIFT program is the extent to which it effectively involved local and national counterpart contributions at the community level. From the onset, the importance of counterpart contributions was emphasized, both for the value of the resources and the alliances established, which are critical to the peace effort. The inputs from SWIFT are contingent upon the actual delivery of corresponding counterpart from the LGUs and the groups themselves.

Commitments for continuing technical assistance from the LGU through the Municipal Agriculture Officer were also secured beyond SWIFT's project term. Project Development Officers also supported efforts to generate more resources from within the groups and to link beneficiaries with NGOs in the area. In a few cases, particularly in Lanao del Norte, some groups have avoided counterpart contributions from local mayors to avoid incurring political liabilities.

Organizational leadership is still drawn from the old military scheme. With only a few exceptions, the group's chairman is the former commander. The project evaluators observe that "the military mindset is still very much at play. Members have apparent or expressed confidence in their commanders regardless of skill in management of a civilian organization." The evaluators, however, express concern about the possibility that ordinary members may not feel entirely at ease with answering questions about the conduct of their leaders. "It is an obviously touchy subject area, and evaluation team members had to dance around the issue through a series of proxy questions to get at the truth" (Heard and Magno, 2000: 14).

This may be seen in relation to the challenge of creating a social space for participatory decision-making. In many places, being a former rebel commanders qualifies one to become a datu. In the end, the evaluators may have observed a relationship between leaders and followers that is more widespread and not just confined to former MNLF commanders. In his work on Lanao Muslims, G. Carter Bentley (1994) observed that Maranaos "consider the normative social condition to be one of being ruled, to stand in tributary relation to a center of power." Beckett (1972) likewise notes: "The datu represented the centralizing principle in a volatile society in which centrifugal forces were strong." Common folk will tend to gravitate toward an individual who displays the character and deportment that they associate with leadership, because that leader's *barakat* (blessing) will "radiate toward supporters and enhance the effectiveness of their actions as well."

SZOPAD Social Fund Project

THE SZOPAD Social Fund Project proved to be an effective tool for providing prompt development assistance after the MNLF and the Philippine government forged the Peace Agreement in the 1990s. The Social Fund allowed for fast and direct disbursement of funds through direct contracting and with minimum channels of approval. The project also had a special status; it was lodged under the Office of the President and this endowed it with prestige and influence that proved useful in negotiating with different government agencies and in minimizing political interference that normally cause project delays. This design of the project allowed beneficiaries to experience the end of the conflict as also being the beginning of improvements in their lives.

Local governments were not intensively involved in the major stages of project processing. It was the community groups that were given key prerogatives in the delivery of the Social Fund sub-projects. Local government officials could have provided technical and

[11] Based on Heard and Magno (2000).

financial support to sub-project implementation and subsequent support for operations and maintenance. But on the other hand, the intensive participation of local governments would have increased the risks of elite capture, which could have become an additional source of political acrimony between the MNLF and some local government officials. Such were the trade-offs that needed to be weighed given that prompt development assistance was a very important social objective.

There were, however, factors perceived to be outside the control of the Philippine government and of the implementing agency that initially created constraints to project implementation. One key constraint, which was also apparent from the field investigations (for this social assessment report) in Basilan and Sulu, is the limited number and limited capacity of private contractors to supply the services needed in sub-project execution. This would be especially marked in isolated towns, for instance, in the Sulu Archipelago. Reports from the SZOPAD Social Fund (World Bank, 2003) specifically show that delays due to the weak financial capacity of contractors affected ten percent of sub-projects. It may be crucial for implementing agencies to imagine how this external constraint might also be addressed directly through mechanisms that development projects might develop.

Releases of funds through the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) were significantly delayed on certain occasions due to the changeover of political leadership during project implementation. This also created delays in payments to contractors.

I. Local Governments and the ARMM

Non-Resident Mayors

MANY MAYORS choose to stay in the capital towns of provinces. In general, the absenteeism of the mayors also corresponds to local governments that do not have the capacity to perform their mandates. There are a number of exceptions in Basilan—these are the capital town of Isabela, Lamitan and Maluso. The new mayors of Sumisip, Lantawan and Tipo-Tipo are said to be development-oriented leaders but they have inherited bureaucracies with very limited capabilities. In Sulu, the towns with some significant capacity to fulfill their mandates are Siasi, Jolo, Luuk and Parang.

In Sulu, traditional leaders or ethnic elders assume the role of intermediary between their followers and the formal government structure; in the absence of government provision some even provide basic services to their followers. Informants and stakeholders believe that it is important to recognize and strengthen these traditional leaders. This assessment of the traditional leaders is often contrasted to the frustration that is widely felt over the type of people who win elections. It has been articulated that electing leaders is alien to the Muslims. In contrast, tradition involves the anointment by the elders and their training through apprenticeship.

