

CASE STUDY

Teduray Lambangian Women's Organization, Incorporated (TLWOI): Broadening the participation of Non-Moro Indigenous Women in the Bangsamoro Region

June 2025

The Teduray Lambangian Women's Organization, Incorporated (TLWOI) is a women-led federation of 65 community-based women's organisations of Indigenous Peoples. It works to empower Teduray, Lambangian, Dulangan Manobo, Blaan, Higaonon, and Sama Badjao/Sama Dilaut women and other Indigenous Women in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), developing programmes and projects to support knowledge and awareness of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Through a Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund Rapid Response Window (WPHF-RRW) grant, TLWOI supported Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples (NMIPs), particularly NMIP women, to participate in the transition process in BARMM, and to increase the Bangsamoro Parliament's awareness and knowledge of NMIP women's priorities.

In 2014, the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro (CAB) was signed between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), ending four decades of conflict in the predominantly Muslim region of Central and Southwestern Mindanao in the Philippines. The CAB established a new self-governing entity called Bangsamoro, to replace the existing Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, following a transition led by the MILF. The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) was established in 2019 to oversee the transition to the formal Bangsamoro government, with the first parliamentary elections planned for 2025. The rights of NMIP communities are an important aspect of the transition process. NMIP communities are considered the most economically marginalised, politically and socio-culturally disenfranchised groups in the Philippines, yet representation of NMIP communities, particularly women, in decision-making processes is lacking.

One of the priority issues in the run-up to the elections was the rights of indigenous communities, including the enactment of an Indigenous Peoples (IP) code to recognise

and enforce the rights of IPs in BARMM. The process of developing and passing the IP code offered a rare entry point to advocate for legal provisions to be responsive to IP communities, and to ensure that NMIP communities are empowered to understand their rights under proposed provisions, particularly how they relate to women. TLWOI's project took place from December 2023 to June 2024. TLWOI continued to engage in decision-making processes over the IP code beyond the project timeframe, with the IP code, also known as the Bangsamoro Indigenous People Act (BIPA), passed in December 2024.

Impact: Increasing the representation of NMIP communities in the Bangsamoro transition process

- **Increased knowledge and awareness of NMIP communities, especially NMIP women, to effectively participate in peace and political processes.** Training sessions were provided to NMIP communities, including 55 NMIP women, on topics including customary law, the parliamentary system, electoral code and voter education. For example, Sama Badjao participants highlighted that the project increased their awareness about the Bangsamoro government, noting that it was the first time they had heard about the BARMM parliamentary elections in 2025.
- **Strengthened presence and opportunities for NMIP women to participate in the passage of the IP bill,** ensuring that NMIP communities' rights and priorities were given a voice in the political transition process. NMIP women were at the forefront of advocacy, awareness sessions and dialogue with the Bangsamoro Parliament, including public consultations headed by the Committee on Indigenous Peoples Affairs (CIPA) and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs (MIPA). In another instance, 50 NMIP members, including 28 women, drove a lobby campaign on the passage of the IP code with members of CIPA.

- **Strengthened reputation of NMIP communities in the political process more broadly.** The project had a broader impact on the political process. The Indigenous Peoples Democratic Party (IPDP) had not yet been registered before the RRW project, but subsequently filed for registration and accreditation to participate in the 2025 elections. This was the first time that NMIPs have formed a political party at the Barangay level, which is an administrative unit in local government structures. In addition, 50% of the party's 10,000 members are women, higher than the average of 30% for parties in Bangsamoro. TLWOI's reputation, including through the implementation of project activities, helped to contribute to a growing respect for women's roles and a high level of women member representation.
- **Improved recognition of the priorities of NMIP communities within the decision-making and conflict resolution mechanisms of BARMM.** The presence and role of NMIP communities were recognised through the course of the project. Through the increased presence of NMIP communities in public consultations on the passage of the IP code, CIPA's leadership highlighted their intention to consider NMIPs' propositions to the IP code. Additionally, key Members of Parliament demonstrated increased interest in and outspokenness on NMIPs' rights, lobbying position papers by IP women groups, and increasingly speaking out about IP rights.

IMPACT OF TLWOI'S PROJECT – STRENGTHENING LOCAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Many of the NMIP women leaders in the project, who come not just from TLWOI but from other CSOs, were not previously involved in policy and advocacy work. Through involving them in training sessions and public consultations on the IP code, the project helped to build their confidence and familiarity with advocacy. After the project, they continued to drive advocacy work in other areas – for example, lobbying with Barangay (local government) to get birth certificates for NMIP children, and bringing cases of violence against women to the local government.

Lessons learned supporting women to influence peace processes

- **Continued awareness-raising of NMIP communities and women is crucial, particularly in light of Bangsamoro's first elections.** TLWOI found that many communities lack understanding of the parliament system and electoral code, and many NMIP communities in the islands have limited understanding of the proposed IP bill. Continued work by TLWOI to strengthen awareness raising can support NMIP communities to be represented and participate in political and peace processes.
- **Building relationships with key stakeholders can help to strengthen policy buy-in and roles in decision-making processes.** TLWOI was able to strengthen their relationship with MIPA, a government agency responsible for formulating and implementing policies, plans, and programmes for the wellbeing of indigenous peoples. TLWOI was accredited by MIPA as a sectoral organisation, enabling them to collaborate directly with MIPA. Project activities also brought together different NMIP communities in an IP congress held in May 2024, strengthening the relationship between NMIP organisations, the Indigenous Political Structure (IPS), indigenous peoples professionals, and those in mainstream politics, ensuring broad participation and strengthened coordination in pushing for the protection of IP rights.
- **Creating opportunities for NMIP communities to engage in internal dialogue can create space for women to advocate for their needs.** TLWOI coordinated community dialogues among NMIP communities. This included the IP Congress involving 2,258 NMIP people, and a pre-lobby orientation involving 235 NMIP people (including 89 NMIP women). These dialogues provided a chance for NMIP women to advocate internally on their needs related to the passage of the IP code, which were then used in lobbying campaigns with key stakeholders.

The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund Rapid Response Window is a funding mechanism that addresses urgent funding gaps with targeted, short-term support to increase women's participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements. WPHF is a flexible financing tool supporting quality interventions to enhance the capacity of local women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities.

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