

Highlights of the Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC) Meeting

STABILIZATION, RECOVERY, AND TRANSFORMATION for PEACE (START-PEACE)

A UNDP Project in Support of Lasting Peace in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

08 June 2019, 1330H-1530H | SEDA Abreeza Hotel, Davao City

Attendance:

1. Mr. Chetan Kumar – UNDP Resilience and Peacebuilding Unit (RPBU)
2. Mr. Winston Aylmer Camariñas – UNDP RPBU Cotabato Field Office
3. Mr. Nelson Peloton Jr. – UNDP RPBU Cotabato Field Office
4. Ms. Judith de Guzman – UNDP RPBU Cotabato Field Office
5. Ms. Elisa Vistavilla – UNDP RPBU Cotabato Field Office
6. Mr. Melanio Teodoro Adao – Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP)
7. Mr. Oliver Binancilan – OPAPP
8. Ms. Vanessa Estraño – OPAPP
9. Ms. Amina Rasul – Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy
10. Ms. Bernadette Fernandez – Teach Peace Build Peace Movement (TPBPM)
11. Ms. Saturnina Rodil – Mindanao State University, Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT)
12. Mr. John Mayo Enriquez – Ateneo de Zamboanga University (ADZU)
13. Mr. Ibrahim Salic – Maranao People Development Center Inc. (MARADECA)
14. Mr. Guiamel Alim – Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS)
15. Mr. Mohamad Omar – CBCS
16. Mr. Windel Diangcalan – Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA)
17. Ms. Hadja Giobay Diocolano – Kadtabanga Foundation for Peace and Development Advocates (KFPDAI)
18. Ms. Juhaira Bayan – KFPDAI
19. Ms. Lyca Sarenas – Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)
20. Mr. Abunawas Maslamama – Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
21. Mr. Akmad Brahim – Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces, MILF
22. Mr. Marhan Burhan – Da'wah Committee, MILF
23. Mr. Naguib Sinarimbo – Ministry of the Interior and Local Government, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (MILG-BARMM)

Welcome remarks and context of the LPAC Meeting

The Team Leader of the UNDP's Resilience and Peacebuilding Unit, Mr. Chetan Kumar, welcomed the participants to the LPAC meeting and requested them to briefly introduce themselves. After the introductions, Mr. Kumar gave a brief overview of the LPAC meeting. He mentioned that a similar session had been made by UNDP with DFAT in which the latter concurred with the overall design framework of the project. He indicated that the meeting was convened to consult stakeholders regarding the Project design and its components, and encouraged them to give their comments and inputs regardless of whether they are supportive or critical. He added that UNDP is committed to do the project in the most transparent way possible, remain flexible in its implementation, adjust according to needs on the ground and bring in new partners along the way as necessary.

Overview of the START-PEACE Project

Mr. Kumar then proceeded with a presentation on the project. He said that the overall design is anchored on the premise that lasting peace in the Bangsamoro will largely depend on four (4) key transitions: (1) successful transition of Marawi and Lanao del Sur to full recovery and reconciliation; (2) an effective transition from ARMM to the new political entity BARMM, and of major Moro fronts from armed groups to vehicles for constructive political participation; (3) transition from reactive responses to violent extremism to more proactive as well as preventive approaches; and, (4) the transition, through the normalization process, from armed groups and combatants to peaceful and productive individuals within resilient communities.

He added that while lessons in peacebuilding and post-conflict transitions globally generally imply that various inputs and achievement of targets add up to peace being built, emerging wisdom suggests that these are not enough and that discrete interventions whether by national or international actors do not necessarily add up to what is a self-sustaining, dynamic process of governance in any particular area, which is essentially what is necessary to sustain peace—the ability to make certain decisions that will lead, in the long term, to development and lasting peace. The key is to get the framework in place, to get the process rolling, and to make sure that those in trying situations have the ability and platforms to make decisions that would drive processes for progress and development to continue.