Negative Perception of Local Governments and of Public Agencies

THERE ARE resigned comments about the corruption and ineptness of public officials and their staff. The respondents give a consistent picture of local governments as having been unable to serve as fulcrums of community collective action be it in the effort to confront rising poverty, in efforts to assist the displaced and the victimized or in efforts to support peace by insisting on the state's monopoly of the legitimate use of force.

Municipal governments, however, are also immobilized because of the limited resources at their disposal. It is a common occurrence for staff of rural health units to be holed up in offices because of the lack of budgets for operations. In this manner, resources are expended to little or no effect for the salary of personnel. ARMM line agencies and district representatives are often blessed with bigger budgets.

Given the high risks of channeling funds through local government officials and politicians, it has been suggested by some key informants that depending on the project, a substantial portion of assistance or loan be in the form of commodities or goods. Presumably, commodities being more visible and less

convertible to other uses, they are harder to divert to other uses.

ARMM Line Agencies as Implementing Bodies

FOR MUNICIPALITIES where there are absentee local government officials, particularly in Basilan and Sulu, project designers are faced with two options, which need not be mutually exclusive.

The first option is to work through the ARMM's line agencies like the DSWD, Department of Education (DepEd), and Department of Health (DOH). These agencies have a presence (even if only a token presence) in the 18 municipalities of Jolo, and the Social Assessment revealed that the personnel of the DOH and the DSWD are perceived by the stakeholders to be credible. Because their operations are centralized in the ARMM, their funding and operation would not be hampered by absentee LGU officials. It is possible that this will also be true for the other ARMM provinces.

Line agencies generally have greater capacity to deliver services. It is the field units of the ARMM agencies and of the national government that have demonstrated occasional initiative and effectiveness. These agencies would include the DSWD in Sulu and the Departments of Agrarian Reform, Agriculture, Education, Labor, and Trade and Industry in Basilan. The accession of Basilan to the ARMM from being part of the administrative region of Western Mindanao is bound to introduce changes, and perhaps severe difficulties in the near term to the established priorities and operations of these agencies in Basilan. This, as well as the weakness of local governments, will have profound implications for projects being designed for the area.

The other option is to rely on alternative structures and delivery mechanisms that bring together community elders, groups of NGOs and peoples' organizations or cooperatives. Actual project implementation would involve capacity building for these groups. They can provide crucial support for local governments – as anchors for coordinators of development initiatives. Municipal stakeholders' forums composed of such groups would perform a function not unlike that of Municipal Development Councils created through the Local Government Code.

J. Conclusions

THE NATURE of the conflict determines which paths leading to peace are workable.

An important feature of the major GRP-MILF confrontation is that it was in the nature of an attempt by the Philippine military to displace the MILF from its camps and strongholds. But these camps also happened to be nestled in Muslim communities. The displacement of armed MILF combatants, thus, also led to the displacement of civilian populations. At the end of 2001 close to one million people were displaced by the GRP-MILF war. It is now necessary, however, to help the civilian population to return to these places of former conflict and rebuild their communities and livelihoods.

Findings from surveys in Central Mindanao reveal that a significant number of IDPs will not return to their places of origin. After leaving evacuation centers, these people will seek to be accommodated in other communities. Others will return only once they see that the chances of restoring their livelihoods have increased. The first welcome step that the Government has done in this respect is to rebuild homes that have been destroyed. Bridges, roads madrasahs, public schools, health centers, potable water systems and farm implements, however, were also destroyed. Carabaos and harvests have been lost or else sold or depleted during the interim when people had to flee their homes. Until normalcy returns to rural economies, people will need to work very hard just to prevent the further depletion of their productive assets. They will have to re-establish their livelihoods in a setting where rural credit flows have been disrupted by failures in harvests, and as a result of the knowledge of creditors that many households may have sunk too far below the surface to make the repayment of past and new loans a priority. The Social Assessments reveal that women, children, and even the elderly have had to join the labor markets in response to the disaster brought about by the disruption of their livelihoods and communities.

A second important aspect of the recent conflict is its largely unfinished character. Many displaced people worry about their security and about the possibility of a repeat of the armed conflict in their communities of origin. This must be particularly so for those displaced persons whose communities are within marching distance of the dispersed MILF bands or of troops of the Philippine military stationed in the former rebel camps. Communities in and around former MILF camps remain precarious because, being strategic military locations, these will continue to invite contest between the warring parties. Meanwhile, the uncertainty of life in these areas will continue to shape people's decisions even after the displaced families have returned to their homes and farms. Planning horizons of people in these communities will tend to be short and long-term investments in farms and communal facilities that would otherwise be worthwhile may be forgone. Yet, it is also probably true that communities that have been assisted in investing in their livelihoods and communities will be more hesitant than others to engage in activities that would increase the risks of another disruption—e.g., participating in aggressive pre-emptive moves against groups and forces that are perceived to be hostile. This is an idea that comes from young people encountered by the Social Assessment teams.

