

PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN MINDANAO, REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

THE LONG ROAD TO PEACE THROUGH TRUST

Naoyuki Ochiai



PROJECT HISTORY SERIES **No.2**

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Cover: Signing Ceremony on Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro on
27 March, 2014 (Photo by Juro Chikaraishi)

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Foreword

This book is about peacebuilding in the conflict-affected Mindanao region of the Republic of the Philippines. It introduces how the Japanese Government and JICA was involved in peacebuilding there over more than two decades since 1996, the history between Japan and conflict-affected Mindanao, and the various problems facing the conflict-affected Mindanao region historically.

The author, Naoyuki Ochiai, was involved in the peacebuilding process in various capacities, including as a JICA official and a member of the Embassy of Japan on the ground in conflict-affected Mindanao. He highly praises Japan's efforts at peacebuilding there, and he himself was awarded the Yasuhiro Nakasone Award in 2016 by the Yasuhiro Nakasone Peace Institute (formerly known as the Institute for International Policy Studies). This is an award given to those who have made "meaningful achievements ...which will contribute toward the realization of true peace and prosperity in the international community." One of the reasons for his selection included the fact that "he prioritized close communication with the local people affected by the conflict and was highly praised by those people."

The experiences in international cooperation described in the book can be summarized in the following two very important points. First is the experience of a Japanese aid worker going in the area before a peace agreement had been reached (all that existed was a truce in the fighting) to give aid directly. In other words, Ochiai volunteered as a member of the international monitoring team while the military tensions continued to provide assistance on the front line, conflict-affected Mindanao. At the time, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs had set the level of danger at 3 (advising those wishing to travel to the area not to go). Even as a JICA official, it was a place one could not easily go to. This book introduces in great deal what it was like to work on the ground in conflict-affected Mindanao as well as the difficulty of living there at the time.

The second interesting point is that those being supported included anti-government forces. Ordinarily, Official Development Assistance, or ODA, is given from the Government of Japan to the government of the developing nation. The case of conflict-affected Mindanao is quite rare in that it included not only aid to government organizations but also

to anti-government forces as well. When “anti-government forces” is written, it is easy to imagine violent, terrorist groups, or other extremists. It goes without saying that JICA does not approve whatsoever of any violent acts, but at the same time, it would be naïve to suggest that such entities were mixed in. With that said, from the perspective of the anti-government forces, it was a fight for justice, autonomy, and the protection of their rights with ancestral domains, etc. Through the development of conflict-affected Mindanao, the Government of Japan and JICA were able to provide a place by which the anti-government forces and the Philippine government could work together harmoniously toward peace. This careful approach toward supporting the area and bringing about long-lasting peace is the real charm of aid and development work.

This book is number 25 in our “Project History” series, and is the second English-language book in this series. The Project History series is dedicated to carefully documenting the individual facts of projects in which JICA cooperated on the one hand while seeking to recreate the history from a larger perspective at the same time. In addition, the individual authors include important messages in the text based on their personal insights and experiences. Several of the books to date have focused on peacebuilding, including book number 7 which deals with Afghanistan, book no. 8 (Sudan), book no. 23 (South Sudan), book no. 24 (Bosnia-Herzegovina), and now this one. With this collection of works, it would be interesting to conduct comparative research on cooperation in peacebuilding. I would be grateful if this book and others in the series can be of reference to the reader in order to help his or her understanding of and research into these issues.

Akio Takahara
Director, JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute
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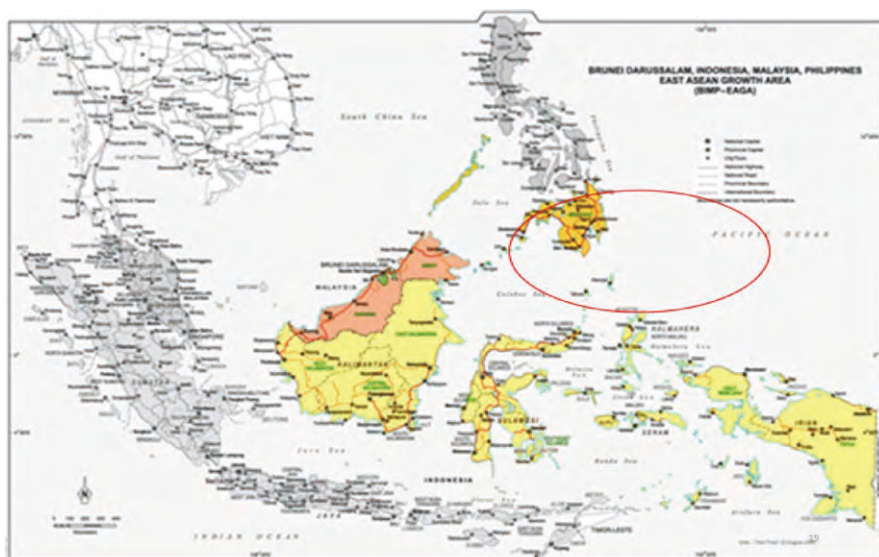
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Prologue



Philippines, Mindanao Island, Malaysia, Indonesia
(Map: Mindanao, Republic of the Philippines and the region

Source: JICA Report)



Cagayan de Oro City, Marawi City, Zamboanga City, Sulu Islands, Cotabato City, Davao City, General Santos City

(Map: Mindanao Island)

Source: JICA Report)

Becoming Attracted to Mindanao

I joined the Japan International Cooperation Agency, or JICA, in 1991. I was first assigned to the section in charge of a technical cooperation project in the mining and manufacturing industries. There I thoroughly learned the fundamentals of what it is like to be a professional in the field of international cooperation. Said another way, it was a true apprentice. Moving to the Philippine office in 1994, I met the man who would become my mentor in the field of development cooperation, Jurō Chikaraishi, who was serving as Deputy Resident Representative. Still a novice, I thought it important to keep him informed of issues as quickly as possible but failed to organize the matters at hand or think them through. I would approach him and say, "About such and such..." to which he would respond, "Yes, and so?" It was as if he was saying, anyone, even a cassette player, can report facts. The person in charge of a project should give his or her analysis, thoughts, and recommendations. I became very satisfied when, at some point, Deputy Resident Representative Chikaraishi's comments began to change from, "Yes, and so?" and "You're still naïve" to "Oh, this could be good" and "Yes, let's do this."

October 1994. I arrived in Davao City in Mindanao, in the southern part of the Philippines. It was my first domestic official trip after arriving in the country. At the time, the airport in Davao was so small, and would be unrecognizable today. At the time, it was typical of any regional airport in the country. Being so close to the Equator, it felt like I was going to melt in the bright sun. I had no idea this was the start of a very long relationship with Mindanao.

Immediately after the signing of the peace agreement between the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front, Deputy Resident Representative Chikaraishi and I traveled on many occasions to Cotabato City in the center of the conflict affected area to meet with officials and others to see if there was something JICA could do to help solve the problems there. At the time, it was still dangerous, so we traveled with armed escorts, soldiers of the Philippine Army.

After returning to Japan in 1998, I was interested in studying about development and conflict, and pursued a master's degree studying political science and peace in a graduate program at Hosei University in Tokyo. Afterwards, I tried to return to the Philippines, requesting an assignment

there, but was instead sent to our office in Jordan in the Middle East. This was in 2003. I had never been to an Arab state before and was honestly quite bewildered. I did not speak Arabic and was not familiar with the culture. I ended up spending just under four years in the JICA Jordan Office and became immersed in Islamic society. I lived directly across from a mosque and five times a day heard very loudly the calls for prayer known as Adhan. I was able to learn a great deal in Jordan about Islam with Muslims I worked with and spent my free time with. In retrospect, it was probably thanks to this experience that I was able to interact with Muslims in the Mindanao region so easily.

The first time I visited Davao was 16 years later, in 2010, when I was sent there as part of the International Monitoring Team (IMT). I had volunteered for the position with the IMT. Of course, my primary motivation was that I wanted to work on the front lines, so to speak, in assisting Mindanao. Also, I am very good at teamwork, something I learned as a child, particularly in the outdoors and other challenging conditions. Moreover, as an international development worker, I wanted to see what it was like to attempt providing economic development assistance prior to a peace agreement being in place.

I was largely able to survive in the IMT, which is primarily led by members of the military, because of my childhood experience. As a child, I belonged to the Boy Scouts. I learned the importance of rules and other codes and norms in an organization. In high school, I belonged to the mountain-climbing club, and went climbing all the time throughout the year. In university, combining my love for sports and intellectual/academic pursuits, I often went exploring caves. Examining topographical maps, geological maps, and prior research reports, I would estimate where possible new, undiscovered caves were. I would then go into the mountains and look for possible cave entrances. If I found an entrance, I would explore the inside, studying the cavern's hole, condition of subterranean streams, and its narrow spaces, sometimes using my rock-climbing skills in the process. Having surveyed the inside of the caves, I would make a map and further study the insides and the origins of the cave, eventually presenting my findings at academic conferences. Moreover, to ensure that these research trips went well, I handled the logistics aspects as well—travel, food, equipment, lodging, etc. Exploring the caves as I did, as well as my outdoor experience with different clubs and groups, allowed me to work harmoniously with many different types of people. As a result, the

transition to the work of IMT was not difficult for me. Namely, because the IMT operated in dangerous areas and we could not go out freely, we were often in close quarters. However, I was long used to working closely in tough conditions with my team mates since my youth, and thus it was easy for me to adjust to this life.

I have visited just about every part of the Philippines in the course of my work and living there: 4 years in JICA's Philippines office, 7 years in the section in charge of the Philippines at JICA's headquarters, 5 years in Cotabato City as a member of the International Monitoring Team and as part of the project on the Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro, for a total of 16 years in Philippines-related work. I have been to Aparri in the northern part of Luzon Island to the southernmost island of Tawi-Tawi Island, directly across from Malaysia. Within Mindanao, I have been not only to the major cities of Davao, General Santos, Cagayan de Oro, Butuan, Cotabato, Pagadian, and Zamboanga, but also to villages and towns whose names are not widely known in the coastal areas and the mountains, and wetlands as well as outer islands. My personal mottos are "love", "motivation", "imagination", and "innovation." I am, in effect, a person, who loves to be on the ground, seeing things with my own eyes, thinking for myself, and imagining the possibilities.

This book, therefore, is written from the perspective of someone who prefers to be on-site and, with the hope that it inspires readers, seeks to introduce my experiences with the Government of Japan and JICA in the field of development assistance for the peace and development of Mindanao.

Chapter 1 discusses the history of the Philippines and that of Mindanao from the time when Islam began to be transmitted there. In particular, it looks at how the armed struggle of the Bangsamoro people expanded over time. The second chapter looks at the involvement of the Japanese government and JICA in the Mindanao peace process, including the "Mindanao Assistance Package" and the "Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development," or J-BIRD. Chapter 3 introduces the "Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro" during the transition to peace, using real examples of projects as seen through the individuals involved in them. Finally, the last chapter analyzes the significance and characteristics of the Japanese government and JICA's development assistance for resolving the conflict in Mindanao.

On a final note, please refer to the list of acronyms on page 159 when viewing the chronology over the next two pages in order to better understand the Mindanao problem.

Chronology

Year	Political/Security Situation in country	Movements by GOJ and/or JICA
1969	Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) forms separatist movement	
1976	Marcos Administration and MNLF sign Tripoli Agreement	
1984	Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) separates from MNLF	
1990	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) established	Malitubog-Maridagao Irrigation Project (loan)
1991	Abu Sayaff Group (ASG) formed	
1996	Ramos Administration and MNLF sign final peace agreement (September)	Attend Mindanao Peace Donors Conference
1997	Ramos Administration and MILF sign ceasefire agreement (July)	
1998		Supported project for road construction equipment in Western Mindanao (grant aid) Supported Metro Iligan Regional Infrastructure Development Project (loan)
2000	Philippine Armed Force and MILF restart armed conflict during Estrada Administration	
2001	Arroyo Administration and MILF begin peace talks Arroyo Administration and MILF sign Tripoli Agreement. Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) created	
2002		Prime Minister Koizumi announces "Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao" (December)
2003		JICA launches Mindanao Experts Committee Special Policy Advisors begin to be sent to ARMM Government Project for ARMM Social Fund (loan) begun Central Mindanao Road Project begun (loan)

Year	Political/Security Situation in country	Movements by GOJ and/or JICA
2004	International Monitoring Team (IMT) launched (October)	ARMM administrative capacity development (technical cooperation) project begun ARMM regional health service strengthening project begun
2005		ARMM regional rice growing-centric agriculture strengthening (technical cooperation) project begun
2006		Foreign Minister Aso announces support for Mindanao Peace Process during visit to Philippines (July) JICA President Ogata visits MILF Camp Darapanan, meets with Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim (September) Japanese personnel (Socio-Economic development) dispatch to IMT begun (October) Prime Minister Abe announces Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD) (December)
2007		Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development in Conflict Affected Area in Mindanao (technical cooperation) begun
2008	Armed conflict starts over set back in agreement over ancestral domains in October; IMT temporarily leaves	ARMM human resource development (technical cooperation) project begun ARMM infrastructure (road network) development survey research begun
2009		Consolidation for Peace in Mindanao (COP) 3 held in Penang, Malaysia
2010	Aquino Administration restarts peace talks with MILF (June) International Contact Group (ICG) launched (October)	ARMM local industry development survey research (technical cooperation) begun Topographical map surveys (concessional loan technical cooperation) project begun for Mindanao Peace and Development Japan was invited to be a participant in the ICG (October)

Year	Political/Security Situation in country	Movements by GOJ and/or JICA
2011	President Aquino and MILF Chair Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim hold first meeting at Narita (August)	Japanese government facilitates this meeting of top leaders
2012	Aquino Administration and MILF sign Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) (October)	JICA President Tanaka visits MILF Camp Darapanan, meets with Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar Capacity Development in Conflict Affected Area in Mindanao (CD-CAAM) project (technical cooperation) begun Sending of ARMM business development advisers (technical cooperation) begun ARMM rice growing-centric agriculture expansion (technical cooperation) project begun Mindanao Sustainable Agrarian and Agriculture Development (MinSAAD) project (loan) begun COP5 held in Malaysia
2013		Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro (technical cooperation) begun
2014	Aquino Administration and MILF sign Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (March) Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), prepared by Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC), submitted to both Senate and House	COP6 held in Hiroshima Human resource development for autonomous government of Bangsamoro in Mindanao project (grassroots technical cooperation) begun
2015	Mamasapano clash happens, BBL deliberations interrupted (January) Amendments made by both Senate and House BBL bill (September)	Development in Conflict Affected Area in Mindanao Project (grant aid) begun
2016	Duterte inaugurated as President, new roadmap for resolution of Bangsamoro issue announced (June)	JICA President Kitaoka visits Camp Darapanan, meets with Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar (March)

Year	Political/Security Situation in country	Movements by GOJ and/or JICA
2017	BBL, revised by BTC, submitted to both Senate and House	Electric power equipment distribution network project in Bangsamoro (grant aid) begun Development in Conflict Affected Area in Mindanao road network preparatory research project Marawi City and environs recovery and reconstruction project (grant aid) begun
2018	BBL Amendment Bill (BOL) passes both Senate and House (July)	Harnessing Agribusiness Opportunities through Robust and Vibrant Entrepreneurship Supportive of Peace Transformation (HARVEST) project begun (concessional loan)
2019	Referendum held in Bangsamoro Region (January and February) Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) established (February)	Start of new project (technical cooperation) for increasing capabilities of autonomous government of Bangsamoro

Chapter 1: The Island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago

Mindanao, an island located in the south of the Republic of the Philippines, has long been home to members of the Islamic faith. The resistance by the Bangsamoro people that began with the Spanish invasion of the 16th Century has continued into the present as their liberation movement sought independence from first the United States and later the Republic of the Philippines itself.

Section 1 The History of Mindanao

Islam first arrived in Mindanao in the 13th Century. Mindanao remains a crossroads for a diverse array of ethnic and religious groups, including the descendants of Japanese immigrants.

The Introduction of Islam

Islam is believed to have first arrived in Mindanao in the 13th Century. According to local legend, Muslims from what is now Malaysia visited the island and attempted to convert a pair of brothers who were leaders of their communities. While the older brother was deeply moved by the teachings of Islam and decided to convert, the younger did not. To avoid any strife with his brother, the younger man decided to move to the mountains. The Muslim residents of Mindanao are said to be the descendants of the older brother while the indigenous groups on the mountains like the Manobo and Teduray are said to be the descendants of the younger. As such, the Muslims and indigenous groups are considered siblings.

The Sultanate of Sulu, founded on the Sulu Archipelago in the 15th century, was the most powerful regional power, although the Sultanate of Maguindanao (located in the Cotabato region of Mindanao) rose as a rival force in the 16th and 17th centuries. These Muslim states did not succumb to repeated invasion attempts by the Spanish and continued to retain control over a large part of Mindanao. The descendants of these states – who refer to themselves by the title “datu” – and their clans still dominate local Mindanao politics.

Until the early 20th Century, about ninety percent of the population of Mindanao was Muslim. But with the “resettlement policy” adopted by the American territorial government in 1912, large numbers of Christians began to settle on the island. The first wave of these moved to Pikit, Pagalungan, and M’lang in what is today southern part of North Cotabato Province. The second wave, which lasted from 1919 to 1926, was concentrated on the islands of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. From 1939, areas in South Cotabato like Tupi, Koronadal, and Surallah were chosen for settlement. After the Philippines gained formal independence from the United States following the Second World War, the new government embarked on a full-fledged resettlement program and moved Christians from Luzon and the Visayas to areas across Mindanao. After 1954, waves of Christian immigrants flooded areas of Maguindanao that had formed the center of the former Muslim state: Buluan, Tacurong, Sultan Sa Barongis, and Ampatuan. The government’s resettlement program was accompanied by land grants, with each immigrant receiving up to twenty-four hectares of land for free. Companies and organizations that moved were granted up to 1,024 hectares. The Muslims of Mindanao were legally loss of their ancestral lands through these government policies, decades later, there is incessant conflict over this land.

The result of these policies enacted over the past century is that roughly eighty percent of the twenty-five million people now living on Mindanao are Christian. These Christians also own a similar proportion of the land. Muslims are now in the minority not only in the Philippines as a whole but also in Mindanao, with the indigenous groups of the island an even smaller minority.

Immigrants of Japanese Descent

Davao, a city of more than a million people located in eastern Mindanao, first became a destination for significant Japanese immigration in the early 1900s. These Japanese immigrants had been hired to work on the construction of a highway from Manila in central Luzon to Baguio, a city located in the island’s northern mountains. Once the construction came to an end, they looked south to Mindanao and began moving to Davao because of its widespread cultivation of abaca (the raw material for Manila hemp). By the time of the Second World War more than 20,000 Japanese lived in the city and there was a prosperous Nihonmachi (Japan town) in the city’s Mintal district. Japanese immigrants lived in areas across

Mindanao like Cagayan de Oro, Zamboanga, Marawi, and Cotabato and largely worked in agriculture and commerce.

Today, seventy years after the war, it's hard to find any sign of the significant Japanese population that once existed in Cotabato and Mindanao. It goes without saying that the Japanese living there and their descendants suffered considerable hardship in the years following Japan's defeat in the Second World War. They were persecuted by the local population and, in order to escape detection, did away with all evidence that they were Japanese such as their passports and identification documents. This is the way that those of Japanese descent have lived.

The People and Religions of Mindanao

The ethnic and religious distribution of modern Mindanao is complicated. There are large numbers of Muslims in the central provinces of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao and on the islands of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. They spend their days faithfully following the five pillars of Islam. Verses of the Koran play at great volume from mosque loudspeakers, announcing the five daily prayer times. Goats are slaughtered for celebrations and they hold feasts known as "kanduli." Everyone fasts from sunrise to sundown during the holy month of Ramadan and avoids scheduling meetings and appointments for the afternoon as it becomes difficult to concentrate on work at that time. They try to get their important work done early in the morning, instead. People greet each other with "As-salamu alaykum" and receive "Alaykum as-salamu" in reply. They never use Tagalog greetings. And just as in the Middle East, women wear hijabs and niqabs. Muslim women who didn't cover their hair as young women become more pious as they grow older, marry, and have children. When you're in these areas, it's easy to forget that you're in the Philippines.

The lifestyle of the Christians who make up an overall majority of the Mindanao population, however, doesn't differ noticeably from that of their compatriots in Luzon or on the Visayas. Many of the Christian settlers on Mindanao apparently originated from the Visayan islands of Panay, Cebu, and Negros, so while Tagalog is used as a common tongue, Visayan is used exclusively at home. Naturally, these Christians drink alcohol and eat pork, with the Filipino specialty of lechón (roast suckling pig) an indispensable part of their celebrations. Christmas is the most important time of the year. The Christmas season begins in September in the Philippines

and the Christians on Mindanao grow restless as its approaches.

Broadly speaking, there are three ethnic groups on Mindanao: Christians, Muslims, and the indigenous groups. As mentioned earlier, these indigenous groups continue to follow the indigenous religion of the area. They worship the myriad spirits who exist in nature and hold unique ceremonies through which they pay homage to them. There are said to be more than twenty such groups. Their traditional clothing features combinations of bright colors like red, yellow, and green, and anyone who watches native dancers performing in traditional costume will be spellbound.

The Ancestral Domain Issue

But while these three groups live together on Mindanao, the history of this co-existence has very much not been a peaceful one. The Christians who came to Mindanao through the Philippine government's resettlement policy in the 1960s (largely from the Visayas) formed local communities based on their Christian culture. And with the government providing them with land, the area they occupied steadily expanded. This was all done completely legally.

