



JICA Research Institute

**JICA-RI Working Paper**

Human Security in Practice: East Asian Experiences

# A New Perspective on Conflict Resolution in Asia: Integration of Peace and Development for the Philippines

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No. 155

June 2017

JICA Research Institute



JICA Research Institute

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# A New Perspective on Conflict Resolution in Asia: Integration of Peace and Development for the Philippines

Sachiko Ishikawa \*

## Abstract

The peace process between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front is a showcase of a new type of conflict resolution. This process included development and a hybrid form of peacekeeping aside from peacemaking endeavors. Japan's assistance to the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao demonstrated the notion of human security with a tripartite cooperation arrangement consisting of the International Monitoring Team, the Mindanao Task Force, and the Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development. Above all, Japan's participation in the International Monitoring Team opened new pathways for the country to carry out comprehensive support to Mindanao by bridging peace and development. Japan remained in Mindanao even after the peace negotiations reached a stalemate in October 2008. That was the period when the empowerment of local communities and people were at stake under a volatile cease-fire agreement. Japan, in collaboration with local security providers, continued assistance in the conflict-affected areas. In parallel with this effort, the Consolidation of Peace Seminar played a role in introducing local consultation into the peace process; bridging the gap between local civil society and the negotiating panels. These multifaceted endeavors supported local communities in their quest for peace during a critical period of the peace process.

**Keywords:** human security, Mindanao, sovereignty, empowerment, self-contained assistance

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This paper has been prepared as part of a JICA Research Institute project entitled "Human Security in Practice: East Asian Experiences." All views and interpretations expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supporting institutions.

## 1. Introduction: Uniqueness of the Mindanao Peace Process

This paper attempts to outline a new perspective on conflict resolution in Asia by examining the peace process between the Philippine government (GPH)<sup>1</sup> and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It is also designed to extract the lessons learnt by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) from its peacebuilding assistance program. Although the main theme is peace and development, these two elements can however be integrated under the umbrella of human security. This is because, while it is well said that ‘there is no peace without development and no development without peace’<sup>2</sup>, the international community has not found an effective formula for promoting peace (Galtung 1996) in the increasing numbers of conflicts around the world.

The GPH-MILF peace process in Mindanao, tackled this important issue with the following unique approach: First and foremost, the Mindanao peace process is a non-United Nations led operation. In the early 1990’s, the United Nations expanded its peacekeeping roles into peacebuilding, which referred to efforts ‘to identify and support structures that would tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict (United Nations 1992).’ The principal problem facing the United Nations, however, was the perennial struggle between state sovereignty and the collective good (MacGinty and Williams 2009). The United Nations-led peacebuilding approach concentrated on the promotion of liberal democratic governing systems

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<sup>1</sup> On October 28, 2010, the Philippine Information Agency released an online report: “DFA Shifts to ISO initials ‘ph.’ and ‘phl’,” stating that the initials “GRP” will no longer be used. The report on the ABS-CBN news read: “DFA junks ‘RP,’ adopts ‘PH’ or ‘PHL’.” On November 16, 2010, the Philippine Consulate in New York released to the press: “The Philippines ADOPTS ISO 3166-1, from RP to PH.” *Mindanews*.

<http://www.mindanews.com/mindaviews/comment/2011/01/22/'grp'-to'gph'-why/>. This project therefore uses “GPH” to address both the previous and current administrations of the Philippine Government. Please note: as of 5 June 2017, this web-site link has been removed from the homepage of Mindanews.

<sup>2</sup> Speech of UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson on 27 February 2013, on the occasion of a Town Hall meeting at the United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan.  
<http://unu.edu/news/news/town-hall-meeting-jan-eliasson.html>.

and market-oriented economic growth (Paris 2010) by restricting state sovereignty. The limitations of this ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach (Milne 2007: 74) when combined with rapid liberalization strategies, however, became increasingly apparent in the early 2000’s through the operations in East Timor, Afghanistan and elsewhere. As Paris argued: ‘rather than creating conditions for stable and lasting peace, efforts to hold a quick set of elections and economic reforms did little to address the drivers of conflicts, and in some cases produced perversely destabilizing results (Paris 2010).’ On the contrary, during the GPH-MILF peace process, the sovereignty of the Philippines was well respected and international assistance did not conflict with the interests of the Philippine government. The Mindanao peace process secured the accountability of the negotiation process but also allowed ample flexibility for the negotiating parties in their decision making.

Second, there has been an obvious linkage between development and a hybrid form of peacekeeping in this peace process. Both negotiating parties paid a fair amount of attention to socio-economic elements in the conflict-affected Mindanao (Mindanao)<sup>3</sup> area aside from the task of reaching a political settlement between themselves. That was the idea of Malaysia as the facilitator of the peace process, learning from the negative outcomes of the previous peace process between the Philippine government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). This brought the development facet to the peace process.<sup>4</sup> In this context, special attention should be paid to the roles of the International Monitoring Team (IMT). Although its main task was traditional monitoring of cease-fire situations in Mindanao, a socio-economic aspect was added to its duties, which made the IMT a hybrid organization. In other words, the IMT is a

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘conflict-affected areas in Mindanao’ can be interpreted in both narrow and broad senses. In a narrow sense the designated areas are engaged in the conflict between the Philippine government and MILF, and are covered by the IMT. In a broad sense, however, conflict-affected areas also include the MNLF controlled areas, the ARMM, and the sites of “ridos” aside from the narrow interpretation. In this study, the term “Mindanao” refers to both narrow and broad interpretations depending on the context.

<sup>4</sup> The author interviewed Datuk Hasanah Binti AB. Hamid, Director General, Research Division, Prime Minister’s Department, on 25 August 2015 in Putra Jaya, Malaysia.

showcase of the collaboration between the Pillar II (international cooperation) of the 'Responsibility to Protect' (United Nations 2014), and human security. As the report of United Nations Secretary-General describes: 'while traditional development cooperation has a central role to play, assistance to States in the context of the responsibility to protect will also involve a wider range of economic, political, humanitarian and, in certain cases military tools (United Nations 2014).' While the IMT components cover the various aspects such as military, civilian protection, human rights and identification of local needs for socio-economic aspect, Japanese members of the IMT play an additional role. They bridge the gap between the IMT's socio-economic needs identification program and the development work implemented by JICA. It is also noteworthy that the Philippine government has been generous about development in Mindanao. The government not only welcomed third parties to take part in development assistance, but also launched their own development program called the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (Peaceful and Resilient Communities Program) in 2011. This forward-looking attitude of the government is deemed to be a key to manifest human security under the volatile peace process.

Third, the Mindanao conflict has a historical and regional dimension aside from the internal conflict between the Christian population and Muslim inhabitants. In the 15th century prior to colonization by Spain, there were Islamic sultanates flourishing in the southern Philippines that traded with neighboring territories, including Malaysia and Indonesia. Because of these historically active interactions among the sultanates in the region, a territorial issue is being raised with Sabah in relation to Mindanao. Given that there are a number of Malaysian immigrants, mainly from Sulu Island, this territorial dispute is still a sensitive problem between Malaysia and the Philippines. Malaysia, thus has its own interest in solving the conflict in Mindanao. Aside from the historical dimension, the spirit of regionalism of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also influences the GPH-MILF peace process. As of 2011, the population of the ASEAN region was estimated to be 600 million, out of which the Muslim

population was approximately 240 million, or 40% of the entire population in the ASEAN region (Tanada 2013).<sup>5</sup> The Association aims for an integration by building three communities, namely economic, political-security, and socio-cultural ones (ASEAN 2009). To achieve the aimed integration, amicable interfaith relationships are imperative, and conflicts between different religious and ethnic groups can be potential threats to regional integration. The involvement of Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia in the GPH-MILF peace process can therefore be understood from the regional dimension as well.

To illustrate the empirical case of ‘peace and development,’ this paper focuses on Japan’s assistance in Mindanao within the perspective of human security. Special attention is paid to the following three research questions: sovereignty issues in the Philippines, the comprehensiveness of Japan’s assistance, and the empowerment of local stakeholders. Firstly, in terms of the sovereignty issue, this paper examines whether Japan entered the Mindanao for her assistance without conflict of interest over Philippine sovereignty. Secondly, the paper clarifies how Japan has attempted to link development to peace to make assistance more comprehensive. Thirdly, the paper examines how Japan attempted to empower local communities vis-a-vis the volatile peace process.

