Operationalising women’s “meaningful participation” in the Bangsamoro:
political participation, security and transitional justice
Implementing organisations:

Nisa Ul-Haqq fi Bangsamoro (Nisa)
Nisa uses Islamic teaching as a framework for women’s empowerment, working with women from different social and political backgrounds. The group has worked at regional and provincial level on Gender and Development (GAD) codes, as well as on the peace process. Nisa has members from across the political divides.

Téduray Lambangian Women’s Organisation, Inc (TLWOI)
TLWOI is a federation of 35 community-based Téduray and Lambangian women organisations in the province of Maguindanao. TLWOI aims to support Téduray and Lambangian women in attaining their sustainable and environmental development while respecting their Indigenous cultures and promotion of basic development rights as tribal women (including the right to decision making processes, community development projects, and justice and peace).

United Youth of the Philippines Women (UnYphil-Women)
UnYphil-Women works to empower Bangsamoro women and children through peacebuilding, human rights protection and promotion, and sustainable development. It undertakes shelter and psychosocial assistance, human rights and peace education, as well as research and documentation on human rights issues related to the Bangsamoro women and children.

Women Engaged in Action on 1325 (WE ACT 1325)
WE ACT 1325 is a national network of women from peace, women and human rights organisations. It helps implement the Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. It works to advance the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the community and national levels through the localisation of the National Action Plan (NAP), active engagement in the peace processes, research and capacity-sharing. It has 39 member organisations nationwide.

Coordinating organisation:

Conciliation Resources
Conciliation Resources is an independent organisation working with people in conflict to prevent violence and build peace. The organisation is a member of the International Contact Group (ICG) on the Mindanao peace process, with advises the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front on the peace negotiations. As an ICG member Conciliation Resources has the task of linking the peace negotiations with the local civil society organisations. Conciliation Resources’s work in the Philippines is informed by gender analysis and a commitment to women’s empowerment for a transformative peace process.

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Cover image: Women in the Bangsamoro discuss their concerns and recommendations for the peace process.
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Acronyms

BBL: Bangsamoro Basic Law
BTA: Bangsamoro Transitional Authority
BTC: Bangsamoro Transition Commission
CAB: Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
FAB: Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro
GBV: Gender-Based Violence
GPH: Government of the Philippines
IP: Indigenous Peoples
JNC: Joint Normalization Committee
MILF: Moro Islamic Liberation Front
NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations
Nisa: Nisa Ul Haqq fi Bangsamoro
PNP: Philippine National Police
SWC: Social Welfare Committee
TJRC: Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission
TLWOI: Téduray Lambangian Women’s Organisation, Inc.
UnYPhilwomen: United Youth for the Philippines Women
VAWC: Violence Against Women and Children
WE ACT 1325: Women Engaged in Action on 1325
Introduction

In October 2012 the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed a Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) that laid out a road map to put an end to 45 years of armed conflict in Mindanao. The historic document opened up the chance for sweeping political change in Mindanao, as the agreement acknowledged the need for genuine political autonomy of the Bangsamoro people.

To realise the full potential for peace, the future Bangsamoro institutions need to be inclusive and responsive to the diverse communities they will be accountable to: the multiple ethno-linguistic Muslim and Indigenous peoples, as well as the descendants of Christian settlers.

Coming out of decades of conflict, women in particular face a culture of discrimination and structural violence in addition to the struggles of living in a conflict-affected area. In this sense, the FAB indicates the “right of women to meaningful political participation, and protection from all forms of violence” (section VI, article 1g). This provision has opened a window of opportunity to redefine the social, legal and institutional arrangements to allow and ensure women’s participation beyond meeting quotas, and foster a genuine role for women to influence policy and promote a just social system and thus help bring peace for the people in the Bangsamoro.