But older Muslims remember this process somewhat differently. They say that the Christians who came from the north were the impoverished, those who had been without land and enough to eat. Feeling sorry for them, the Muslims loaned the Christians a portion of the land that had been passed on to them by their ancestors. The Christians were extremely grateful and worked tirelessly to cultivate fields and raise families. They steadily reclaimed uncultivated land around their villages, and the Muslims were happy to see this. Then, one day, the Christians came to the Muslims and announced that "The Philippines government has formally recognized our ownership of the land that we reclaimed through the sweat of our brows. From now on, that land belongs to us, the Christians." This came as a complete shock to the Muslims who had been living on that land since before the Philippine government had even existed. The land didn't belong to the government, so it had never even occurred to them to register it. They hadn't thought it necessary.

The two groups took up arms and fought. The Christians to protect the new paradise that they had worked hard to make for themselves, and the Muslims to protect the land that had been passed on to them by their

ancestors.

Bloody fighting swept across Mindanao. Ultimately, the two groups decided upon the creation of a “highly-autonomous government” as the means of resolving the conflict. The course that led to that decision was by no means a peaceful one. In fact, the parties to the conflict were unable to maintain the ceasefire and make meaningful progress in their peace negotiations by themselves. They felt that the involvement of third parties was needed and constructed frameworks to monitor the ceasefire and move the peace negotiations forward through them. Alongside the Japanese government, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) contributed to the peace negotiations and peacebuilding through socio-economic development in the hope of resolving the conflict in Mindanao. The specifics of that contribution will be explained beginning in the next chapter.

Column ❶ Cotabato City and the Takumi Detachment

The city of Cotabato is located at the mouth of the Rio Grande de Mindanao, a great river that flows from the island’s north. The city has prospered as the gateway to central Mindanao since the arrival of Islam in the 13th Century. Those who came to Mindanao from places like Malaysia and China made their way into the depths of the island by following the river upstream from Cotabato. The name of the city comes from “kuta watu,” which means “stone fort” in the local language.



Looking out on Cotabato from the sky



Downtown Cotabato

There are also traces of the old Imperial Japanese Army in Cotabato. At the end of the Second World War, Cotabato was defended by the 166th Independent Infantry Battalion, part of the 100th Division stationed in Davao. Placed under the command of Lt. Col. Yutaka Takumi, this unit suffered catastrophic losses after coming under fierce American attack in April 1945. It is believed that less than 10 percent of the battalion's 3,000 soldiers survived. The families of those who perished wanted to erect a memorial following the war but, with memories of the fierce fighting still fresh, they were unable to find anyone willing to provide land for the purpose.

That is when the head of the Sebastian family, Christians originating from Panay in the central Philippines, stepped forward. While he is no longer alive, his wife Victoria explained the rationale to me: "My family suffered greatly during the war. I lost my brothers and my home. The same happened to my husband. But he was a man with a great heart. He felt that if the families of the Takumi Detachment shared his feelings that such a cruel war should never come again and agreed to only place the word 'peace' on the memorial, then we should provide the land." Today, a stone marked only with the word "peace" in Japanese stands a mere twenty meters from the Sebastian home. Whenever I pass by and time allows, I offer a silent prayer at the memorial for peace in Mindanao.



The peace memorial

Section 2 The History of the Mindanao Conflict

The Muslims living on Mindanao formed armed groups and confronted the Philippine government as part of a liberation movement to protect the rights and land of the Moro people. The Moros are not monolithic, however. They divided into two groups that only concluded a peace agreement following fighting and negotiations.

The Moro National Liberation Front

In March 1968, young Muslim army recruits were brought to Corregidor (an island in Manila Bay) for training. They were then killed by Christian army officers after mutinying. When the officers involved in the massacre were found not guilty by a military court, it led to widespread Muslim outrage against Christians and the intensification of the armed conflict between the two communities. Calls rose up for the Muslims to show solidarity as Moros. Muslim students in Manila labeled the massacre the “worst crime of the century” and protests spread through the city. Conflicts between armed Christian and Muslim groups on Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago escalated, resulting in more than 30,000 people fleeing their fields and villages to avoid the conflict.

These events provide the backdrop for the founding of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1971 by Nur Misuari, a lecturer at the University of the Philippines, and his two associates Abul Khayr Alonto and Salamat Hashim. The MNLF was an armed group that sought the independence of the Bangsamoro (the Moro people).

The conflict between Muslim and Christian groups intensified following the declaration of martial law by the Philippines government in 1972. Riding this trend, the MNLF under Nur Misuari accelerated its political and military efforts for independence, carrying out military actions simultaneously in Sulu, Cotabato, and Zamboanga. The declaration of martial law increased popular discontent against the government, and the MNLF – which had previously been just one of many Muslim political groups – gained the support of Muslim leaders in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. It became a central force representing the interests of Muslims.

The MNLF was the first group to adopt the phrase and concept of the “Moro people.” But why did they use the term “Moro,” a slur against

Muslims that dated from the Spanish colonial period? Muslims in the southern Philippines can be broadly divided – both linguistically and geographically – between Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. They can be then further subdivided into groups like the Maguindanao, Maranao, Tausug, Yakan, Sama, and Bajau. They were in other words, not a group that possessed a sense of ethnic solidarity. The MNLF defined “Moros” as those who embraced the MNLF’s national concept and lived in the territory that their independent state would have sovereignty over. They then used this term to create a sense of ethnic solidarity that could be used to further unity and push for the independence of a Muslim state on the Philippines.

The Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF

Armed attacks by Muslim separatists increased in the 1980s. The number of internally displaced persons from Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago reached nearly a million people and more than 50,000 were killed in the fighting. Corazon Aquino became president of the Philippines in 1986 following the People Power Revolution that ousted Ferdinand Marcos. She took the Muslim issue very seriously and held talks with Chairman Nur Misuari in August 1986 on the Sulu Archipelago, the MNLF’s stronghold. When the new Philippine constitution was enacted in 1987 to do away with the remnants of the Marcos regime, it included provisions for the creation of an autonomous area for Muslims in the southern Philippines. Republic Act No. 6734 – An Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao – was enacted in 1989 and explicitly stated that the people of Muslim Mindanao had the right of autonomy “within the framework of the Constitution and national sovereignty.”



MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari (center) in 1996.
The author is standing to his right.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was established following a referendum, though it only encompassed the four Muslim-majority provinces of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur, and Maguindanao. The ARMM's first gubernatorial election was held in 1990 and it was decided that the ARMM government's offices would be placed in Cotabato.

Fidel Ramos, who had served as chief of staff of the armed forces under Aquino, was elected president in 1992. Immediately after taking office, he moved to restore the government's peace negotiations with the MNLF. Chairman Nur Misuari responded to this effort and explored negotiating positions with the MNLF leadership. The result of these lengthy negotiations was the Final Peace Accord signed by the Philippines government and MNLF on September 2, 1996. Nur Misuari was elected governor of the ARMM government in elections held later that year.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front

Salamat Hashim, who had founded the MNLF alongside Nur Misuari, was born in Pagalungan, Maguindanao in 1942. He spent eleven years in Cairo and studied Islam at Al-Azhar University. While a student, he came into contact with Middle Eastern and African anti-colonial movements and became greatly influenced by contemporary Islamist thought.

After the signing of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF, differences surfaced between Salamat Hasihm and Nur Misuari over the goals of the Moro liberation movement and how they were to be achieved. The MNLF split into a Misuari faction based in the Sulu Archipelago and a Salamat faction based in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur. These two factions would eventually enter into armed conflict with each other.

In 1984, the Salamat faction broke with the MNLF and its Western secularism, becoming the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF's aim was the establishment of an Islamic state based on Sharia law through *jihād*. This was to protect the sanctity of Islam and the of Bangsamoro people and ensure their right of self-determination. The modern leadership of the MILF, figures like, Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim, Ghazali Jaafar, Mohagher Iqbal, and Sammy Al Mansor, were with Salamat Hasihm when he broke away from the MNLF to found the MILF.

But while the MNLF and MILF followed different paths, both were fighting for justice for the Bangsamoro. As mentioned earlier, the MNLF's fight ended with the signing of the Final Peace Agreement with the Philippine government in 1996. But the MILF would continue to fight until October 2012 when the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) was reached and an overall framework for peace was formally agreed to. The MILF and Philippine government reached the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in March 2014. This abolished the ARMM government and clearly stated that a highly autonomous "Bangsamoro government" would be created. With this agreement, justice for the Bangsamoro had finally been achieved.

Own Governments

The MILF operates along a committee system. It contains committees on politics, military affairs, Islam, Sharia law, administration, finances, education, welfare, health, public relations, intelligence, logistics, industry, culture, women, and youth affairs. The MILF Central Committee is composed of the chairs of these committees. As the original goal of the MILF had been secession from the Philippines, its organizational setup was created in the image of an independent government. Vestiges of that can be seen in the current committee system.

The MILF political and military authorities also maintain subgroups at each level of administrative division: barangay (village), municipality (town), and province. A distinctive form of political organization is present within the political chain of command. As mentioned above, the original goal of the MILF had been secession and it had created its own independent government.



MILF Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim

The existence of the MILF's military authorities – the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) – is readily apparent. It maintains thirty-one military bases on Mindanao and its associated islands. While these are referred to as base commands, front commands, or satellite commands depending on their size, all exist within a strict military hierarchy with the base commander at the top. The BIAF has more than 45,000 armed personnel equipped with a diverse range of weapons, high performance sniper rifles, heavy machine guns, assault rifles, rocket launchers, and hand grenades. These range in age from the most advanced weapons of today to surplus from the Vietnam War. Military training is thorough and morale in the BIAF is high.

In general, BIAF soldiers are farmers who only take up arms when needed for patrols or emergencies. We referred to them as “farmer soldiers” and they reminded me of the country samurai of Japan's late feudal period. One of the principles of the Bangsamoro liberation movement preached by Salamat Hashim was “self-reliance,” the idea that all those who participated in the great cause of the Bangsamoro were to do so through their own efforts and strive for self-fulfillment. The BIAF's soldiers thus do not receive any salary from the MILF.

During the period when the fighting was raging across Mindanao, the absence of male farmers meant that farming families were pushed into a desperate state and women had to carry out all agricultural work by themselves. Bangsamoro women are also included within the MILF's political and military hierarchies. A notable example of this is the Bangsamoro Islamic Women's Auxiliary Brigade (BIWAB) which includes both young and middle-aged women. Members of the BIWAB protect the home front, support their husbands and sons, and work hard at home



BIAF soldiers



BIWAB members

and in the fields. When fighting begins, they care for wounded soldiers and provide logistical support such as food to the front. The members of the BIWAB that I met at Camp Busrah were about twenty years old, perhaps slightly older. They were young women who still seemed like girls. Looking at these young women standing in formation, their innocent faces surrounded by BIAF camo, I could only try to imagine what their daily lives and feelings were like.

The Bangsamoro Liberation Movement and the Meiji Restoration

By creating political and military frameworks that permeated down to the barangay level and providing benefits such as education, welfare, food, and financial support, the MILF secured an extremely broad support base for itself. The Bangsamoro liberation movement had established a foundation on Mindanao and its associated islands.

The movement had been successful at securing a certain degree of support from regional political leaders and ordinary Muslims living on Mindanao. The MILF could now claim to legitimately represent the Bangsamoro people and, as a result, the Philippine government officially recognized it as a counterpart for peace negotiations in 1997 (during the Ramos administration).

Incidentally, I'm a big fan of the Japanese history of the late 19th Century and the Meiji Restoration, the time when feudal rule was overthrown and Japan began modernizing. If time machines actually existed, I would go back to that time to experience the rapid changes of the era and witness the dawn of a new Japan alongside the likes of Shoin Yoshida, Shinsaku Takasugi, Takayoshi Kido, Toshimichi Okubo, Takamori Saigo, and Ryoma Sakamoto. When I was in middle school, I buried myself in the historical novels of Ryotaro Shiba and Shotaro Ikenami, imagining what it would have been like to interact with these great figures of history, who were also considered rebels in their time but have come to be greatly respected and revered.

On Mindanao, I frequently met with MILF leaders at the head of the Bangsamoro liberation movement such as Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim. These men had led from the front during their protracted armed revellion against the Philippine military and then shrewdly negotiated with the Philippine government. They were, overall, men with gentle and calm

demeanors. But at times their eyes would take on a piercing look and I would feel something akin to the intimidation that comes from being near an intelligence and toughness. These men had devoted themselves to the Bangsamoro liberation movement at a young age and now, after more than forty years of being deprived of their chosen future, they felt that they were finally going to be able to fulfill their responsibilities to their families, comrades, and supporters. At some point I began to superimpose them onto my heroes, the great Japanese figures of the late 19th Century. And to think that perhaps I, a Japanese with the blood of the samurai, could make some kind of contribution to the efforts of these mujahideen of the MILF, these men who had risked their lives fighting to change the still feudalistic politics and society of Muslim Mindanao and bring about a new dawn for the Bangsamoro.

It made me realize that I could not engage with these people in a half-hearted way. I needed to always be serious and diligent as I went about my work.

Column ② Ethnic Warfare

Rido

There's a tendency to view the Mindanao conflict as a straightforward struggle between "Christians" (the Philippine government) and "Muslims" (the MILF). And it is true that large-scale fighting has largely been avoided since the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the two parties and the subsequent beginning of the International Monitoring Team's operations in 2004. Military clashes (ceasefire violations) have fallen dramatically thanks to the presence of the IMT and its efforts. But this is not to say that the security situation on Mindanao has been completely transformed. And that is because the framing of conflicts on Mindanao in an entirely religious context is overly simplistic.

The social control structures present on Mindanao are heavily feudalistic in nature. Landlords hold monopolistic control over land and resources which they then provide to farmers in exchange for

their loyalty and service. And when these elites enter into conflict with one another over land and resources including local politics, the local inhabitants are drawn in. These conflicts between elite families (clans) are known as *rido* in the local language of Mindanao. It's not rare for parents, children, and siblings to end up fighting one another in these conflicts. They are not only fought over resources and prestige or over land and leadership; ridos can begin from truly trivial things, like parents becoming involved in a fight between children on a basketball court. These become fights where the honor of the family is at stake. And if no resolution is found and the two sides in a rido continue to antagonize each other, they may each call upon "greater powers" to help. And with their entry, the rido has somehow now become a conflict between the greater powers. It goes without saying that the greater powers here are the Philippine military and the MILF. The IMT thus pays close attention to potential ridos, monitoring those that do occur and attempting to move the parties to a resolution. This is all in an attempt to prevent a military confrontation between the military and the MILF.

The Family Feud

A "ceremony of reconciliation" was held in October 2011 in a barangay located in an area of central Maguindanao under the influence of the MILF. It was being held for two families on hostility, these families that had continually fought over land and the position of barangay captain. Their rivalry resulted in four deaths before being finally resolved through MILF mediation. Weapons are easily obtained on Mindanao, meaning that people are frequently killed in ridos, something that just makes the fighting become worse. The ceremony was attended by members of the two families and representatives of the MILF, the Philippine military and police groups with jurisdiction over the area, members of Philippine government and MILF's ceasefire monitoring teams, and the IMT.

The ceremony was held from 10am to 4pm. After the moderator provided an overview of the events that had led up to the ceremony, each of the guests offered lengthy congratulatory speeches that boiled down to the sentiment of "let us move forward with our eyes focused on the future,

not looking back on the past.” Five members of each family then offered their “pledge” to stop fighting: “The lives lost will never come back. May we never fight again.” “Let’s work together to make the barangay better.” One man was overcome with tears as he spoke, saying that he had “made great mistakes.”

The climax of the event was the signing of a written oath by the families and witnesses. In the oath, the families agreed to “never again engage in this kind of fighting” and to pay 120,000 pesos (about 300,000 yen) in compensation for each of the four dead. Two new M-16 assault rifles would also be furnished to replace four rifles destroyed in the fighting. Six water buffalos, thirty bags of rice, six well pumps, and one hundred backpacks also arrived with the congratulations of the provincial governor.

The state of the barangay where the rido came to an end was wretched. The ceremony was held in a local elementary school that had no classrooms, just a roof and some pillars. The building is just left to the elements with no maintenance. A clinic next door contained only tables and desks. And there are only muddy, unpaved roads connecting the barangay to the area’s major roads. As we travelled to the barangay by car, I repeatedly hit my head on the roof.

I was present at the “ceremony of reconciliation” as a representative of the IMT. I arrived in the morning and gave the requested congratulatory speech. Prior to the beginning of the ceremony, I had been taken aside by the barangay captain and mayor and asked whether J-BIRD (the Japan–Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development) could “help provide basic infrastructure for the village such as paving the roads and repairing the elementary school?” This led me to mention in my speech that “if you promise that there will be no more ridos and that this barangay will forever live in peace, I will have the IMT look into repairing the elementary school and roads.” I did not feel particularly positive as I gave the speech, however.

The reason that attending the ceremony didn’t really sit right with me was that I harbored doubts about whether the families truly regretted their past actions. It’s a good thing that both sides were provided with a certain degree of compensation as part of the resolution of the fighting. But there was no sign that the core issues of “what caused you to fight in the first place?” and “what needs to be done to prevent further conflict?”

were being addressed. I had been accompanied on the trip by a Malaysian member of the IMT, and he muttered to me that he was sure that there is a possibility for one of the families would end up attacking the other again, a thought I shared. But I also felt somewhat regret with myself at having given such a superficial speech. Rather than speaking of the possibility of infrastructure repair, I should have touched on the more essential aspects of the conflict. By failing to do so, I had made myself no different from any other bystander.

I've heard that this kind of ceremony, has also been held in other barangays. The reality of Mindanao is that we just can't seem to eradicate the roots of conflict. Ending the conflict between the Philippine government and the MILF isn't enough for Mindanao to truly be at peace. We have to wipe out the ridos, these feudalistic conflicts. And for that to happen, it's important for the involved parties to have a broader understanding of their fighting and for them to take ownership. And it had been our job, as third parties, to make them realize that.

Chapter 2: Toward a Peace Agreement

Section 1 Support Package for the Mindanao

The Japanese government revealed its “Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao” at a meeting between Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and President Gloria Arroyo in December 2002. This was a full-fledged support program under which the Japanese government would provide support for peace in Mindanao on the basis of three priority areas: “support for policy formulation and implementation,” “support for improvement of basic human needs,” and “support which contributes directly toward peace-building and the fight against terrorism.”

Major Initial Support

While the MILF had initially hoped to form an independent state, it eventually shifted its goal to the creation of a highly autonomous government within the Philippines. It reached a ceasefire agreement with the Ramos administration in 1996 and entered into peace negotiations with the government. Ramos’ successor as president, Joseph Estrada, however, embarked on a thorough crack-down on Islamic anti-government groups, breaking off negotiations with the MILF and launching an all-out war against them. Camp Abubakar, MILF’s headquarters located in northern Maguindanao, fell to the Philippine military in 2000. Photographs of Filipino soldiers celebrating with beer and lechón ran on the front pages of newspapers announcing the base’s fall, greatly offending Muslims.

Estrada was ultimately impeached for corruption in 2001. His replacement, Gloria Arroyo, was determined to restart the negotiations with the MILF and in June of that year, the Philippine government and MILF concluded the Tripoli Agreement on Peace in Libya. This agreement identified security, rehabilitation, and the issue of the ancestral domains as the aspects that the two parties would need to address as they moved towards a final peace agreement.

The Libyan government was heavily involved in the conclusion of this agreement, just as they had been in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement reached between the Philippine government and the MNLF. Libya at this time was ruled by an Islamic government under Muammar Gaddafi and had

a heavily anti-American character. It was also known for its support of Islamic anti-government groups throughout the world. A key member of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (IOC), Libya used its influence in the organization to help resolve the Mindanao conflict (which is why Libya has served as a member of the Mindanao IMT since its creation).

Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi visited five members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in January 2002, including the Philippines, as part of his push for a proposed Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a partnership that would also drastically strengthen security cooperation between its members. He visited the Philippines again in December for a summit with President Arroyo and it was here that he revealed Japan's "Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao."

This "Mindanao Package" provided support targeted at three priority areas. The first was "policy formulation and implementation," improving the administrative capabilities of the ARMM regional government that had been established in 1990 in accordance with the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. The second was the "improvement of basic human needs," expanding the provision of education, medical care, and social welfare to all residents of the Muslim Mindanao region regardless of religion. And the third was "peace-building and the fight against terrorism," supporting the government's efforts to the terrorist group that repeatedly engaged in indiscriminate killings and kidnapping, while also supporting the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF. This support was to be carried out through "cooperative projects." Practically speaking, this meant the liberal use of loan aid, grant aid, and technical assistance.

The capacity building assistance provided through training and developmental studies was effective at increasing the capabilities of the ARMM regional government's ministries and laid a foundation for further improvement. And the welfare of the people of Mindanao was greatly improved by the programs to expand the infrastructure of local municipalities. Grant aid for road construction equipment led to the building of national roads in the central Mindanao region and loan aid was provided for construction to improve the lives of local residents.

The Influence of 9/11

During the time that JICA was working on the Mindanao Package, I was serving as the deputy director in charge of the Philippines for its South East Asia Division. I had returned to Japan in July 1988 after working at JICA's office in the Philippines for four years. I briefly joined the Planning Division, where I worked on budgetary requests and planning new projects, before being moved to the South East Asia Division in November 2000. This division oversaw all of JICA's assistance to the Philippines and the country was always on my mind, night and day. I worked on our support for Mindanao, a task that was both very difficult and very much worth doing.

Formulating the Mindanao Package was a complicated affair, the result of many days of intense discussion with officials from the foreign ministry and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). I was able to experience how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, JICA, and JBIC work together in assembling major pieces of Japanese foreign policy. Each cooperated in accordance with its role: the foreign ministry as the government agency in charge of setting foreign policy, and JICA and JBIC as organizations that help carry out that policy. As someone working in development assistance, I was extremely pleased to be able to experience the dynamics of how foreign policy and development can come together to provide support for developing nations.