The methodological framework for this paper is mainly a content-analysis of Japan’s peacebuilding assistance to Mindanao within the concept of human security. To address the research questions, a chronological analysis method was applied. Japan’s policies on peacebuilding and human security as well as the practical operations in Mindanao during the initial period of assistance were analyzed. This paper also used an interview method to reinforce the content-analysis. The study involved interviews with major actors of the Mindanao peace process carried out during the months of July and August 2015 in five different venues; Tokyo,

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<sup>5</sup> The Muslim population is calculated by using the statistics provided in the paper titled ‘Muslim Population in the World and Japan 2011’ by Professor Tanada of Waseda University, <http://nbakki.hatenablog.com/entry/2014/08/22/181309>.

Manila, Cotabato, Kuala Lumpur, and Kota Kinabalu. Among the Japanese interviewees were six ex-members of the IMT who were interviewed in Tokyo, and one current IMT member who was interviewed in Manila. Valuable informants in the Philippines were the Secretary of the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the current and former chair persons of Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), the Heads of the GPH-MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), officials from international organizations, and the leaders of local NGOs, among others. The study also approached a former head of the IMT and the Malaysian government in Kuala Lumpur, as well as JICA's partners for Consolidation of Peace Seminar (COP) in Kota Kinabalu.

## **2. The Mindanao Conflict and the Search for Peace**

This section outlines the history of the conflict in Mindanao to highlight the root causes of the conflict and the approaches made in the subsequent two peace processes. This helps understand the protracted nature of the conflict, which lasted more than four decades before the final peace pact was concluded between the Philippine government and the MILF. In the history of Mindanao, the primary cause of the conflict can be traced to the legacy of the Spanish and American colonization of the Philippines between the 16th and early 20th centuries. Under the occupation by America, migration of the Christian population to Mindanao was encouraged. After full independence was acquired, President Marcos continued this migration policy, but territorial disputes became obvious and serious between Christian migrants and Muslim inhabitants. By the mid-1960's the number of Christian migrants exceeded the Muslim population in Mindanao. The marginalized and usurped Muslim population in Mindanao was left in need of proper recognition of its identity, cultural values, physical security, sufficient livelihood, and level of participation in politics in the modern Philippines (Lingga 2005; Ferrera 2005; Jubair 2007). The lack of recognition of these needs



led to the second cause of the conflict, which was severe poverty. Freedom from *fear* and *want* declined in a vicious cycle and made the Mindanao conflict a protracted one. Within this pattern, the 1968 Jabidah Massacre in Corregidor triggered armed Moro resistance (Ferrera 2005: 10; Jubair 2007: 100; Lam 2009: 76), and over the next thirty years the struggle continued with fluctuations in intensity and frequency of violence as well as with spillovers in issues and actors (Ishikawa 2014: 81).

Prior to the peace process between the Philippine government and the MILF, there were other Moro groups involved in the quest for Bangsamoro self-determination. The MNLF was one of these. This group was established in 1969 by Nur Misuari. With the assistance of the Organization of Islamic Countries, the MNLF and the Marcos administration signed the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. Although President Marcos created two autonomous regions in Mindanao, the MNLF found this an unacceptable outcome of the agreement. As a result, the armed conflict waged by the MNLF continued. The emergence of the MILF, a faction within the MNLF, also made the conflict more complicated and protracted. The MILF was born just before the first Tripoli Agreement of 1976 was signed. According to Jubair (2007), the group disagreed with the phrase, 'the constitutional process for the implementation of the entire Agreement,' which was surreptitiously inserted into the Agreement by the government peace panel at the last unguarded minute (Jubair 2007: 14).

The MILF's vision for the outcome of the Bangsamoro armed struggle was: (1) the establishment of a true Muslim community, (2) the establishment of a genuine Islamic system of government, and (3) the application of a genuine Islamic way of life in all aspects of society (Mastura 2012). The MILF aimed to attain independence from the Republic of the Philippines. Nur Misuari of the MNLF Central Committee, however, sealed the right of the Bangsamoro people to exercise their rights to self-determination when he signed the 1996 Final Peace Agreement (Jubair 2007: 13). Thus, during the negotiations between the Philippine government and MNLF, the MILF was simply seen as a possible spoiler of the peace process.

The Organization of Islamic Countries recognized the MNLF as the only representative of Bangsamoro. Subsequently, Misuari served as the first governor of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) from 1996 to 2001 under the volatile implementing institutions, but without sufficient financial support and political power to exercise real autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

Upon the conclusion of the GPH-MNLF peace pact in 1996, President Fidel Ramos (1992-1998) started a round of peace talks with the MILF in 1997, but that did not make a significant progress without a third party as a facilitator or mediator between them. President Joseph Estrada (1998-2001), his successor, imposed *all-out war* by the government against the MILF in 2000, and the GPH-MILF peace process was completely destroyed. This action was short-lived though, as the current peace process can be traced back to January 2001 when President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001-2010) took over from President Estrada. However, as the MILF maintained their position that they would not go back to the negotiating table without the presence of a third party, she asked Prime Minister Mahatir of Malaysia to assist in the GPH-MILF peace process.

The subsequent peace process between the GPH-MILF was worked out differently from that with the MNLF. Both negotiating parties and the Malaysian government had learnt some critical lessons from the previous peace process with the MNLF, and tried not to retrace its agonized path. Malaysia was behind the scenes separately supporting Libya during the peace process with the MNLF, and that was why this country believed it important to introduce a socio-economic aspect as well as a cease-fire monitoring mechanism to the peace process with the MILF.<sup>7</sup> The Agreement on the General Framework of the Resumption of Peace Talks was concluded in Kuala Lumpur on 24 March 2001. Finally, a cease-fire was achieved and the peace talks were resumed with the Agreement on Peace between the Philippine government and the MILF of 22 June 2001. The main agenda for the peace talks included issues related to

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<sup>6</sup> Author interview with Datuk Hasanah Binti AB. Hamid, 25 August 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Author interview with Datuk Hasanah Binti AB. Hamid, 25 August 2015.

security, relief and rehabilitation, and ancestral domain. However, frequent and sporadic fighting between Philippine government and MILF forces disturbed the progress of the negotiations (Jabair 2007: 36). Malaysia was requested to send a team to Mindanao in 2004. A sharp decrease in number of skirmishes within a couple of years indicated the effectiveness of the IMT's presence in Mindanao. Although over 600 skirmishes were reported on yearly basis before 2003, only 60 were reported after the deployment of the IMT in 2004, and 46 in the following year.<sup>8</sup>

Japan was eventually invited by both negotiating parties to take part in the socio-economic role of the IMT in 2006, which will be discussed in detail later. There was, however, a long impasse in the peace talks from September 2006 to early 2008, caused by different views on the issue of the territory to comprise the proposed autonomous region (Jubair 2007: 144-147). The most discouraging event was the suspension of signing the agreement on the ancestral domain<sup>9</sup> in August 2008, and the subsequent decision by the Supreme Court of the Philippines in October 2008 labeling the agreement unconstitutional. Due to the resulting impasse in the peace process, several skirmishes broke out during this period. Worse came when the Malaysian IMT withdrew from Mindanao in November 2008 despite the immense threat of skirmishes. All the stakeholders of the peace process including the negotiating parties, local politicians and civil societies lost a forum to exchange their ideas and consult each other for a while.

The peace talks were resumed only in July 2009, with an International Contact Group (ICG) created to monitor the following peace talks as international guarantors. Along with the resumption of the peace process, the Malaysian IMT returned to Mindanao in February 2010. During the President Arroyo's administration, the peace process experienced ups and downs,

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<sup>8</sup> The author interviewed Brig. General Edgardo M. Gurra, a former head of GPH-CCCH on 13 September 2006 in Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines.

<sup>9</sup> The official title of the agreement on the ancestral domain is the *Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain Aspect of the GRP-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 2001*.

and it seemed still a long way to go before the final peace agreement could be constructed. On 3 June 2010, just before the end of the term of President Arroyo, the peace panels signed the Declaration of Continuity for Peace Negotiation, which basically re-affirmed the points of consensus that had already been agreed upon throughout the nine years of negotiations between the two parties during President Arroyo's time.

