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How partnership helps to resolve clan conflict in the Philippines

Conciliation Resources works with two local partners in Mindanao, southern Philippines, to resolve clan conflicts, and strengthen relationships between communities and local authorities. Tenduray Lambangian Women’s Organisation (TLWOI) is a network representing indigenous people, and United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) is a predominantly Moro (Muslim) youth organisation working to promote peace in the region through dialogue and reconciliation.



Felix Colchester (</who-we-are/people/felix-colchester>)

November 2019



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Known locally as 'rido', clan conflicts in Mindanao are caused by competition around access to land and resources, political rivalries and issues of family honour. Rido pose a threat to people's livelihoods and everyday security, and undermine community cohesion. They also threaten to derail a fragile national-level peace process between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Government of the Philippines.

In response, Conciliation Resources, TLWOI and UNYPAD established Community Safety Working Groups to support people to identify and resolve conflict issues, such as rido, which affect their lives. To date, we have set up 12 such groups across four locations. These working groups have created a space for communities, civil society leaders, and local and regional government bodies to discuss priorities for peace. Importantly, they offer individuals often excluded from decision-making, such as women, youth, indigenous groups and people with disabilities, the opportunity to have a say in how their societies operate.

Community Safety Working Group initiatives have delivered tangible results. A working group in South Upi municipality engaged two warring communities – one a Moro community, the other an indigenous community – over a period of two years to broker a series of agreements relating to the triggers of their rido. They had been in violent conflict for over 30 years.

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Empowering communities in the Philippines

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These efforts resulted in a drastic reduction in the levels of everyday violence. The communities have held a 'Kanduli' – a celebration to honour the rebuilding of relationships between both communities – following a series of agreements on the cessation of hostilities, joint community conflict management mechanisms, and land tenure demarcation. Since the Kanduli, no attacks or disturbances between the two clans have been reported and members of both communities enjoy the freedom of passage across the others' territory.

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Importantly, the resolution of rido also assists the process of implementing the 2014 agreement between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Government of the Philippines. Creating conditions of trust between different identity communities in Mindanao will be vital as the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao is

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established following a plebiscite in January 2019. TLWOI, UNYPAD and Conciliation Resources will continue to work together to resolve rido through community working groups ahead of important regional elections in 2022.

Our new report, 'Learning from partnership: effective donor support to civil society-led peacebuilding (/learning-hub/learning-partnership)', examines Conciliation Resources' approach to partnership with civil society organisations, networks and groups in conflict contexts to understand how it contributes to peacebuilding achievements.

Conciliation Resources never dictated to us what to do. In our joint brainstorming sessions, we would share what was happening on the ground and then Conciliation Resources would share knowledge from different contexts and experiences. Sometimes we would explain why interventions that had worked elsewhere wouldn't work in Mindanao and they listened to us.

DATUAN MAGON
United Youth for Peace and Development

The Community Safety Working Group initiative in Mindanao features in the report as a 'partnership story'. It demonstrates how a strong partnership relationship between an 'external' INGO and 'internal' civil society organisations can help to bring about peaceful change.

In the story UNYPAD, TLWOI and Conciliation Resources explain how they complimented each other to enable the peaceful resolution in South Upi. Project development, for example, combined Conciliation Resources' global experience of community security with UNYPAD and TLWOI's knowledge of what was applicable and appropriate in the local context.

Complementary skillsets and networks were also instrumental in achieving a successful outcome. TLWOI and UNYPAD's local legitimacy with the communities meant they were well placed to initiate the mediation of disputes and coordinate quick responses to any escalating tensions. In parallel, Conciliation Resources drew on its access to government actors and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to receive their consent for working group activities.

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We each have different sets of skills that we can pull together and offer to the communities in which we work. For example, TLWOI has very good knowledge of indigenous laws, norms and customs, including of traditional reconciliation processes. UNYPAD has great access to Moro communities, and a strong history of working to mediate clan conflicts. Conciliation Resources provides training on peacebuilding tools and analysis, and created the opportunity for the two local partners to work on the project together.”

Paul Adolfo, Mindanao Project Manager Conciliation Resources

[Our report \(/learning-hub/learning-partnership\)](/learning-hub/learning-partnership) reflects on the ‘partnerships stories’ to draw out lessons for how donors can better accommodate and support civil society-led peacebuilding.

The reason why this partnership has been so successful is because all three of our organisations, as well as our donors, want to see a positive change in the communities. We all want to transform the communities from conflict to peace.

FROILYN MENDOZA
Teduray Lambangian Women’s Organisation

Our experience in Mindanao, and in other conflict contexts, suggests that donors who seek to apply a partnership approach to their own actions are in a better position to enable peaceful change initiated by civil society. This entails a greater emphasis on relationship management with civil society, a more proactive role to build the political space for civil society actors to operate effectively in conflict contexts, and the development of donor systems and processes that enable and value the contribution of civil society in response to violent conflict. In doing so, donors can act upon their commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals to partnership (Goal 17) and peace and justice (Goal 16).

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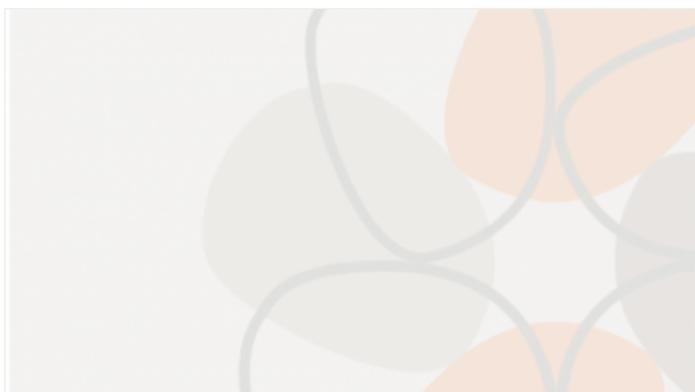
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