I was in my middle thirties when I became deputy director. The position meant that I was often away from my desk during the day due to meetings with other departments within JICA or with government ministries and agencies we worked with like the foreign ministry. In the evening I could relax at my desk, reading over reports and giving my approval to decisions. I frequently ended up taking the last train home at night. This was my life when the unforgettable day of September 11, 2001 arrived. I was working late as usual when I noticed people gathering around the television in the office. The screen repeatedly showed footage of the planes hitting the World Trade Center in New York, the Al-Qaeda terrorist attack that changed the world. I was uneasy and could only hope that as America's war against terror began in earnest that it would not have any unfortunate effects on Japan's support for Mindanao.

To Jordan

Despite having put a lot of effort into implementing the Mindanao Package, I was reassigned in September 2003. Two months earlier, I was summoned by Noriaki Niwa, the director of the South East Asia Division, and told that I was going to be sent to Jordan. “Jordan? ... where’s that?” was my mental response. I had never been to the Middle East, nor involved in any of JICA’s aid efforts to Arab nations. I certainly couldn’t speak Arabic. I was so surprised. I’d been involved in JICA’s efforts in Mindanao ever since serving in our Philippines office and had been serving as deputy director in charge of the Philippines at the time of my reassignment, overseeing the deployment of the Mindanao Package. I couldn’t imagine myself sitting on a camel in the middle of a Middle Eastern desert. Telling myself that this must all be happening for a reason, I left the work of Mindanao to my successor and departed for Jordan.

Section 2 The Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso visited the Philippines in July 2006 and indicated that the Japanese government was willing to provide the country with new support. JICA President Sadako Ogata followed this up, visiting in October and meeting with President Arroyo and Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim about making additional contributions to the Mindanao peace process. These developments would result in me being once again sent to the Philippines.

President Sadako Ogata

In 2006, as I was struggling with my work with the Jordanians, Japan and the Philippines celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Foreign Minister Aso visited the country in July and indicated that the Japanese government would soon begin providing more active support for the Mindanao peace process. This would take three forms: the dispatch of Japanese specialists on socio-economic development to the Mindanao International Monitoring Team (IMT), a third party group created in 2004 by mainly Muslim nations to monitor the ceasefire agreement between the Philippine government and the MILF; the creation of the “Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for

Reconstruction and Development” (J-BIRD) to provide socio-economic development assistance; and the creation of a “Mindanao Task Force” in Manila by the Japanese embassy, JICA, and JBIC to coordinate Japan’s assistance at the local level.

Monitoring the ceasefire agreement is not the IMT’s only role, however, as it also oversees the situation in Mindanao regarding the protection of citizens, respect for human rights, and socio-economic development. But while Foreign Minister Aso had said that Japan would send experts to the IMT, an internal decision on which group was going to send personnel had yet to be made. Discussions on the question were held by the foreign ministry home office in Tokyo and the Japanese embassy in the Philippines, with the result being that JICA was tapped for the job. Sadako Ogata, who became the president of JICA in 2003, then headed to the Philippines in September, determined to contribute to the realization of peace in Mindanao.

President Ogata needed to personally ascertain what the local conditions were before she could make the decision to send JICA personnel to the IMT. She arrived in Cotabato (a city in central Mindanao about ninety minutes away from Manila by plane) on September 18, 2006, accompanied by JICA Philippines Office Resident Representative Shozo Matsuura and JICA First Asia Department Deputy Managing Director Takahiro Sasaki. Her first visit was to the headquarters of the IMT, where she received a warm welcome from the IMT head of mission. After being provided with a detailed overview of the security situation in Mindanao, she confirmed for herself the safety of the IMT’s facilities.



The meeting between President Sadako Ogata and Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim



The meeting between President Sadako Ogata and President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

Afterwards, President Ogata visited the MILF's headquarters at Camp Darapanan (located in the municipality of Sultan Kudarat to the north of Cotabato) to see Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim. There had originally been no plans for such a visit, but she had felt that as the president of JICA, it was extremely important for her to meet with both parties to the conflict. She began her meeting with Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim by saying that "I believe that development can contribute to achieving peace in Mindanao. Could I ask that you leave that work to JICA?" The two briefly talked about the difficulties facing the Bangsamoro people and their hopes for the future before Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim told her that "We would like JICA's help in resolving the problems facing us and in building our future."

At a meeting with President Arroyo at Malacañang Palace in Manila two days later, President Ogata gave her the same message that she had given Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim – "development will contribute to achieving peace." Like Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim had done before her, President Arroyo expressed her hopes for JICA. It was on this day that JICA's work providing support to peace in Mindanao truly began, a task that has continued for more than a decade.

There was no final peace agreement in place in Mindanao at this time, only a ceasefire. This would be the first time in history that JICA dispatched personnel on a long-term mission to a region with an unstable security situation. There was no knowing if or when the promises made in the ceasefire agreement would be broken. President Ogata's willingness to take full responsibility for the lives and safety of her personnel in order to make this contribution to peace led JICA into an unprecedented area of peacebuilding assistance.

From Jordan to Mindanao Again

In Jordanian capital of Amman, I lived diagonally across from a mosque and heard the Adhan blare from its loudspeakers from morning to night. During my time in Jordan, I gained a practical education in the history and culture of the Middle East and the teachings of Islam. Jordan is a small Middle Eastern country surrounded by Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. It is a monarchy ruled by the Hashemites, the former Sharifs of Mecca and descendants of Muhammad, the founder of Islam. It is a multiethnic state with a majority Arab population (mostly Palestinian

with others coming from areas such as Syria), Bedouins in the southern desert, and Armenians from the Caucasus. Jordan needs to maintain good relations with its neighbors (particularly Iraq, Palestine, and Israel) and make good use of its location to survive. JICA provides direct assistance to Jordan and also actively partners with it on peacebuilding and recovery assistance for its neighbors Palestine and Iraq. I'll never forget how President Ogata asked, "What can JICA do to assist peacebuilding?" during a visit to the JICA Jordan Office.

My four years in Jordan also provided me with practical experience with working in the Middle East. More importantly, I also gained knowledge and insights into peacebuilding assistance in the Middle East, an undertaking that incorporates the many issues facing Muslims there. It was an irreplaceable opportunity.

When I first arrived in Jordan, a location so far from the Philippines, so I tried to completely forget about Mindanao during my time in Jordan. It helped that I did not find working with Arabs easy and as such had little time to spare worrying about Mindanao.

I found negotiating with Arabs to be truly difficult. My time working in Asia had led me to understand that negotiations are, at heart, the work of finding the "point of compromise" for all parties. But when working with Arabs such as the Jordanians, it didn't seem to quite work that way. In negotiations with Arabs, they would open negotiations with an outrageous demand. The thought being that "there's no harm in trying." Which meant that the counterdemand needed to be similarly outrageous. I eventually got the knack of these negotiations down, however, and began to fancy that I would try to become JICA's leading expert on the Arabs. I truly thought about studying Arabic diligently and spending the rest of my career at JICA working to assist those in conflict areas in the Middle East. It was at that point that I received my new transfer orders. I was being sent back to Mindanao, the place that I had been trying for four years to forget about.

In January 2007, after having spent four years in Jordan, I returned to Tokyo and was made director of the South East Asia Team 2, which was in charge of the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei (the South East Asia Division had been renamed South East Asia Team 2 during my time in Jordan). As I resumed my duties, it felt oddly like a ball that I had

passed to someone else had now been passed back to me.

A New Initiative

I visited Cotabato city in March 2007. Accompanying me on my visit was Rey Gerona, an in-house consultant at the JICA Philippines Office who had frequently joined me on my travels throughout Mindanao during my time working in the office. He is a man who I trust implicitly. Cotabato city had not changed much in the four years since I had last visited. The electrical grid was still in poor shape, as was the security situation. Come night, the streets were pitch black and deserted. While Manila had undergone drastic changes, it seemed as if time had stopped in Cotabato city. One of my reasons for visiting the city was to pay my respects to the IMT, so I met with Senior Advisor for Reconstruction and Development Masafumi Nagaishi shortly after arriving.

Advisor Nagaishi was the first person to be dispatched to the IMT by the Japanese government, and he did remarkable work there. He was deeply trusted not only by the IMT but also by the Philippine government and MILF. My discussion with him was wide-ranging, covering topics such as the situation in Mindanao, IMT's work, progress being made through the Japanese embassy's grass-roots grant aid projects, and information-sharing and coordination between JICA's assistance projects. We both shared the view that cooperation between the IMT and JICA was key to the success of Japan's J-BIRD initiative for Mindanao as both groups worked directly with support recipients.



The assistance provided to Mindanao beginning in 2006 was different in nature from the Mindanao Package that had been launched in 2001. That had been primarily intended to provide capacity-building assistance for the ARMM government. By contrast, the new initiative was focused on using development as a means of contributing to the ongoing peace process between the Philippine government and the MILF. And that change of concept meant that a new name, one more appropriate to the Japanese government's new approach, was needed. This was the thinking of Nagaishi and his friend First Secretary Yoshihisa Ishikawa, a member of the political affairs section of the Japanese embassy in Manila. Together they came up with "Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development" (J-BIRD) as the name. The decision to use the term "Bangsamoro" here rather than "Mindanao" was an expression of Japan's strong determination to contribute to achieving justice and a bright future for the Muslim residents of Mindanao (the Bangsamoro). Those who have followed in Nagaishi's footsteps as the Japanese representative to the IMT have carried on his desire to serve as a bridge between Japan and the Bangsamoro.

Section 3 The Mindanao International Monitoring Team

The IMT is a third-party group created in 2004 by mostly Muslim nations to monitor the ceasefire agreement between the Philippine government and MILF. Since its creation, it has become one of the most important organizations for facilitating the peace process in Mindanao. Its activities and contributions have given it an unseen power in the region.

The Third Delegate to the IMT

A new JICA was born in October 2008 with the merger of the old JICA and JBIC. I continued to oversee our work in the Philippines, albeit now from the position of director of the Third South East Asia Division. My days were fulfilling but always very busy as I was now in charge of the Philippines for the world's largest governmental organization for development assistance, one that encompassed technical assistance, grant aid, and loan aid. The merger of the two organization's Philippines departments meant that the number of people in my division had suddenly tripled from five to fifteen. One thing that had not changed, however, was that I still ended up taking the last train home at night.

Then, in December 2010, I found myself at IMT headquarters in Cotabato as the third Japanese delegate to the IMT. I had realized after returning to Japan from Jordan in 2007 that Mindanao was where I was fated to be. I had now finally received the precious opportunity to personally carry out peacebuilding in Mindanao and I couldn't wait to get started.

I left behind Japan and its cold weather and met Tomonori Kikuchi, my predecessor at the IMT, at Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila. We immediately headed for the Japanese embassy. This is because Japanese delegates to the IMT are transferred from JICA to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then given the position of first secretary at the embassy in the capital city. I would thus be playing two roles at the same time.

While at JICA's offices in Tokyo, Kikuchi had worked at the departments overseeing the Middle East and security management. An expert on peacebuilding assistance, he had previously worked in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Myanmar. He had been appointed to the IMT just in time for the outbreak of armed conflict in August 2008 and the withdrawal of Malaysia and Brunei (the primary sources of manpower for the IMT) from the conflict areas. While making sure to take extra safety precautions, he had met with many residents and organizations in the affected areas and worked to ascertain what their needs were and what the state of socio-economic development was at the community level. The information that he gathered at this time contributed greatly to later assistance projects.

First Secretary Hirotaka Ono, an old acquaintance of mine, was waiting for us at the embassy. We knew each other from my time working at the

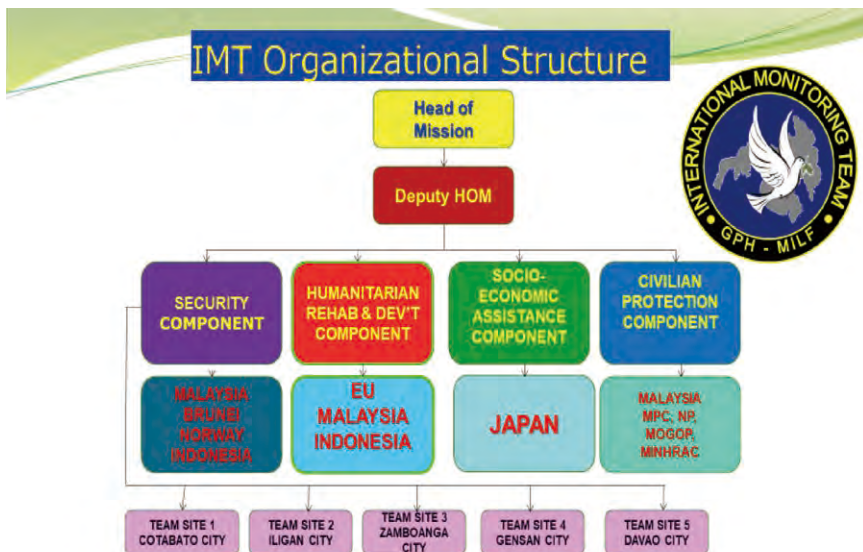


Those working at IMT-6 headquarters.
The author is second from the right in the front row

JICA Philippines Office from 1994 to 1998. He's fluent at Tagalog and knows everything there is to know about the Philippines. There would be no one who I could count on more than him as I began my work at the IMT. After receiving a briefing from Ono and Kikuchi on what my work at the IMT would be like, we all went to a Japanese restaurant and toasted one another with *San Miguel*, the local Philippine beer. Filled with hope and a bit of uneasiness about the new duties I would take on in Cotabato and Manila, I drank quite a lot that night.

The Composition of the IMT

The IMT is composed of four components: "ceasefire monitoring" (overseen by Malaysia, Brunei, Libya, Norway, and Indonesia); "humanitarian assistance" (overseen by the EU); "socio-economic assistance" (overseen by Japan); and "civilian protection." This last component is the responsibility of Malaysia and Indonesia in coordination with four NGOs: Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), the Mindanao Human Rights Action Center (MinHRAC), the Mindanao's People Caucus (MPC), and the Muslim Organization of Government and Other Professionals (MOGOP). A month after I was appointed senior advisor for socio-economic assistance in December 2010, the EU dispatched two women to the humanitarian assistance component.



The structure of the Mindanao International Monitoring Team

The IMT has established five “team sites” within Mindanao. Team Site 1 (Cotabato) is headed by Brunei, Team Site 2 (Iligan) is headed by Libya, Team Sites 3 (Zamboanga) and 4 (General Santos) are headed by Malaysia, and Team Site 5 (Davao) is headed by Indonesia. These team sites are primarily involved in ceasefire monitoring and each consists of five to ten personnel. IMT Headquarters in Cotabato is in charge of all four components and as such has personnel from each participating country (eight Malaysians, one Bruneian, two Norwegians, two Japanese, and two from the EU for a total of fifteen staff). Combined with the five team sites, there are a total of sixty-seven IMT personnel carrying out monitoring activities within the areas affected by the Mindanao conflict.

IMT Head of Mission

The IMT is organized along the lines of a military unit. The head of mission is at the head of the hierarchy, followed by the deputy head of mission and director-general, and then finally each of the IMT’s components. Each component has a designated representative, and I was appointed to that position for the socio-economic assistance component. Each component is required to report on its activities to the head of mission who in turn gathers these activity reports and submits them to the Philippine government and MILF’s peace negotiation teams on a monthly basis. IMT Headquarters and each team site are also required to summarize and log their actions on a daily basis.

Because the IMT operates as a military unit, it is very strict when it comes to scheduling and following regulations. Breakfast is served at seven o’clock sharp every morning, with lunch at noon and dinner at six o’clock. The morning briefing meeting is held at eight o’clock immediately following breakfast. During this meeting the officer of the day gives a report on any incidents and cases that arose in the previous twenty-four hours and lays out each component’s activities and plans for the day.

There is an unspoken rule at the IMT to always be ten minutes early. The morning briefing meeting may start at eight, but everyone will have already arrived by 7:50 and be waiting for the head of mission. The head of mission serves as the IMT’s clock. The morning meeting starts when he arrives, even if that happens to be before eight.

One day, I arrived at the IMT’s parking lot at 5:50, ready to leave for dinner

at six, only to find it completely deserted. It turned out that the head of mission had arrived at 5:45, so that's when everybody left. It speaks to the military nature of the team that the head of mission is the center of everything, the yardstick that everything goes by. I worked under three heads of mission during the two years that I was at the IMT: Major General Baharom, Major General Mahdi, and Major General Rahim. These were the fifth through seventh heads of mission for the IMT and all three were professional soldiers who had worked their way up through the ranks. They were also all men with strong personalities.

Head of Mission Baharom was a fan of riding bicycles, a common activity for Malaysian soldiers. He bought a mountain bike at a store in Cota-bato and would use it to go touring on the weekends. I hadn't ridden a bicycle since junior high school, but I had the owner of the store sell me his high-quality mountain bike after being cajoled into it by a Malaysian military doctor. It was not an inexpensive transaction. Every day after dinner, Baharom and the others would absorb themselves in maintaining and polishing their beloved bicycles in preparation for their weekend touring. I followed their example and joined them in diligently polishing my bicycle. To tell the truth, I had felt lonely when I first arrived at the IMT. English is used as the team's working language, but most of the personnel at the IMT are from Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia and could communicate in a common language called Bahasa. I felt a sense of loneliness outside of work hours as I would often be the only one in a given group who didn't understand Bahasa and was thus excluded from conversations. I referred to this feeling as being "alone in a group." Fortunately, bicycles provided a world where language wasn't needed. I greatly enjoyed riding my bicycle at the IMT as I didn't feel any loneliness while with the others.

Another Head of Mission, Mahdi, was a major general in the army but also an attorney. He always had a book under his arm, and he'd take it out and read whenever an opportunity presented itself. He seemed more like a college professor in his appearance. Thinking that he must have somehow become a professional soldier by mistake, I once asked him why he had joined the military. In response, he actually told me that it had been some kind of mistake, although he wouldn't say just what that mistake had been. Joining the military seems to have been the right choice for him in the end, however. One day, after dinner, we were all talking about how we spent our weekends back home. Mahdi began talking about how he

would often go with his family to a shopping mall. Because his wife and daughter would take so much time shopping, he would go to the mall's Starbucks to drink coffee and read as he waited for them. As he related the story, a quite nostalgic look came across his face.

The next day, I left for Manila. When I returned to Cotabato a few days later, my eyes went wide. Somehow, "Starbucks" had opened a branch within the IMT compound. Talking to the soldier on duty that day, I learned that the enlisted men at the compound had placed sofas and tables in an empty part of the compound and painted the famous Starbucks logo on the wall, adding "Cotabato" below it. They had wanted to make what the general had talked about that night a reality. I was deeply touched by the latent power showed by these soldiers, their ability to tap into the feelings of a commander they respected and then immediately bring his dream into existence. Unfortunately, the menu was limited: all this "Starbucks" had on its menu was instant coffee and banana chips. And all its kitchen would provide was Filipino stir-fried noodles.

"Soldier" is the most suitable word to describe another Head of Mission I worked under MajGen. Rahim. He often spoke of his experiences as a young man fighting communists in Malaysia, spending his days deep in the jungles of Borneo leading a squad of ten men and engaging in hit-and-run tactics when they encountered guerillas. He was very proud of the fact that Malaysia was the only country to have successfully wiped out its communist insurgency. He was respected, not just within the IMT but also by the Philippine government and MILF, as a man who led from the front.



At the café inside IMT headquarters. The author is at the far left. The others are members of the Malaysian detachment.

As mentioned earlier, the officer of the day reports on each component's activities and plans at the daily morning briefing meeting, something that would usually take about half an hour. During MajGen. Rahim's time as head of mission, this briefing would be followed by a daily lecture. While it was very impressive that he was able to prepare a lecture on a different topic every day, I would notice pained expressions creeping on to my colleagues' faces as the lecture slowly dragged past fifteen minutes, something that the general paid no attention to.

Based on military top-down leadership and management system, those Major Generals were always taking care of coordinating with all contingents from each member countries of IMT composed of military officers and civilian personnel to lead. I learned lots of things from them as good and trustworthy leaders.

The Samurai Colonel

During my first morning at the IMT, the Malaysian NCO in charge of administration asked me to give him "my rank." I, of course, held no military rank. The closest thing I had was my status as a first secretary at the Japanese embassy in Manila and my former position as a JICA division director in charge of the Philippines. But I figured that neither "first secretary" nor "division director" would mean anything to him. I could tell that he was uncertain about how to deal with me. Remembering that the components' designated representatives had been ranked alongside the chief of staff on the IMT's organizational chart, I suddenly told him "I'm a colonel." He looked relieved by my answer and said "Yes, sir, Col. Ochiai!" He then saluted and walked away. I've been known as a "colonel" in Mindanao ever since. When I told this story to Colonel Yuki Matsuzaki, the military attaché at the Japanese embassy, the next time I was in Manila, he laughed and then scolded me, telling me that civilians can't just claim to hold military ranks. But the deed was done. It was accepted within the IMT as a convenient measure to make things easier for a Japanese civilian to survive within an international organization that was largely military in nature.

One night after dinner, Col. Kaili, one of the Malaysian members of the IMT, asked me if I was a *samurai*. I answered that "There are no longer any *samurai* in Japan, but my ancestors on my mother's side were *samurai*. They served a lord named Shingen Takeda." The colonel then asked me

if *samurai* were able to walk on water or make themselves disappear in thin air. He apparently had *samurai* confused with *ninja*. He also wanted to know if *samurai* could pull absolutely anything out of their pockets or if they had large doors that they could use to travel anywhere. So, our conversation had moved on from *ninja* to Doraemon (a popular Japanese cartoon character).