With the landslide presidential victory of Benigno Aquino, Jr. in June 2010, hopes and expectations rose among the people in Mindanao. However, the resumption of peace talks was marked by disagreement over procedural issues in the talks themselves, resulting in a difficult two-year period (Ishikawa 2014: 82). The Japanese Government discreetly organized, upon the request of the negotiating parties, an informal meeting between President Aquino and Murad, the Chairman of the MILF at a hotel in Narita on 4 August 2011. This meeting served as an icebreaker for the impasse on the peace talks although it took another year before the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro was concluded on 15 October 2012. With this Framework Agreement both parties agreed to establish an autonomous territory called the Bangsamoro. By late January 2014 substantial issues such as power sharing, wealth sharing, and other remaining matters had been agreed to by both parties, prior to finalizing the final peace agreement. On 27 March 2014, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro was finally signed by both the Philippine government and the MILF. As Mohagher Iqbal, the former chief negotiator of the MILF Peace Panel said: 'implementing the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro is deemed likely to be more difficult than concluding it.'<sup>10</sup> It seems it will take some time until the planned autonomous entity called the Bangsamoro is finally established.

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<sup>10</sup> Remarks delivered by Mr. Mohagher Iqbal at Open Seminar on the Peace Process in the Southern Philippines: Its Challenges and Prospects, 15 November 2015, at Rikkyo University in Tokyo.

### **3. Japan's Assistance to the GPH-MILF Peace Process**

This section concentrates on one of the most critical periods for the peace process; the period between October 2006 and February 2010 that was affected by the above challenges to human security. There are three reasons to justify considering this as a critical period. First, respecting the sovereignty of Philippines was the primary challenge to tackle when Japan commenced assistance to Mindanao in October 2006. Entering the conflict-affected areas to engage with a rebel group about Official Development Assistance (ODA) without jeopardizing the sovereignty of Philippines was a tremendous challenge for Japan. Second, the adverse verdict of the Supreme Court of the Philippines on the agreement on the ancestral domain had completely shut down the peace negotiations. As noted, the Malaysian IMT had to withdraw from Mindanao in November 2008 despite the immense need for security measures. All other donors evacuated and suspended their aid to Mindanao. In such a situation, the challenge for Japan in terms of human security was how to retain development assistance and to link it to peace to make assistance more comprehensive. Third, people at all levels lost an important forum to consult each other on the peace process. The challenge for human security at this stage was how to empower people to voice their opinions, and to find ways to be involved in the peace process.

#### **3.1 Japan's Involvement in Mindanao**

Japan's assistance to Mindanao is based on a deep-rooted relationship between Japan and the Philippines, as well as on Japan's policy and belief in human security. First, Japan and the Philippines have been friendly neighbors sharing the same values of democracy and market economy for many years, and have enjoyed a close relationship in trade as well as in geopolitics. Japan started her ODA to Philippines in 1968, and since then Japan has been a top

donor to the country, giving a total amount of 21.7 billion US dollars up to 2014.<sup>11</sup> In the single year of 2014, for example, the amount of Japanese ODA allocated to the Philippines was 473 million US dollars, which was 34 percent of the total ODA received by the country, while the assistance from the United States and France amounted to 20 percent and 10 percent respectively.<sup>12</sup> Trust between the two nations has been enhanced, especially since 1977 when the Fukuda Doctrine was articulated to create a “heart to heart” relationship with Philippines and other neighboring countries in Southeast Asia (Lam 2013). After the events of ‘September 11’ in 2001, stability in Mindanao was highlighted to be a priority issue for the whole region in the context of anti-terrorism measures (MOFA 2002a). Then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi noted in his official speech in January 2002 that Japan would like to actively cooperate in reducing poverty and preventing conflicts in areas such as Mindanao, Aceh and East Timor (MOFA 2002b). Eleven months later Prime Minister Koizumi and President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo held reciprocal state visits and concluded a new initiative for ARMM, the ‘Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao’ in December 2002 (MOFA 2002c). This was assistance for poverty eradication and consolidation for peace with a total amount of 40 million US dollars.

Again, in 2006 it was good timing for Japan to be involved in the IMT. Since the Japanese Government was looking for an opportunity to play up the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the resumption of diplomatic ties with the Philippines, the Country responded positively to the invitation to take part in the IMT (MOFA 2006). Second, Japan’s policies and practices on human security and peacebuilding became the backbone of the assistance to Mindanao: Japan has been promoting the idea of human security since the late 1990’s, emphasizing its development facet (Edstrom 2011: 21).

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<sup>11</sup> Filipin Kyouwakoku Kiso Deta [Basic data, Republic of the Philippines] provided by the MOFA. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/philippines/data.html> (accessed 26 April 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Filipin Kyouwakoku Kiso Deta [Basic data, Republic of the Philippines] provided by the MOFA. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/philippines/data.html> (accessed 26 April 2017).

The concept of human security appeared as a basic policy though, for the first time, in the Official ODA Charter in 2003 (MOFA 2003). In this charter the term *peacebuilding* was officially used, and was defined as ‘activities throughout the whole process of a conflict, including conflict prevention, emergency humanitarian assistance in conflict situations, assistance in expediting the ending of conflicts, the consolidation of peace, and nation-building in post-conflict situations (MOFA 2003).’ Peacebuilding was listed as a priority issue under the umbrella of human security. In this sense, Japan’s commitment to Mindanao was ‘a litmus test of where Japan could indeed exercise diplomatic initiatives in Asia’ (Lam 2009:74). Thus, in parallel to the introduction of human security in the ODA charter, JICA was tasked to manifest its concept in practice.

Sadako Ogata assumed the post of President of JICA in 2003, and was given the task of implementing the new policy (Edstrom 2011: 49). In the larger context of the administrative reform in Japan, Ogata placed human security as one of the three pillars of organizational reform (JICA 2004: 18). The concept of human security transformed JICA’s peacebuilding assistance in terms of an entry point, modalities and target groups (Goto et al. 2015: 216). The Mindanao case is an example of the latest generation of JICA’s peacebuilding assistance. In September 2006 when Ogata announced JICA’s commitment to Mindanao, she also articulated that Japan would work not only with the Philippine government but also with local communities for the promotion of equitable economic growth and the enhancement of human security (Ogata 2006).

### **3.2 Respect for the Sovereignty of Philippines**

In the GPH-MILF Peace Process the sovereignty of Philippines has been well respected by all the stakeholders, including international society. Both the Philippine government and the MILF

agreed to pursue the peace process without compromising Philippine sovereignty.<sup>13</sup> Ready acceptance of Japan's role by both negotiating parties was an important factor (Lam 2009: 82) for Japan's participation in the IMT in 2006. In this sense, there was no negative implication about infringing on Philippine sovereignty by Japan's involvement in the IMT. On the contrary, Japan's participation was expected to contribute to the internationalization of the IMT.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, neither the Philippine government nor the MILF specified any Japanese organizations or personnel to be deployed to the IMT, and left the decision to the Japanese government. This implied trust towards Japan, and the lower concerns of both parties about state security. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs initially planned to offer an IMT post to the public. However, the final decision made after a series of consultations was that a staff member of JICA should be seconded to the IMT to tackle its socio-economic requirements.<sup>15</sup> That decision was a paradigm shift for Japan's assistance in Mindanao in terms of connecting peace and development. Japan finally sent one person to the IMT in October 2006.

Another sovereignty-related issue was about the implementation of socio-economic assistance. Although both negotiating parties paid a fair amount of attention to development issues in Mindanao, international groups could not have extended assistance without a working counterpart on the ground. It was, in principle, not possible for ODA actors to engage with a rebel group for socio-economic assistance. The GPH-MILF peace process somehow overcame this constraint. The Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), which eventually became the development and project implementing arm of the MILF was created by the Implementing Guidelines on the Humanitarian and Development Aspect of the GRP(GPH)-MILF Tripoli Agreement on Peace of 7 May 2002 (MILF Peace Panel and the Asia Foundation 2010:

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<sup>13</sup> The author interviewed Atty. Michael Mastura, a former member of the MILF Peace Panel, on 12 August 2015 in Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines.

