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USIP Special Report

Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring in Mindanao

By Rachel Julian, Ronnie Delsy and Rexall Kaalim

Summary

- The conflict in Mindanao, Philippines is one of the longest running conflicts in the world. Mindanao is one of the first conflict sites where civilian ceasefire monitoring (CCM) has been developed by civil society and then incorporated formally into the formal Ceasefire Mechanism.
- Community-led monitoring in Mindanao shows that CCM can play a positive role in ensuring that peace agreements remain in place. Armed actors do yield to unarmed civilians to comply with ceasefire agreements and civilian protection, and civilian monitors are effective in building confidence in the ceasefire agreement as a component of longer-term peace.
- Training is essential for CCM to work and needs to include theoretical and practical components. Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) provides a clear framework for the knowledge, skills and competencies required in CCM including detailed context, security protocols, and communication with all stakeholders.
- CCM works in both formal and informal mechanisms and begins with community concerns and organisation. CCM in Mindanao addresses both political and community violence (*rido*). It works through building good relationships between community monitors and armed actors, by using 'presence', and by establishing early warning systems. Limiting CCM to formal ceasefire mechanisms is insufficient as civilians see the formal ceasefire agreement as only one component in peace, and they monitor other forms of community violence using the same techniques and tools.
- Specific roles are taken on by traditional leaders and new community-based trained CCM volunteers. Women are important to CCM because they are trusted, persistent and have traditional conflict resolution roles. Tasks identified as carried out by civilians include creating new networks and informal communication methods, setting up and bringing people to safe spaces and peace zones, establishing community early warning early response systems, and gathering and sharing data.
- The motivation for being a CCM volunteer is rooted in family and community. Volunteers have a clear vision of peace and the future they want for their community. By integrating protection with the community's traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, they are creating informal systems for longer term security and dispute resolution that meet community needs.

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report examines the contribution of unarmed civilians to Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring in Mindanao, Philippines, based on a research project funded by USIP in 2018–2020 to study the roles and tasks of civilians in Mindanao in unarmed civilian protection and monitoring. The research partners are Nonviolent Peaceforce Philippines and Leeds Beckett University. The research contributes to our understanding of how CCM works. It demonstrates that local communities have capacity, skills and agency, and that with training, use of informal mechanisms, and recognition, they can contribute to the maintenance of ceasefires and long term peace.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Rexall Kaalim is Program Director for Nonviolent Peaceforce Philippines. He is a founder of the civil society ceasefire monitoring initiative in Mindanao and was coordinator of Bantay Ceasefire.

Introduction

The cessation of hostilities in armed conflict is usually secured through ceasefire and peace agreements (Krause and Kamler 2022), which are part of the confidence building measures required to rebuild peace. Each agreement includes the responsibilities and mechanisms that all parties must abide by and provides for monitoring to ensure that the parties adhere to the agreement. The ceasefire monitoring role has often been given to military actors such as UN peacekeeping missions. Civilians living in communities affected by violations of ceasefire and peace agreements are also important actors, but their role has been under-researched and rarely included in official mechanisms.

Mindanao, Philippines is one of the first conflict sites where *civilian ceasefire monitoring* (CCM) has been developed by civil society and then incorporated formally into the Ceasefire Mechanism. CCM sits in the centre of larger debates on the local ownership of peace processes and peacebuilding (Lederach 1997; Reich 2006; Donais 2009; Furnari et al 2015), the development of unarmed civilian protection (Julian and

Schweitzer 2015; Julian 2015) and ceasefire mechanisms (Buchanan et al 2021). We know that the inclusion of local people in a community affected by violent conflict contributes to successful peace, and we know that local people have agency (Krause 2018). The case of Mindanao provides a specific example of the positive role that CCM can play in ensuring that peace agreements remain in place and communities begin to rebuild a peace that they help to design and want to create.

Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring (CCM) in Mindanao consists of community-based civilians who are affected by the conflict acting to support and assist the formal mechanisms of state and non-state armies to abide by their ceasefire agreement. CCM ceasefire agreements are made between armed actors, but we know that it is civilians who are predominantly affected by the violence. CCM is important because it gives these civilians a voice and agency to improve adherence to ceasefire agreements, making their lives safer and ensuring that their needs are understood.