Malaysia has seen Japan as a model for national development since Prime Minister Mahathir embarked on his “Look East Policy” in the 1980s. This man had learned about Japan while attending military school, but things had obviously gotten confused somewhere along the line. But as it would have taken too much effort to correct everything he said, I ended up playing the role of a *samurai* at the IMT. The IMT personnel believed that the ideal soldier was a man who was pure, just, and strong. And they gave this figure the label of “*samurai*.” Every day I was forced to eat extremely spicy curry with the words “You’re a *samurai* so you should have no problem eating this, right?”

One day, as I was participating in “Bike for Peace 2011,” a bicycle race in Cotabato, my mountain bike got a flat tire. I had just reached the point in the race where the route enters a long, steep stretch that passes over a mountain. The flat tire thus came as a relief as it meant that I could retire from the race without losing any face. I called IMT Headquarters and told them to send a pickup truck to come get me. But when the truck arrived, there was a replacement bicycle tube lying in the back with a message attached: “Go SAMURAI Go!!” I thus ended up finishing the



A letter of SAMURAI of Chinese Character, created to commemorate the author when he left the IMT, it is still hanging at IMT headquarters.



A participant in the Bike for Peace race

race. Whenever I participated in competitive events like this, I would be given the honor of having been the “best of the Japanese participants.” It goes without saying that I was also the only Japanese participant.

It was quite tough playing the role of a samurai. But I hope that I was able to display some of the pure, just, and strong spirit of the Japanese people to not just the military men of the IMT but also to the Bangsamoro people and MILF soldiers.

JICA has continued to maintain a presence in the IMT. Masafumi Nagaishi was the first to be sent. Since then, I and eight other brave individuals have been dispatched to the Mindanao conflict region for terms of two to four years: Tomonori Kikuchi, Yusuke Mori, Kei Fukunaga, Takayuki Nakagawa, Tomoyuki Tada, Hiroyuki Kawamoto, Yosuke Tamabayashi, and Ryusuke Ikeda. Each and every day of the two years I spent at the IMT working with the Philippine military and MILF was exciting.

Together We Make It Happen

In October 2011, an armed conflict between the Philippine military and BIAF (the MILF’s military organization) broke out in Payao, Zamboanga Sibugay, a municipality located on the Zamboanga Peninsula in western Mindanao. This conflict continued sporadically for ten days before culminating in an aerial bombardment by the Philippine military. The fighting resulted in many casualties on both sides and came in the wake of another terrible incident: eight hours of combat in the municipality of Al-Barka on Basilan Island that left nineteen Filipino soldiers and five BIAF fighters dead. Both the Philippine military and MILF protested that the other side had been the one to break the ceasefire. The MILF asserted that the military had broken it by entering territory under MILF control without giving prior notice and had engaging in military activities there. The military claimed that it had been ambushed by the MILF while executing an arrest warrant for murder against Dan Asnawi, deputy base commander of MILF 114th Base Command. The fighting in Payao and Al-Barka ended up displacing more than 20,000 people.

As the media began to report on just how serious the two clashes had been, some Filipino legislators called for an immediate end to peace negotiations with the MILF and the beginning of all-out war. While it seemed for a tense, brief time that the peace negotiations might break down and

the country would be plunged back into armed conflict, President Benigno Aquino III's declaration of "All-Out Justice" managed to avert the crisis.

As the fighting dragged on and many people were forced to flee their homes, the Philippine media and public demanded that the IMT make an appearance: "Where's the IMT!?" "The IMT needs to head to the front immediately and stop the fighting!" However, heading to active battlefields to demand that combatants put down their weapons is not the role of the IMT. The IMT was created to "monitor" the ceasefire agreement and the state of development undertaken for rehabilitation. It has neither the firepower nor the authority to intervene in an armed clash between the Philippine military and MILF. It does not carry weapons and is also not allowed to investigate the cause of a given confrontation in the absence of a declaration by one or both parties' ceasefire monitoring teams that a violation of the ceasefire has occurred. The IMT has the important role of investigating what happened at the location of an alleged ceasefire violation and then reporting on its findings to both parties' peace negotiators. It is a unique organization that is different from UN peacekeepers.

Ultimately an IMT-led "on-site verification and inspection team" was dispatched to the site of the fighting. This meant travelling the nine hours by car from the IMT's headquarters in Cotabato to Zamboanga (located on the western tip of Mindanao) followed by another two hours by ferry. The trip thus took half a day each way. This inspection was the largest-scale effort in the history of the IMT and involved all four of the team's components: ceasefire monitoring, civilian protection, humanitarian assistance, and socio-economic assistance. We were making our best efforts with IMT



The car ferry to Basilan Island. It evidently used to operate in the Seto Inland Sea as the words "Teshima – Shodoshima" have been painted over in white.

motto as “Together we make it happen”.

The ceasefire monitoring component, made up of military personnel, gathers information from those involved to ascertain the accuracy of the assertions put forward by the two parties in their formal written protests concerning the ceasefire violation. The civilian protection component determines whether or not residents suffered injuries during or following the fighting. The humanitarian assistance component gathers information on the situation regarding internal displaced persons and their needs and also investigates whether any violations of international human rights law had been committed against either combatants or residents. The socio-economic assistance component (the component that Japan oversees) investigates the local socio-economic situation to determine the need for assistance.

The municipality of Al-Barka is located about seventy kilometers from the provincial capital of Isabela in a location that is difficult to reach. It is far from any of the major roads on the island and requires travelling along “roads” that seem more theoretical than real. The trip takes three hours and would be impossible without four-wheel drive vehicles. When we arrived, the site of the fighting was still covered with shell casings and bloodstains. The many palm trees in the area were marked with countless bullet holes and the presence of fresh blood was overwhelming. It was the first time in my life that I smelled the scent of blood.

The municipality was located in an area under complete MILF control. Al-Barka had only been split off from the neighboring municipality of Tipo-Tipo in 2006 and at the time of our visit was still without a city hall. There was an extreme shortage of elementary schools and clinics. Many of the town’s children attended the local madrassa (Islamic religious school) and the residents often had neither the time nor money to visit a clinic. Unless they were suffering from a truly serious illness, they wouldn’t visit the hospital in the next town over. I confirmed that Al-Barka would require assistance in truly fundamental areas – health, education, social welfare, and infrastructure – if the daily lives of its many residents living below the poverty line were to be improved.

The Invisible Power of the IMT

Was the armed conflict that left a total of twenty-four dead a violation of

the ceasefire agreement as both sides claimed? It would have required gathering a large amount of testimony and evidence to confirm their allegations and the security component's investigation was unable to adequately interview those involved. Even so, the findings of the on-site investigation were compiled into a report and submitted to the Philippine government and MILF's peace panels. The report was based on the facts (testimony, evidence, data, etc.) that the team had been able to gather in the limited amount of time that the IMT had had to investigate. The question of what was to be done with the information contained in the report was left to the judgment of the two teams of negotiators. The job of the IMT is merely to confirm facts, not probe into the truth. That is the limit of the IMT's authority.

In peacekeeping operations (PKO) as primarily carried out by the UN, peacekeepers carry weapons for the protection of both themselves and local residents, weapons that they are authorized to use in certain circumstances. They are also granted a degree of authority to intervene to keep the peace. By comparison, the IMT is unarmed and only has limited authority as ceasefire monitors. And yet, this unarmed ceasefire monitoring group has an unseen but strong deterrent power that is more effective than one might think.

When I went into the field with the Malaysian soldiers of the security component for the first time, I felt uneasy when I saw that they were unarmed. They did not appear like the kind of imposing ceasefire monitoring groups that I had seen on TV and in movies. But when we arrived,



An IMT ceasefire monitoring team. Head of Mission Mahdi is standing to the left of the author (second from the right). Everyone is unarmed. In the middle is Deputy Base Commander Asnawi of the BIAF.

I saw that local leaders, the Philippine military, and BIAF commanders all treated the IMT with deference. I wondered where this invisible but almost intimidating sense of authority came from.

At the time of the IMT's creation, there were several hundred violations of the ceasefire every year. Armed confrontations were a constant and common occurrence. But since the IMT's arrival, these violations have fallen dramatically and now number in the single digits. This change shows that the Philippines government and MILF – the two parties to the Mindanao conflict – were quite aware that the IMT represents the international community. When one was watching, so was the other. Both sides were also aware that should something happen to a member of the IMT, it could potentially cause them diplomatic problems that would negatively affect their position and the peace negotiations severely. Once I'd come to understand the situation, I was able to engage in my work with a somewhat strange feeling of safety that came from being under the protection of both parties to the conflict. The IMT's unseen power creates a subtle sense of trust and tension between the Philippine government and MILF.

Section 4 The Government of the Philippines-MILF Joint Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities

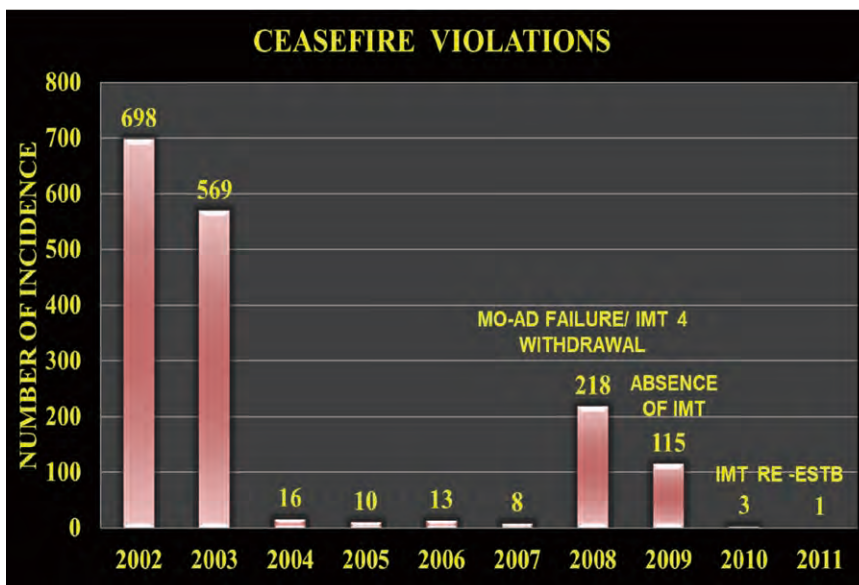
The Philippine government and the MILF formed the Joint Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) in 1996 to serve as a mutual ceasefire monitoring mechanism. Both chief secretariats of the CCCH worked long and hard for the Bangsamoro peace process. Unfortunately, both men passed away before they could witness its resolution.

The Effectiveness of Ceasefire Monitoring

The Mindanao Package that the Koizumi government put forward in 2001 was the product of a markedly different era from that of J-BIRD, the new Mindanao support program launched by the first Shinzo Abe government in 2006. The peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF had made slow but certain progress during the four years that I was stationed in Jordan and the Japanese government and JICA had decided to take a more proactive stance in their support for Mindanao.

When the Philippine government and the MILF entered into peace negotiations in 1996, they also concluded the “Agreement for the General Cessation of Hostilities between the GRP and the MILF.” The CCCH was established as the mechanism through which they could jointly monitor this ceasefire. This ceasefire agreement was rendered null and void in 1998, however, when the Estrada administration embarked on its all-out war against the MILF. While the Arroyo administration had managed to restore the ceasefire agreement after taking office in 2001, there were still a total of 698 military acts in violation of that agreement (by both sides) in 2002 and 569 in 2003. The parties realized that there was a limit to what their monitoring could accomplish and felt there was a need for third party monitoring mechanism. This led to the creation of the largely Malaysian-led IMT in 2004 through the intercession of the OIC.

The IMT originally consisted of Malaysia, Brunei, and Libya, all countries with majority Muslim populations. They dispatched elite units to monitor the ceasefire in Mindanao. The result was a remarkable fall in the number of violations. There were only sixteen in 2004, ten in 2005, and thirteen in 2006. While this number would surpass two hundred in 2008 due to outbreak of armed conflict (something that will be discussed later), there have only been one to three violations a year since 2010.



Data on Ceasefire Violations (Credit: IMT)

MILF-CCCH Chief Secretariat Rasid

The Philippine government and MILF jointly established the CCCH to monitor their ceasefire agreement. When an alleged violation of the ceasefire occurs, the members of the CCCH's two monitoring committees meet and establish a Joint CCCH (JCCCH). It is also the job of the IMT to become involved in incidents the JCCCH is discussing and to provide mediation and investigate.

I met MILF-CCCH Chief Secretariat Rasid Ladiasan for the first time in March 2007 while I was visiting IMT Headquarters in Cotabato. There had been many cases of the Philippine military entering areas under MILF control without permission or prior notice at the time, and he was visiting the IMT to explain the situation. Rasid was a man in his mid-thirties. He had grown up in Datu Piang in central Mindanao, an area that saw heavy fighting, but ultimately left for Cotabato to escape it. He had gone to work for the ARMM regional government after graduating from college.

He had an affable nature and was always smiling and telling jokes. But when he was there at the IMT, eloquently and passionately protesting incidents where the Philippines military entered barangays in MILF-controlled territory and scared the inhabitants, he was every part the Bangsamoro soldier, even if he did not carry a gun. I could feel Rasid's passion. He was still young, a member of the third generation of the Bangsamoro conflict. It would be people like him who would become the leaders of the new Bangsamoro government when it was founded and lead the Bangsamoro people into a brighter future.

After that first meeting, I would call on him at the MILF-CCCH's office



MILF-CCCH Chief Secretariat Rasid Ladiasan (front) and MILF-CCCH Chairman Sayeed Sihek

whenever I was in Cotabato. He taught me about the history, culture, customs, norms, politics, and economics of the Bangsamoro so that I could understand the true nature of their suffering and why they fought. The time I spent sitting with him and drinking Japanese tea (which he had acquired somewhere) was the most pleasant that I would spend during my trips to Cotabato. I think that if I had never met Rasid, I would likely never have come to understand the essence of the Bangsamoro conflict or been able to accept what it is that motivates the Bangsamoro people to risk their lives fighting.

Rasid had a young daughter named Heisei. When he first told me that, I assumed that it was a Muslim girls' name. I didn't think that it was derived from the Japanese name for the era from 1989 to 2019. I only made the connection when he told me that "Her name comes from Japanese." Rasid was both a Bangsamoro fighter and a father, and his earnest desire for peace, for the Mindanao conflict to have ended by the time his daughter was old enough to understand what was going on around her, came across to me eloquently. For me, "Heisei," which means achieving peace, personally represented less an era of peace than the time when my leisurely university days had come to an end and I'd been thrown into the job-hunting and earning a living. But every time I visited Rasid's home and saw little Heisei running around, I associated the word "Heisei" with peace just a little more. And I came to feel that, as a Japanese who had benefited from the peaceful Heisei period, I needed to think more seriously about peace in the world.

MILF Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim and Chief Negotiator Chaiman Mohager Iqbal represent the first generation of the Bangsamoro conflict, but there were also those of the third generation like Rasid who threw themselves into the conflict. Men like MILF Peace Panel Secretariat Member Mike Pasigan, Peace Panel Member Mohajirin Ali, BIAF General Staff Member Basir Carim, BIAF Legal Advisor, Attorney Naguib Sinarimbo, and Bangsamoro Development Agency Executive Director Mohammad Yacob. I was greatly moved by these men's devotion to the Bangsamoro people. In fact, that's what has driven me to continue to be involved in providing assistance to Mindanao. When I think of how to support Mindanao, I picture the faces of the Bangsamoro people, including these men. It may have been through work, but ever since meeting them, I've told myself that I, too, need to approach them with the same willingness to risk my life that they've shown.

GPH-CCCH Chief Secretariat Sol

Major Carlos T. Sol, the then-Chief Secretariat of the Government of the Philippines CCCH (GPH-CCCH), was an active duty army officer. He grew up in Alamada in central Mindanao. As information on the security situation in Mindanao is sent to the GPH-CCCH, I would regularly visit him at his office to find out what was going on.

Until I began my work with the IMT, I had believed the stereotype that militaries were top-down organizations where the orders of one's superiors were absolute. But working and living alongside the Malaysian military personnel of the IMT twenty-four hours a day caused me to question that and to suspect that things might actually be a little different. Meeting with Maj. Sol and learning about the movements of the Philippine army battalions and companies stationed across Mindanao, I learned that units on the ground often respond to their local situations by exercising their judgment as to what the most appropriate actions to take were. The 6th Infantry Division stationed near-by Awang Airport may determine broad plans at the strategic level, but local commanders have broad discretion as to how those strategies are to be implemented.

The Philippine military has its own unique history and has been strongly influenced by the American military which provides it with assistance. The officer class of the Philippine military often studies at American military academies. While Maj. Sol did not explain it to me using this specific term, he seems to have integrated the concept of the OODA Loop



GPH-CCCH Chief Secretariat Maj. Carlos T. Sol



The MILF-CCCH has submitted a complaint to the GPH-CCCH claiming there has been a ceasefire violation. Both have been invited to IMT headquarters to gather more information on the incident.

(a strategic theory used by the American military) into his work with the GPH-CCCH.

At first glance, the strategic thinking behind the loop – Observe, Orient, Decide, Act – appears similar to the philosophy of the PDCA Cycle – Plan, Do, Check, Act – adopted by JICA. This is deceiving, however. Under PDCA, you create plans, execute them, and then briefly pause to evaluate the results and make improvements before beginning the cycle again. The OODA Loop, however, is based on the premise that a situation will always be changing. The idea that plans will be decided upon and implemented on the fly is built into its thinking. The PDCA Cycle is most appropriate for spheres where things can be crafted with minute precision.

Naturally, peacebuilding through development assistance is not military in nature. But it occurred to me that the philosophy behind the OODA Loop could be useful for carrying out aid operations under circumstances like those presented by the Mindanao peace process where unstable political and security situations meant that adaptation was key. I became familiar with the OODA Loop through my conversations with Maj. Sol and sometimes seeing him apply it. And I was well familiar with the PDCA Cycle from my experiences working at JICA. As I went through my days at the IMT, it seemed to me that by using the two in tandem, it would likely be possible to act in accordance with a given situation, respond to largely unexpected circumstances, and reduce the likelihood of failure.

Rasid passed away on May 11, 2016 of illness, as did Maj. Sol on June 30, 2018. Both died without seeing the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law and the creation of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (to say nothing of the arrival of the Bangsamoro government). I think that's truly unfortunate.

I think of these two men whenever I'm involved in assistance to Mindanao. Are we coming closer to their dream of a new world for the Bangsamoro? Is what I'm doing at JICA the right thing? I always ask them that in my mind.

Section 5 The Start of Armed Conflict

The peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF continued as the IMT went about its work monitoring their ceasefire. While the progress made in these negotiations seemed to ebb and flow, the two sides did manage to conclude one part of a peace agreement, the “Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain.” Just as this agreement was to go into effect, however, the Philippine Supreme Court issued an injunction.

The Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain

While the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF that were begun by the Ramos administration in 1997 were broken off by the Estrada administration, they were restarted by President Arroyo in 2001 with the Malaysian government serving as mediators. By August 2008, the two sides had finally agreed upon the “Memorandum of Agreement on the Muslim Ancestral Domain” (MOA-AD), one part of a peace agreement.

Representatives of the Philippine government and the MILF gathered in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur for the signing of the agreement, with representatives of the IMT nations of Malaysia, Brunei, Libya, and Japan present to act as witnesses. Among the Japanese delegation was JICA Senior Advisor on Peacebuilding Sachiko Ishikawa. Just before the signing took place, however, the Philippine Supreme Court issued an injunction against the agreement. North Cotabato Governor Piñol, Zamboanga Mayor Lobregat, and others had filed suit, arguing that the MOA-AD was unconstitutional on the grounds that its contents and the process through which it had been decided had violated the “people’s right to information” as enshrined in the Philippine constitution.

There’s no question that the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF had taken place in secrecy. The government had not reported on their actions to Congress as would have been proper and the public had not been informed of what was happening. The Supreme Court judged that this peace agreement between the government and an anti-government organization had not been reached in a manner that treated Congress and the Philippine people with respect and that this failure had violated their constitutional right to be informed of “of all

[the government's] transactions involving public interest." The Supreme Court thus formally ruled the MOA-AD to be unconstitutional, sending the peace negotiations back to zero.

Senior Advisor Ishikawa, who had travelled to Malaysia to become a living witness to the reaching of a peace agreement, didn't hide her anger and disappointment when she spoke with me in Japan after her return: "It was truly shocking."

It goes without saying that she was hardly the only person angry at these developments. Among those outraged were Abdullah Macapaar ("Commander Bravo"), commander of the MILF 110th Division in Lanao del Norte, and Ameril Umbra Kato ("Commander Kato"), commander of the MILF 107th Division in central Maguindanao. In October 2008, the units under their command rose up and attacked nearby Philippine army garrisons.

With these actions, the ceasefire agreement between the Philippine government and the MILF was effectively discarded and the two sides returned to a state of armed conflict. As the fighting grew more serious by the day, there were concerns that the IMT could no longer safely carry out its activities. The Malaysian and Bruneian contingents returned home. The Libyan delegation at IMT Team Site 2 (Iligan) in Northern Mindanao was under strict orders from Gaddafi to not return home until a peace agreement had been concluded so decided to stay at IMT Headquarters in Cotabato city instead.