<sup>14</sup> The author interviewed Mr. Rashid Ladiasan, Head of MILF-CCCH, on 11 August 2015 in Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines.

<sup>15</sup> The author interviewed Mr. Masafumi Nagaishi, a former Japanese member of the IMT (2006-2008) on 2 July 2015 in Tokyo, Japan.



121-125). Although the BDA was not able to be registered at the Security and Exchange Commission as a legal entity, it could still implement development activities based on the Implementing Guidelines.<sup>16</sup> President Arroyo, in fact, encouraged the donors to tie up with the BDA during the Philippine Development Forum in March 2006.<sup>17</sup> Due to the consent between the negotiating parties on the utilization of the BDA for addressing basic human needs in Mindanao, the international community including Japan could commence development activities with the Agency even under the volatile cease-fire agreement. In short, the contradiction between state security and human security was minor in the Philippines (Tsunekawa and Murotani 2014: 185).

### **3.3 The Comprehensiveness of Japan's Assistance**

#### **3.3.1 Japan's Cooperation Arrangement**

Coordination among the IMT, Mindanao Task Force (MTF), and the Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD) demonstrated a new model for Japan's peacebuilding assistance, and generated a synergistic effect in the support of human security. First, Japanese members of the IMT were key for Japan's cooperation arrangements in Mindanao (Uesugi 2015: 14). It was a forward-looking decision on the Japanese side to deploy a JICA staff member to the IMT. The first IMT member from JICA was seconded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was then appointed as the first-secretary of the Japanese Embassy in Manila prior to being attached to the IMT in Cotabato. This arrangement has become the standard procedure for deploying Japanese members to the IMT. In this way,

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<sup>16</sup> The author interviewed Ustadz Mohammad Yaacob, Executive Director of BDA on 10 August 2015 in Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines.

<sup>17</sup> The author interviewed Ms. Aya Kano, a staff member of JICA Philippine Office, on 29 January 2007 in Manila, Philippines.

Japanese members of the IMT put on three different hats: they are a JICA staff member, a diplomat, and a member of the IMT.<sup>18</sup>

These appointees have made most use of the three titles formally and informally on different occasions to navigate Japan's assistance to a new type of 3D (defense, diplomacy and development) cooperation (Uesugi 2015: 12). This has enabled Japan's assistance to Mindanao to be more comprehensive. Second, the Mindanao Task Force, although an informal arrangement, played the key roles of both policy coordinator and general manager of Japan's assistance to Mindanao (MOFA 2006). The Mindanao Task Force initially consisted of the Japanese Embassy in the Philippines, JICA, and (until 2008) the Japan Bank for International Cooperation<sup>19</sup>, and had the role of supporting a newly assigned Japanese IMT member in 2006. Aside from its role in development coordination, the Mindanao Task Force thus gradually evolved into an agency dealing with the political dimension of the peace process. Japanese members of the IMT, in their capacity as secretaries of the Japanese Embassy, attended Mindanao Task Force meetings. Their trusted relationship with the MILF and other local stakeholders made it easier to access even politically sensitive information in Mindanao, and this meant that the Mindanao Task Force was always well informed of the updated situation of the peace process.<sup>20</sup> Chaired by a minister in the Japanese embassy, it met once a month and discussed any matters concerning Japan's assistance to Mindanao, including the progress of the peace process, and Japan's efforts in back-channel diplomacy to accelerate that process (Ishikawa 2014: 84).

Third, J-BIRD was a brand name for Japan's official development assistance to Mindanao. J-BIRD was initiated and shaped by the first Japanese IMT member and the

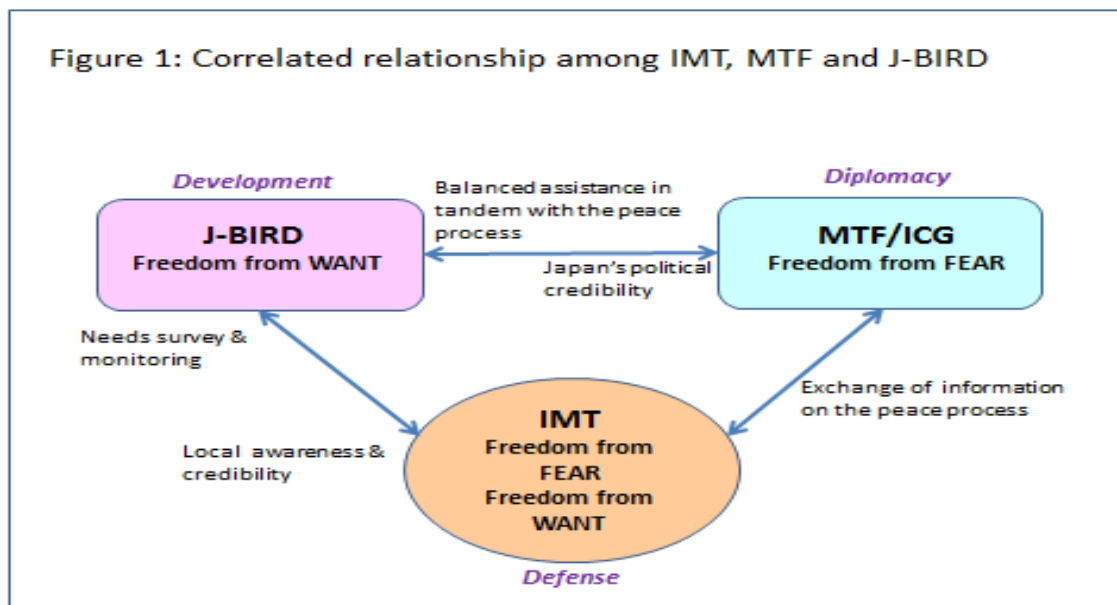
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<sup>18</sup> The author interviewed Mr. Naoyuki Ochiai, a former member of the IMT (2010-2012), on 5 July 2015 and in Tokyo, Japan. The author also interviewed Mr. Takayuki Nakagawa, a current member of the IMT (2012-), on 9 July 2015 in Tokyo, Japan.

<sup>19</sup> JBIC's yen loan operation was integrated into JICA in October 2008, and since then the Task Force has been convened only with the Japanese Embassy and JICA.

<sup>20</sup> Author interview with Mr. Masafumi Nagaishi, 2 July 2015.

Japanese Embassy in December 2006 using the Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Programs (GGP, hereafter referred to ‘the Grass-roots Grant Assistance’). This was aimed at ensuring that the projects would directly benefit people at the grassroots level, and enable them to experience the dividends of peace, such as the construction of classrooms, vocational training centers, water supply systems, and health care centers (Ishikawa 2014: 82-83). Initially the local needs identified by Japanese members of the IMT were customized as the Grass-roots Grant Assistance projects for the J-BIRD. Eventually this was expanded to include technical cooperation, loan aid, and other relevant modalities of Japanese assistance to Mindanao. The J-BIRD soon became visible and popular in the area. Every infrastructure project assisted by J-BIRD carried its logo on the wall or near the construction site, which became a symbol of “all Japan” assistance to Mindanao. Finally, having described the three agencies of Japan’s assistance to Mindanao, the correlated relationships among them for a synergistic effect can be illustrated as shown in Figure 1.



Source: The Author.

Japan's participation in the IMT thus lets the country manage development assistance in balance with the pace of the peace process. First, Japanese IMT members took advantage in identifying needs and monitoring the progress of projects for the J-BIRD in Mindanao, even when JICA staff members were not allowed to enter this area due to security management reasons.<sup>21</sup> Japanese IMT members were accompanied by the cease-fire monitoring unit of the IMT, with security clearance granted by the GPH-MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH).<sup>22</sup> In this way collaboration between the IMT and J-BIRD made it possible to reach the most vulnerable local communities for rehabilitation and development, activities that supported mostly freedom from *want*. The IMT's trusted relationship with the MILF was an indispensable factor in successfully carrying out needs surveys and project implementation in Mindanao.<sup>23</sup>

Second, since the Mindanao Task Force was well connected to the local situation in Mindanao, the Japanese Embassy in Manila could be confident in carrying out its back-channel diplomacy to accelerate the peace process. In this sense, the collaboration between the IMT and the Mindanao Task Force aimed to promote freedom from *fear*. The political role of the Mindanao Task Force was further articulated when Japan was invited to be a member of the International Contact Group in July 2009 for monitoring the progress of the peace process. The Mindanao Task Force and the International Contact Group assisted each other by exchanging information from Japanese stakeholders in the peace talks.