This report explains why and how CCM was set up in Mindanao and how it is working now, before drawing on evidence collected through participatory workshops with civilian volunteers involved in ceasefire monitoring in Mindanao to present CMM from the perspective of civilians and their communities. It demonstrates how civilians link their monitoring work with the creation of a peace that they want. By exploring the roles and tasks that civilians themselves identify, this report concludes that CCM is contributing to the stability of the peace process by ensuring that the ceasefire agreement is maintained. It is also contributing to long term peace by giving people representation and a role in building peaceful relationships.

Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring (CCM) in Mindanao

CONTEXT OF THE CONFLICT

The conflict in Mindanao is one of the longest running conflicts in the world. It started with the resistance of the sultanates of Sulu, Maguindanao and Pat a Pangampong sa Ranao in Lanao against foreign colonizers (Spaniards and Americans). During the US occupation (1898–1946), pockets of resistance continued against the Americans led by three major Islamized ethnic groups: Tausugs of the Sultanate of Sulu, Maguindanao of the Sultanate of Maguindanao and Meranaws of Pat a Panagmpong sa Ranao. Under the American regime, colonial government-sponsored resettlement programs were initiated that brought Christian settlers from Luzon and Visayas to Mindanao, resulting in the minoritization, marginalization, and dispossession of the native inhabitants of their lands. The three established Sultanates were also slowly divested of their powers. In 1935, when the US initiated a transition government for the Philippines (the ‘Commonwealth Government’) in preparation for the granting of full independence, the Bangsamoro leaders in Mindanao assembled in Lanao formally issued a petition to the US Government (the Dansalan Declaration) for Mindanao to be excluded from the Philippine Republic. The petition was denied due process.

The aspiration to regain freedom for the Bangsamoro people was rekindled in 1968 when a group of young Muslims, recruited by the Philippine Government to invade Sabah, were massacred in Corrigidor island in Luzon in what is popularly known as the Jabidah Massacre. This incident triggered an organized resistance among young Muslims led by Nur Misuari who formed the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Backed by the traditional leaders (*datu*s) the MNLF fought for total independence for Mindanao and the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawitawi and Palawan. When the MNLF entered into a peace agreement in 1976 and accepted autonomy, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) split from the MNLF and continued to fight for an independent Islamic state for Mindanao until in 1997 when the MILF also signed a ceasefire agreement and started negotiating with the Philippine Government.

Despite the signing of the ceasefire agreement, from 1997 to 2003 ceasefire violations on the part of both MILF and the Government of the Philippines (GPH) were high and there were three major wars. The ceasefire structure was composed of only the MILF and GPH Coordinating Committees on the Cessation of Hostilities. In 2004 the GPH and MILF peace panels agreed to invite international monitors to help monitor the compliance of both the government and MILF to the ceasefire agreement. The first Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team (IMT), composed of Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and Libya, was deployed in Mindanao. The parties also agreed to create another mechanism in the ceasefire structure called the Adhoc Joint Action Group, which was tasked to coordinate operations against criminal and lawless groups within and adjacent to MILF influenced or controlled areas to avoid breach of the ceasefire agreement.

BEGINNINGS OF COMMUNITY-BASED CCM IN MINDANAO

The protracted war and vertical conflict in Mindanao between the Muslim rebels (MNLF and MILF) and the Philippine Government polarized what were already sensitive relationships in communities where settlers and native inhabitants interfaced, such as in North Cotabato and Lanao del Norte. The vertical conflict ignited horizontal conflict within these communities. Moro residents in conflict-affected communities supported the rebels and settlers supported the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The situation was aggravated at the height of the Marcos Martial Law (1972–1981) when mass atrocities were committed against Muslim civilian populations. It was also during this period that a settler-led militia group was organized and sowed havoc in Muslim communities. The situation further widened the divide between settlers and native Moro inhabitants and indigenous peoples (IPs) creating a culture of mutual distrust, prejudice, bias, and stereotyping.

It was in this context that, after the ‘all-out war’ of the Estrada Administration against the MILF in 2000, local peace groups in Mindanao started to intervene with conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-affected areas. Community peacebuilding processes were conducted among the settlers, Moros and IPs, leading to the emergence of the Mindanao Peoples Caucus (MPC), a tri-people group representing Moro inhabitants, settlers, and IPs. MPC members realized that they were all victims of conflict and that peace

was so important to them that they could not leave its attainment solely in the hands of the MILF and the government. They therefore decided to participate in the formal peace process between the GPH and MILF.