With the support of the British embassy in Manila, and the coordination of Conciliation Resources, four Mindanao-based civil society organisations have been working over the past two years to operationalise the provision in the FAB on women’s participation: Nisa ul Haq fi Bangsamoro (Nisa), United Youth for the Philippines Women (UnYPhil-Women), Téduray Lambangian Women’s Organisation, Inc (TLWOI). The Women Engaged in Action on 1325 (WE ACT 1325) joined the team on the project’s second year. The work has focused on promoting change at three levels:

- **Social**: Awareness raising on the peace process, and capacity-building of women in the Bangsamoro for increased participation.
- **Legal**: Consultations with women in conflict-affected areas on their needs and expectations,
Conciliation Resources and advocacy with Congress to inform the drafting of the Basic Law.

**Institutional:** Research on the specific topics of political participation, security and transitional justice, to inform the work of the Joint Normalization Committee, the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Committee (TJRC), and the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA).

This publication presents the results of this research to bring the voices of women to the deliberations of the peace agreement implementation bodies.

**Background developments**

When the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) started drafting the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) in April 2013, a number of civil society organisations engaged in a massive effort to inform the people about the developments of the peace process. These consultations also allowed people to articulate their concerns and expectations for a Bangsamoro at peace.

Between September 2013 and February 2014 Conciliation Resources’ partners organised 72 consultations with some 2,750 women. The results of these consultations were validated in a Women’s Summit in Cotabato and collated in a common agenda, the ‘Women’s Contributions for a Better Bangsamoro for All’. The agenda was discussed and validated at a Women’s Summit on 7 March 2014, and handed over to the Chair of the BTC, Mr. Mohagher Iqbal, who attended the Summit.

“The participation of women in the Bangsamoro is assured... in the Parliament, in the police and in other agencies of the government.”

Mohagher Iqbal, Chair of the BTC
Research design

Building on the initial achievements, the project sought to provide more specific insights and recommendations for women’s participation in three specific areas:

- Governance and politics
- Security
- Transitional justice

The thematic areas were chosen because of their strategic relevance for women’s empowerment, and because the formal peace process created specific bodies to address these topics:

- Bangsamoro Transition Commission
- Joint Normalization Committee
- Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Committee

Twenty-one workshops were conducted between October 2014 and February 2015, consulting 716 women leaders across the Bangsamoro, including women from Moro communities in Manila. These women came from various sectors, age groups, religious and ethnic backgrounds, and political affiliations. The workshops opened with a session on Bangsamoro history and the peace process, focusing on gendered aspects, UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and gender in Indigenous Peoples (IP) and Islamic traditions. With this background established the participants moved into focus group sessions where they expressed their aspirations for an ideal future in the Bangsamoro and their reflections under the themes of women’s participation, transitional justice and community security.

From these workshops the information was collated to draw out conclusions, aspirations for the future, and to evaluate the forces that are obstructing women’s meaningful participation in Bangsamoro governance. The outcome report then went through a validation process at a Women’s Forum in Cotabato (20 March 2015) attended by 126 women who participated in the research. The women reviewed the findings, drew their own conclusions and suggested recommendations as well as drafted action plans. This Women’s Forum “Upholding Women’s Meaningful Political Participation in the Bangsamoro” also produced a Declaration on Women’s Participation.

Unplanned positive outcomes

The project not only drew out deep insights regarding the future aspirations for women in the Bangsamoro, but also created a space for collectively considering matters that they would not normally discuss. This allowed them to identify common challenges and concerns, and to explore ways to address them collectively. Additionally, the sessions became a rare opportunity to foster inter-communal dialogue with people who would not normally meet, such as Moro and Indigenous populations. Participants left the sessions expressing a better understanding of the other.

The research also opened up a space for constructive conversation on the peace process, which led to improved understanding of the BBL and the possible changes it could bring to their communities. At the end of the sessions, participants would normally endorse the BBL produced by the Transition Commission and call for its swift enactment by Congress.