Third, mainly because of the multi-tasked Japanese members of the IMT, the Mindanao Task Force and the J-BIRD were coordinated in an effective manner. With first-hand information on the peace process from the Mindanao Task Force, J-BIRD could implement in tandem with the progress of the peace process. In most previous cases diplomacy and

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<sup>21</sup> The author interviewed Mr. Tomonori Kikuchi, a former member of the IMT (2008-2010), on 7 July 2015 in Tsukuba, Japan.

<sup>22</sup> Author interview with Mr. Tomonori Kikuchi, 7 July 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Author interview with Mr. Tomonori Kikuchi, 7 July 2015.

development work have not been tactically coordinated with Japan's peacebuilding assistance. In other words, Japan has tended to over-rely on development aid as an incentive for peace (Lam 2009: 102). The case of Mindanao showed Japan's departure from this older practice. Thus, the close linkage among the three agencies attempted to promote both freedom from *fear* and *want*.

It is also worth mentioning that Japanese NGOs were implementing their own projects in Mindanao outside the cooperation arrangement, during the period focused on in this paper (Fukunaga 2014 150-156). The International Children's Action Network (ICAN), among others, launched the School of Peace project in Pikit Town, Cotabato province in 2006 (ICAN 2006), which subsequently became one of the targets for the Japanese government's Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects in 2011(MOFA 2016).

### **3.3.2 A Challenging Period for Human Security in Mindanao**

By the time Japan committed to assist Mindanao in 2006, the human toll of the conflicts since the 1970's was devastating. An estimated 120,000 lives were lost, while over 2 million people had been internally displaced. The poverty rate – already the highest in the country - increased from 56% in 1991 to 71.3% in 2000 (Schiavo-Campo and Judd 2005). The situation in Mindanao therefore required immense assistance in basic human needs. Japan responded to local needs during the period 2006-2010 with the activities of Japanese members of the IMT for the Grass-roots Grant Assistance projects, and JICA's first project entitled the Study for the Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development of Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (SERD-CAAM, hereafter referred to 'the Socio-Economic Study'). In December 2006, even though the details of J-BIRD, such as the framework, modalities and conditions, were not yet fully discussed in the Mindanao Task Force, importance was placed on the swiftness of Japan's initial assistance to the needed areas (Nagaishi 2007). J-BIRD was thus started with twelve Grass-roots Grant Assistance projects (Japanese Embassy in the Philippines 2006).

The Grass-roots Grant Assistance projects were very handy because they were small grants of a maximum ten million yen (approximately four million pesos in December 2006) per project that could be quickly deployed in fields of basic human needs such as health, sanitation, agriculture, education and so forth. Local NGO's and people's organizations could apply for the grants in assistance using the needs surveys conducted by Japanese IMT members together with their counterparts in the BDA. The BDA's local network was valuable in the identification of appropriate projects. Once identified needs were approved by the Japanese Embassy in Manila, grants were directly disbursed to recipients in stages. Recipients were responsible for completing the planned projects during the agreed periods of time. Japanese IMT members and the BDA monitored ongoing projects. In this way freedom from *want* was addressed with a bottom-up approach. Ten Grass-roots Grant Assistance projects out of a total of twenty per year in the Philippines were allocated to Mindanao during the focus period.<sup>24</sup> When the peace process became deadlocked in October 2008, JICA decided to add one more person to reinforce the IMT instead of withdrawing from Mindanao. This extraordinary decision subsequently improved not only visibility and mobility, but also the credibility of Japan's assistance to Mindanao. Two Japanese IMT members continued following through with their duties even during the absence of the Malaysian IMT members between November 2008 and February 2010. From January 2009 onwards, the two Japanese IMT members regularly visited Mindanao once a month for a week to undertake needs surveys and the monitoring of ongoing Grass-roots Grant Assistance projects (Fukunaga 2014: 52). They developed a new routine for security arrangements, such as security clearance from GPH-MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), prior to being escorted by the Philippine Army to move around for their duties.<sup>25</sup> They never faced any

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<sup>24</sup> The author interviewed Mr. Yusuke Mori, a former member of the IMT (2008-2010), on 8 July 2015 in Tokyo, Japan.

<sup>25</sup> Author interview with Mr. Yusuke Mori, 8 July 2015.

physical danger during their duties in the field because they were well protected not only by the Philippine Army but also by the MILF, who respected them for remaining in Mindanao.<sup>26</sup> During the absence of most of the other sources of international assistance, the J-BIRD funded eleven Grass-roots Grant Assistance projects in the Japanese fiscal year 2008 (Japanese Embassy in the Philippines 2008), and eight in the following fiscal year 2009 (Japanese Embassy in the Philippines 2009).

JICA launched a Socio-Economic Study (SERD-CAAM) in February 2007. A newly introduced *fast-track system*<sup>27</sup> was applied to this project, aiming to expedite JICA's response to the immense needs for assistance through the early deployment of appropriate aid personnel to field operations, and by skipping certain procedures to accelerate decision-making (Ishikawa 2014: 85). This project was 'to formulate the socio-economic development plan for the reconstruction and development of conflict-affected areas, with the end in mind of promoting the consolidation of peace in Mindanao (JICA 2007).' The output of the Study was expected to lead to further assistance from Japan, as well as to its utilization by the Philippine government, the BDA and other donor agencies (JICA 2007). The project was recognized as a part of the J-BIRD in light of the 'all-Japan' assistance concept.<sup>28</sup>

The Socio-Economic Study (SERD-CAAM) was specially designed to adjust to the situation in Mindanao. First, the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and JICA jointly promoted the function of the BDA by giving the agency co-chairmanship in a steering committee and a technical working group. The BDA thus exercised ownership of the project. At the same time, the BDA and officials from central and

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<sup>26</sup> Author interview with Mr. Tomonori Kikuchi, 7 July 2015.

<sup>27</sup> The *fast-track system* for the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao was approved by the President of JICA on 28 December 2006.

<sup>28</sup> The author interviewed Ms. Haruko Kase, a JICA staff member previously in charge of the agency's Mindanao assistance, on 9 December 2015 in Tokyo, Japan. According to Ms Kase, although the criteria for the J-BIRD projects were rather ambiguous, most of the JICA's projects in Mindanao including those for the ARMM were, in the end, regarded as part of the J-BIRD brand under the concept of 'all-Japan' assistance.

local governments were compelled to work together (Tsunekawa and Murotani 2014: 185). Second, small scale infrastructure construction and assistance such as *quick impact projects*<sup>29</sup> and *on the spot assistance*<sup>30</sup> projects were additionally implemented to respond to people's urgent needs (JICA 2009). These boosted confidence building, and brought about the acceptance of this Study among local communities.<sup>31</sup> In these ways, a bottom-up approach was promoted and strengthened, which sustained the activities of the Study even when the Japanese study team had to evacuate from Mindanao to Manila as a consequence of the exchange of fire between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the MILF in Basilan in July 2007.

Japan's cooperation arrangement also contributed to the effective implementation of the Socio-Economic Study (SERD-CAAM). The IMT's high mobility and geographical knowledge was of use when the Study identified appropriate barangays (the smallest political units within cities or towns in the Philippines) for a social survey. With security clearance provided by the GPH-MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), a Japanese IMT member accompanied the study team to select target barangays for the needs assessment.<sup>32</sup> The progress and challenges of the Socio-Economic Study (SERD-CAAM) were reported and discussed at monthly Mindanao Task Force meetings. Additionally, when Japan was the only country remaining in Mindanao, Japanese IMT members continued monitoring the sites of the Study, where JICA staff members were prohibited to enter due to deteriorated security conditions.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it is fair to say that synergistic effects of the cooperation arrangement managed to connect peace and development in Mindanao.

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<sup>29</sup> Eleven *quick impact projects* were implemented in the Socio-Economic Study (SERD-CAAM). The cost per project was in the range of 2 to 3.6 million pesos.