The MPC and Initiatives for the International Dialogue formed an independent civilian-led community-based ceasefire monitoring mechanism called Bantay Ceasefire in 2002 with the purpose of conducting ceasefire investigative missions. Its first report was shared with the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the government, MILF, the Ceasefire Committee, and the Office of the President. Bantay Ceasefire's reports also became an alternative source of information for communities, civil society, and even the media about incidents of ceasefire violation and their impacts on civilian populations. Reports made by the parties to the formal structures are confidential and not available to the public.

RECOGNITION OF CCM

In February 2003, less than six months after Bantay Ceasefire shared its first report, there was another war. This prompted an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) action – 'Bakwit [evacuees] power' – in which 20,000 IDPs occupied a national highway calling for a cessation of hostilities. The call was heeded and there was a national cessation of hostilities. The core leaders during the mobilization became the first grassroots Bantay Ceasefire volunteer monitors. Thereafter the numbers of volunteers grew.

In 2005, the GPH and MILF recognized the presence and contribution of civilian ceasefire monitoring initiatives and invited Bantay Ceasefire to be part of the interim ceasefire structures, namely the Joint Monitoring Assistance Teams and Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Posts, which are composed of representatives from the GPH, MILF, and IMT, and Bantay Ceasefire volunteers. These interim ceasefire structures served as the early warning and early response system of the formal ceasefire mechanism in the conflict affected areas.

That year, the MPC and Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) also invited Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) to come to Mindanao, having recognized a need for independent international presence and accompaniment to support local initiatives in monitoring civilian safety and security and human rights violations as a result of ceasefire violations by both the government and MILF. In 2007, NP established a programme in Mindanao and started accompanying local organizations like MPC, Bantay Ceasefire and CBCS. NP also started organizing and training community-based human rights monitors who later became early warning and early response (EWER) monitors in conflict-affected communities.

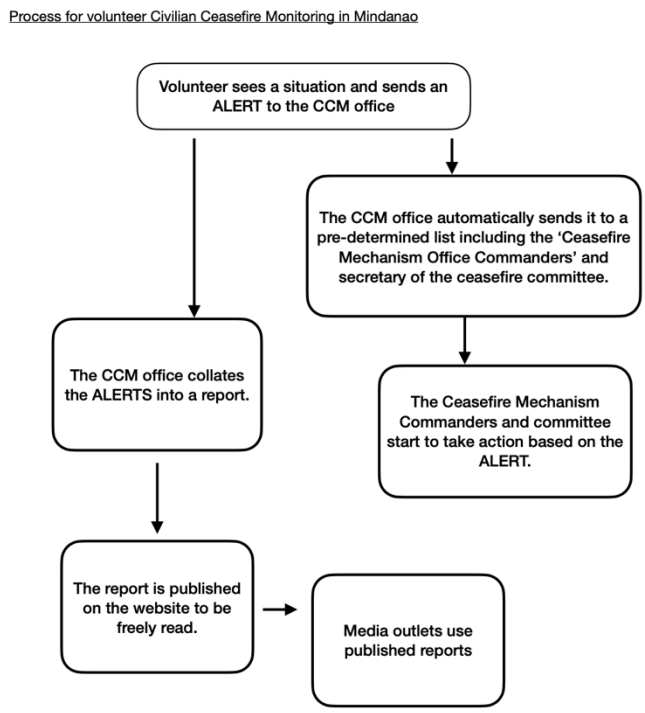
FORMALIZATION OF CCM IN THE GPH-MILF CEASEFIRE STRUCTURE

In 2008 war again erupted when the draft Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain was declared unconstitutional by Supreme Court of the Philippines and the government withdrew from signing it. The impact of the 2008 war was so massive that in 2009 when the GPH and MILF resumed their peace negotiation agreed to add a Civilian Protection Component (CPC) in the ceasefire structure under the International Monitoring Team.

The CPC mandate includes monitoring of the compliance of both GPH and MILF to international legal frameworks for the protection of civilians including but not limited to International Humanitarian law, Human Rights Law and other international instruments. Included in the CPC mandate is the strengthening of the ownership of the peace process by supporting and empowering communities to manage and resolve conflicts at the community level. Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) was invited as the only international organization to join and compose the CPC along with three other local organizations namely the Mindanao Peoples Caucus (MPC), Mindanao Human Rights Action Center and Muslim Organization of Government Employees and Professionals.