He then proceeded to explain the four key processes that stand out from the various consultations: (1) **participation**, which would allow people to influence or be involved in critical political and economic decision-making impacting their daily lives; (2) **opportunities**, by which people can access, obtain and expand the resources and prospects through which they can better their lives; (3) **positive narratives**, whereby people can form positive and peaceful “worldviews” through continuing dialogues and engagements, and then take actions to change not-so-ideal conditions based on these worldviews; and, (4) **collaboration**, which encourages people to work together for a common good, build cooperation and consensus, and coexist in shared economic and social spaces.

The Project will then concentrate on these four processes in framing interventions that would focus on the Bangsamoro political transition and prevention of violent extremism (or promotion of peaceful engagements) as outcome areas since others are already leading the work in Marawi rehabilitation and normalization process. With the indicative activities reflected in the Project Document provided to participants, Mr. Kumar highlighted key outputs pertaining to the two outcome areas and according to the four categories of participation, inclusion, narratives and collaboration. He also mentioned the primary target groups of the Project as well as likely partner institutions and organizations from the government, BARMM, academe, private sector and civil society.

Discussions

On narratives, Ms. Rodil of MSU-IIT suggested that the Project may want to consider supporting ongoing efforts of mainstreaming the Bangsamoro and Mindanao history in the educational system. Some of the current initiatives include the integration of Mindanao’s history in books for elementary to college students, recognition of heroes from Mindanao and inclusion of the Mindanao weave into university subjects. These efforts are intended to improve perceptions from people outside the Bangsamoro region and Mindanao, especially the decision makers from Luzon and Manila. Mr. Kumar acknowledged that a similar concern had been raised in previous consultations and is already being considered as an area of intervention in the next Peacebuilding Fund Project alongside issues on transitional justice and reconciliation, and with the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) for the creation of a liaison office for Moro diaspora communities.

Ms. Sarenas of VSO inquired if UNDP and Bangsamoro leadership would be open to supporting initiatives on improving social accountability since people need to feel that they are able to participate in governance processes during the transition. She expressed hope that the BTA and other governing bodies in BARMM would be open to types of citizen-led monitoring as platform to give people opportunity to check on their work, jointly formulate recommendations to achieve promised changes for the Bangsamoro and identify solutions for current gaps. For UNDP, Mr. Camariñas concurred with the idea of having a strong partnership between civil society and the BTA during the transition. Initiatives are ongoing to build on and strengthen existing platforms allowing civil society organizations (CSOs) to talk with and engage the BTA/BARMM leadership on pressing concerns. BARMM may want to consider adopting the DevLive system of UNDP whereby ordinary citizens can provide feedback through the use of a mobile phone application. Mr. Sinarimbo meanwhile responded that MILG-BARMM already set up its own Transparency and Participatory Governance Unit that would lead in operationalizing the idea of participatory governance at the different levels of local government units. The mechanism however is not yet established at the regional level and would have to be initiated by the Office of the Interim Chief Minister. The MILG would be happy to share the concept.

Mr. Sinarimbo then raised an emerging concern regarding the political transition from ARMM to BARMM. He mentioned that since a substantial part of the transition would have to come from the generosity of the central government, it would be very difficult for the regional government and the Bangsamoro region to chart its own destiny if Central Offices of national government agencies continue with their attitude of treating the ministries as their regional extension. He added that the law is clear about the setup and the level of autonomy that should be present but has become diluted when interpreted and acted upon by functionaries in the national government. Hence the proposal to include activities in the Project that could address this concern since a large part of the work, the substantive transition that needs to happen, would require a change in the mindset of those who hold important positions in the national government.

Mr. Kumar responded that the Project can already cover this concern under two activities: (1) finalize an agreement with the consortium led by the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) and Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), along with the Local Government Academy and Galing Pook, for the implementation of a bridging leadership program for the ministers and senior officials of BARMM, especially those who are new in the government service; and, (2) session for executives at the national level on what the BOL means in terms of their relationship with the BARMM ministries and how the latter should be dealt with differently as compared to the regional offices of each department. Mr. Kumar then asked if OPAPP would want to consider organizing an event, in which UNDP could also assist, for other government departments to familiarize with the implications of the BOL as well as to solicit inputs that would feed into the final framework for intergovernmental relations.