A third characteristic of the conflict is that, while its primary impact was in Muslim communities, it also had a qualitatively different effect on mixed ethno-religious communities. There are many known instances where neighbors have armed against each other or else moved out of each others' paths by transferring temporarily to communities dominated by their own ethno-religious group. It will be a delicate matter to try to convince communities and groups that were provoked by the war to turn against each other to now work on common projects. In some instances, local governments have also been implicated in the escalation of tensions between neighbors.

A fourth characteristic of the conflict that was highlighted in this report is the possibility that the large scale armed conflict may have magnified pre-existing local conflicts. In the past, the presence of rebel and government troops in combat posture is known to have induced local actors to cast purely local conflicts in terms of the ideological and historical narratives of the rebel groups or of the government troops. The consequence of this is that the parties in the big conflict have often been persuaded to descend upon protagonists in localized conflicts. The recent military confrontation between the MILF and the government troops may not have been an exception to this phenomenon. This may imply that it will be important for development practitioners to put a premium on trying to understand how the large-scale conflict may have created new tensions among local actors in and among villages. And because local conflicts will continue to be played out in the course of time, even after the large-scale conflict has ceased, it would certainly not hurt if development efforts that have a chance of defusing these tensions were given high priority.

The resolution of long-standing social conflict, especially over land claims, is a challenge that even the MNLF leadership dared not address forcefully, not even after it held the reins of the ARMM government. This does not mean that the MNLF leadership lacked resolve, but it does say a lot about the magnitude and contentious nature of the problem.

Institutionalized rules and frameworks for conflict resolution that are perceived to be fair by most stakeholders are probably key to establishing the credibility of state institutions. In the end, it is only the reliability of state agencies and the perceived fairness of their rules that will slowly defeat the need for people to resort to arms and to seek the protection of local strongmen.

Initial social conditions unique to the conflict areas of Mindanao define the feasible means of reaching the poor. The needs of the poor in Mindanao may be very basic, as may be gleaned from survey results and focused group discussions. However, the delivery of development assistance is mediated by communities that have their own unwritten yet binding rules. The datus, war lords, rebel commanders, religious leaders, clan and village elders and the local nobility are the anchors of stability for communities in the many lawless frontiers of

Mindanao. The relationships between leaders and followers would sometimes tend to be benign and fatherly, especially at the level of clan groupings within villages. But, just as often, it may also turn out to be exploitative, hierarchical, and far removed from standard notions of accountability.

Unfortunately, the same traditional ethos are also known to frequently permeate the running of local governments and other state agencies. Recent experience in project delivery among development agencies that supported MNLF reintegration efforts after 1996 give ample demonstration of this fact. Inquiries conducted by the Social Assessment team for Basilan and Sulu also give further evidence of the limits of working with local governments.

One may not avoid encountering these local leaders in the process of project delivery. They provide the modicum of local order that allow agreements to have any chance of being respected and to be forged in the first place. The question is whether what they are and what they do should be taken largely as a given or whether one might suppose that it is possible, even just within the narrow confines of executing development projects, to introduce new modes of collective decision-making and accountability mechanisms.

Membership in clan and communal groups have important but limited functions as: i) modes of solidarity and common defense during times of conflict and displacement; ii) support system during times of economic emergencies affecting some members; iii) modes of coordinating supply of farm labor during the peak planting and harvesting seasons; and iv) modes of governing access and resolving disputes on matters concerning communal lands and common resources.

The routines of such closely-knit groupings may prove to be quite inadequate though when it comes to helping members negotiate for access to land and other resources not belonging to the lineage group, access to markets for goods, technologies and sources of finance. Even where the local political situation allows it, people will need intensive training if development agencies will expect them to decide and act collectively in creating pools of fund for their projects.

The upshot of this is that fully participatory approaches in project selection, financing, and delivery may be very difficult in some parts of Muslim Mindanao. There will be significant political constraints owing to the nature of traditional leadership and the weakness of local government structures and autonomous civil society groupings. In these places, external modes of making leaders accountable will be necessary, project execution and delivery rules will need to be put in place so as to avoid elite capture of project benefits. There will certainly be places where a community centered approach may work because of the loosening over time of authoritarian ties between leaders and followers. In such places, intensive preparation will be needed to strengthen social capital and organizational capabilities and linkages between communities and government units.

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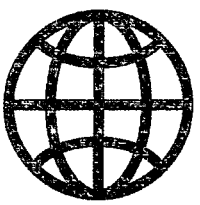

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