In terms of the reporting structure of the CPC, daily reports from CPC member organizations go to the CPC Secretariat, which is composed of representatives from the member organizations. The CPC Secretariat is headed by a CPC Coordinator from the Malaysian contingent of the IMT, who consolidates the daily reports and submits a monthly situation report to the CPC Executive Body for review before submission to the IMT Head of Mission. The CPC Executive Body is composed of the heads of the CPC member organizations. The CPC report is then included in the overall monthly report of the IMT to the peace panels.

How does CCM work?



Community-based civilian volunteers engaging in ceasefire monitoring are able to learn about a situation and where it is happening faster than other actors, which means that they can share and publish the information quickly in a range of useful ways.

As the community-led CCM began in Mindanao there were 600 volunteer civilian monitors trained and active in ceasefire monitoring, with 6-8 volunteers in each conflict area. The civilian monitors are all ordinary people of varied ages, occupations, religions and genders, and include indigenous people. Inhabitants of towns and villages in conflict-affected areas started to recognise these volunteers and to recognise that they were monitoring the ceasefire. In this way ordinary people got to see that it was other ordinary civilians doing the monitoring. Volunteers built up credibility through being well trained, doing good, and sharing useful reports that were widely used.

Before CCM was formalized within the official ceasefire structure in 2009 under the CPC, its value was already recognised. To give just two examples of the significant roles that CCM volunteers played: first, they were able to report on incidents where the IMT could not go and, second, they shared information using

a range of communication methods. For example, in 2007, CCM volunteers investigated a ceasefire violation in Albarkah, Basilan in western Mindanao, an area where the IMT was not yet allowed to operate. They also carried out a large-scale information/awareness raising campaign with all rank-and-file armed actors about the content of the ceasefire agreement, so that it was clear to everyone what was allowed and not allowed and that civilians also knew these rules. Once they were operating inside the ceasefire mechanism CCM volunteers could also contact armed actors through the official committees when civilians were threatened by troop movements or attacks. They were now able to work directly on the ground and through the formal committees.

CCM AND UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION (UCP)

In Mindanao civilian ceasefire monitoring uses Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP). UCP is an approach used worldwide by unarmed civilians to prevent and reduce violence from armed conflict without use of or reliance on weapons (Figure 2). The training that CCM volunteers in Mindanao participate in includes the key concepts of ‘proactive engagement’, ‘active monitoring’, relationship building and early warning. In Mindanao this work is seen as human rights advocacy and the term UCP is not widely used in community groups. But the enhancement of local capacity, embedding of civilian protection at a community level, and use of nonviolence demonstrate that UCP is being used and is effective in civilian monitoring. Using UCP, as a proven method in training and capacity enhancement helps explain how civilian ceasefire monitoring works.

Figure 2. The elements of unarmed civilian protection. Source: Nonviolent Peaceforce.

EFFECTIVE MONITORING

CCM volunteers have been able to do effective monitoring in three ways: 1) connecting with armed actors (soldiers and commanders) and creating good relationships; 2) being present on the ground; and 3) having a community Early Warning Early Response mechanism.

Connecting with armed actors and creating good relationships is essential to being able to de-escalate a violent incident, since de-escalation depends upon being able to reach people in a very human way. Dialogue with armed actors must be about communicating the urgency of the situation so that they can picture the impact on civilians, the fear and threat to them, and realise that their attack is on real people just like their own families. This approach to CCM requires knowledge of the command structure and the ability to build a good relationship at all levels of the command, including both the local commanders (so that they will talk to CCM volunteers on the ground) and the senior commanders (so that they will give the order to stop firing), as well as with soldiers on the front line.

When CCM volunteers have to deal with an imminent start of hostilities – maybe with tanks and airplanes already there – they may find themselves on the front line with the soldiers. The volunteers engage the soldiers in conversation about anything they have in common. The aim is to help them remember that it is other families and civilians who are being threatened and to give them a chance to calm down. CCM volunteers learn to listen to the people who are holding the guns and to help them to understand that an armed attack is not allowed under the ceasefire agreement. They might also remind the armed actors that they could be hurting their own friends and families. For example, a planned attack on a market day could harm anyone who is visiting or selling, including the friends and family of the soldiers.