For his part, Mr. Diangcalan of BDA expressed his appreciation of the Project's theory of change and the focus on processes. He mentioned that the BDA can play a major role in these processes by continuing being the development arm of the MILF. With the MILF currently heavily invested in managing governance concerns and strengthening its political party, the BDA is anchoring the work on the MILF's transition into a social movement and in defining how it would operate in the Bangsamoro. He added that the BDA's presence across communities places it in a good position to help the Bangsamoro government, through the ministries, in the delivery of basic services and in eliciting community participation in governance. He also reiterated the agency's commitment in supporting the political party in the 2022 elections; in monitoring the implementation of the integrated MNLF-MILF Bangsamoro Development Plan, a copy of which was already submitted to the Office of the Interim Chief Minister; in tracking the progress of the transition using the plan's results framework; and, in providing feedback to help ensure that the Bangsamoro government deliver by 2022.

Mr. Kumar agreed with the points raised by Mr. Diangcalan and affirmed that BDA would be a very critical carrier of process going forward. He shared that empirical evidence from groups around the world transitioning from revolutionaries to civilian and political roles suggest that those with a part of them becoming a think-tank or as a nexus for policy development, intellectual work or mobilizing people for ideas have fairly done better in transitioning and in the longer term. He added that there is something to be said about having a part of the MILF that continues to work on ideas, policies and broader principles as it would keep people together and provide them with a continuing driving force for change.

On capacity building, Mr. Enriquez of ADZU suggested that a bridging leadership program at the regional level be also cascaded to the municipal and barangay levels, particularly for the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK). He mentioned that based on consultations with youth groups in Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, their main challenge remains to be their limited capacity to deliver or implement their own ideas, including concepts or initiatives on peacebuilding. He broached the idea of having a joint bridging leadership arrangement, a youth-adult partnership scheme that also recognizes the structure at the barangay level, and other capacity building activities for the SK. On narratives, he put forward the idea of also looking into how to change the negative narrative of madrasah teachers, students and religious leaders being seen as complicit to the spread of violent extremism ideologies. ADZU conversations with these groups highlight strong feelings of being discriminated, accused and targeted.

For Kadtabanga, Ms. Diocolano shared that their peacebuilding work, including their engagements with the youth, is rooted on the core principles of culture of peace and conflict transformation. She mentioned that their efforts related to the promotion of peaceful engagements are predicated on the idea of developing peace and development communities where all stakeholders have to work together to address the factors or drivers of

conflict. For the youth, Kadtabanga interventions include capacity building activities, continuous monitoring of those trained, organizing them into youth associations and provision of small-scale livelihood assistance packages considering that the reasons commonly cited for young individuals joining extremist groups are lack of attention, marginalization and poverty.

Still on narratives, Ms. Rasul of PCID added that crucial to the development and sustaining of narratives is building of consensus and bringing in diverse groups of people, even opposing parties, to do so. She said it would be essential to have continuing engagements among parties concerned as well as presence of groups that would focus on consensus-building in order to maintain core messaging and communications at all levels. Otherwise, advocacies and sectors to be supported become dependent on the priorities of funding institutions which in most cases are very opportunistic. She recommended for the creation of a multi-year program focusing on capacitating about 100-150 Bangsamoro CSOs on training, project development and communications strategy among others, to make them strong autonomous organizations, working with BARMM and linking with the national government, to consistently push for their sectoral priorities and other development agenda.

