

Program Information

- **Country:** Philippines
- **Project Name:** Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD) (Technical Cooperation, ODA Loan, Grant Aid)
- **Cooperation Period:** 2003-
- **Implementing Organization:** Bangsamoro Development Agency, Government of Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, etc.

1. Conflict and Peace-building from the Gender Perspective

In conflict and post-conflict areas, women have gender-specific difficulties. It is estimated that women and children constitute 80% of refugees and internally displaced persons by dispute. Women who lose their husbands have to support their families. Women tend to be victims of sexual and domestic violence, and trafficking in persons. Women suffer from the psychological impacts of this violence. At the same time, women are involved in the conflicts as combatants and also as cooks, porters and administrators in regular armies and non-state military actors. Recently, however, women's positive role in preventing conflicts and consolidating peace is becoming more recognized.

Necessary support should be extended to those who suffer from serious human rights violations in conflicts. Additionally, economic empowerment of women affected by conflicts is also of great importance. Necessary measures need to be taken for women to actively participate in the post-conflict peace building.

2. Background and Program Summary

In March 2014, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro was signed between the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), ending an armed conflict that had lasted over 40 years in the Mindanao Island in the south of the Philippines. A new political entity named the Bangsamoro Government is scheduled to be established by 2016. Under the political entity, it is expected that all the inhabitants including Muslims, Christians and indigenous people will enjoy the peace dividends and improvement of living standards. Japan has extended its support to the peace process for years. In addition, under the J-BIRD, since 2003, Japan has contributed to the socio-economic development in the Mindanao region.

3. Gender-responsive Activities

The following gender-responsive activities have been implemented under the J-BIRD.

(1) Skills Training for Bangsamoro Women

The armed conflict in Mindanao has left behind a large number of widows. They have been

confronted with serious economic difficulties. In 2006, the Ittihadun-Nisa Foundation established a Skills Training Center for women affected by armed conflict such as widows and women in need. The Foundation conducted various livelihood trainings such as food processing and dressmaking to support women's economic empowerment. 348 participants completed the training courses from 2006 to 2009. In 2009, the Center was expanded to accept more women for the courses.



(2) Support for women and children suffering from psychological impacts of the armed conflict

In Mindanao, there are a great number of women and children who have suffered from psychological disturbances and/or trauma due to the armed conflict, abuses, domestic or sexual violence and anxiety for life. In 2009, the United Youth of the Philippines-Women established the first facility in Maguindanao to accommodate women who need psychological support with services such as counseling, treatment of trauma, legal support, education, referral to specialists, and skills training.

(3) Activities for livelihood improvement

Women participate in the activities in vegetable production and aquaculture implemented under the "Project for Capacity Building for Community Development in Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao," and learn related skills.

(4) Capacity development of local administration

Under the "Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro," the capacity of local government staff including many female staff has been strengthened. In addition, the Bangsamoro regional development plan is planned to be formulated with gender considerations.

(5) Improvement of social services targeting mainly women as beneficiaries

Through the "Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Social Fund for Peace and Development Project", JICA in collaboration with the World Bank has provided improved social services to women through construction or rehabilitation of facilities including nurseries and clinics.

In Mindanao, women traditionally play a major role in community-level conflict resolution. Women's role in the peace process is also highlighted. It is expected that more involvement of women in the peace process in Mindanao will lead to fair distribution of peace dividends for both men and women.