CCM volunteers also work with senior commanders to halt live firing and get the soldiers to move away. CCM volunteers have learnt that the tactical commanders on the ground are usually some distance away from the front line, so they can be approached directly in an effort to get the immediate firing to halt. Once this is achieved, the CCM volunteers can go past them to reach the other armed actors to get them to comply and to create a safe route for civilians to leave. Coordination is key. As well as talking to the tactical commanders, CCM volunteers send an alert and contact the heads of the respective MILF and government ceasefire committees. There have been instances where these committee heads have called their tactical commanders on the ground telling them that Bantay Ceasefire wants to communicate directly with them and ordering them to listen. It helps if different types of influence can be brought to bear on the armed actors, for example if senior religious figures are able to talk to commanders as well as recognised CCM volunteers. In this way CCM works to stop soldiers firing, allowing civilians to leave or to be kept safe from attack.

Being present on the ground means that trained civilians are visible in places where incidents might occur and have the skills to prevent or de-escalate attacks. Community-based volunteers who engage in civilian ceasefire monitoring are able to learn about a situation and where it is happening faster than other actors because they know the local area well. This means that they can share the information quickly and communicate it in a range of useful ways. They also have the skills to notice and prevent situations such as

imminent troop movements, revenge attacks, or an increase in tensions, and their physical 'presence' (Schweitzer 2010) as recognised CCM volunteers changes the behaviour of armed actors. In these ways, by being present on the ground, CCM volunteers save lives.

Community Early Warning Early Response (CEWER) (Engelbrecht and Kaushik 2015) systems are used by CCM volunteers to prevent attacks. Having an EWER system in place means that there is an action plan for when incidents happen or are imminent. Local people know to get in touch with volunteers to warn them of planned attacks. Civilian monitors can then act on this information to talk to commanders before the attack starts. If volunteers meet the soldiers they can remind them that they are working to support them in complying with the ceasefire agreement. This can include sending a complaint to the formal mechanism. In this way, CCM works to prevent attacks from happening. It also builds local confidence in the peace process since people know that action is taken when they report an incident.

EWER volunteers are provided with knowledge on unarmed civilian protection methods and various national and international legal instruments for the protection of civilians, including women and children, and trained in skills such as documentation, negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution to address conflict and to better protect themselves and their communities. These community EWER structures have functioned and continue to provide and share information alerts on incidents of violence to prevent conflict. These structures also popularize support for and strengthen conflict-affected communities' ownership in the peace process.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

Key to being able to achieve these benefits is the training provided to CCM volunteers, which combines training in monitoring, reporting and early warning early response, with instruction on safety, security and human rights, so that civilians understand the risks, opportunities, and mechanisms within which they are working.

In Mindanao this training has been delivered through both formal learning and by new volunteers shadowing more experienced monitors when they go to do the reporting to learn from them and build their skills. CCM volunteers were trained in:

- How Unarmed Civilian Protection works and how to set up an Early Warning Early Response mechanism.
- How to collect, record, and report data, including how to conduct interviews and document ceasefire violations.
- How to analyse the conditions so that volunteers can tell what is going on.
- Understanding of what constitutes a ceasefire violation so that volunteers have the confidence to do the monitoring activities.
- How to call for compliance with the ceasefire agreement.

- Ways to de-escalate the situation and try to get the live firing to stop.
- How to work with armed actors once they have stopped live firing, getting them to move away and increase the distance, so that it is safer for the civilians to escape and deaths can be reduced.
- Safety protocols, for example, learning not to enter a conflict area while there is live firing and what to do if they become trapped (stay low and monitor the situation while others work to de-escalate the violence and get the firing to stop).
- The rule of law and international human rights law.

Civilian Perspectives on CCM

To understand how civilian ceasefire monitoring works in Mindanao from a community perspective, we carried out a study of what happens in the communities affected by the violence, asking community members and ceasefire monitors what they thought of their roles and tasks in monitoring, and how it benefitted them.

METHODOLOGY

The research followed a collaborative participatory creative approach (Julian et al 2019) in which experiential knowledge was shared and gathered through workshops using narrative methods and participatory drawing exercises. This enabled civilians to share with local Mindanao-based researchers community perspectives on civilian roles and tasks. The participants lived in Mindanao and were active or trained in CCM and UCP or were affected by the conflict and violence. NP has built trusting relationships across all the communities and participants involved in the research. The participants were recruited through community meetings where the research was explained and workshops were co-designed to ensure that they were safe for participants.