Go Forward

With the decision by Malaysia and Brunei to withdraw their units, the IMT had effectively disbanded. JICA made a very different decision than those nations, however. After hearing reports on the situation at JICA headquarters, President Ogata immediately rejected any withdrawal, saying "Go forward." JICA officials were bewildered by her words, having assumed that JICA would join the others in pulling out. As the division director in charge of the Philippines, I was one of those present in the president's office as she made her decision and I was overwhelmed by her decisiveness. She then went further, saying "Let's send additional person. It's a valuable opportunity to experience local conditions firsthand, so send someone young." The official from the Personnel Department couldn't

conceal his confusion at the sudden decision to increase the number of people we had in Mindanao.

Yusuke Mori of the Rural Development Department was the one tapped for the job. Mori was a little over thirty and had never been sent overseas before. Having never overseen any project related to the Philippines, he was at a complete loss. When he went to see President Ogata to pay his respects before leaving, she saw him off with only a few brief words: "Fruit in the Philippines is delicious, especially the bananas. Do your best." It was a very anti-climactic meeting. I was present and had expected President Ogata to give him some kind of grand speech. But her approach meant that the young man had no unnecessary weight placed on his shoulders and Mori departed from Tokyo with an easygoing expression on his face. I later heard that he had started a blog to show what things were like in the Philippines. And I had to laugh when I saw the blog's title: written across the top in a large font were the words "The Banana Reports." I sent a message of encouragement, telling him that things might be tough but that he should do his best and to make sure to eat a banana every day.

JICA would not have become as involved in the resolution of the Mindanao conflict as it eventually did without President Ogata's important decisions. And we would never have achieved such remarkable accomplishments. She was the one who began JICA's involvement in Mindanao. I did nothing more than frantically try to keep up with her. Sadly, she passed away in 2019, having retired from JICA in 2012.



IMT Member Yusuke Mori (left) with an IMT medic

The International Contact Group

Japan thus continued its socio-economic assistance activities in Mindanao, now with two JICA staff members in accordance with President Ogata's wishes. I frequently travelled to Manila and Cotabato during this period.

While the armed conflict finally died down in early 2009, the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and MILF remained suspended. The MILF's distrust of the government had reached a peak and it would be difficult to restart negotiations under the system that had been used thus far. But this didn't mean that either side had lost their desire to continue negotiating. The problem was how to create a framework under which the negotiations wouldn't collapse again. It was thus seen as necessary to involve a third-party group in the negotiations in addition to Malaysia (which had already been serving as mediator) so that they could act as an observer and occasionally provide advice. The two sides agreed to the creation of the International Contact Group (ICG) to serve as this third-party group.

The ICG was formed in September 2009 with representatives from Britain, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Japan, the Asia Foundation, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Muhammadiyah, and Conciliation Resources. It attended the peace negotiations held in Kuala Lumpur as observers and focused on assisting the negotiation teams by providing advice when appropriate. Two members of the ICG, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, were important members of the OIC and had wanted to be involved in the peace negotiations. The MILF had also requested the presence of



Formal peace negotiations between the Philippine government and MILF in Kuala Lumpur. The government negotiators sit on the right, the MILF on the left. The Malaysian mediators sit in the center.

Britain as they felt that there was much to be learned from the country's experience negotiating with the IRA and granting autonomy to Scotland. Scotland was seen as a concrete example of the kind of highly autonomous government that the MILF hoped to create.

Japan was already actively contributing to peace for the Bangsamoro through its participation in the IMT and J-BIRD, its independent peace assistance initiative. According to Michael Mastura, a member of the MILF negotiating team and a former Philippine congressman, both the Philippine government and MILF had a special level of trust in Japan and high hopes for its involvement. This was despite Japan being a non-Muslim nation with no history of dealing with domestic separatist forces. There's no question that Mastura's pro-Japanese inclinations were a factor in Japan receiving this opportunity to participate in the planning of peace for the Bangsamoro.

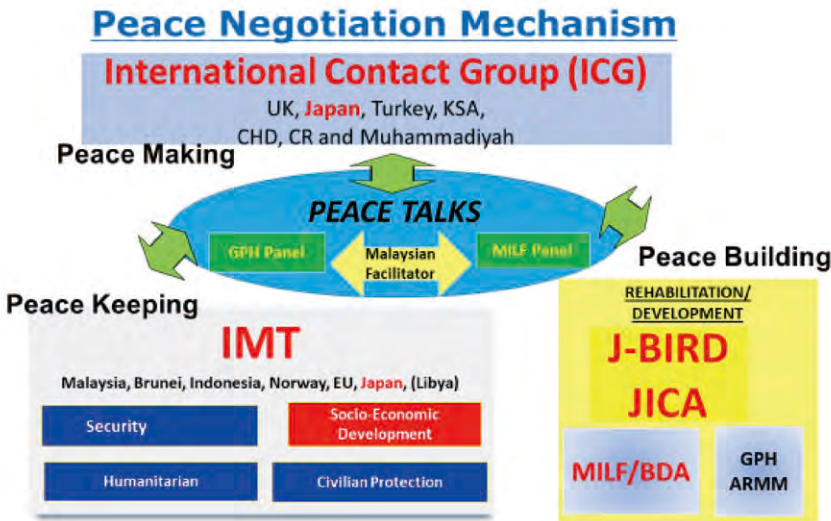
Sultan Kudarat, an ancestor of Mastura, appears in the records of a survey of Mindanao carried out by the English explorer Thomas Forrest from 1774 to 1776. He was a famous figure, a Muslim feudal lord who ruled over central Mindanao. Today, there is a province named after him there. The Mastura family descends from him, and Michael is the head of the family. He's a lawyer and has worked since he was a young man to improve the status of Bangsamoro and bring it increased self-determination. He is also a powerful politician who capably represented his local district in Congress.

An Islamic primary and secondary school that Mastura is involved with received assistance through the Japanese embassy's grass-roots grant aid program. It was through this work that I first got to know the Mastura family better. I often visited his home in Cotabato where I enjoyed his wife's homemade cooking as he taught me various things about the Bangsamoro such as their history, culture, politics, and economy. The history of the rise of the Mastura family and the difficulties that followed struck me as being almost a distillation of the current state of the Bangsamoro and the challenges facing them. At some point, our relationship became that of a teacher of history and politics and his student. And as I continued to receive these lessons in the Mastura family library, surrounded by the unique and pleasant scent given off by old books, he came to almost treat me as if I were a son-in-law. And I increasingly came to have stronger feelings about the Bangsamoro.

Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, Peacebuilding

An envoy or secretary from the Japanese embassy in Manila’s political affairs section was present at every meeting of the Kuala Lumpur peace negotiations as part of the ICG. The ICG also frequently met with the negotiating teams for the Philippine government and MILF in Manila to provide them with appropriate advice on various elements of the negotiations. The ICG came to be seen as a group whose members were united in their desire for permanent peace in Mindanao in a way that transcended their nationalities and NGO affiliations.

Japan has been actively involved in the political process through its socio-economic development assistance. It has arranged a setup where it comprehensively contributes to peace and stability in Mindanao through a three-pronged approach. It participates in peacekeeping through the military framework of the IMT, in peacemaking through the political framework of the ICG, and in peacebuilding through the developmental framework of J-BIRD. The Japanese personnel at the IMT travel throughout the regions affected by the Mindanao conflict to conduct fieldwork and this gives them a full understanding of what the actual situation on the ground is and what needs to be done. This allows them to discover and influence projects for JICA’s J-BIRD initiative. The assistance projects



The structure of Mindanao Peace Process

that JICA carries out means that when staff from the Japanese embassy in Manila attend the negotiations, the advice they give to the conflict parties has more weight behind it. The parties know that these staff members have actual knowledge of local conditions. The foreign ministry and JICA's three-pronged approach for providing support for peace in Mindanao has a synergistic affect, maximizing the effectiveness of each role.

The foreign ministry (through the Japanese embassy) is present as an ICG observer at each session of the Kuala Lumpur peace negotiations and Japan plays an important role in creating a relationship of trust between the parties at the negotiations. When the negotiations broke down in 2008 following the resumption of armed conflict, Japan continued to engage in backchannel diplomacy with the conflict parties through the Japanese embassy's political affairs section. Embassy personnel frequently traveled between Manila and Cotabato, maintaining communications between the Philippine government and MILF and working steadily towards the restoration of formal peace negotiations between the two. These efforts led the parties to have an immense trust in Japan and also helped lead to the secret meeting between President Aquino and Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim in Narita, Japan in August 2011.

The Japanese personnel dispatched to the IMT played a significant role in the effective and efficient implementation of Japanese foreign policy and development assistance through their skillful engagement with the Mindanao peace process. JICA members are given appointments as diplomats and then dispatched to serve as the IMT's specialists on socio-economic development by the foreign ministry. These figures serve as a link between JICA and the foreign ministry and are the key to the "All-Japan" framework for engaging with the Mindanao peace process. The peace dividends created through J-BIRD (a joint project of JICA and the Japanese embassy) are used to assist Japan's diplomatic efforts, the political framework for conflict resolution. And J-BIRD became an effective means of maintaining the political peace framework for the Mindanao peace process.

Section 6 Linking Those Fighting

Even if peace negotiations are something undertaken only by the parties to a conflict, it is also important for those in the position of being able to indirectly influence the negotiations to discuss things with one another if

the peace process is to make progress. JICA created the “Consolidation for Peace in Mindanao” (COP) seminars to provide a venue in which this could happen. The Japanese government also provided the venue for the first discussions between the top leaders of the conflict parties.

Consolidation for Peace in Mindanao

Formal peace negotiations continued in Kuala Lumpur between the Philippine government and MILF (with Malaysia serving as mediator). These two parties were not the only one with a stake in or influence over the peace process, however. Since 2006, JICA has invited influential stakeholders in the peace process to gather outside of the Philippines for frank and sometimes heated discussions of how to achieve peace in Mindanao. These COP seminars (co-hosted by the Universiti Sains Malaysia) are an example of “track two” diplomacy. Attendees have included representatives of the ARMM regional government, local government units, religious groups, universities, civic groups, NGOs, and business leaders. This has been a groundbreaking attempt by JICA to serve as part of the mediation activities for peacebuilding.

The key figures behind COP are JICA Senior Advisor Ishikawa and Professor Kamarulzaman Askandar of the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Prof. Kamarulzaman is a leading researcher of the conflicts in Mindanao, southern Thailand, and Aceh Province (Indonesia) and has long been personally involved in mediation efforts. Ishikawa and Kamarulzaman are two long-standing acquaintances and this relationship led JICA to join with USM to help foster peace in Mindanao. They began hosting COP in Penang, Malaysia (near USM) to provide a venue where the conflict parties could gather and hold discussions with important stakeholders.

COP was also motivated by the desire to create a “place for learning” where those involved in the conflicts in Mindanao and southern Thailand could learn from the precedent provided by Aceh. The Aceh conflict resulted in Aceh becoming a highly autonomous province within Indonesia. COP was organized so that the MILF and other stakeholders involved in the ongoing peace process in Mindanao could study the background to and history of the Aceh conflict. Representatives from southern Thailand hoping to begin peace negotiations in the near future also participated.

At every COP, more than fifty participants assemble at a hotel in Penang

and spend four days discussing conflicts in South East Asia from the perspectives of peace, security, governance, justice, and development among others. At the end a declaration is produced, combining the contents of the discussions with whatever commitments the participants are able to make.

COP provides a “track two” venue for peace negotiations, bringing the parties to the conflict together with other concerned parties for discussions outside of the Philippines. By doing so, it creates an extremely effective framework, one where the “bottom-up” approach of development assistance is linked to the “top-down” approach of peace negotiations.

To be completely honest, I at first completely missed the significance of having JICA, a development assistance organization, host this kind of seminar. I was skeptical. Wasn't there something more effective that we could be spending this money on? But I eventually became convinced, as I saw the same participants come year after year and build on their previous discussions, that COP was one of the greatest possible contributions that JICA could make to the peace process given that we were not directly involved in the peace negotiations.

As director of JICA's South East Asia Team 2, I was the one in charge of running COP3 in 2009. As part of this, I did my best to explain the significance of COP to Mitsuru Suemori, the newly appointed managing director of the First Asia Department (and therefore my boss). As would be expected, he had the same doubts about COP that I, myself, had harbored earlier. But I argued passionately that, while the effects of COP on the peace process aren't immediately obvious, they're like body blows. Their impact is indirect but builds up over time. Thankfully, Managing Director Suemori ultimately authorized JICA's continued hosting of COP, saying that “As you said, I think it's significant that JICA hosts this.” I was very relieved when I heard those words. If I hadn't been able to convince him, I don't know how I could have shown my face to Ishikawa or Kamarulzaman. And when I realize that COP6, an important piece in the history of JICA's peacebuilding assistance, would never have come to be without his wise decision, I'm very grateful to Mr. Suemori.

The timing was such that COP3 was held immediately following the rejection of the MOA-AD agreement and the subsequent break down in the formal negotiations between the Philippine government and MILF. By

giving the conflict parties an unofficial venue where they could meet and limiting participants to those involved in the Mindanao conflict, COP3 provided an opportunity for the negotiations to effectively continue within a track two space.

Members of the two negotiating teams sat at the same table and held calm discussions with the other participants. The mood turned ugly when the topic of conversation turned to the issue of rights and justice, however, with the MILF participants continually making heated comments that were met with provocative replies by the Philippine government representatives. Senior Advisor Ishikawa, who had been quietly listening to the exchanges, saw that it was time to act and, with a beaming smile on her face, calmed down both sides and directed the discussion towards more constructive topics. When the participants took a short break, Prof. Kamarulzaman nonchalantly joined the MILF group and spoke with them, sometimes smiling as he did so and other times showing concern.

The actions of the parties away from the table can be as significant as what they do at it. Something COP taught me is that it is vital for third parties to be present at these moments. Providing the venue wasn't the only aspect of COP that had meaning. It also provided us with the ability to influence the conflict parties.



The structure of Consolidation for Peace in Mindanao

COP5, held in January 2012, saw the participation of politicians, a group that had been absent from the earlier sessions. These included Philippine legislators from Mindanao and the governors of the five provinces of the ARMM. When the future Bangsamoro government is created, it will be the politicians who are most influenced and who will naturally be in the position to exert the most influence. The discussions at COP5 focused more on the reality of politics – questions of authority and rights – than they had at earlier COPs. It made me truly realize that creating peace isn't something that can be handled entirely through the theoretical ways written in textbooks on international politics and peacebuilding. It needs to be accompanied by acts that are more akin to cleaning out a gutter.

COP in Hiroshima

COP6 – the “Hiroshima Mindanao Peacebuilding Seminar” – was hosted in Hiroshima in June 2014, shortly after the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) had been reached. This was the first COP to be held at a location other than Penang, Malaysia. In addition to its regular participants, COP6 also saw the attendance of President Aquino and Secretary of Foreign Affairs del Rosario for the Philippines government and Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim for the MILF. They interacted with the numerous attendants involved in the Bangsamoro peace process and participated in discussions about the creation of the Bangsamoro government following the post-agreement transition period. Hiroshima Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki and Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui attended the opening ceremony for the three-day event. Hiroshima serves as a symbol of peace for the Bangsamoro people and it was thus extremely significant that these discussions on the peace that would provide a future for the Bangsamoro were being held there.

We had only three months to prepare for the arrival of more than a hundred important Philippine figures in Hiroshima. JICA had never before hosted this kind of large-scale meeting within Japan, at least not during my time at the agency. Organizing the seminar was largely the work of the Economic Infrastructure Department, South East Asia and Pacific Department, and JICA Philippines Office. JICA's support for Mindanao has always been the work of these three groups, with each playing their designated roles and holding frank discussions on the topic. While we worked together on the hosting of COP6 as always, the scale of the event was unprecedented, and we also received help from those outside of our

departments with an interest in peacebuilding and the Philippines. Many JICA members fully devoted themselves to the massive and complicated work of preparing for and then hosting the seminar. The hosting of COP in Hiroshima was the result of the combined efforts of many people, given despite the short timeframe in which everything needed to be done.

The discussions at COP6 focused on three topics: the socio-economic development of the Bangsamoro, the creation of the Bangsamoro government, and the restoration of public safety. At the end of the seminar, the “Hiroshima Declaration on the Realization of the Bangsamoro” was written on the basis of the discussions held over the previous three days and adopted with the consensus of the participants.

The seminar discussed three topics: (1) socio-economic development of Bangsamoro; (2) establishment of the Autonomous Government of Bangsamoro; and (3) normalization of internal security. First, discussions were heated in the session, “Socio-Economic Development of Bangsamoro,” on the focus of socio-economic development with a view to establishing the Autonomous Government of Bangsamoro. At the heart of the discussion was the progress of the Bangsamoro Development Plan (BDP), being conducted by the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), and socio-economic development with new values. The BDA has made it clear that the plan will benefit all people residing in the Bangsamoro region and that it would ensure consistency with other development plans implemented in parallel with the BDP. Attendees made valuable proposals on the need to revitalize the private sector and the importance of a comprehensive development plan, including indigenous peoples other than just the Moro people. Next, the session on the establishment of the Autonomous Government of Bangsamoro focused on the entry into force of the Bangsamoro Basic Law, which would be the basis of the new autonomous government, and the subsequent establishment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority and its functions. Attendees asked sharp questions and gave good comments about concerns over the future review of the draft basic bill in the House of Representatives of the Philippines, and the demand for the ARMM Autonomous Regional Government to continue its service delivery during the transition period through 2016. In the final session about the “Normalization of Internal Security,” discussions were held on the issue of maintaining security within the Autonomous Government of Bangsamoro, as well as the demobilization, disarming, and return of soldiers to the community. The Independent Police Commission (ICP)

provided a roadmap on how to establish a mechanism for maintaining security within the Autonomous Government, and the Head of the IMT announced that it would focus its role in ensuring security during the transition period. This session reminded me that, in light of Mindanao's special situation, the MILF was not the only target of normalization.

As a result of the discussions over the course of three days, it can be said that the COP's main feature was demonstrated in the following three ways. First, provide the opportunity for a direct discussion between all stakeholders involved in the Mindanao peace, not just the Philippine Government and the MILF. Second, the issues involved in the establishment of the Autonomous Government of Bangsamoro and normalization became clear, and it was an opportunity for all participants to have a common awareness of them. Third, as the hurdles were being overcome, it was possible to confirm the strong will of the participants toward the implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement.

Based on the three-day discussion at the conclusion of the COP6 seminar, the "Hiroshima Declaration on the Realization of Bangsamoro" was adopted as the consensus of the participants. The gist of the Hiroshima Declaration is as follows:

"On June 23-25, 2014, JICA and the Universiti Sains Malaysia co-hosted the Mindanao Peacebuilding Seminar in Hiroshima. Participants of the conference evaluated the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on the Establishment of the Government of Bangsamoro between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on 27 March, and welcomed international support for the establishment of the Government of Bangsamoro in 2016. The participants of the conference recognized that Hiroshima was a symbol of peace, and appreciated the second meeting between President Benigno Aquino III and Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim in Japan. Together with the organizers, they thanked Hiroshima Prefecture, Hiroshima City, and Hiroshima University for the adoption of the Hiroshima Declaration.

(Bangsamoro Socio-Economic Development)

- 1) To stress the importance of "inclusive development" of the Bangsamoro through the proactive participation of all the people residing therein in the sense of unity and reconciliation;
- 2) To support the people of the Bangsamoro to implement the

Bangsamoro Development Plan driven by their own values and needs;

- 3) To mobilize domestic and international support and partnerships for the Bangsamoro, in addressing basic social and economic needs;
- 4) To mainstream gender responsive governance and to incorporate it as an integral part of peace-building and socio-economic development in the Bangsamoro and to provide women with opportunities for their meaningful participation in development;

(Institutionalization of the Bangsamoro Government)

- 1) To welcome and support the timely enactment of the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the establishment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority until a duly elected government assumes its role;
- 2) To uphold the democratic principles, especially fair and equitable participation of all in the establishment of the Bangsamoro Government in 2016;
- 3) To accelerate the establishment of new government institutions of the Bangsamoro and to strengthen their capacity, including the conduct of fair, honest and clean election;
- 4) To enhance and improve the justice system in the Bangsamoro;

(Developments in Normalization)

- 1) To uphold the basic Human Rights principles in the Bangsamoro in accordance with international standards and practices;
- 2) To support the work of the Independent Commission on Policing to



COP6 in Hiroshima (Credit: JICA)



COP6. From left: Professor Kamarulzaman, Chairman Murad, Governor Yuzaki, Foreign Secretary del Rosario, President Aquino, JICA President Tanaka, OPAPP Secretary Deres, Andres, GPH Chief Negotiator Ferrer, MILF Chief Negotiator Iqbal (Credit: JICA)

- ensure the introduction of an appropriate policing in the Bangsamoro;
- 3) To strengthen the confidence-building measures in support of the normalization process;
 - 4) To encourage the international community to support the normalization process to ensure the end-result will benefit all the people in the Bangsamoro.

The items approved in the Hiroshima Declaration were emphasized as important points in the Bangsamoro peace process when the Aquino Administration transitioned to the Duterte Administration.

In this way, by using the Track Two process for peace talks where those involved in conflict and others can meet together for discussions, in a location outside of the Philippines, COP is a highly effective way to link the promotion of development and cooperation from below with peace talks from above.

The First High-Level Meeting between Philippine President Benigno Aquino III and MILF Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim

At 8:45 p.m. on August 4, 2011 (a Thursday), a high-level meeting was held between President Benigno Aquino III and MILF Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim at a hotel near Narita International Airport. Even though fourteen years had passed since the beginning of the peace negotiations with the MILF, this was the first time that a Philippine president met with the MILF chairman. As the meeting was held one-on-one, with only the leader of each side's negotiating team present to take notes, the two men were able to speak to one another frankly. In the statement released following their meeting, the two men agreed to accelerate the peace negotiations and confirmed that a peace agreement would be reached before President Aquino left office.