<sup>30</sup> The scale of *on the spot assistance* was much smaller, at less than 140,000 pesos. Twenty-three 'on the spot' activities were reported during the Socio-Economic Study (SERD-CAAM).

<sup>31</sup> The author obtained the comment from Dr. Danda Juanday through e-mail correspondence on 5 October 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Author interview with Mr. Masafumi Nagaishi, 2 July 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Author interview with Mr. Yusuke Mori, 8 July 2015.



### **3.4 The Empowerment of Local communities and People**

#### **3.4.1 Political empowerment through “Consolidation of Peace” Seminars**

Human security requires the empowerment of local communities and people to strengthen their resilience. The case of Mindanao is not an exception. However, Mindanao required not only socio-economic empowerment but also political empowerment of the local stakeholders under the fragile peace process. While most of the local leaders including the BDA, NGOs, and academics shared their positive views on Japan’s socio-economic assistance, they also pointed out the necessity of political advocacy. It was advocated by local stakeholders that economic empowerment must be coupled with people’s empowerment for engaging in political discussions.<sup>34</sup>

In 2008 Japan’s socio-economic assistance faced a challenge when the peace process was, in fact, on the verge of being abolished due to the issue of the agreement on the ancestral domain. In an insecure situation involving armed clashes, development assistance cannot continue, and aid workers have to evacuate to safer places (JICA 2011: 10-11). If the security situation deteriorates and keeps the peace process at a standstill for a considerable time, the threat emerges that aid programs will be terminated. In the Philippines context, neither the people in Manila nor those in Mindanao wanted to talk about the peace process because they did not know what to do to turn around this situation.<sup>35</sup> In this situation, there were very few fora at any level to allow consultation between the parties, or to discuss the way forward. While Japan could continue the Grass-roots Grant Assistance and technical cooperation under such insecure conditions, she needed to find an alternative way to revive the peace process aligned to rehabilitation and development works. There emerged views within JICA that the

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<sup>34</sup> The author interviewed Mr. Guiamel Alim, Executive Director, Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, on 12 August 2015 in Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines.

<sup>35</sup> The author interviewed Dr. Ayesah Abubakar, Senior Lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sabah on 28 August 2015 in Kota Kinabaru, Sabah, Malaysia.

agency needed to change its mind-set, and should be involved in peacemaking to some extent to break the deadlock. The favored option was to politically empower local actors towards the resurgence of the peace process. Consequently JICA, in collaboration with the Malaysian Science University<sup>36</sup> organized a forum called Consolidation of Peace for Mindanao III (COP3) in January 2009.

A series of COP seminars started in January 2006 as part of a mutual learning opportunity for Mindanao, Aceh and Southern Thailand. Aside from involvement in the Malaysia-led IMT, the COP seminars were Japan's most visible collaboration with Malaysia for the Mindanao peace process (MOFA 2007). The Mindanao-focused COP3 was organized on 12-16 January 2009 in Penang, three months after the agreement on the ancestral domain had been adjudged by the Supreme Court to be unconstitutional. COP3 came at a perfect time because local stakeholders were seeking a platform to meet and discuss the stalemate in the peace process. COP3 also reached out to the two negotiating parties to give them moral support, and expressed how local stakeholders felt about the peace process.<sup>37</sup> COP3 took Track Two and Track Three approaches during the seminar; involving leaders of civil society groups, religious leaders, academics, journalists, ethnic minorities and the BDA. It was noteworthy that Mohagher Iqbal, the chief negotiator of the MILF, was an observer together with Miriam Colonel Ferrer, an academic, who later became the counterpart of Iqbal on the government peace panel. He was, in fact, able to bring back the peace panel whatever outcomes were necessary to revive the peace process.

The main objective of COP3 became the one of addressing how the civil society groups in Mindanao could contribute to putting the peace process back on track. With this objective in mind, nine concurrent workshop sessions were conducted, aside from a couple of

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<sup>36</sup> The strong human network and conceptualization capacity in peacebuilding of Kamarulzaman Askandar, and the outstanding role of Ayesah Abubakar as an insider mediator were indispensable engines for the politically sensitive COP seminars.

<sup>37</sup> Author interview with Dr. Ayesah Abubakar, 28 August 2015.

plenary sessions, in which participants could discuss various issues among themselves. The topics for the workshops required the proactive commitment of local actors. They were about engaging different religious groups and ethnic minorities, engaging the MILF and the Philippine government, strengthening the Mindanao civil society for peace, and supporting the internally displaced persons and other victims of war, among others. At the end of the seminar, the group recommended three interconnected processes: these were resumption of the formal peace talks, consultations at the community level, and the sharing of information and advocacy between conflict parties and across stakeholders (Askandar and Abubakar 2009).

The group also wrote a letter to President Arroyo appealing for the resumption of the peace talks. A visible contribution of COP3 to put the peace process back on track was to conceive the idea of the International Contact Group, which would monitor the negotiations with the eyes of neutral third parties.<sup>38</sup> COP participants shared their common views that the peace process would need third parties to guarantee the agreements between the negotiation parties, and seeded this idea in their workshop session. They came up with a list of acceptable third parties as guarantors who had adequate clout to compel the protagonists to implement signed agreements that included Japan (Askandar and Abubakar 2009: 143). Subsequently, the inclusion of the International Contact Group was suggested by the MILF as a condition of resuming the negotiation, which was agreed and recorded in the Joint Statement between the Philippine government and the MILF of 29 July 2009 (MILF Peace Panel and the Asia Foundation 2010: 258).

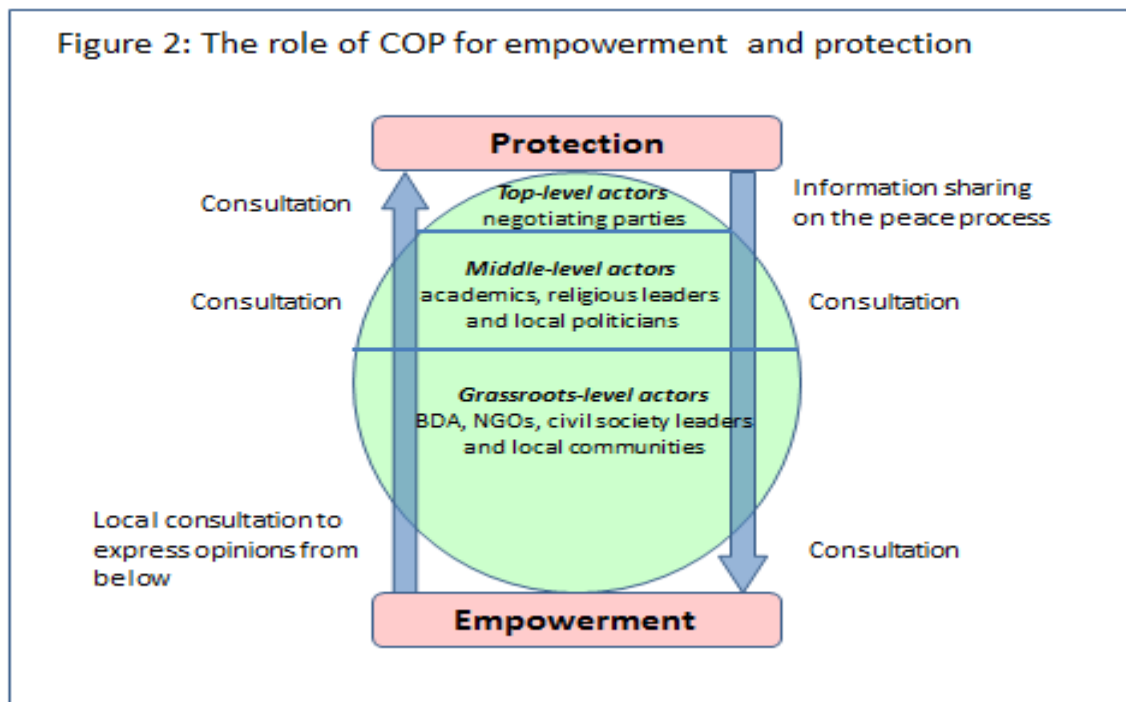
There was also a certain impact of COP3 on the political empowerment of local stakeholders. Participants of COP3 started the consultative process with both the Philippine government and the MILF. After the COP3 there were dozens of consultation meetings between the MILF and civil societies, and between the OPAPP and the local communities. The

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<sup>38</sup> The author interviewed Dr. Kamarulzaman Askandar, Professor of School of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, on 28 August 2015 in Kota Kinabaru, Sabah, Malaysia.

consultative process has, in fact, connected a bottom-up approach by empowering local stakeholders and a top-down approach which can be described as the peace negotiations. Middle-level actors such as academics, religious leaders and local politicians played the role of connectors, as Lederach (1997: 39) articulated in his model “Actors and Approaches to Peacebuilding.” The channel of communication between the local communities and the peace process was finally established.