Three workshops were held, one each in Bukidnon, Buganga, and Datu Piang, conducted in local languages. The workshops were framed around the question: ‘What do you do and what role do you play in creating peace?’ We asked people to tell stories, share opinions, and describe what tasks they did in their communities in relation to safety and security, monitoring, and protection, and to discuss why civilian monitoring was important to them. The discussions were recorded, then transcribed, anonymised, and translated into English by local researchers. Interviews with key stakeholders in the peace process and community leaders captured additional insights into how community monitoring works in Mindanao. Analysis of the narrative data revealed themes that explain how civilians see their roles in securing peace and what tasks they undertake, with what training.

ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY

In Mindanao, communities and community organisations have been participating in civilian monitoring for many years. Whilst the formal ceasefire monitoring structure recognises civilians in general, our study shows that there are in practice a number of different roles within communities. During the workshops for this study people were asked to describe the roles they took, or noticed, in relation to creating peace and reducing violence. Their responses show how communities have integrated existing and new capacities into CCM, both supporting traditional leaders and building up new roles. They see women as playing a particularly significant role.

Traditional role of community leaders in carrying out dialogue and mediation: Traditional community leaders, who include tribal chieftains, councils of elders, and religious leaders are important because they are rooted in the affected communities and have established mediation and conflict resolution processes that are respected and known. Those communities are affected not just by the political violence addressed in the ceasefire agreement and peace process but also by community violence (*rido*), in which traditional leaders can intervene. Through CCM, traditional leaders receive training in strengthening civilian participation in the peace process, which supports and enhances existing capacity in the communities. This is part of how civilian monitoring works in communities affected by multiple forms of violence.

New roles of community-based peace and protection monitors: All community-based civilian ceasefire monitors have been trained (see above). Once they are trained, they work in organisations (e.g., the Community-Based Peace and Protection Centre) and in their communities, using their skills and knowledge to create safe routes for people to escape violence, gather reports and evidence to submit to local and national mechanisms, set up safe spaces where people can gather and meet, and establish dialogue between people or families experiencing conflict. Through sharing reports of incidents or increasing tensions, these community monitors make it possible for government or local authorities to know what is going on in the communities. Research partner, NP, observed that embedding CCM through community organisations leads to a ‘more systematic way of obtaining and sharing information’ that can prevent the occurrence of conflict. Monitors in the communities see themselves as integral to creating peace in their region and holding armed actors to account as part of the peace that they seek. Although CCM relates to ceasefire monitoring, people see the role of ‘monitor’ as much wider than this.

Traditional role of women in relationship building: Participants noted that women are particularly important in monitoring and supporting peace in their communities because they are seen as having traditional roles of relationship building. Women described one of their strengths in civilian monitoring as their tendency to listen more and listen better, so that stronger trust and relationships are built up. Women are involved in directly performing the roles of trained civilian ceasefire monitors and as people who can act as channels for reporting early warnings of increasing tension and violence in their localities. Women have taken the lead in calling for peace zones and have leadership roles in many of the important peacebuilding organisations in the Philippines. In particular, women discussed how one of their roles is to stay focused and

persistent throughout the process, remaining present throughout all long-term organisation and networking; they are not just present in a crisis. This role correlates with how family is seen as a central motivation and core value for civilians doing the difficult monitoring work (see below).

TASKS CARRIED OUT BY CIVILIANS

Civilians see themselves and other community members as undertaking a range of tasks specific to protecting civilians from violence and constructing the structures and mechanisms to prevent violence from harming their communities, which contribute to successful civilian ceasefire monitoring.

Setting up new networks and organisations to fill gaps in the structures supporting civilians to stay safe. One example is the establishment in 2004 of the Community-Based Peace and Protection Centre or Tiyakap Kalilintad in Maguindanao, a network of people all focused on building peace who recognise that violence needs to be prevented. The participants from the Data Piang workshop described how the network works across Mindanao to monitor, document, and report about peace and human rights and they also intervene to get help to vulnerable people: "Tiyakap maintains a list of evacuees, especially of the head of the family. The list will be sent to the concerned line agency to secure assistance for the IDPs." (Datu Piang workshop participant)

Creating safe spaces and peace zones. This ensures that volunteers are able to identify designated safe spaces where vulnerable groups, such as displaced persons, can take refuge when they are threatened by violence. Peace zones give communities a space in which they can build structures that prioritise dialogue and protection. "Safe space", they said "is usually coordinated by IP women leaders within the tribal council, up to the *barangay* [local government] and other local and national agencies which can assist in resolving the conflict." (Bukidon workshop participant)

Guiding people to safe spaces and creating informal communication methods. Civilian monitors explained that "we also guide civilians to a safer place to keep them from harm" (Data Piang workshop participant) during outbreaks of violence in the conflict. They also establish informal communication methods to contact people when they need a safe place to go to. This is a new role established by civilians that is revealed by our data.