Additionally, members of the implementing partner organisations went through their own transformative learning experience by engaging in the research sessions, one staff member reported:

*As a Catholic from Zamboanga I felt skeptical of the BBL, but now after hearing the stories from women from the Bangsamoro I understand their perspective and why the BBL is needed. I now do not see the legislation as a threat.*

The concepts of transitional justice and community policing were new to most people involved in the research. These were also new concepts to the implementing partner organisations and they required training to be able to articulate this in the research sessions. Therefore, the research served as an educating process for both those implementing the project and the participants.

Challenges

The conceptual focus of the research was difficult to explain to participants and initial responses focused on specific realities and concerns of the women rather than speaking directly to the themes. The partners learned that due to the open nature of research, it was possible for adaptability
in the framing of the topic. With this flexibility, specific circumstances and needs of the community surfaced, along with desires that fit under the thematic focus of the research. A member of TLWOI gave one example of this:

*It was hard to get the women to understand the BBL, they had previously not engaged in it and did not understand. We wanted to talk about the BBL, but they wanted to tell us about how the Department of Health was delivering soap and blankets for them, but the barangay captain who the goods were delivered through would ask the IPs to take part in hard labour to receive the goods as a form of payment. The discussion around this experience went on for a long time, but it was through explaining these issues that we could bring in the need for aspects of transitional justice, communal policing and women’s participation to stop this practice.*

Implementing organisations made great efforts to secure a balance in the groups in terms of age and social and economic backgrounds. As an example, given the interest of several politically engaged MILF women from the Social Welfare Committee (SWC) in attending the sessions it was important to prevent a dynamic that could risk reducing the input of non-MILF participants.

While organisers engaged mostly with women from all over the Bangsamoro geographic territory, they were not able to reach some of the more remote areas. Also, the workshops in Basilan and Sulu had to be moved to Zamboanga due to security concerns.

A challenge for the facilitators was to address and process their own emotions and deliver an appropriate response to those women that had opened up and shared their difficult stories. The facilitators of the study session asked, "how do you close a session when the participants have been crying from opening up their stories?"

**Overarching findings**

- Women in the Bangsamoro have a strong desire to become more engaged in community governance to improve women’s representation and gender sensitive policing.
- There is an awareness of the need for women’s engagement for medium and long-term benefit of society through a process of gender mainstreaming in Bangsamoro governance: to challenge stereotypes, gender norms and set an example of women’s leadership for future generations. The Bangsamoro transition is a crucial moment to make this change.
- Across the board, findings indicated that livelihood support and poverty reduction was needed for genuine security and to facilitate women’s participation in additional activities such as community work. This will also serve as a form of transitional justice.
- Capacity building and accompaniment is needed to encourage key women leaders to participate and influence Bangsamoro governance mechanisms.
- There is a need for the BTA to build on already existing structures for community security and justice, while conducting evaluations for improved gender sensitivity.
- There is a deficit of social services that can assist in gendered concerns. Active participation by women in institutions for security and justice may increase women’s reporting of violations and thus increase awareness of discrimination against women.
- Women felt the need for an inclusive BBL to pass at the national government level. The overwhelming view is that communities are hopeful in the ability of the BTA and eventually the Bangsamoro Government to genuinely improve their lives and to begin a process of meaningfully engaging women in political participation.
Women’s meaningful participation

Participants acknowledged the value of increased women’s participation during the transition to peace for both medium and long-term objectives. Women’s participation in the BTA is necessary to institutionalise the role of women in governance and decision-making bodies and to ensure agencies adopt a gender sensitive approach. The overarching response from the research was a powerful aspiration for women to be empowered so they can contribute to the Bangsamoro Government.

The research also found that the women were acutely aware of long-term need for systematic and structural cultural change in regards to the role of women in governance and politics. A majority of the participants spoke for the urgent need to address systems of discrimination, correct stereotypes, and to educate and build the capacities of the next generation of women leaders.

