

PHILIPPINES (Mindanao-MNLF)



BASIC INFORMATION

Population:	83.1 million inhabitants (2005)
Mindanao:	18.2 million inhabitants
ARMM:	2.4 million inhabitants
GDP:	98,306 million dollars (2005)
Mindanao:	15,000 million dollars
ARMM:	1,250 million dollars
GNI per cápita:	1,300 dollars (2005)
Mindanao:	820 dollars
ARMM:	322 dollars
HDI:	0.763 (84 th) (2004)

BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

The Philippines, the main Catholic country in Asia, has suffered internal armed confrontations since its independence (1946), with multiple armed opposition groups. In 1969, in the framework of the fighting against the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, two insurgent forces were created in different places and with different objectives: on the one hand the NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (clandestine), which is fighting for a Maoist-inspired revolution; on the other, the **Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)**, created by N. Misauri, began a fight for independence in the island of Mindanao, based on the demand for the historical rights of the Bangsamoro culture. Mindanao is the country's second largest island, and the Spanish colonisers were never able to subjugate its population. The US administration first, and then the Philippine State promoted an active Christian repopulation, which involved the progressive displacement of the native population, of which there are two separate groups, indigenous and Moslem. In 1978 the MNLF suffered a split: the **Islamic Front for National Liberation (MILF)**, critical of Misauri's personal ambition, and with a greater emphasis on the Islamic component of the independence struggle.

In the mid-1980s, the **Abu Sayyaf** ("father of the sword") group was created, devoted to propagating the Holy War, and based on the island of Basilan (in the ARMM). Despite its reduced size and support, its existence serves as an excuse for a notable presence of **US** troops. Finally, it should be realised that there is an extremely complex "micro" dynamics which feeds constant conflicts between rival clans. The carrying of weapons forms a part of the Bangsamoro culture.

10 years after the Manila agreements, the structural causes that favoured the creation of the MNLF have not changed, and the Muslim Mindanao region is still the poorest in the country.

PEACE AGREEMENTS / PROCESS

The MNLF signed a peace agreement with the Government in 1996 (Manila Agreements) - with the initial mediation of Libya, and later, the organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Saudi Arabia and Indonesia – based on a solution of autonomy for the western part of the island. After the holding of a referendum, the **Autonomous Region of Moslem Mindanao** was composed of

PHILIPPINES (Mindanao-MNLF)

13 provinces and 9 cities. Misuari was named governor, but he led a new armed rising in 2001, for which he was condemned and imprisoned.

The MLF signed a ceasefire with the Government in 2003 and the options of a final agreement, which will continue involving a solution of autonomy, seem near. The main points of disagreement are the extending of the ARMM's territory (the "ancestral lands"), the compatibility with the 1996 Agreement with the MNLF, and the compatibility of the new agreement with the Constitution.

The MNLF is currently in peace conversations with the Government. This process is headed by a Joint Coordination Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities (which includes the respective Committees of the government and of MILH) and has Malaysia (which leads the ceasefire International Observation Team) as mediator, and the backing of numerous organisations from the civil society. The collaboration between these bodies has achieved a certain pacification of the area (bearing in mind that the MILF is not the only armed group operating in the region), and the return of numerous displaced people has begun. The US offered 30 million dollars aid to the MILF combatants if they managed to sign a peace agreement. However, the process is currently paralysed by the postures of the Government and the MILF with regard to the extension that a future autonomous Bangsamora region would have, and the ceasefire is occasionally violated. This agreement made no reference to disarmament, with the result that a review has been suggested as necessary, by means of a meeting between the parties, planned for March 2007.

DDR STRUCTURE

Background to the DDR process:

Once the peace agreement between the government and the MNLF had been signed in 1996, a process for the partial demobilisation of this group was introduced in two stages. The first stage involved the establishment of the mechanisms and institutions that had been provided for in the agreement, such as the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD), defined as geographical areas in which the local community builds peace through initiatives that benefit the local civilian population. These zones also engage in the development of alternative forms of conflict resolution, using methods based on local culture.

The second stage involved the approval of an amendment to the Organic Bill for the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), following a referendum held in September 2000. This extended the region's autonomous powers.

Type of DDR:

Partial (only reintegration), with the voluntary handing-in of weapons and reintegration into the armed forces.

Enforcing bodies:

The body in charge of the process is the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo). Funds have, for the most part, been channelled through the various United Nations agencies. The UNDP coordinates aid from donors, and significant assistance has been received from USAID and Japan (JICA)

Basic principles:

Complete reintegration of former MNLF combatants and help for their communities on the island of Mindanao.

Groups to be demobilised:

Some 25,000 former MNLF combatants and their families.