Securing help for those in need. Civilians identify and help people in their communities who are not provided for in other systems, particularly people displaced by the conflict or those who might be isolated or excluded. Peace monitors recognise when IDPs need material assistance and secure help by organising visits from other agencies. For example, when IDPs' accommodation is overcrowded and conflicts emerge, but there are no agencies able to help, the community monitors use traditional conflict resolution to ensure that IDPs can settle in a new area.

Gathering and sharing information. Civilian monitors described how they conducted surveys and engaged people in discussions about their security. Some monitors reported incidents and shared

information for agencies on social media to make sure that stories were shared, and agencies can work out how best to help. They see their collaboration and sharing of information as what helps to keep them safe.

Community early warning monitoring and early response. Setting up and running the CEWER helps civilians stay safe. An example of the importance of learning early warning signs is that participants from Marawi workshop said that before the siege, they did not know where to go for help. During the siege, their response was to secure themselves and their family in a safer place; other than that, they had no idea what to do next. "Now, there is a unanimous decision that if one notices terrorists around the area, they are to be reported to the authorities immediately to prevent what happened in Marawi." (Marawi workshop participant)

LINKING CCM TO LONG TERM PEACE

Civilians who live in the area of the ceasefire link monitoring tasks to long term safety and peace, while CCM monitors, as one volunteer put it, are able to 'identify the root cause of the conflict' (Data Piang workshop participant). Ceasefire monitoring happens in places that want peace. Including civilians in ceasefire monitoring can have a wider impact than that of the formal ceasefire process, but peace is always an important outcome for a community. One of the benefits of being involved in monitoring and responding to violent conflict at a community level is that the civilians have some agency in creating a peace that they envisage and want. *By being active participants in the ceasefire monitoring they are creating peace.*

Conceptions of peace. In the workshops community members shared what peace means to them. Their conceptions of peace show that it is not just about the formal peace process, but also about everyday peace in their communities and families:

> The people in my drawing are safe. This mother is holding her child's hand. They are waiting for a ride because they are going to attend a church wedding. (Marawi workshop participant)

> My drawings are: Ladyfinger. Coconut. Corn. … A peaceful community can cultivate a vegetable garden. (Date Piang workshop participant)

> Assalamu Alaikum. My drawing is of the flag and health center. While the flag is standing, it will signify peace. Health, prosperity, and peace. These are our aspirations, not just for us peace monitors but especially for the civilians. (Date Piang workshop participant)

> The green signifies peace. We are happy that we have houses already. (Marawi workshop participant)

These and other workshop participants described peace in terms of their community and the need for good livelihoods, which are threatened by ceasefire violations by armed actors. *This tells us that CCM supports national peace processes, but peace has a specific and contextual meaning for people living in conflict-affected communities and influences their motivation for being CCM volunteers.*

Protecting livelihoods. As well as monitoring the armed actors, civilian monitors have negotiated directly with the armed actors to allow IDPs to safely return to their former houses to do the harvest, and then accompanied the IDPs to make sure they were safe. These actions protect long term livelihoods and cultures that help keep families resilient. In 2007, 100 farmers were accompanied to do their harvest in the Bantay Ceasefire Ahan Accompaniment Mission. Being involved in negotiations like this, and seeing ordinary people accompanying the farmers, changes the mindset of the armed actors.

When asked about what makes them happy and peaceful, participants in Bukidon and Data Piang workshops said,

> "When basic services are available in their homes (right livelihood, adequate food, being able to send their children to school, availability of health services, etc.)" (Bukidon workshop participant) and" If a community is peaceful, we can see schools and big trees" (Data Piang workshop participant)
>
> Unpeace usually comes from the lack felt by individual families, which is reflected on how they interact with others in the community (becoming irritable, frustrated, etc.) as reflected in violent threats within and outside the community.