Many women have limited opportunities for participation in decision-making and governance affairs. In one workshop participants expressed that they were not sure of how to best engage in the meeting because this was the first time they had been invited to participate in an activity that will talk about their participation beyond the home.

Challenges facing women’s engagement in governance structures

The findings indicate that three broad areas are blocking women’s participation in governance:

- Lack of confidence and education
- Cultural beliefs and traditions that brought about unequal rights and discrimination
- Poverty and social difficulties

Growing up with limited education and opportunities for leadership, many women in the Bangsamoro hold back on engaging at the political level. Several participants in the research cited that they felt a lack of awareness in matters of community governance, together with low self-confidence influenced by the perception that women are weak.
However, once constructively engaged in political participation many women transformed from this mindset to one of empowerment as they were given an opportunity to engage proactively in the peace process. One example of this was an Indigenous woman who went to Manila for the first time to share the experience of her community in the House of Representatives:

She was scared about the trip and had lack of confidence in representing Indigenous women in Senate and Congress because she had never finished school and felt intimidated in facing politicians. She overcame her fear and successfully presented in the House by focusing on the importance of genuinely representing her community and speaking from the heart. Her empowerment didn’t end here, she started to become in demand so she was set up with an email address and learnt how to use the computer and email. She has been invited to Manila again since and is comfortable in taking part in advocacy and engaging the media now despite her initial low confidence and fear.

There is much evidence that the empowerment of women in this setting is contagious. When a few women are empowered, more can be expected to follow suit around them.

The issue of unequal rights was noted in many focus group discussions with responses that cited discrimination and cultures and traditions that led women to feel that it was not their place to become involved. One story came out of a workshop in Manila, which demonstrates the challenges that many women face:

One woman was given a position in the mosque of their barangay. However, upon announcing her assignment, many men in the community opposed it. They stated that women are not allowed to hold such positions.
because it is not in accordance with the provisions in the Quran. The men even filed a petition to prevent her appointment. Eventually she had to withdraw from the position because of the pressure. However, she still believes that women should not be limited by the conservative interpretations of the Quran, and wants to show that they are capable of leading and making decisions.

Economic difficulties lead many women to prioritise securing livelihood before becoming involved in governance. Participants referred to restraints such as poverty; being too busy with work and the family; problems with their husbands; large families taking priority; and a sense of insecurity.

Recommendations

To increase women’s engagement activities need to be implemented that fundamentally:

- Build capacity and awareness of women on leadership and participation, governance and electoral processes;
- Institutionalise spaces for women’s engagement;
- Engage men and women in encouraging cultural change to better understand and acknowledge the way women contribute to society.

To ensure women’s participation in the short-medium term there should be reserved seats for women in parliament, decision-making bodies and government institutions. This will begin the process of making women’s inclusion the norm. In more than one workshop the idea of establishing a women’s political party was raised. The idea had traction and some participants started seeking support to establish one. Additionally, women want women integrated in electoral nominating processes and want to see political parties carrying a women’s agenda.

Creating commissions and working groups on women’s protection and participation in thematic areas of special attention such as the new Shari’a justice system and the Code of Muslim Personal Laws, to ensure they are not discriminatory to women. It would be beneficial to create a monitoring mechanism to understand the progress of women’s participation over the transitional period and to evaluate needs to continue their engagement. At the Women’s Peace Forum it was suggested to create a ‘Women’s Watch Group’ that can organise women’s groups and cater to the needs of women, orphans and widows through training, mentoring and coaching. This would be a network made up of interested Bangsamoro women’s groups aiming at community engagement and could be supported by local government units.

- To encourage political parties to have a women’s agenda, and integrate women in electoral nominating processes
- To ensure the representation of women in the Shari’a justice system
- To revisit the Code of Muslim Personal Laws to ensure that these policies are not discriminatory to women

Women’s organisations were viewed as key implementers of programmes scouting out potential future women political leaders and conducting capacity building to help them find their potential and encourage them to become fully engaged.