This meeting took place only two months after the IMT had gone on a state of high alert on June 27 during the previous round of informal negotiations between the two parties. During those negotiations, the Philippine government had seemed unable to produce a counterproposal to a draft peace agreement that the MILF had submitted. Losing their patience, the MILF delegation had stated that "we will not hesitate to return to the mountains if we find the contents of the Philippine government's counterproposal unacceptable." The IMT believed that the outbreak

of serious armed conflict was a potential worst-case scenario of these developments. Despite the government's continued failure to produce a counterproposal, however, the MILF did not leave the negotiations and peace was maintained in Mindanao.

Corazon Aquino, the president's mother, had met with MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari in 1987, when she was president. She had made the bold decision to visit Sulu, Nur Misuari's base of operations, in attempt to restart the peace negotiations that had completely broken down under the previous Ferdinand Marcos administration (1965-1986). The Aquino-Misuari meeting was a major turning point for the peace process and put the negotiations with the MNLF back on track. By meeting with MILF Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim, her son was following in her footsteps. There's no question that his meeting with Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim also represented a major turning point.

Japan was chosen as the site for the meeting and the Philippine government said in their statement that "We give thanks to Japan for providing facilities in accordance with its long-standing commitment to peace." As part of its efforts to facilitate the peace process in Mindanao, the Japanese government had become a member of the ICG, dispatched personnel to the IMT, and engaged in socio-economic development assistance such as J-BIRD through JICA. It was thanks to the Philippine government and MILF's trust in the Japanese government and hope for its future efforts that this historic meeting was able to happen. And it was the Japanese government's continuous involvement in the peace process that had provided the basis for that trust and hope.

The meeting with Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim came about due to the strong desires of President Aquino. The Philippine government negotiating team had initially been opposed to the meeting. Peace negotiations are like a tug of war between the two sets of negotiators. If one tactic doesn't get you anywhere, you try something else. The negotiations with the MILF had been making gradual progress, however, which made the Philippine negotiators feel that holding a high-level meeting without any preliminary agreements in place was an unnecessary risk. If the discussions between the two leaders went badly, that was it. But Aquino's will was unwavering. He wanted to see for himself just what kind of man Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim was and whether he could trust him. And thus, this historic first direct meeting between a Philippine president

and the chairman of the MILF took place.

There was nothing particularly novel about the statement released by the two men following the meeting. Both the acceleration of the timetable for peace negotiations and the declaration that an agreement would be reached during the current presidential administration were normal for this kind of statement. But there can be no question that this face-to-face meeting, the first of its kind in the long history of the peace negotiations with the MILF, helped foster trust between their countrymen, bringing them a little closer after their lengthy adversarial relationship.

This August 2011 meeting in Narita would serve as a great moment for the peace process, one that locked in the course that would ultimately lead to the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro in October 2012 and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in March 2014. In the meantime, however, fierce bargaining continued at the monthly peace negotiations in Kuala Lumpur continued. It was against this backdrop that Japanese Ambassador Toshinao Urabe met with Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim at Camp Darapangan in June 2012 and tried his best to push the peace process forward, telling Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim that “a good plan, bravely executed today, is more important than a perfect plan tomorrow” (a variation on General Patton’s famous words).



The first meeting between President Aquino (right) and Chairman Murad (left)
(Credit: Philippine Government)

Chapter 3: Supporting the Transition to Peace

With the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and MILF making progress, JICA redoubled its efforts in advance of the establishment of the future Bangsamoro government. These new efforts took the form of the SERD-CAAM, CD-CAAM and CCDP. Even though the security situation remained unstable, JICA dispatched Japanese experts to conflict affected area in Mindanao, creating a full-fledged support framework. Despite being at the mercy of local security and political conditions, JICA achieved one accomplishment after another as it assisted its local counterparts. The journey that ultimately resulted in those accomplishments was an extremely difficult one, however.

Section 1 SERD-CAAM Project

JICA has been dispatching staff to the IMT through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2006, and began the SERD-CAAM, or “Study for the Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development in Conflict Affected Areas in Mindanao,” from the beginning of 2007.

At the time of 2007, the Philippine government and MILF were in the midst of peace talks. Although there was a ceasefire agreement, there were sporadically small-scale clashes between the two sides. At this still unstable stage, JICA established a roadmap for peace on the assumption a peace agreement would be reached and a new self-governing government would be formed in the near future, and in order to promote the peace process, JICA sought to help prepare for the future and provide early dividends of peace. To do this, it formulated the “Socio-Economic Development Plan for Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (SEDP).”

In the survey, we conducted consultations with expected beneficiaries and stakeholders on the basic matters essential for understanding and evaluating detailed and comprehensive development demand in the field, mapping the Mindanao Conflict-Affected Areas (CAAM), and formulating regional development plans. Roughly speaking, four surveys were done: (1) social surveys (in depth Barangay Needs Assessment, which includes profiling and development demand surveys of Barangay); (2) experimental projects with the main focus on the development of

small-scale infrastructure (Quick Impact Project; QIP) and small-scale response assistance (ON the Spot Assistant; OSA), (3) Construction of GIS for Mindanao and (4) the formulation of SEDP.

In February 2007, shortly after returning from Jordan, I traveled to Cotabato City for the first time in four years as the Philippine Country Director at JICA Headquarters and met with JICA and Filipino officials working on this survey. A joint research team by Katahira Engineering International and IC-NET Company had already established offices in Cotabato. All members from both companies, including the head of the research team, were professionals in the formulation of regional development plans and had extensive research experience in various countries.

Hiroiyuki Kawamoto, a staff of the Economic Infrastructure Development Department, was in charge of this survey at JICA Headquarters. He was sent to the IMT later, but no one imagined at this point that that would happen. He is well-known within JICA as a passionate man. Born and raised in Hiroshima, he loves the hometown professional baseball team, the Carps, very much. He studied peacebuilding in graduate school in the United Kingdom, worked in the conflict-affected areas of Bosnia and Sri Lanka. However, even this strong man found it difficult to proceed with the SERD-CAAM survey. Kawamoto was forever troubled by the various problems and frictions that arose among the Japanese side and the Philippines. How can the investigation proceed smoothly? How can we overcome the differences between the different requests and demands? Can the survey be completed as planned on schedule? As the final peace agreement had yet to be realized, it was extremely difficult to coordinate and pursue investigations in the midst of mixed speculations of the parties to the conflict and the parties concerned. Kawamoto regularly traveled back and forth between Tokyo and Cotabato, connecting the headquarters with the Philippines Office, the joint team of consultants on the site, the BDA and related organizations on the other side, and IMT's advisor, Nagaishi, gradually moving the survey forward.

I also met Kawamoto several times on the ground in Cotabato and watched him struggle from the side. The survey was completed in November 2009, two years after it began, thanks in part due to the efforts of Kawamoto. The future of the Bangsamoro region drawn by SERD-CAAM determined the direction of BDA's work afterwards.

Section 2 CD-CAAM

From the results of the SERD-CAAM survey, it was clear that the promotion of community development at the village level in the Mindanao conflict-affected area was necessary, and that the importance of BDA as an organization promoting socio-economic development had increased and, at the same time, it was important to strengthen its capabilities. At the request of the Philippine government, JICA undertook the Project for Capacity Development in Conflict Affected Area in Mindanao, or CD-CAAM, from March 2012 to July 2016.

This project aimed to create a system for effective and efficient community development in conflict-affected areas while strengthening the capabilities of BDA, and: (1) accumulate experience and lessons of community development through the implementation of the pilot project and compile practical guidelines; and (2) strengthen the implementation capability of BDA and its ability to coordinate with local governments and relevant ministries and agencies.

The pilot projects were conducted in Sultan Mastura in the Province of Maguindanao, Matungao in the Province of Lanao del Norte, and Bongao in the Province of Tawi-Tawi growing vegetables such as pumpkins, eggplants, and tomatoes, raising tilapia and goats, and carrying out a rehabilitation project on the road leading to the market. While strengthening the BDA and improving its capabilities, Japanese Experts Messrs. Michimasa Numata, Yukihiko Matsumoto and Shingo Furuichi put all their energy into improving the agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture industries of both towns. In the barangay of Tambo in Sultan Mastura, a People's Organization comprised of 30 farmers was formed which raised tilapia. They were taught how to make fish ponds on unused plots of land, how to give food to the tilapia fish, how to maintain the water quality, how to raise the fish until they were fully grown, and how to increase the number of smaller fish. Moreover, in the vegetable farms in the barangay of Macabiso, the farmers were taught more effective and efficient ways of increasing the output of tomatoes, cucumbers, bitter melon, peppers, eggplants, etc.

Of course, there was no point in raising fish and growing vegetables if they weren't going to sell. In addition to marketing to local consumers in the town of Sultan Mustura, proactive efforts were made to sell at the

largest consumer base in the area, the city of Cotabato, 40 minutes away by car. At first, there was no choice but to do business at the price proposed by brokers who came to the aquaculture pond and farms, but when the production became stable through planning, the farmers themselves were able to negotiate directly with markets and supermarkets in Cotabato City. As a result, the income of residents has stabilized. The pilot project in Matungao, Lanao del Norte Province, achieved similar results. I was close to Cotabato City, so I was able to visit the site of the tilapia aquaculture pond project in the Sultan Mustura Town many times to check on the progress. Every time I visited, the number of ponds had increased, and the number of tilapias raised had increased as well. The scene was full of life, and the chief of the People's Association, who was also a supporter of MILF, proudly said, "Hey, Mr. Ochiai, look at this fine tilapia. It is 20cm long. What a volume! Take one with you." I decided to buy about 50 other normal size ones to bring back to JICA's Cotabato Office to be the side dish for the staff there that evening. On the way back, I also stopped by the CD-CAAM farm and bought a lot of tomatoes. I became one of those who also benefited from the CD-CAAM project.

As part of CD-CAAM's results, manuals on the production and marketing of vegetables, tilapia, goats, seaweed, etc., and the operation of the people's associations were prepared. When each manual is placed next to the others, they become an 8cm-thick masterpiece. After the completion of the CD-CAAM, the towns of Sultan Mastura and Matungao began their own efforts to improve the productivity of farmers in their respective areas by utilizing the results of CD-CAAM. The BDA also distributed CD-CAAM manuals to regional offices located in each region and began providing guidance to motivated farmers and farmers' associations in the region. Rumors about the effectiveness of the CD-CAAM manual sparked interest in learning more, and farmers and farmers' organizations who want to learn how to grow vegetables and cultivate tilapia, began to contact the BDA. Despite being low on budget, the BDA went to the most remote towns, even if it took a whole day to drive there, to teach these methods. When I inquired about their efforts, I learned that in many cases, the BDA instructors paid their own costs to go teach. I was deeply impressed by the sincere attitude of the staff of the BDA, which was a product of the peace negotiations and not an organization that was officially part of the Philippine government. My respect for their motivations to truly help the people in the areas they visited, extended beyond my role as a member of their counterpart organization, JICA. Through CD-CAAM, I believe

JICA was able to deliver a peace dividend that allowed the residents of the communities where the pilot projects were implemented and the surrounding areas feel that some peace had finally begun to come.

Section 3 The Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro

It was explicitly written in the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) reached by the Philippine government and MILF on October 12, 2012 that both parties would seek the creation of a highly autonomous Bangsamoro government in the future. JICA put together a new project to help prepare the way for this government.

The Formation of the New Project

My two-year stint at the Mindanao IMT came to an end on November 1, 2012 and I returned home to Japan. The foreign ministry released me from my duties and I went back to work at JICA where I was assigned a new position with a very long title: Senior Director in charge of peacebuilding for the Economic Infrastructure Department (later renamed the Social Infrastructure and Peacebuilding Department) and deputy director of the Office for Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction. I was then immediately appointed to lead a survey team that the Economic Infrastructure Department was dispatching to work out a new JICA project for assisting in the creation of the future Bangsamoro government laid out in the FAB.

According to the roadmap set out in the FAB, the Bangsamoro government would be established three years later, in 2016. During the first two of those three years, a Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) would be created, the Bangsamoro Basic Law drafted, proposals made to amend the Philippine constitution, and development efforts intensified. The ARMM government would be abolished in 2015 and a “Bangsamoro Transition Authority” (BTA) created for the final year.

There were only three years until the establishment of the new government and a lot to get done in that time. The organization of the government needed to be determined and the personnel who would serve in it trained. Plans had to be made for the infrastructure improvements (roads/bridges, seaports, airports, irrigation, power, etc.) that would serve as a

foundation for the development of primary and secondary industries. And disarmament, demobilization, vocational training, and livelihood improvements needed to be implemented for the normalization of the MILF's former soldiers. I was sent to Cotabato on November 5 as head of the survey team that would create the CCDP, JICA's new project for comprehensively addressing these tasks.

JICA Senior Advisor on Peacebuilding Yuko Dohi, one member of my team, had lengthy experience as a peacebuilding specialist at JICA. I've known her ever since she first joined JICA and have great trust in her abilities. A brave veteran with peacebuilding experience in many conflict regions, she's been involved in JICA's assistance to Mindanao from the very beginning. Her gallant figure, walking around in a black leather jacket, has become the stuff of local legend in Cotabato.

Having returned to Cotabato only a week after leaving, I received a hero's welcome from my old friends. But that feeling would be short-lived. The plan for the CCDP included a unified implementation framework under which the ARMM and BTC would act as partners and work together to provide a smooth transition to the new autonomous government. The survey team thus went to speak to the two organizations, both of which have their headquarters in Cotabato. When we did, the ARMM rejected the project's planned unified framework on the grounds that they were the only autonomous government. Meanwhile, the BTC (an MILF-lead) labeled the ARMM a "failure" and said that it would be difficult for them to accept any plan involving cooperation with the ARMM. Both sides had thus rejected our planned structure for the CCDP. Our negotiations had been a failure.

Given this situation, the operating plan for the CCDP was changed to include two entirely separate components: one to act as a counterpart for the ARMM, and one to act as a counterpart for the BTC. We had come to the conclusion that it would be extremely difficult for the MILF and ARMM to openly work together. The CCDP was thus structured in a way that each group's activities were, at least on the surface, separate.

Dohi and I had initially thought that, because the ARMM and MILF would ultimately be merged with the implementation of the peace agreement, it would make the eventual transition to the new Bangsamoro government easier to have the two groups carry out their activities in tandem now.

But this way of thinking was too self-absorbed. We had established the framework in accordance with how JICA, which had spent many years establishing roots and working in the area, would have done things. And this mistake caused our plans to utterly collapse. The ARMM enjoyed the legitimacy that came with more than twenty years of existence and acknowledgement in the Philippine constitution. The BTC was an MILF dominated, however, a group whose legitimacy came from its rejection of the ARMM. Both organizations may have been composed of Muslim Bangsamoros, but it would not be as simple to have them live as equals under the same roof as we as a third party had supposed. There was too much history and strife standing in the way. The project ultimately had to be rearranged as if there were “two houses existing under one roof.”

Following several rounds of discussions between the parties and the survey team, JICA signed an agreement with the BTC on July 25, 2013 and then with the ARMM on September 17. As we began the CCDP’s activities, we secretly harbored the belief that the BTC (an MILF-led) and ARMM would become one as time passed. The project was intended to last for three years and conclude with the planned establishment of the Bangsamoro government in 2016. But due to the back-and-forth nature of the peace process in the years that followed, the CCDP’s work would ultimately continue for six years, ending in 2019.

The first chief leader of the CCDP was Shinichi Masuda. I would return to Cotabato to serve as its second chief leader on July 24, 2015.

Two Houses under One Roof

It was decided that, to make it clear that the cooperation provided to the BTC was separate from that provided to the ARMM, the counterpart to the BTC would be referred to as “CCDP-B” and the counterpart to the ARMM would be referred to as “CCDP-A.” The project goal for CCDP-B was facilitating the transition process to the Bangsamoro government. It successfully: 1) facilitated the structural preparations for the Bangsamoro government; 2) carried out community development projects in the areas affected by the conflict; and 3) facilitated the formulation of development plans for the Bangsamoro. Meanwhile, the project goal for CCDP-A was facilitating the organizational reform of the ARMM. It successfully: 1) improved the organizational and personnel capacities of the ARMM and local governments; 2) facilitated the provision of administrative services;

and 3) developed local industry in the ARMM region.

We carried out assistance projects in three components to achieve these goals: “governance,” “public service delivery and community development,” and “economic enhancement.” An overview of these components is provided below. Each of these components was overseen by a Japanese experts.

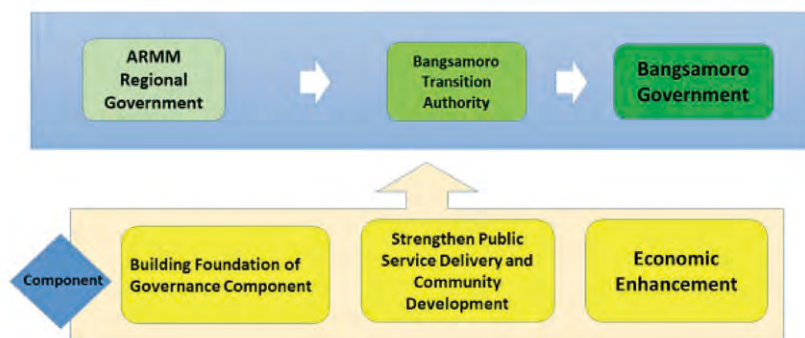
1) Governance Component

This component provided assistance for the formulation of laws and systems related to the Bangsamoro Basic Law to facilitate a smooth transition from the ARMM government to first the BTA and then to the Bangsamoro government. It also assisted in capacity building and personnel training for the ARMM, BDA, and local governments falling within the territory of the future Bangsamoro government.

2) Public Service Delivery and Community Development Component

This component contributed to regional stability and the normalization process by carrying out community development through the improvement of agricultural techniques and the provision of small-scale infrastructure projects. This improved the livelihoods of inhabitants of areas

Comprehensive Capacity Development for Bangsamoro (CCDP) toward establishment of Bangsamoro Government



Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for Bangsamoro (CCDP)

left behind by development (such as those in conflict areas) and thereby helped maintain their hope for peace.

3) Economic Enhancement Component

It was necessary to strengthen the connections between the areas affected by the Mindanao conflict and the urban areas driving development like Davao City to unify development and therefore improve the economies of the former areas. This component promoted agribusiness (the leading industry in the target areas) and improved market access in order to contribute to the establishment of an industrial base that makes good use of regional characteristics.

CCDP-B

The CCDP has two implementation mechanisms. CCDP-B's counterpart was the BTC's Socio-Economic Office (BTC-SEO), a group created by the BTC to look into socio-economic development. As has already been mentioned, the BTC is an administrative body created through executive order issued by the Philippine President in accordance with the provisions of the peace agreement reached between the Philippine government and MILF. Its primary functions are: 1) to draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL); 2) to propose constitutional revisions to be made at the time of the enactment of the BBL, and 3) to coordinate socio-economic development. The BTC's activities came to a close with the ratification of the BBL. Under the Duterte administration, the BTC had twenty-one members including the chair (under the Aquino administration this number was fifteen). A



A meeting between the CPO staff and BTC coordinators. Clockwise from front: Badette, Raissa, Aiyub, Alfonso, Hajiserad, Ali, Mustafa, Expert Nishimaru, the author and Sam

majority of these members belonged to the MILF with the others being chosen from the MNLF, Christians, the Philippine government, and indigenous groups of Mindanao. The CCDP-B's official counterpart is nominally the BTC, but the BTC-SEO (which is under the direct control of the BTC chair) is the group that actually coordinated its projects.

Project Director Mohajirin Ali and Project Manager Norodin Salam (the director and deputy director of the BTC-SEO) were appointed by the BTC to work with the CCDP-B. Four project coordinators were also dispatched by the BTC: Alih Aiyub, Tu Alfonso, Nomaire Mustapha, and Anuas Hadjiserad. These personnel worked alongside Japanese experts to carry out sub-projects. A project coordination committee was also created to authorize and oversee sub-projects, and to discuss and make proposals for the various tasks facing the project. BTC-SEO Director Mohajirin Ali served as co-chair. Technical working groups (TWG) were also formed for each project component to formulate, implement, and coordinate each component's activities. The Japanese experts in charge of the component and the BTC-SEO project coordinators led these groups.

The CCDP-B's sub-projects were carried out from July 2013 (when the CCDP began) to June 2016. This was done in coordination with our counterparts, primarily BTC Chair Mohager Iqbal and BTC-SEO Director Ali. The BTC was revised after the Duterte administration took office in June 2016, with Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar of the MILF becoming the new BTC chair.

CCDP-A

The CCDP-A's counterpart was the ARMM government, which had undergone organizational reform and improvements under the strong leadership of Governor Hataman since he took office in 2011. The goal of the CCDP-A was to create the basis for a smooth transition from the ARMM government to the Bangsamoro government as laid out in the peace agreement. This was to be done by strengthening the capabilities of the ARMM government's organizations and personnel to oversee public services and making it the foundation for the future Bangsamoro government. As with the CCDP-B, a project coordination committee was created for the CCDP-A to serve as the means of its sub-project implementation and coordination. ARMM Executive Secretary Laisa Alamia served as the committee's co-chair and TWGs were created for each of the components'

sub-projects. The experts in charge of each component worked with the appropriate officials of the ARMM government as they formulated, implemented, and coordinated each sub-project.