PHILIPPINES (Mindanao-MNLF)

Vulnerable groups:

Despite no reliable data, it is estimated that around 13% of combatants are child soldiers. Peace process ended without mentioning child soldiers. A seminar was organised in November 2003 to discuss the possibility of a DDR process for child soldiers. Around 30 different civilian organisations participated in this event.

In the current structure for aid to minors in the armed conflict, information, awareness and mobilisation programmes are envisaged to prevent the recruiting of minors into armed groups, and to rehabilitate them for civil life. These rehabilitation programmes include help in legal and security matters for the ex-combatants, as well as community aid programmes to attend to their social, psychological and economic needs

Budget:

Several international organisations have collaborated economically on the MNL excombatants zones, through SZOPAD. It is difficult to separate the funds allocated specifically for the reintegration of former combatants from the funds invested in the general development of Mindanao. An approximate and preliminary estimate would suggest that the regions controlled by the MNLF may have received around 170 million dollars in aid for former combatants and their communities during the period between 1997 and 2005.

The main donors for development in Mindanao are as follows:

1. The World Bank, through the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP), with a budget of 33 million dollars.
2. USAID focused on governance at the local level and the creation of economic opportunities for the reintegration of former combatants through micro credits.
3. UNDP, which coordinates donor contributions.
4. Until 2002, JICA financed 166 projects for a total amount of 363 million dollars. By the end of 2002, JICA signed a new financial deal with the Philippines, focusing on the development of Mindanao and, particularly, the ARMM.

The Japanese government has been the largest provider of financial aid for Mindanao, having financed 166 different projects valued at a total of 363 million dollars since 2002. At the end of 2002 it signed a further economic agreement with the Philippines which placed an emphasis on the development of Mindanao and, in particular, the ARMM administrative region, in the amount of 36.4 million dollars. At the end of 2003, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation awarded loans to the Philippines totalling 57.8 million dollars for development projects in the ARMM and for the construction of a road in Central Mindanao. The loan was co-financed by the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency.

The UN Multi-Donor Assistance Programme (MDAP) has channelled 25.7 million dollars through the UNDP in various stages since 1997, with contributions from Australia (the main donor with 7.7 million dollars), Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. The first stage focused on providing emergency aid for the MNLF communities, while the second dealt with the provision of basic services, subsistence, the development of businesses, trust-building and training in government skills for MNLF leaders. The third stage in the programme, which was allocated a budget of 10 million dollars (4 million of which was provided by the UNDP) began in May 2001 and centred around the strengthening of peace communities, support for institutional mechanisms, improvement in access to basic services, business development, the development of agriculture, forestry and fishing and the promotion of peace culture.

The American agency USAID has been directly involved since 1997 in the reintegration of former MNLF fighters, having promised to undertake these duties once they had been demobilised. USAID is currently pursuing five lines of action in the Philippines, one of which is the “resolution of the conflict in Mindanao”, which is in turn divided into four different areas: the

PHILIPPINES (Mindanao-MNLF)

reintegration of former combatants, the creation of economic opportunities, microloans and local government. The amount of aid allocated is considerable and reflects the USA's interest in ensuring that conditions in Mindanao and the Philippines in general do not provide a breeding ground for terrorists. This explains the increase in aid from 2001 onwards.

Between June 1999 and December 2000, USAID channelled 1.2 million dollars through OTI Country Programmes to be used for around 10,000 former combatants and their families. In 2001, USAID gave 5 million dollars to LEAP (Livelihood Enhancement and Peace Programme), which concentrated on providing aid to former MNLF fighters. This programme, which was set up in 1997, has provided technical assistance for 25,000 former fighters, particularly in the areas of agriculture (including the distribution of hybrid rice varieties) and aquaculture, post-harvest equipment and services. The programme allocates an average of \$400 per former combatant. In 2002, USAID gave 35.7 million dollars for general projects in Mindanao. In 2005 it budgeted 23.2 million dollars for conflict-resolution projects on the island (13 million in 2004), backed up by the Bangsamoro Women's Foundation for Peace and Development. Two thirds of the funds given by USAID to the Philippines are allocated to Mindanao, and 42% of this amount is used to reform governance structures in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), in collaboration with the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo). In 2005 it also set aside funds for 4,000 MILF combatants in the event that negotiations between this group and the Philippines government ended successfully. In this case, its partner would be the Bangsamoro Development Agency.

USAID and the United Kingdom have also given 22.3 million dollars to finance 800 microprojects aimed at former combatants between 2004 and 2007. Other institutions that have contributed to development in Mindanao are the Asian Development Bank, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation. Between 2002 and 2007 (five years), the World Bank, USAID and the UNDP plan to invest 178 million dollars in Mindanao, particularly through the Special Peace and Development Zones (SZOPAD).