For women’s engagement in the Bangsamoro to be operationalised, change needs to come from both women and men, and efforts for change should incorporate this aspect. A suggested approach is to increase awareness raising initiatives with men on women’s participation. Additionally, targeted efforts were to be made with influential members of the community particularly religious and traditional leaders. Building widespread acceptance of women’s inclusion as an essential component of sustainable peace in the Bangsamoro will be key in creating long-term meaningful participation where women are accepted as equals in matters of governance. A creation of a Bangsamoro Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security was identified as a possible pathway to women’s inclusion and participation.

For all the above to be institutionalised, and to link up the new Bangsamoro self-governing entity with international norms and standards, several participants suggested the need for some sort of Department of Women’s Affairs to foster women’s rights, protection and agency. Similar government departments exist in other Muslim countries.
Community security

Community security and community policing are alien concepts in the Philippines. They have been introduced in the frame of the peace process by the report of the Independent Commission on Policing (2014), which made recommendations for a new police force that would be civilian in character and trusted by the diverse ethnic and religious groups in the Bangsamoro.

It is normal in contexts that are transitioning from a conflict to a post-conflict environment that people lack trust in existing institutions and more specifically law enforcement agencies. Combined with proliferation of firearms, drug trade, land disputes, ongoing conflict and lawlessness this creates a volatile environment for communities where families continue to be displaced by security threats.

When discussing concerns that are specific to women, participants mentioned cases of gender-based violence (GBV), violence against women and children (VAWC) and inequality. Others had experienced rape, prostitution, polygamy and trafficking. Many of these abuses went unreported to the police due to a culture of silence and the perception that law enforcement agencies are not trustworthy. The fact that social services are often not accessible adds to the gravity of these concerns.

When asked about how participants addressed security concerns they mentioned seeking support from actors within the community, or self-help strategies such as evacuation. This has allowed the development of several informal communal security structures. When seeking external assistance the most frequently approached actors were barangay officials and community elders.

An overarching problem noted of the Philippine National Police (PNP) is that it is not perceived as an institution that can appropriately address women’s issues, and is not considered approachable for many women facing security concerns. Some women shared stories of reporting rape to the police and being treated inappropriately in the questioning period by officers who handled the process insensitively.

In some areas women would turn to NGOs to voice their concerns and report violations. However, these organisation are not present in more remote areas.

Broader security concerns included poverty, lack of livelihood, health and cultural practices that harm women. For Indigenous participants their concerns extended to the protection of their cultural underpinnings and the maintenance of the Indigenous knowledge system.

Recommendations

To increase the sense of security for the whole community, participants expressed the need for more functional and responsive security services.

In the absence of trusted security providers participants highlighted the importance of acknowledging and strengthening customary, traditional and non-formal mechanisms while ensuring that practices are consistent with human rights, laws on women and other international and national human rights standards.

NGOs are often well equipped to provide first-hand support and guidance on how to proceed in cases of women’s rights violations. It is therefore important to acknowledge the importance of this task and empower NGOs and community organisations to maximise the effectiveness of their efforts.

The most immediate concern of participants was related to family security. In areas such as Zamboanga the need for community policing was highlighted in particular, as many young people were vulnerable to being caught up in trafficking and the drug trade. Protection of children should begin with the family and at the community level and should be enhanced through institutionalised information dissemination on VAWC; and by supporting centres for victims specialising on adolescents. Key programmes supporting family livelihoods and encouraging children to go to school would prevent their recruitment in illegal activities.

It was also mentioned that interventions into young marriages should be tackled through a review and alteration of the marrying age and for more strict criteria for allowing and preventing early marriages in cultural practices.

In the absence of a widely trusted and accountable security system there is a need for women to be actively involved in identifying sources of insecurity and options for preventing or responding to
them. There is therefore a need to train women in community security and community policing concepts and practice to empower them to take responsibility and action on security related issues. At the same time there is a need to train security providers to smoothen their transition from a militaristic approach to security to human security.