The impact of COP3 can be illustrated as in Figure 2. The COP3 contributed not only to the political empowerment of local actors in Mindanao, but also helped to create a channel between the local actors and the peace panels, which could be described as an interaction between the bottom-up approach of empowerment and the top-down approach of protection. Aside from this, JICA has shifted from the role of a development agency merely providing economic assistance, to a more reliable partner in coping with the political dimension of peacebuilding. It is also worth mentioning that the impacts of COP3 and subsequent COP seminars drew positive attention from the top officials of the concerned parties, including the Philippine government and the MILF. The COP of June 2014 in Hiroshima was organized in collaboration with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was attended by President Benigno Aquino Jr and MILF chairman Ebrahim Murad. This indicates the recognition of COP’s role by the top level of the protagonists.

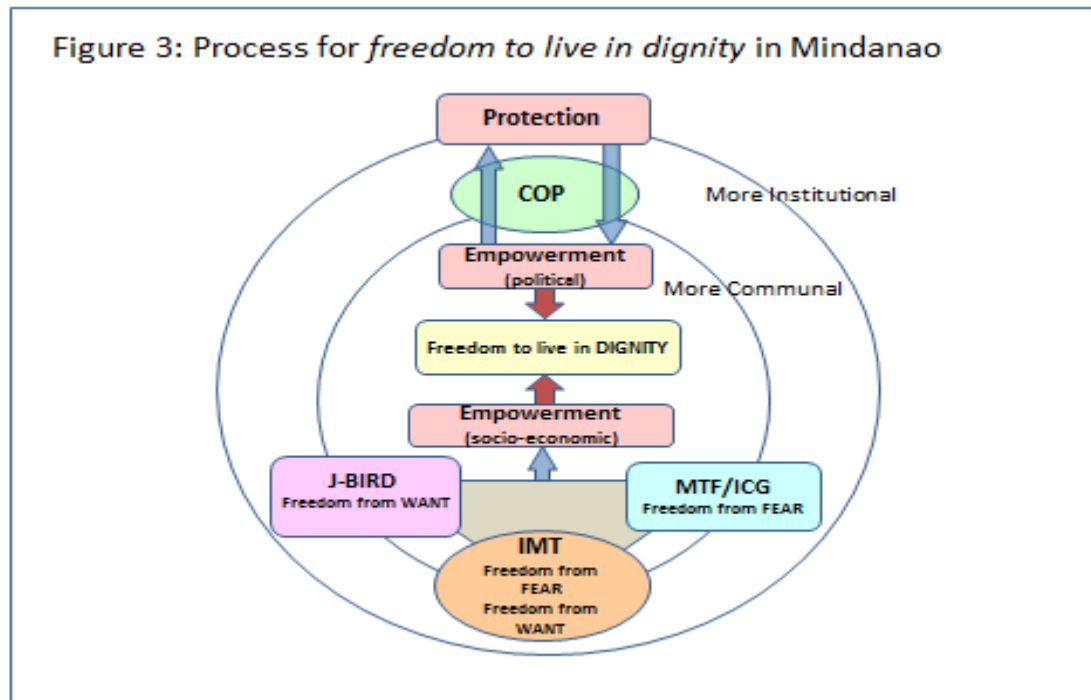


Source: The Author.

### 3.4.2 Integrated process for freedom to live in dignity

*Freedom to live in dignity* is the third principle of human security being discussed in the context of human rights and democracy (United Nations 2005). To facilitate discussion on how a path to *freedom to live in dignity* was created during the period of Japan's assistance to Mindanao, the lens of human rights can be borrowed. This notion is rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNGA 1948), which asserts that human individuals have dignity and are entitled to be treated with respect (MacFarlane and Khong 2006: 68). The rights discussed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNGA 1966a), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UNGA 1966b), are also derived from the inherent dignity of the human person (MacFarlane and Khong 2006: 285). Both Covenants take a top-down approach by obligating states to implement the stipulated human rights articles with law enforcement. Human security, however, requires a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches to address economic, social and cultural

rights as well as civil and political rights through respecting the inherent rights of others. In the context of human security, this can be seen as freedom to live in dignity. Japan's cooperation arrangement and the COP 3 created a synergistic effect on installing a process for *freedom to live in dignity*, as illustrated in Figure 3.



Source: Mine, 2017: 21, modified by the Author.

As discussed earlier, Japan's cooperation arrangement addressed both *freedom from fear* and *freedom from want*. However, it contributed mainly to the socio-economic empowerment of the local stakeholders. The trust Japan gained from local stakeholders during the exercise of socio-economic empowerment helped JICA overcome its limited mandate and allowed the agency to take part in COP3. COP 3 not only offered a forum to voice the concerns and views of local stakeholders but also reciprocated to the IMT, the Mindanao Task Force and the J-BIRD, by providing these three agencies with feedback from the local participants about the over-all assistance of Japan to Mindanao. In such a way, the work of the three different

agencies was reviewed and strengthened. During COP3, for example, a participant cautiously warned of the risk of development assistance being a threat to the peace process by possibly supporting a war economy instead of a peace economy (Askandar and Abubakar 2009: 106). Japan recognized the great value of frank discussions with participants of COP3, and then applied the feedback to the work on the ground. This working cycle in partnership with local stakeholders strengthened their socio-economic empowerment, as well as their political empowerment. In this way, a path for *freedom to live in dignity* has gradually been consolidated in Mindanao.

#### **4. Local Responses to Japan's Assistance**

In accordance with the results of the interviews of various stakeholders in the peace process conducted by the author, it is fair to say that Japan's overall assistance during the peace process (Oct 2006-Feb 2010) was highly regarded by stakeholders at all levels. It should, however, be noted that different stakeholders looked at Japan's assistance from different angles, and thus offered multidimensional assessments. Stakeholders in Mindanao were direct beneficiaries as well as partners of Japan's assistance on the ground. They accepted and appreciated Japan's assistance mainly for four reasons. First and foremost, most of the interviewees shared a common view that Japan's presence during the period of October 2008 - February 2010 gained their unquestioned trust. That trust concretized the reliable working relationship between Japan and the local communities for the rest of the peace process. Both the heads of the Philippine government and the MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) recalled that Japan's presence during the 2008 crisis greatly touched the lives of the people in

the community,<sup>39</sup> and gave the people the assurance that the peace process was still working.<sup>40</sup>

It had a strong psychological effect on the people and on the MILF.<sup>41</sup>

Second, local communities highly valued the scope of the socio-economic component of the IMT, which covered the broad areas of Mindanao where other donors and agencies were not able to visit due to security reasons. In this way, one of the most critical factors of human security, which is to reach out to the most vulnerable communities and people could be seen to have been considered and achieved to some extent. Third, the participatory approach of Japan's assistance was well received by the local communities.<sup>42</sup> People differentiated Japan's assistance from that of other donors, due to this approach. Fourth was the inclusive strategy of Japan's assistance, which created mutual benefits among stakeholders in an area. Japanese IMT members involved other components of the Team, and local politicians in their activities. For example, whenever Japan held launching ceremonies for J-BIRD projects, Japanese IMT members made sure that local politicians and the head of IMT were invited to attend them. The visibility of the IMT rose, and local communities began to understand the comprehensive nature of its operations. Japan's participation in the IMT thus changed the security paradigm of the entire Team.<sup>43</sup> People felt the IMT was closer to their community due to its non-military aspect and the competence of Japanese members. Because of this, local communities eventually welcomed needs surveys and participated in them.<sup>44</sup>

While stakeholders in the Philippine government and the donor community agreed that Japan had made outstanding contributions to Mindanao during the absence of most of the aid-based assistance from other sources, they raised a question about the self-contained nature

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<sup>39</sup> The author interviewed Maj. Carlos T. Sol. Jr, Head of GPH-CCCH, on 14 August 2015 in Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines

<sup>40</sup> Author interview with Mr. Rashid Ladiasan, 11 August 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Author interview with Mr. Rashid Ladiasan, 11 August 2015.