On discussions pertaining to the prevention of violent extremism (VE), Mr. Omar of CBCS remarked that he has not heard of any approach engaging the security sector to combat the growing threats of VE. He suggested options that the Project may want to consider doing with the security sector which include the conduct of culture of peace workshops, lectures on the culture and traditions of the Bangsamoro, and the review of policies on the implementation of government's anti-terrorism campaign in order to address alleged and perceived human rights violations by security forces during enforcement operations. Mr. Kumar responded that there are already initial discussions with the Ministry for Public Order and Safety as well as with officials from Philippine National Police regarding the framework for policing and community security in the Bangsamoro. Ms. Rodil added that there were already engagements with the security sector before which included training sessions on conflict analysis and peace education; and, that current efforts are geared towards institutionalizing peace education by integrating modules into a more formal, weeks-long course for the different levels of leadership in state security forces.

Mr. Alim of CBCS meanwhile expressed his concerns regarding the: (1) possible relapse into violence if Government fails to fulfill agreements like the timely release of funding for major programs, i.e., conditional cash transfer or the 4Ps; (2) MILF's ability to maintain its mass base amidst the decommissioning work and to muster enough support to still secure critical posts in the regional government by 2022; and, (3) MILF's identity and priorities moving forward whether it will remain as a liberation front or focus more on its transition into a political party and social movement.

Mr. Sinarimbo then apprised the group on recent developments at the LGU level which could be helpful in the programming of possible support from the Project. For the SKs, they would now have their own funding and separate account, no longer co-mingled with the internal revenue allotment funds and are authorized to sign disbursements for their respective account. The MILG already programmed consultations in order to ensure that while SKs are now given the liberty to define their own programs for implementation, their independence and spending power will be matched with corresponding responsibility and accountability. For the LGUs, the ministry is focusing on the capacity development for critical functionaries who drive development efforts at the barangay level like the Barangay Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and member of the Lupon; and, the Mayor, Vice Mayor, Planning and Development Coordinator, Treasurer, Assessor and members of Local Special Bodies at the municipal level. The Minister suggested that there should also be a focus on strengthening the demand side of governance, on making sure that there is a strong mechanism for CSO engagement, to serve as check and balance as well as to prevent one institution from dictating everything that should happen in a locality. Ms. Rasul recommended that initiatives on SK revitalization and capacity building should include the National Youth Commission.

Relative to engagements with the security sector, Ms. Sarenas reiterated the need to pursue human rights documentation since there are still a lot of stories from the ground about human rights violations despite the several trainings conducted in the past. There is still a deficit on how to report them, whom to go to and how to address them given the limited capacity of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to look into all cases and amidst the ongoing drug war. Mr. Kumar remarked that in the case of BARMM, it will depend on the level of desire of the leadership to establish a Regional CHR and how it would define its relationship with the national body.

Without further comments from the group, Mr. Kumar then proposed that START-PEACE Project, given its multiple components and implementation modalities, be directly implemented by UNDP in close collaboration with the implementation partners present. Those present agreed to this proposal.

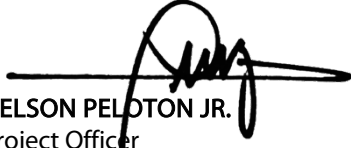
Closing

Mr. Adao of OPAPP mentioned that he is looking forward to the full devolution of powers to the BARMM. He recognized that the transition period is critical for the future of the region and that timely support is essential. He emphasized the importance of all sectors working together to implement the transition plan and see to it that while there is continuing capacity building for BARMM leadership at all levels, the socio-economic development needs of communities should also be simultaneously addressed.

Finally, Mr. Kumar thanked everyone for their inputs and indicated that the same group along with other organizations listed in the Project Document as implementing partners and direct beneficiaries, will be invited to a Project Board setting to provide updates, generate feedback, further collaborate, and adapt or adjust, as needed.


The LPAC meeting officially ended at 1530H.

Prepared by:



NELSON PELOTON JR.
Project Officer
Resilience and Peacebuilding Unit

Approved by:



CHETAN KUMAR
Team Leader a.i.
Resilience and Peacebuilding Unit