More specifically, when creating the Joint Peace and Security Teams (AFP, PNP, MILF) and the future Police for the Bangsamoro it is fundamental to maximise efforts to ensure women’s participation in the design of the functions of these bodies and in their oversight. Participants expressed aspirations that the new security providers should embody the values of transparency, accountability and good governance.

Creating mandatory mechanisms for the advancement of gender and development, along with establishing women’s desks in each community would entrench a gendered perspective at the local police force. These bodies could also take part in education seminars on women’s rights and VAWC.

Participants often cited escalation of violence, particularly in reference to rido1 and land disputes as a security concern. This is also an area that has been stressed by the groups for increased women’s engagement in mediation and de-escalation as many highlighted the ability of women to operate as problem solvers in these circumstances. However, for this to be built upon there is need for more capacity building in conflict resolution and community mediation of key women to intervene effectively and to mitigate the risks of them doing so.

To tackle wider human security concerns there were recommendations for local governance units to establish more livelihood programmes and credit facilities as well as scholarship programmes, women’s crisis centres, and mapping of the local economy and women’s skills to strategically create employment opportunities for women. Accompanied by structures to support women through education and health awareness centres, particularly those that specialise in psychosocial services.

1 Clan or family feuding specific to Mindanao.
Transitional justice

Hundreds of thousands of people have been affected by over four decades of armed conflict in Mindanao. Participants described experiences of forced displacement, GBV, massacres, the Zamboanga siege, land grabbing, illegal arrest and disappearances. Yet there is little systematic documentation of human rights violations.

Relating to the current justice system, the participants experienced discrimination; inequality of treatment; lack of immediate response or guidance from duty bearers; marginalisation; violation of their basic rights; and lack of freedom of expression.

Almost all areas reported a deficit in social services, particularly in conflict-affected communities. This problem is compounded for women who reported gender discrimination and marginalisation in addition to the overall absence of social institutions.

Transitional justice is a concept that was introduced to the Mindanao context through the FAB (2012), which mentioned that "the parties agree to work out a program for transitional justice to address the legitimate grievances of the Bangsamoro people, correct historical injustices, and address human rights violations." Discussions around transitional justice had therefore to start with scoping participant’s understanding and expectations around justice.

Women’s perspectives on justice

For the participant women, justice would involve the creation of a system institutionalising equal treatment for rich and poor with respect for women’s rights, transparency, and a sense of ownership. They saw justice as a process where parties involved were dealt in fairness regardless of their religion, tribe, gender and age. Responses regarding specific cases of reconciliation focused on positive justice citing amicable settlement, and acceptance.

Looking at broader justice, participants in the women’s forum stressed the need for the creation of a fair society that respects cultures and provides equality for all, while fostering systems of mediation to de-escalate and resolve conflict before the need to progress to a formal justice process.

The establishment of peace itself with respect for culture and equal rights is seen by many as justice for the suffering endured over the course of the conflict. Livelihood programmes would serve to balance the economic hardships. Respondents from Maharlika Village, Taguig, in Metro Manila, had a mixed view on whether justice had been delivered to them. Some people felt they had achieved justice because of improvements in the community; however others expressed that due to political deadlock they had not witnessed development and thus did not feel reconciled for the displacement and economic hardships inflicted by conflict. Participants from core Bangsamoro territory expressed that the creation of the Bangsamoro entity will serve as justice for them.

When asked about what transitional justice would mean in practice, participants responded with a variety of scenarios. The most prevalent suggestion was to create an agency to report and cater to the needs of victims of past injustices. The study did not elaborate on the expectations related to reparations.

Recommendations

To operationalise the transitional justice system in their communities, participants referred to strengthening the role of civil society in identifying, profiling and publishing cases of human rights violations and submitting these to the relevant institutions.