It is not unusual for peacebuilding assistance efforts to be performed in conflict areas with highly unstable political and security situations. Carrying out projects within predictable parameters may be easy in peacetime, but it is inevitable that unforeseen developments will occur when attempting to implement them during or immediately after a conflict. While many assistance projects are begun with the accomplishment of certain goals in mind, there are many things that cannot be known until the work has actually begun. Rather than not doing something because the risks are high, we push on with our projects, using our imagination to the fullest and doing our best to anticipate and mitigate risks where possible. The spirit of “going for it” is indispensable to this work.

Section 4 JICA Cotabato Project Office

JICA’S Cotabato Project Office (CPO), the center of our efforts in the Mindanao conflict area, has a total of forty personnel, a mixture of Japanese and Filipinos. It is practically managed by Samrah (a Muslim) and Badette (a Christian).

Unity for Peace and Development

The CPO was established in July 2013 because, with the beginning of the CCDP project, JICA needed to expand its local personnel and logistical arrangements. The Cotabato Field Office was dissolved and merged into the new office, with the CPO taking on its functions and roles. The field office in Davao had already been closed in 2012 in anticipation of the creation of the CPO.

As the office at the forefront of JICA’s efforts in Mindanao, the CPO does more than oversee the CCDP; it has a multitude of functions and roles. Locals were hired to collaborate with Japanese experts in the implementation of projects. This ensures that the various activities needed for the sub-projects that these experts oversee can be completed in a smooth, effective, and efficient fashion.

The CPO is not only in charge of seeing that the CCDP is carried out smoothly, effectively, and efficiently. It also oversees communication and coordination with local parties and provides indirect assistance to other projects. The tasks it performs are extremely broad in scope: providing assistance to other projects; collecting, analyzing, and passing on information related to assistance to Mindanao; communicating and coordinating with parties relevant to assistance to Mindanao; providing indirect assistance in finding, formulating, and implementing other JICA operations in Mindanao; and providing information to the foreign ministry, Japanese embassy in Manila, and other Japanese organizations (government ministries, universities, private businesses, NGOs, media organizations, etc.).

When the CCDP began, the CPO was operating on the third floor of the Alnor Complex (a commercial complex) in Cotabato. It was located next to the Alnor Hotel and that is where the CPO's experts lived. But with the opening of a shopping center in the complex in September 2015, it was decided to look into moving the office for security reasons. In April 2016, the CPO was transferred to a stand-alone facility. The CPO grounds include an office building and a separate residential building for the experts. The CPO is a veritable fortified city; security guards patrol the grounds at all times and the compound is surrounded by high, thick walls topped with barbed wire. There are normally four Japanese experts working there (including myself) as well as local staff. These include project managers, administrators, security personnel, and drivers. There are total of forty people at the CPO, who are working with the CPO motto "Unity for Peace and Development."



The members of the Cotabato Project Office



The outside of the CPO. It's a fortress surrounded by thick walls and barbed wire.

Samrah “Sam” Karon-Patadon

Samrah “Sam” Karon is one of the local staff members who oversees projects. Sam joined the staff of the Cotabato Field Office at the time of its creation in 2005. She has an encyclopedic knowledge of JICA’s peace assistance efforts in Mindanao. I first met her in 2007 while on a trip to Cotabato. There were no Japanese stationed at the office at the time, so she was the one running it. She handled tasks efficiently and actively voiced her opinions about things. More than anything else, she struck me as someone who had a clear understanding of her identity as a Bangsamoro and the ideals that came with that. She had originally been involved in humanitarian assistance efforts at a NGO but had felt that while one-off emergency assistance made an immediate impact, that impact wasn’t lasting. She became interested in the development assistance efforts that she had seen from the sidelines. Her belief that it was development that would guarantee a future for the Bangsamoro led her to decide to work for JICA. She was hired as a local staff member in 2003 for the ARMM Social Fund for Peace and Development Project being carried out by JBIC (which had not yet merged with JICA). This was the beginning of her relationship with JICA.

During my time working at the IMT, I would go the Cotabato Field Office for a weekly meeting with Sam at 11 a.m. every Monday. These meetings consisted of wide-ranging conversations that went well beyond just information sharing. We discussed the history and politics of the Bangsamoro, local economic conditions, and gossip. The actual information sharing would be over after a mere ten minutes. The hour-long lectures that I received from her after that work had been dealt with were the highlight of my week. I felt like my week hadn’t started until I was sitting there, drinking local Mindanao coffee, and hearing her talk about various topics. I learned a lot about Mindanao from Sam. She was something like a big sister to me.

Without the work done by Sam and field coordinators like Raissa, When, Zara, and Jun (the only male coordinator) to support the activities of the CCDP’s Japanese experts, our local support projects would not have stayed on track. They shared our values, our sense of mission, and our awareness of the issues facing our work. It was through them that our collaboration with our Bangsamoro counterparts happened.

Mary Bernadette “Badette” Suarez

Bernadette “Badette” Suarez was the one who tied our administration staff together. A Christian, she has, like Sam, worked for JICA for a long time. She was the one to establish our field office in Davao, the largest city on Mindanao, in 2008. She ran the office and assisted the Japanese staff members. Badette first became involved with JICA around 2000, when she joined JBIC’s yen loan program in General Santos City as a local staff member. I first met her in 2008 when I hired her to establish the Davao field office. I was very impressed that she was not only familiar with JICA but also had field experience with development assistance projects. She was well-versed in how the projects worked and knew how to work with Japanese people.

The Davao field office was small, consisting of just Badette, a Japanese staff member, a secretary, and a driver. That meant that she was involved in everything in the office, including administration, accounting, supplies, appointments, and project coordination. She was extremely dependable. During the brief time between the closing of the Davao office in 2013 and the opening of the new office in Cotabato, she worked at JICA’s office in Manila. She spoke fondly of her time there to me, although working at a large-scale JICA office with almost a hundred people seems to have come as quite a shock to her. Whenever she told me about something that happened, her mannerisms and tone seemed just like those of a television reporter. Her network of contacts and ability to gather information was remarkable. In my position, I needed diverse and plentiful information, but I also needed efficient analysis of that information to sort out what was useful. Badette taught me various things about Davao and Manila as seen through the eyes of a Filipino Christian.

The field coordinators Amor, Nadia, and Rosalin supported the foundations of the CPO with Badette. Without the steady efforts of these women, the CPO would have been unable to operate smoothly. The work of administration and accounting may not be glamorous, but it is crucial in that entire projects can ultimately fail because of problems in those areas. It was thanks to them that the CPO continued to function properly during the six months that the Japanese experts had to withdraw to Manila.

Enjoying Isolation

The Japanese foreign ministry classifies the areas affected by the Mindanao conflict (the location of the CCDP's work) as a Class 3 Danger Area, meaning that travel there is not advised. Work-related travel such as that of JICA staff is permitted, but sightseeing is not. While there is only a very low probability that those of us involved with JICA would be intentionally targeted, being in these areas carries an inherent risk of becoming mixed up in an incident. For that reason, we are required to be accompanied by armed security personnel whenever we leave the CPO compound and can only travel by car. There's always someone by your side when you're moving about. The only time you're entirely alone is when you're in the bathroom.

Humans are able to adapt to their circumstances, however, and soon become used to having constant companions. In my case, this caused no difficulties at the CPO because the same restrictions had been in place at the IMT. In fact, when I left Mindanao for Manila, I found myself sometimes feeling uneasy about travelling alone. Is it really okay for me to walk around by myself? Is someone going to attack me out of nowhere? Is it safe to ride in a taxi when I don't know the driver? What if he just drives off with me? I spent my days unsure of which was "normal," Manila or Cotabato.

Section 5 The Bangsamoro Basic Law

On March 27, 2014, seventeen years after the beginning of peace negotiations, the Philippine government and MILF signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). The agreement consisted of four annexes covering transition arrangements, wealth-sharing, power-sharing, and normalization. The two parties agreed to the establishment of a new Muslim autonomous government: the "Bangsamoro government." Prior to the establishment of the new government, the BTC would draw up a draft for the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) and various related ordinances.

Chairman of BTC

Chairman Mohager Iqbal, the first chairman of the BTC, had long served

as the chief negotiator for the MILF. One of the group's leading intellectuals, he has published books on the history of the Bangsamoro and the peace negotiation process. He was also a tough negotiator. During his time at the MILF, he has primarily been active in areas removed from actual combat.

I first met Chairman Mohager Iqbal in the IMT's operations room in 2010. At the time, MILF Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim and he were being subjected to severe restrictions on their contact with third-party countries by the Philippine government. So, what kind of person was he? Given his reputation as a tough negotiator. His eyes disappeared when he laughed.

Chairman Mohager Iqbal frequently told us representatives of the Japanese government and JICA that "we hope to learn from the history of Japan." What periods of Japanese history was he referring to? "We're particularly interested in Japan's modernization [in the late 19th Century] and in its economic recovery following the Second World War. Japan's experiences during these periods should be very useful for our national development in the new era for the Bangsamoro." These were his words to me while I was working for the IMT. And he repeated them when I later met him again while serving as the second chief leader of the CCDP.

A Parliamentary System of Government

The autonomous government for the Bangsamoro that the MILF desired was, in a sense, predicated on a rejection of the Philippine government. They interpreted the persecution that the Bangsamoro had suffered – something that had been ongoing from the time of American and Spanish



From left: Expert Demizu, Sam, the author, Chairman Iqbal, Mohajirin Ali, Expert Nakata

control through to the present day – as being partially a result of problems with the “nature” of the present Philippine government. That is to say, they did not believe that the Bangsamoro territory could be governed by a state with a presidential system (one with separate legislative, executive, and judicial branches). The structure they wanted for the Bangsamoro government was one where the relationship between the executive and legislative was based on a parliamentary system and where the judiciary was based on Sharia law. And they chose Japan to serve as the model for their parliamentary system.

From the MILF’s perspective, Japan would appear to be an attractive model. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 revolutionized Japanese society and transformed the country’s systems, moving it from feudalism to liberalism. Both the successes and failures of the developmental policies adopted by the Meiji government as they worked to create the modern Japanese state provide useful lessons for the Bangsamoro as they seek to develop their new world. With that thought in mind, I tried to seriously look back on the history of Japan’s modernization in the late 19th Century. I discovered that there have been surprisingly few academic works that analyze this period from the perspective of socio-economic development.

This is perhaps a bit off topic, but I have few memories of really studying modern history (meaning from the late 19th Century to the early postwar period) when I was in school. Now, perhaps that just means that I didn’t pay enough attention in my classes. And I’m not saying that the earlier periods of Japanese history are any less important. But I didn’t want Chairman Mohager Iqbal to realize that I hadn’t properly studied modern history, the period that in many ways served as the foundation for the Japan of today.

The National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

One of the first tasks that the CCDP took on was assisting with drawing up various regulations related to the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), the law which would lay out the structure of the government being created for the Bangsamoro autonomous region. That was the work of the governance component overseen by Expert Tomoko Yasunaga, a woman with great experience in local humanitarian assistance from her time at the UNHCR. She decided to join JICA because she was aware of how important it is to the reconstruction of conflict states for developmental cooperation to follow

humanitarian assistance. She belonged to JICA's Social Infrastructure and Peacebuilding Department before being dispatched to serve as an expert for the CCDP.

What would be the best way to go about learning the lessons provided Japan's experiences with its parliamentary system (and the system of local governments derived from it) so that they could be then applied to drafting the BBL and its regulations? Who should we ask? I met with Resident Representative Takahiro Sasaki of the JICA Philippines Office to discuss the problem. He joined JICA much earlier than I did, and I've known him for a very long time. He was also my immediate superior while I was the director in charge of the Philippines. I've always respected him for his rare energy and his open-mindedness when it comes to ideas. He said "Alright, let's go to GRIPS!" with an energy that made it seem as if we were going to set off for the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in Roppongi, Tokyo at that very moment. Sasaki and I visited GRIPS President Takashi Shiraishi a few days later. President Shiraishi quietly listened to my explanation of the importance and necessity of using Japan's experiences to help shape the future of the Bangsamoro, he said "I understand. We'll help." He introduced us to GRIPS Vice President Kiyotaka Yokomichi, a man well-versed in Japan's system of local governments from his time at the Ministry of Home Affairs.

How was the current relationship between the central and local governments created during Japan's modernization? What was modern Japan's socio-economic development like? How can that developmental process be put to good use in creating a new autonomous government for the Bangsamoro? It was decided to invite the fifteen members of the BTC (the group in charge of drafting the BBL) to Japan with Chairman Mohager Iqbal for an interactive workshop at GRIPS where the answers to these questions – Japan's experiences – could be explained and discussed.

In March 2013, these fifteen BTC members arrived in Japan amidst the blooming cherry trees. They included members of the MILF, Muslims, Christians, the indigenous peoples of Mindanao, and traditional leadership groups. At GRIPS, they learned about concepts that would be fundamental for the BBL like Japan's parliamentary system, local government system, and elections. They were taught by distinguished professors like Vice President Yokomichi and Professor Hirofumi Takada and discussed these topics passionately. Watching the fifteen commission members

engage in vigorous, back-and-forth debate with the passion of younger students, it seemed the very model of an engaged classroom.

After learning about the path that Japan followed as it went from feudal state to modern democracy and the way it operates now, the BTC members returned home. Afterwards, the BTC decided to send a working team to GRIPS for drawing up the BBL and its related legislation. They contacted JICA to request that it make the arrangements. The working team was made up of four legal professionals: law professors from Mindanao State University and lawyers. They were accepted to GRIPS as “special researchers” by Yokomichi and Takada and spent all of their time in Japan studying the Japanese constitution and our laws on local government and elections in detail at GRIPS. They also visited the city hall of Kofu, Yamanashi, where they learned about how local government works in actual practice by meeting with the mayor and administrative officials. As a result of their studies at GRIPS, the BTC submitted their draft of the BBL to the Philippine government in September 2014. Drafts of other legislation derived from the BBL (administrative and parliamentary regulations, etc.) were also produced. Unfortunately, however, this draft would not be enacted during the Aquino administration. It would take until July 2018 for this to happen, by which time President Duterte was in office.

Yokomichi and Takada have both become fans of the Bangsamoro since their first meeting with Chairman Mohager Iqbal in March 2013. They visited Cotabato and spoke at a seminar on the drafting of the BBL. “I can’t believe that Chairman Mohager Iqbal and the others were anti-government rebels. Indeed, they seem more like the patriots of the Meiji



The seminar in Cotabato. From left: Professor Takada, GRIPS Vice President Yokomichi, BTC Member Raissa Jajurie (currently social service and development minister in the BTA)

Restoration.” I am truly grateful that both of these men were inspired by the diligent and stoic efforts of the BTC members and working team (particularly Chairman Mohager Iqbal’s sincerity and academic nature) to go out of their way to help secure a bright future for the Bangsamoro.

The Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society

It was necessary for the desires of the various stakeholders living within the jurisdiction of the BBL to be reflected in its creation – those of not only Muslims but also Christians and indigenous groups; women and young people. To that end, the CCDP hosted the “Bangsamoro CSO Leaders Consultation & Workshop on Mindanao Peace Process” in Davao in November 2016 at the request of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), an umbrella organization for Bangsamoro NGOs. More than sixty representatives of civil society organizations made up of these stakeholders came to the event from across Mindanao. OPAPP Undersecretary Tan, ARMM Governor Hataman, Chief Negotiator Chairman Mohager Iqbal, MNLF Spokesman Attorney Randolph Parcasio, Mindanao Development Authority Undersecretary Lopez, and JICA Senior Advisor Ishikawa were also invited to serve as resources.

The CBCS, JICA’s co-host for the event, has strong influence over the parties to the Mindanao conflict (the Philippine government, MILF, and MNLF). It is headed by Guiamel Alim (a man referred to as the “father of Bangsamoro NGOs”) and has more than fifty NGOs under its umbrella. As mentioned earlier, “track one” diplomacy involves the official parties to a conflict like the Philippine government, MILF, and MNLF. Efforts by other important stakeholders (local governments, academics, private



Participants in the Bangsamoro CSO Leaders Consultation & Workshop on Mindanao Peace Process

businesses, religious groups, citizen groups, etc.) are referred to as “track two” diplomacy. Citizen groups in particular gather the views and desires of ordinary citizens and have continually worked to have these reflected in the peace process. The CBCS plays an important role in track two diplomacy by becoming a voice for these citizens and bringing their thoughts to the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF/MNLF. The BTC actively participated in this event as it sought to learn the desires of Bangsamoro residents through the CBCS and then apply these as it drafted the BBL.

In the statement drafted on the final day of the event, the participants strongly advocated for reconciliation between the MILF and MNLF and collaboration between them on the creation of the BBL, the law that would create the autonomous Bangsamoro government. Both had already reached peace agreements with the Philippine government, after all.

I once asked Chairman Alim about why he did what he does: “Mr. Alim, in your work with NGOs, you’ve consistently pushed for self-sufficiency and autonomy for the Bangsamoro. But given that you feel so passionately about this issue, wouldn’t it have been better to join the MILF?” As he answered my rude and naïve question, he smiled. “Support for the MILF and MNLF comes from the common, ordinary people. I believe that my role is to accurately convey the voices of those people to the leaders of the MILF and MNLF. That’s the mission I’ve been given. Carrying out the work of NGOs can be difficult at times, but I always stand with the people. I plan to continue speaking out for them even after the creation of the Bangsamoro government.” I know very few people who are as zealous about ordinary citizens as Chairman Alim, and I believe that’s why he’s earned the trust of the MILF, MNLF, Philippine government, and donor nations. I want JICA to answer his desires.

HIROSHIMA

Hiroshima University, a national university located in Hiroshima Prefecture, has been conducting one of JICA’s technical cooperation for grassroots projects, “The Global Hiroshima Project to Enhance Peace-building Human Resources Development for Bangsamoro Government in Mindanao.” As a higher education institution, Hiroshima University has invited young people from Bangsamoro who work in the Philippine government, ARMM Autonomous Government, local governments, and

NGOs to Hiroshima for one month as part of the development of human resources. This course provides training for students to acquire specialized knowledge and skills, such as regional administration and industrial development, in both the classroom and out in the field.

About 20 young people are chosen through a rigorous selection process each time. In order to eliminate the problem of nepotism, which is so rampant in Mindanao, the applicant's name is hidden in the application documents distributed to the staff who conduct interviews during the selection examination. Hiding the name is done to prevent the interviewer from being biased and to be able to select truly talented young people. In addition, after taking a selection seminar held in Davao City, they are evaluated for their attainments and eventually certified as Hiroshima Invited Trainees. It is a challenging path just to make it this far. In Hiroshima, their one-month training is packed with lectures from morning to evening. The campus of Hiroshima University is large. Bicycles are used to move between accommodation and facilities such as classrooms and cafeterias. In the local Mindanao, they rarely have a chance to ride a bicycle, and they run through the campus with a rental bike. Training is not just done through classroom lectures. They participate in field training at local governments in order to see how regional administration takes place, and in order to learn about industrial development, they visit agricultural cooperatives and private companies.

According to Professor Osamu Yoshida of Hiroshima University, who leads this human resource development project, what excellent young people with various academic backgrounds and work experiences learned in Hiroshima, a symbol of post-war reconstruction and peace, is meaningful not only for themselves but also for the workplace they returned to after returning from Japan. In addition, alumni associations of those who have completed the training have been formed, and former trainees scattered around Mindanao Island frequently exchange information and opinions through SNS. Some are already leaders in their workplace, and others are active as specialists. JICA's main targets when developing human resources for Bangsamoro are top leaders in government and local municipalities, NGOs, and mid-level administrative and technical officers. JICA seeks to further improve the abilities of people who are already in suitable positions and have knowledge and experience and will likely lead their organizations and communities in the future. On the other hand, those being trained at Hiroshima University are young people

who have just graduated from university. In this sense, the training there is meant to polish a still raw stone to eventually become the jewel of the future. I was invited to Hiroshima by Professor Yoshida for each round of training, and I met these young people giving a lecture about JICA's peacebuilding and our support for Mindanao. It is a precious chance for me to participate in the process of polishing the raw stones into dazzling jewels. In the lectures, the trainees asked questions about the similarities and differences between the history of Japan's modernization and Mindanao's development, as well as my impressions of the culture and thinking of Bangsamoro from my work in Cotabato. It was an exciting 90 minutes. The ceremony of completion for each round of training is held in Cotabato City. I attended as a representative of JICA and was very glad to see them again in Cotabato, having met them in Hiroshima. Every time I recall their confident and motivated looks at the completion ceremony, I imagine the peaceful and prosperous future of Bangsamoro as a result of their infinite possibilities.

Section 6 Revenue Enhancement Assistance for ARMM LGUs

Another core element of the CCDP's governance component is improving the administrative services provided by local governments units in the ARMM. The ARMM consists of 5 provinces on Mindanao and its associated islands and has a total of 2 cities and 116 municipalities. It has an overall poverty rate of 59%, much worse than the national average of 26%. While conditions in the other regions of the Philippines have been steadily improving each year, the ARMM has been left behind. The protracted conflict has halted the provision of administration services by local governments, threatening the safety of residents and neglecting their livelihoods. The Local Government Code in ARMM was enacted in 1995 based on the Local Government Code of 1991. The Philippine central government grants various powers and a certain proportion of domestic tax revenues to local governments to provide them with the means to carry out self-sufficient local administration for the benefit of their residents.

Many local government units in the ARMM cannot adequately furnish the government services provided for by law, however. Some receive no money from the central government, and it can be very difficult to earn their residents' trust without any budget. It has been decided that the ARMM government will be abolished with the establishment of the

Bangsamoro government. But while the autonomous government will change, the local governments below it will remain as they are. And so long as local government unit, the level of government closest to the people, remain unable to function properly, the Mindanao conflict will not truly have been resolved.