<sup>42</sup> The author interviewed Mr. Abdulbasit Benito, Executive Director of Mindanao People's Caucus, on 14 August 2015 in Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines.

<sup>43</sup> Author interview with Maj. Carlos T. Sol. Jr., 14 August 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Author interview with Maj. Carlos T. Sol. Jr., 14 August 2015.



of that assistance. In case of Mindanao, the donor community particularly pinpointed Japan's non-participation in the Mindanao Trust Fund, which was a common basket for donors' support to Mindanao. Japanese ODA policy tends however to avoid joining common baskets unless they are considered to produce more effective outcomes. This is mainly due to the question of accountability, though it does reflect the motto which requires the "utilization of Japan's experiences and expertise." Mindanao was not an exception.

A United Nations Development Program (UNDP) officer in the Philippines offered her view that, although Japan was willing to join discussions among donors, the country was very much self-contained and did its own work.<sup>45</sup> She continued that if Japan thought of an integrative way of working, then it would have to look for a niche outside its own actions.<sup>46</sup> A World Bank officer pointed out that Japan's assistance was comprehensive as it was engaged in every piece of the architecture of the peace process<sup>47</sup> and, although he echoed the UNDP officer in terms of Japan's self-contained assistance, he also looked at a positive side of its self-contained nature in its COP3 seminar. He commented that this kind of semi-formal opportunity in getting important actors away from home was playing a key role, and that COP3 was essential because it got things going in 2009.<sup>48</sup> The OPAPP secretary commented that Japan's assistance always had its own parameters.<sup>49</sup> She, however, shared her view that Japan's self-contained assistance took advantage of this by moving its development works forward, while the OPAPP during the Arroyo administration did not have the capacity to control donor activities.<sup>50</sup> The OPAPP secretary also touched upon Japan's informal but special position in the peace process due to the fact that 'Japan was very well regarded with the

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<sup>45</sup> The author interviewed Ms. Alma Evangelista, Team Leader, Crisis Prevention and Recovery Unit, UNDP Philippines, on 19 August 2015 in Manila, Philippines.

<sup>46</sup> Author interview with Ms. Alma Evangelista, 19 August 2015.

<sup>47</sup> The author interviewed Mr. Matt Stephens, World Bank, on 19 August 2015 in Manila, Philippines.

<sup>48</sup> Author interview with Mr. Matt Stephens, 19 August 2015.

<sup>49</sup> The author interviewed Ms. Terresita Quintos Deles, the Secretary of the OPPAP, on 19 August 2015 in Manila, Philippines.

<sup>50</sup> Author interview with Ms. Terresita Quintos Deles, 19 August 2015.

MILF.’<sup>51</sup> Her comment implied that Japan’s trusted relationship with the MILF was valuable when the peace process reached a stalemate in late 2008. Aside from the deployment of the IMT members, Japan’s back-channel diplomacy and her J-BIRD activities during the critical period of the peace process were positively recognized not only by the MILF, but also by the Philippine government.

## **5. Conclusion: Lessons Learned from the Asian-led Peace Process**

The peace process between the Philippine government and the MILF based on the sovereignty of the Philippines, provided Japan with an opportunity to conduct its comprehensive assistance to Mindanao in three ways. First, the flexible decision-making powers of both negotiating parties invited Japan to take part in the socio-economic aspect of the IMT. This unique exercise, in fact, reflected the spirit of the Pillar II of the Responsibility to Protect (United Nations 2014), and offered a common ground for the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ and ‘Human Security’, by connecting peace and development.<sup>52</sup> Second, the flexibility of the peace process allowed Japan to explore its convenient cooperation style for Mindanao without impinging on the sovereignty of Philippines. Japanese IMT members became of use especially when Japan coped with the unstable security situation under the volatile cease-fire agreement. Because the Japanese IMT members could connect the socio-economic assistance of the J-BIRD and the political aspect of the MTF, Japan’s assistance to the area became more comprehensive. In this way Japan could address both freedom from *want* and freedom from *fear*.

Third, the peace process overcame the limitations of the government-to-government principle of the ODA. The forward-looking decision of the Philippine government allowed and encouraged external parties to work with the BDA, while the MILF also recognized the

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<sup>51</sup> Author interview with Ms. Terresita Quintos Deles, 19 August 2015.

<sup>52</sup> The author interviewed Maj. Gen. Datuk Mahdi Yusof, former Head of IMT 6, on 26 August 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He commented that the IMT was a Pillar II mechanism.

importance of fulfilling basic human needs of local communities in Mindanao. As a result, Japan could engage with the BDA in Grass-roots Grant Assistance and the Socio-Economic Study (SERD-CAAM). The self-contained nature of Japan's assistance, although normally carrying a negative connotation, fitted perfectly in the devastating situation when other forms of outside assistance were not available. According to the policy and aid guidelines from the perspective of human security, Japan added one more member to the IMT and continued their routine works in Mindanao. This decisive arrangement gave not only socio-economic empowerment, but also indispensable moral support to local communities and people. Political empowerment by COP3 complimented Japan's endeavors in socio-economic empowerment. In this way people's *freedom to live in dignity* has gradually been attained and strengthened.

Additionally, some lessons have been learned from the peace process and Japan's assistance in it. First, when the negotiating parties invited Japan to the IMT in 2006, that was a change from the Organization of Islamic Countries-led peace process to an Asian-led, or more precisely Southeast Asian-led approach. It deemed the peace process to be informally adapted to part of the 'ASEAN Ways'; otherwise known as the non-interference principle. Malaysia's facilitation as well as Japan's deployment to the IMT was based on respect of Philippine sovereignty. It is fair to say that the flexibility and non-interference nature of the peace process fits well in the Asian mentality, and could be a model for future action in this region. Second, Japan's assistance was a significant shift from previous practice given the perspective of human security in the flexible Asian context. Above all, Japan's participation in the IMT maneuvered to connect diplomacy and development as part of Japan's comprehensive peacebuilding assistance. Closer collaboration between Japan's Foreign Ministry and JICA will be worth considering in future cases. Thus, JICA's role in the peace process and its assistance under the volatile cease-fire agreement has given the organization another dimension to its mission. To achieve this, it was deemed necessary for the development agency to go beyond its limited mandate in peacebuilding assistance (Uesugi 2015: 15). COP3 echoed the observation

that there was a growing recognition in the development community of the potential role of mediation outside its traditional role in conflict resolution (Wennmann 2011, 94). Finally, Japan's experience in the GPH-MILF peace process will be tested in future cases of her peacebuilding assistance.

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## Abstract(In Japanese)

### 要約

フィリピン政府とモロ・イスラム解放戦線 (MILF) の和平プロセスは、新しいタイプの紛争解決の道を示唆している。この和平プロセスは、交渉による平和の創造 (peacemaking) のみならず、開発に加えてハイブリッドとでも呼ぶことのできる平和の維持 (peacekeeping) を包括している。日本によるミンダナオ紛争影響地への援助は、国際停戦監視団、ミンダナオ・タスク・フォース、並びに日・バングサモロ・復興開発イニシアチヴ (J-BIRD) から成る三角協力を通じて人間の安全保障を具現化している。特に、日本の国際停戦監視団への参加は、平和と開発を結びつけることによってより包括的な援助を実現するための新たな道を開いた。日本は、2008年に和平交渉が暗礁に乗り上げた後もミンダナオの現地に留まった。正に、脆弱な停戦合意の下で現地コミュニティと人々のエンパワーメントが必要とされた時期であった。日本は、現場での安全対策のサポートを得ながら紛争影響地域での支援を継続した。これと並行して、平和の定着 (COP) セミナーは、現地コミュニティと和平交渉団を繋ぐことによって現場の声を和平プロセスに反映させていく役割を果たした。和平プロセスが中断していた危機的な時期に、日本によるこのような重層的な努力は、現地コミュニティに平和への希望を与えることに貢献した。





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