Additionally, specific governmental agencies should be established in the Bangsamoro to ensure proper delivery of justice. Gendered analysis and response mechanisms should inform their action. The BTA should deepen their engagement with CSOs and communities to more specifically determine actions for community-responsive justice.

In many communities in the Bangsamoro there are already operating community justice mechanisms such as ‘sumbungan’ or the Tiyawan process. New justice mechanisms should not be implemented over the top of these local institutions, but in coordination with them and accompanied by efforts to strengthen their effectiveness and sensitivity towards gender and cultures. A participant highlighted that efforts for transitional justice shouldn’t “make Mindanao become chaotic”.

The Women's Forum identified the need for a special envoy of women from a variety of tribes and religions to monitor and evaluate the process of peace, development and justice implementation. This would serve to evaluate the responses to
the mechanisms and the effectiveness for them to deliver a sense of justice. Like with security concerns, views and desires for justice will likely evolve over the transitional period, so **establishing a monitoring mechanism** will be important for adaptive approaches to delivering the needs of communities.

To rectify the suffering of those that experienced displacement due to the conflict, participants wished for the creation of mechanisms that will help ensure the needs of women are responded to if affected by displacement outside the future Bangsamoro political entity. This would feed into broader networks that could function as a quick response team.

A fundamental concern of the communities in the Bangsamoro is the protection and respect of their religious, spiritual and communal identities and practice. Fostering livelihood development, empowerment of women, tackling corruption and structural and armed violence would be considered as transitional justice for many of the participants.

The need for reparation was often cited, but the findings did not provide sufficient insight on **women’s expectations of reparation and reconciliation** and what such processes would look like. This is an area of further research to be expanded on.

**Final remarks and ways forward**

The Mindanao peace process will be a long journey. Marginalisation, poverty and protracted violence have been mutually reinforcing in a vicious cycle that has put an enormous toll on the people in the Bangsamoro. Most of them have never experienced peace in their lifetime.

All people in the Bangsamoro dream of a better future of peaceful coexistence and prosperity. But many have a hard time articulating the details of their vision, or how change for the better can happen. It is probably no wonder, given that they have never seen a functioning political system; security providers that are accountable to the people instead of the politicians; and a mechanism that acknowledges and addresses the human rights violations they have suffered from multiple perpetrators.

The findings of this report are not a detailed action plan for engendering governance, security and transitional justice. They are a snapshot of the social reality, captured through the patient and committed work of Muslim and Indigenous grassroots civil society organisations from conflict-affected areas.

The findings probably raise more questions than answers. But in a peace process no one has all the answers and sometimes asking the right questions helps navigate the uncertainties.

The primary target audience for this document are the formal peace agreement implementing bodies: the government and the MILF peace panels; the JNC; the TJRC; and the BTA (yet to be established at the time of publishing). We hope this document will inform their action. We also re-affirm our commitment to staying the course and contributing from a bottom-up approach to the enormous tasks they have at hand.

We also hope fellow civil society organisations, and any other national or international organisation committed to peace and human rights find the results informative and enlightening.
Appendix one

Questions that guided the focus group discussions on the three research topics

Participation
1. What are your dreams for the Bangsamoro?
2. What kind of situation do you envision/hope for the women in the Bangsamoro?
3. What are the experiences of women in situations of armed conflict and non-armed conflict which you would like the BMG to address?
4. What are the issues/problems that affect women’s participation in the field of governance?
5. Will these issues/problems affect their participation in the BTA and BG?
6. How can these issues/problems be solved?
7. How do you see women participating in the BTA and BG? In what mechanisms do you see them participating/should they participate?
8. Why do they have to participate?

Transitional justice/dealing with the past
What are your personal experiences of conflict and violence in your own communities in the past years? (The experience may be personal, family, community HR violations, GBV, displacements, killings, trauma)
1. Were there efforts to resolve or act on them? If so briefly elaborate.
2. What is your understanding/expectation about justice?
3. Did you feel that justice was achieved?
4. What are the current mechanisms that enable justice to be served?
5. Do you fully trust members of other communities? (different clans, tribes, religious groups).
6. What should be done to achieve reconciliation?
7. What will be the role of the women in achieving justice and reconciliation?