The power of family. The key focus within the community is on family and for some people the community itself is family. As expressed by one CCM volunteer in a workshop: "Family protection is the basis of community protection" (Marawi workshop participant). Another saw their work as "a legacy for my family, my children and the community" (Bukidon workshop participant). IDP participants also emphasised the importance of family. In the words of one IDP participant who was living in the Buganga transitory shelter: "This about our family. We have to be strong. We have to learn how to earn a living. We will not rely on the government to help us always." (Marawi workshop participant)

The power of family as a concept, driver and motivator is important because when we design monitoring and protection systems we conventionally think in terms of individuals. But there are direct benefits for people when they become involved in civilian ceasefire monitoring, beyond the ability to reduce ceasefire violations, because they are building capacity and constructing the peace they want for their families and community.

Building Peace in Mindanao

Civilian ceasefire monitoring is building peace in Mindanao. It is ensuring that confidence is maintained in the peace process by reducing ceasefire violations and improving civilian protection. CCM includes people who would otherwise feel excluded and marginalised, in particular women and IDPs. It also links people more directly to the official peace process and gives them a route to be heard within it.

In Mindanao, civilian monitors are trained in and use Unarmed Civilian Protection. This framework can be used for designing civilian ceasefire monitoring that includes civilian safety, knowledge of threats, inclusion of different sectors of the population, and communication with all actors. CCM in Mindanao has helped to increase ceasefire compliance and to ensure that civilians are safer by training and engaging thousands of civilians over 20 years working in their own communities. These civilians are using multiple strategies to build relationships with soldiers and commanders so that when attacks are threatened they know who to contact to make civilians safer. By monitoring from within their own communities they are present and available, able to learn new information quickly, and flexible enough to share that information in a variety of ways including social media, reports and complaints.

As with all ceasefire monitoring, successful community CCM requires recognition by the armed actors and their agreement that they want to limit civilian casualties. Before CCM was part of the formal mechanism in Mindanao, it was already being recognised by the armed actors because it was conducted by local people who knew the soldiers and commanders, and who were able to directly negotiate and communicate with them.

The way CCM works in Mindanao demands a high level of involvement from civil society, including participation in training, networking, and collecting and communicating information. The community-led early warning early response system ensures that people know what do when there is a threat and that safe routes or safe spaces are organized in advance. Formal and informal processes can be combined as civilians are involved in both the formal ceasefire and peace processes *and* community-designed mechanisms that work to improve monitoring and long-term peace. Although formal processes are designed around the activities of the armed actors, informal mechanisms can include different forms of violence and focus on the needs of the community, including providing safe spaces and using the family as a focus for protection.

The motivation for being a CCM volunteer is rooted in family and community. Volunteers have a clear vision of peace and the future they want for their community, including a good livelihood, housing, safety, and strong families. By integrating protection with the community's traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, they are creating informal systems for longer term security and dispute resolution that meet community needs. Developing the capacity of women through CCM training and inclusion in monitoring strengthens the networks through which communities build peace and protection systems. By building on existing capacities and therefore enhancing traditional mechanisms, CCM skills and knowledge can also be used to address other forms of community violence. As such it is a route through which people can contribute to a longer-term peace.

Recommendations

The findings in this report suggest that civilians have both networks and specific knowledge that can help build the confidence between parties to ceasefire agreements, making long term peace more likely. It is therefore recommended that civilian ceasefire monitoring should be considered for inclusion in every formal

ceasefire agreement. Informal processes such as Early Warning and Early Response systems and formal ceasefire committees can co-exist through good coordination, communication and mutual recognition of the benefits of both.

Unarmed civilian protection provides a framework for designing and understanding how civilian ceasefire monitoring works and for choosing which approaches work in different situations to protect civilians. Volunteer training is essential and needs to cover a full range of theory and practice including dealing with armed actors, staying safe, reporting, human rights and ceasefire compliance. The training can be both formal (workshops) and informal (shadowing), but it needs to be sufficient to minimise risks and be clear on boundaries and regulations, the importance of communication with all stakeholders, and inclusion of communities.

When initiating, supporting, or facilitating the design and development of community-led CCM, it is recommended that communities, policy-makers, INGOs and donors take the following into account: the traditional roles of community leaders and women in mediation and relationship building should be included, as well as new roles for civilian monitors and community volunteers. Mechanisms should be designed to include marginalized groups such as women and internally displaced people so that they can become involved in the peace process and their needs can be better understood. It must also be recognised that family is a strong motivation and focus for people who become volunteers. Finally, CCM should not be limited to formal ceasefire mechanisms as civilians see the formal ceasefire agreement as only one component in peace and use the same techniques and tools to monitor other forms of community violence.

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