Body	Period	Aid for Mindanao as a whole (millions of \$)	Aid focused on former combatants and their communities (millions of \$)
WB	2002	33	
Japan	97-02	363.6	
Japan	2002		36.4
Japan	2003		57.8
UNDP (MDAP)	97-05		25.7
USAID	01-06	230.1	
USAID	2004		13.0
USAID	2005		23.2
USAID	2006		10.5
USAID – UK	04-07		22.3
USA-ILO	2003	1.5	
Australia	2005	48.7	12.7
New Zealand	2005		1.1
Canada	05-10		18.0
TOTAL		324.1	254

By 2003, the ILO had received 1.5 million dollars from the US Department of Employment for projects aimed at creating economic opportunities in Mindanao through education and job creation. The European Union began contributing to the economic development of Mindanao in January 2004.

In February 2005, The Australian International Development Agency (AusAID) renewed its commitment to development in Mindanao, donating a further 12.7 million dollars in a five-year programme of Action for Conflict Transformation (ACT), which will provide continuing support for the Peace and Development Communities (PDC) created in the MNLF-controlled areas, as well

PHILIPPINES (Mindanao-MNLF)

as in areas populated by indigenous communities. Mindanao receives 48.7 million dollars a year from Australia, this being one of the latter country's preferred areas for cooperation. New Zealand has also promised 1.1 million dollars for the five-year programme, focusing its aid on the Caraga region.

Canada has given aid totalling 18 million dollars through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to support the establishment of governance structures in the autonomous ARMM region during the period from 2005 to 2010.

Timetable:

Between 1997 and the end of 2005.

Other issues:

- **Security sector reform:** A total of 4,850 members of the MNLF joined the Philippine Army (AFP) and a further 4,835 joined the National Police (PNP), a total of almost 10,000 former combatants (a little under half the number of MNLF troops when the peace agreements were signed), though there was no actual demobilisation process. The integration of these forces into the AFP and the PNP was delayed for three years and finally completed at the end of 1999 after a number of hold-ups. The people who did not join the security forces returned to the field and joined other armed groups (MILF numbers doubled between 1996 and 1999).

DDR STAGES

Reinsertion:

Since 1997, the UNDP has introduced various socio-economic projects to help the MNLF communities (institutional training for men, community training for women, literacy programmes, professional training for young people, basic services, business development, etc.). The UNDP has introduced these projects under its Human Resources Development Programme (HRDP), which is aimed at converting the revolutionary structures of the MNLF into popular democratic organisations that will lead to the mobilisation of community resources.

Since 2001, five UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, FAO, ILO), supported by another four agencies (UNICEF, WHO, UNIDO, UNHCR) have implemented a joint programme in the autonomous parts of Mindanao (ARMM) to help former combatants. At the end of 2003, USAID and the Philippines government began a training and development programme for 21,000 former MNLF fighters.

EVOLUTION OF THE DDR PROCESS

With support from USAID and other international agencies, a total of 12,000 former combatants had been integrated in the civilian economy by 2005, while 1,000 more were being prepared for reintegration. 2,800 homes in the MNLF communities now have electricity and 225,000 microloans have been awarded (70% of them to women).

PHILIPPINES (Mindanao-MNLF)

ASPECTS TO BE EXAMINED

Planning:

- Development targets have not been achieved.
- Delays in the implementation of many government projects.
- Program's overextension

SOURCES

International:

- Asian Development Bank, at <<http://www.adb.org/Documents>>.
- Centre of Excellence, at <<http://www.coe-dmha.org>>.
- Embassy of Japan in the Philippines, at <<http://www.ph.emb-japan.go.jp>>.
- Government of Japan, at <<http://www.mof.go.jp/english>>.
- ILO: *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict: An Inter-regional Project*, 2002, at <<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/themes/soldiers>>.
- ILO: *Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflict. The Philippine Experience*, 2003.
- Japan Bank for International Cooperation, at <<http://www.jbic.go.jp/autocontents/english>>.
- Japan International Cooperation Agency, at <<http://www.jica.go.jp/philippines>>.
- LEAP Program, at <<http://www.mindanao.org/leap/index.htm>>.
- Lubang, A. and Makinao, M.: *DDR. The Mindanao Experience*, 2001, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada, at <<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/arms/mindanaopaper.pdf>>.
- Reliefweb, at <<http://www.reliefweb.int>>.
- UNDP: *Philippine Human Development Report 2005*, at <<http://www.undp.org.ph>>.
- USAID, at <<http://www.usaid-ph.gov>>.

Non-governmental:

- Philippine Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers: *Enhancing Partnerships Towards Effective Strategies on DDR*, 2nd National Consultation Workshop on the Use of Child Soldiers in the Philippines.

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