Community security / policing
1. Do you feel safe in your own community? What are the issues that make you feel insecure?
2. Who do you approach when you have a safety concern?
3. Are there security concerns you keep to yourself? (Why?)
4. Who provides security in your communities? How much do you trust the different security providers? (not at all / little / very much).
5. As a woman and a member of your clan and community, what will make you feel safe?
6. How can community security mechanisms be improved to bring you this sense of security?
7. Do you think women could play a bigger role in resolving community problems?
8. Would you trust the BM police more if they had women?
Appendix two

Women’s Declaration on Participation (March 2015)

We, participants of the Women’s Forum “Upholding Women’s Meaningful Political Participation in the Bangsamoro” coming from grassroots communities and peace and women’s organisations in Mindanao, commit towards working for the full empowerment of our fellow women.

We commit to strengthen and intensify our advocacy and capacity-building on women’s rights in the grassroots level, to include also the men, so that they, too, will understand and support the women’s aspirations.

We will organize ourselves and work for women’s empowerment starting at the barangay level. We will start with educating our women in the communities about their rights especially to meaningful participation in the electoral exercise.

We will identify who among us can best represent and articulate our interests in government and in the community.

We shall endeavor to promote the economic, social and cultural well-being of women. We shall continue to advocate for women’s security both in the home and in the public space. We will promote the advancement of women through livelihood and education while providing for the education of our children.

We shall commit to be partners in ensuring security in our respective communities. As such, we will contribute and cooperate with authorities and concerned institutions to address the issues of human and drug trafficking, drug addiction and law enforcement in our communities.

We will work for the equal protection of Moro and Indigenous women by engaging government agencies.

We shall work for justice that will pave the way towards the healing of wounds of injustice and promote reconciliation among and between peoples.

We commit to seek justice where offenders will be held accountable but will also help restore relationships between victims and perpetrators and in the community, in general. We will work to ensure that rights of peoples in the community, including the rights of the Indigenous Peoples are respected and promoted. As women, we commit to be healers, mediators, peace educators and bridges of friendship and understanding.

We shall remain vigilant against forces, individuals, and groups be they in government or in the private sector, that undermine women’s initiatives in pursuing a genuine and lasting peace in Mindanao.

We realize, however, that the fulfilment of our dream to meaningfully participate in the Bangsamoro is not solely in our hands at the moment. The Bangsamoro Basic Law must be passed. We want a BBL that is consistent with the principles stipulated in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, particularly the provisions that refer to women’s participation, protection and development.

Don’t crush our dreams for a better tomorrow. We call on our lawmakers: Adopt the BBL.

20 March 2015
Alnor Hotel
Cotabato City
Appendix three

Timeline and milestones in women’s participation

1969  Moro insurgencies begin an armed struggle for independence of Muslim Mindanao.
1979  The UN General Assembly adopts the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
1996  Final Peace Agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).
1997  Ceasefire between the GPH and the MILF.
2010  The Philippines becomes the first country in Asia to adopt a NAP on UNSCR 1325.
2011  Miriam Coronel-Ferrer becomes the first woman in the world to chair a peace panel.
      Raissa Jajurie becomes the first woman to join the MILF negotiating team.
2012  October – Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro.
2013  April – The BTC is established, with 15 members. Only four women are appointed but they chair two out of five of the drafting committees.
      September – February. Project partners conduct massive awareness raising and consultations with women in conflict-affected areas.
2014  7 March – Women’s Forum validates a document on Women’s Contributions to the BBL.
      27 March – Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro.
      September. The BTC submits the draft BBL to Congress for enactment.
2015  20 March – Women’s Declaration on Participation.