Following a request from the ARMM government, the CCDP joined with the ARMM Department of Local Government to take on the task of improving organizational and personnel capacities and making the administrative structures of local governments what they should be. This sub-project was given the name "Revenue Enhancement Assistance for ARMM LGUs" (REAL). Filipinos love acronyms. The Philippine government is referred to as "GPH," LGU stands for "local government unit," and ARMM is also an acronym, of course." Because of this, we always try to think up names that will have stylish acronyms when creating names for projects. In choosing the acronym "REAL," we incorporated our desire to change the "reality" of local government in Mindanao and improve it.

Non-Functioning Municipalities

Profiles were created for 30 of the 116 ARMM municipalities in May 2016. Their personnel, regulations, income, and projects were thoroughly examined and when problems were found, the reasons behind them were analyzed. The picture that came from this work was one of truly non-functioning local governments: municipalities with insufficient personnel, a low capability for planning, an inadequate regulatory framework, and a lack of income outside of the central government.

Local elections were held in May 2016 in conjunction with national elections and many of the profiled municipalities elected new mayors at this time. The mayors, deputy mayors, and project planning officers from the thirty selected municipalities were invited to an orientation and workshop intended to help them restore their municipalities to functionality. These were held in September 2016 in two sessions (once for those municipalities on Mindanao and once for those on its associated islands). Officials from the central government's Department of Budget and Management, Civil Service Commission, Commission on Audit, and Department of the Interior and Local Government gave lectures on basic areas of administration like budgeting, accounting, and personnel management and provided an overview of how the participants, as

public officials, were to approach them. Afterwards, action plans were formulated for each municipality under the guidance of its mayor.

The ARMM area has an especially serious issue with corruption, even for the Philippines. The workshop included lectures on managing budgets and accounting with a focus on preventing corruption – on how to be disciplined as public officials handling public money, if you will. The officials received training on how to make improvements to systems related to regulations, income, accounting, development, and personnel. Practical exercises were also given on how to improve the capabilities of personnel. With the creation of the new Bangsamoro government, self-governance in the Mindanao conflict region will change. The municipalities will remain in place as they have, however. And it is no overstatement to say that transforming them from systems heavily influenced by the region’s traditional feudalism into “functioning municipalities” that administer for the benefit of their inhabitants is the key to achieving lasting peace.

We created profiles for 30 out of the ARMM’s 116 municipalities. This capacity building training for their mayors and deputy mayors was intended to improve the capabilities of several “model municipalities” in the hope that these could then serve as examples of “functional local government” that other municipalities could learn from.

The goal of the sub-project was to improve the ability of municipalities to operate as functional local government. But what is required to achieve that goal? What specific kind of projects are needed to produce results? How could we secure the funding and personnel needed to carry out those projects? And what kind of metric should be used to determine what the results of the sub-project had been and whether it had completed



A lecture by Expert Mamiko Nakada

its goal? We needed to bring this REAL sub-project together and put it on a one-sheet chart, a Project Design Matrix (PDM).

PDMs are one of the most important documents for JICA's implementation of technical cooperation projects. It is a roadmap for the project's execution that concisely indicated what its goals are, what will be done, and how each action will be assessed. Yuko Tanaka, Senior Representative of the JICA Philippines Office, Project Formulation Adviser Yukiko Sano, and Chief of Mindanao Section Christina Santiago repeatedly came to Cotabato city to work on the creation of the PDM. They did so over the course of many meetings with their counterpart Director Khalid Dumagay of the ARMM Ministry of the Interior and Local Government and JICA Expert Mamiko Nakada who were in charge of the REAL sub-project with field experience in development cooperation related to governance in countries like Norway and Nepal.

Five Selected Municipalities

It was determined from the municipal profiles that increasing revenues needed to be a priority. Five of the thirty profile municipalities were selected for revenue enhancement assistance in March 2017 and we signed documents of agreement with them.

The five selected municipalities were Matanog, Barira, and Ampatuan in Maguindanao and Taraka and Balindong in Lanao del Sur. We knew from the profiles and mayoral training workshop that all of these municipalities were either already independently taking steps to secure some kind of revenue source or intended to do so. In other words, these were municipalities that did not intend to be entirely reliant on the central government for funding. While President Duterte's policies aimed at eliminating drugs have been subjected to widespread international criticism for their human rights violations, they have, in a sense, achieved results. Duterte had accused a surprisingly large number of mayors in Muslim Mindanao of overseeing municipalities involved in the drug trade. We couldn't provide assistance to mayors like these, even by mistake.

I was already familiar with the mayors of Matanog and Barira. These two municipalities were located near Camp Abubakar, the MILF's former headquarters, in an area that saw intense fighting from the 1980s to the 2000s. Both mayors had lost numerous relatives and family members in this

fighting and many refugees had fled their towns. The two municipalities' administrative services had largely ceased during this period. These were finally restored in the 2010s and now their officials were seriously trying to rebuild. These municipalities also served as counterparts in the URTP-B project that will be discussed later.

Immutability and Fluidity

The 116 municipalities of the Muslim Mindanao region show a remarkable amount of variety. There are some where the administration operates well. And there are others who can provide no administrative services to their citizens as they are unrecognized by the central government and receive no funding (these municipalities were created by the Regional Legislative Assembly of the ARMM but the National Government refused to accord them IRA because of the reported failure to satisfy the requirements set under R.A.7160). It would unfortunately be extremely difficult to help all of these at the same time, but we could certainly improve those municipalities that are truly motivated. And these municipalities will then influence their neighbors to gradually become better themselves. These municipalities are located in a region that's seen more than fifty years of conflict. The lack of functioning administrative services and almost invisible presence of basic facilities felt as if they have been abandoned by the Philippine government and are regarded by the Philippine people as almost living in a different country. But there are people living in these municipalities and they want to have lives suitable for humans. There are leaders who sincerely strive to improve the livelihoods of their citizens, and staff members supporting their efforts. What REAL seeks to achieve is a society where people can live normal lives in peace, supported through the work of good municipal leaders and their officials.



Leadership training

Immutability. To preserve the essentially unchangeable, you should seek out new things and change. Change what should be changed and leave alone what should not. As long as a municipality exists, it will have both administrators and citizens. But by charging the relationship that exists between the two so that it points in a positive direction, one suited to the surrounding circumstances, those citizens can live in peace. We kept that thought in mind as we considered how REAL should be carried out.

Column ③ Leader's Decision

One-Armed Leader

The barangay of Kalumalis in the municipality of Guindulungan, Maguindanao has long been the site of incessant conflict. Not just clashes between the MILF and Philippine military but also constant *ridos* – conflicts between local elites. Revenge begetting revenge. It is truly an area where blood is used to wash blood away. The local infrastructure – things like roads and schools – have been destroyed, and the spirits of the residents are breaking as well. JICA contributes to rebuilding these kinds of collapsing communities through the “ARMM Social Fund for Peace and Development Project,” a loan aid (yen loan) project. This project is a 2.4-billion-yen operation active in 358 barangays. It undertakes small-scale, resident-led infrastructure improvement projects to provide fundamental social services and improved employment opportunities (mainly in agriculture and fishing). Its goal is to contribute to the reduction of poverty by promoting sustainable development through the facilitation of employment.

Kalumalis is a barangay in the Linguasan Marsh region and experiences floods in the annual rainy season. It is primarily agricultural, producing rice, corn, coconuts, and cassava. I visited the barangay in May 2012 and met with Parido Zukarimin, the leader of KPO, a resident organization carrying out a JICA project. Parido is missing his right arm. Smiling but seeming a bit apologetic, he offered me his left hand for a handshake. When I asked how he lost his arm, he told me that he had been caught in a hostile clan's ambush in 2008 over the position of barangay captain. Shot in the right arm and stomach,

he had barely survived. He had considered trying to avenge himself by getting revenge on the clan but ultimately came to the conclusion that continuing the cycle of revenge would only hinder the barangay's development and the lives of its residents. And so, he acted to break the cycle.

The ARMM Social Fund for Peace and Development Project decided to fund the construction of a solar grain dryer, a grain silo, and a community center in the barangay. As leader of the resident organization, Parido took charge of the residents and did all he could to ensure that the projects went smoothly and properly. He was personally involved in the construction work and was also active in supervising the sites. Many of the barangay citizens have made good use of the facilities provided by the community center since its completion.

And through the mediation of the barangay's elders, Parido has made peace with the clan that attacked him. He felt that doing so was a way to improve the barangay's development and its residents' lives, at least a little. He cast aside past grudges and has entrusted his hopes to the future. The clans share the community center and the barangay is at peace once more. And the villagers who fled during the conflict are gradually returning, bringing the barangay back to life.

The ARMM Social Fund for Peace and Development Project (part of J-BIRD) has significantly increased the level of infrastructure in the Mindanao conflict region in accordance with the needs of its barangays.



The one-armed leader, Parido Zukarimin



The community center in Kalumamis built through a grant from the ARMM Social Fund for Peace and Development Project

Much of this has taken the form of schools, clinics, silos, grain dryers, small-scale irrigation facilities, community centers, and farm roads. Its construction of facilities has allowed the flower of peace to bloom for Kalumamis in the soil of Parido's forgiveness and tolerance. The power of buildings – their ability to bring about peace – has worked to great effect here.

Section 7 The Peace Dividend Project (QIP)

The Philippine government and MILF signed a comprehensive peace agreement on March 27, 2014, the result of seventeen years of negotiations. JICA President Akihiko Tanaka was present for the signing. During a meeting with MILF Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim, the two men shared their belief that “it is essential to ensure that assistance reliably reaches community members so that they may experience the fruits of peace and continue to have hope for a peaceful future.” This was the origin of the Quick Impact Project (QIP), a JICA sub-project for the construction of small-scale facilities.

Rapidly Delivering Peace Dividends

After the meeting, President Tanaka beckoned me to come over, which I immediately did. Without any hesitation, he then ordered me to “implement the Quick Impact Project that Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim was talking about.”

Normally when a request of this kind is made, it is passed to JICA staff who will carefully examine it and only then submit it for approval at the appropriate levels. It was obvious in this case, however, that with the signing of the peace agreement, the Bangsamoro people wanted concrete, visible peace dividends. In bringing his request to President Tanaka, Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim had been grasping at straws. And we at JICA also wanted to respond to this request quickly. President Tanaka had made his wishes clear. I had been given an order from the head of JICA on the historic day of the peace agreement's signing. Trembling with anticipation and with my entire body filled with joy and enthusiasm, I found myself briefly unable to move from the spot where the two men

had met.

The task was straightforward: quickly deliver peace dividends. The issue was what to do and where to do it. Based on my previous experience working on support for Mindanao, I knew that local communities needed things like community centers, elementary schools, agricultural facilities (solar dryers, silos, etc.), running water, roads, and bridges. But with only limited funds, the question was how to ensure that these benefits were provided “comprehensively,” i.e., in a way that reached as much of the Bangsamoro region as possible, aiding not just Muslims but also Christians and members of indigenous groups. We needed to decide what facilities to build and where to build them before construction could begin, and that would take a fair amount of time. It was not easy to choose project sites in a way that was broadly distributed, comprehensive, and fair in the way that the MILF wanted. We adopted firm selection criteria: areas with high levels of poverty that had been greatly affected by the conflict, areas that were relatively easy to access (to facilitate bringing in building materials, etc.), and areas where the local security conditions made carrying out projects feasible.

Regional balance was also taken into consideration when choosing sites. They were chosen from the entirety of the conflict affected areas in Mindanao in a way that ensured that benefits would be distributed



The meeting between President Tanaka and Chairman Murad following the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement. Front row, from left: GRIPS President Shiraishi, Chairman Murad, President Tanaka, Vice Chair Jaafar, Executive Secretary Amin. Back row, from left: Minister Isomata, CCDP Chief Leader Masuda, Chief Representative Sasaki, Director General Takewaka, Bangsamoro Peace Advisor Chikaraishi, the author, Deputy Director General Muto

comprehensively, not only to Muslims. And local governments already benefiting from development projects from other donors were not chosen. We met with MILF personnel many, many times over the course of creating these selection criteria. We also needed to be especially careful when choosing construction sites for new facilities as Mindanao has seen innumerable conflicts over land rights.

Given that the majority of projects was planned for areas with extremely unstable security conditions, JICA's safety protocols would not allow the CCDP's Japanese experts or other Japanese to visit them. While having to carry out construction projects through remote control is not a rare phenomenon for peacebuilding assistance, it still meant an additional layer of difficulty for the project's execution.

Community Centers

Shu Nishimaru was the Japanese expert assigned to oversee QIP. He is a "jack of all trades" who had ensured the smooth operation of the CCDP by working on general affairs, accounting, and overall coordination. He has extensive experience in peacebuilding assistance, having worked in Sri Lanka, Montenegro, and South Sudan among others. A tenacious, resilient man, Nishimaru was ideally suited for the complicated task of remotely overseeing construction projects in conflict areas.

Twenty locations (including community centers, grain silos with dryers, and classrooms) were chosen based on the construction site selection criteria established through consultations with the MILF, BTC, and BDA. Local consultants were hired to oversee the construction and construction companies were chosen through a bidding process. Fumio Tonai was dispatched from Tokyo to act as an overall technical engineer for the construction work, which got underway in February 2015. He periodically visited construction sites and worked with the local consultants to help the projects move along.

As the construction work was underway, efforts were also being made to build the capacities of local resident organizations to ensure that they would be able to manage and maintain the newly built facilities. The resources of the BDA were put to effectively use in this work. JICA had constructed community centers and agricultural facilities across Mindanao through our earlier work providing support to communities and we thus

knew the importance of post-construction management. Once a facility has been completed, JICA's assistance comes to an end. Those we've helped need to then assume the primary role. Special organizations are needed to ensure that community centers are maintained and operated in accordance with the needs of local residents. Fortunately, there are many local organizations in the Philippines, although many do not function well. If an organization does not have skilled members, an operating budget, and systems through which the organization's course of action can be decided and its members mobilized, it will eventually become dysfunctional. All of these criteria are needed. It was necessary to improve the capabilities of local organizations prior to and during construction to avoid this fate.

The BDA contributed to the smooth operation of the facilities built through QIP. It selected and trained local organization officials (leaders, accountants, secretaries, etc.) and secured the budgets that would be used to maintain and operate these facilities. Experts Nishimaru and Tonai joined with members of the BDA and BTC to facilitate the progression of these construction projects so that the residents would be able to receive peace dividends quickly. The QIP worked frantically to bring Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim and President Tanaka's idea to fruition. It was thanks to the creation of this kind of mechanism between the involved parties from the very beginning of the project that it was able to reliably fulfill its goals.

Seventeen of the twenty sites were community centers, two were classrooms, and just one was an agricultural facility (a silo). Japanese experts were only able to visit eleven of these sites (the ones in central and eastern Mindanao). It is unfortunate that they were unable to see the remaining sites located in western Mindanao and its associated islands.



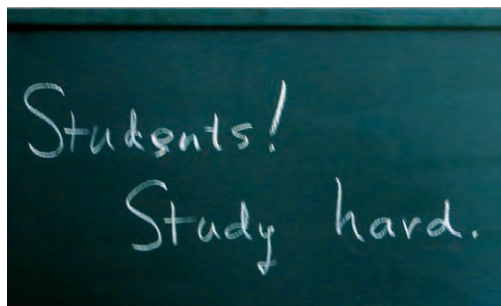
The community center in Glan, Sarangani (Credit: CPO)

Students! Study Hard

A hand-over ceremony was held in August 2015 following the completion of one of the QIP's projects, Kibleg Elementary School in Upi, Maguindanao. JICA President Tanaka and Chief Negotiator Chairman Mohager Iqbal were among those in attendance, as were the mayor of Upi and representatives of the BTC, BDA, and local NGOs. President Tanaka spoke at the ceremony, explaining the significance of the project from the perspective of the peace process and peace dividends. He said that JICA was determined to continue making contributions to peace in the region.

President Tanaka's first trip overseas after becoming president in April 2012 had been to Cotabato. This was while I was serving as the Japanese delegate to the IMT, so I met him when he arrived. He had first taken an interest in the Mindanao peace process while serving in his previous position as executive vice president of the University of Tokyo. He was greatly interested in the use of development to stabilize fragile nations and regions not just because of his position as the president of JICA but also his academic background, international politics. This interest is what led him to make Mindanao the destination of his first foreign trip. He would also choose to make Cotabato his final overseas trip as president, something that allowed him to witness the results of the QIP project that he had personally approved. I am honored to have been present both when he made his decision and when he saw the results, two historic moments.

After the hand-over ceremony came to a close, the participants visited the newly built school's classroom. President Tanaka approached the



The message written by President Tanaka on the chalkboard in Upi

blackboard and leisurely wrote “Students! Study Hard” on it in chalk. He told the others present that his daughter was a teacher and that, as an educator himself, he wanted these elementary schoolers to study hard because they would be the ones to shoulder the future of the Bangsamoro. I think that he wanted to convey how powerful a weapon knowledge can be in life. According to a report from Expert Nishimaru, President Tanaka’s words eventually faded away and disappeared. But I believe that the thoughts made manifest in those words took hold in the hearts of the children who studied in that classroom.

When a monitoring survey was conducted on the twenty QIP locations in late 2018, it was found that all of the facilities were still being actively used. While the way that the community centers are being used varies, the fact that they are helping area residents to live in peace and safety means that the hope that Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim and President Tanaka shared in March 2013 that peace dividends could be brought to community members has come true. It is now up to the residents whether the power of buildings flourishes or dies. It is my hope that the facilities built under the QIP project will be forever used to maintain peace in those communities.

Column ④ The Power of Buildings

Bualan Elementary School in Pikit

The municipality of Pikit, North Cotabato has long suffered from conflict. Under the Philippine government’s policy of moving people from Luzon and Visayas into Mindanao, large numbers moved to Pikit beginning in the 1950s, where they frequently came into conflict with the Muslims who had long inhabited the area. The region saw serious fighting between the Philippine military and MILF in 2000, 2003, and 2008, causing many residents to flee. The elementary school in Bualan, a Muslim barangay in the western part of Pikit, was the site of a battle that left the school building in ruins. Students returned following the end of the fighting, but it was unusable. Classes were instead held in a classroom that consisted only of pillars and a roof made from palm trees.

The Mindanao Children's Library (MCL) is a Japanese NGO based in Kidapawan, the capital of North Cotabato. It visits barangays in the region and carries out activities like reading picture books to children, planting trees, and providing medical, educational, and refugee assistance. Tomo Matsui, the group's founder, is an amazing person. The MCL's mission is to help and show love to unfortunate children who need it. He gives happiness to sad children, provides comfort to their wounded spirits, and helps them understand each other's cultures. Through his actions, he truly shows what it means to create a world at peace, one where dreams are fulfilled, and all can live together as one family. The MCL provides more than 500 deprived children with scholarships to attend school, showing no favoritism toward any one group—Christians, Muslims, or indigenous people. It also provides housing for many children in Kidapawan from which they can go to school. I deeply admire Matsui's passion and often visited the MCL. The unworried smiling faces of the children there gave me courage.

Reconstruction of the elementary school in Bualan began in April 2011 following a request from the MCL. This was done through the Japanese government's grant assistance for grassroots projects. This provides the necessary funds for projects that directly benefit residents at the grassroots level. It is based in the concept of human security and is intended to aid the socio-economic development of developing nations.

The largely Muslim barangay of Bualan and the neighboring mountainous Christian barangay of New Valencia Area had long been hostile, with villagers from one being prohibited from entering the other. The two have gradually resumed contact since, as the MCL built clinics in both barangays, however. Matsui's goal has been for the Muslims of Bualan and the Christians of New Valencia Area to reconcile and co-exist in peace.

Feeling the goal was a worthy one, there was something that I wanted to ask the barangay captain of Bualan when we met: "Do you hate Christians?" The first thing the captain (a man twice my size) said to me when we met was "I want the barangay and its surrounding area to return to the time long ago when everyone lived in peace, no

matter their religion. Everyone, be they Muslim or Christian, has had someone in their family killed, and I'm no exception. Our resentment will not go disappear in our lifetime. But the next generation of children should not inherit this hatred. I want to the barangay to go back to being a place where the children who will carry its future can live in peace regardless of religion. I want to build an elementary school as a first step in that direction."

I also spoke to a Christian woman living in New Valencia. One night while she was a child, men wearing black shirts came to her house and sprayed it with gunfire. Her father, mother, and brothers were all killed. This kind of incident may have been commonplace at the time. Having lost her family in an instant, she was raised by relatives and is now a mother of four. She has continued to live in Pikit ever since, partially because she has nowhere else to go. I asked her "If Pikit is placed under the jurisdiction of the new Muslim autonomous government when the future peace agreement is signed, what will your family, as Christians, do? Will you leave?" She thought a bit before giving her reply. "I don't mind if this becomes part of the Muslim autonomous region so long as it becomes a place where children can live in peace. I'm sick of the fighting." Her house is located on a hill overlooking an elementary school. But only Muslim children attend that school. She sends her own children to a largely Christian elementary school located an hour's walk away, outside of the barangay. She knows that it's unlikely that anything would happen to her children if she sent them to that school at the bottom of the hill, the way that something might have in the past. But she can't bring herself to make that decision.

Construction on the school moved at a fast pace, with both students and their parents actively taking part under the supervision of the construction company. Mothers distributed food while fathers took up hammers and shovels. The Muslims of Bualan were not alone in this. Christians from New Valencia sweated alongside them in solidarity "for the children."

With the completion of the new school, the number of students commuting from New Valencia gradually increased. Interaction between

the barangays became active. Ultimately, a “peace agreement” was signed and residents of both joined together to build a road on the steep mountain slope leading to New Valencia so that the children could easily and safely go to school. Cooperation was born between the formerly hostile villagers and a “cornerstone of peace” created.

School of Peace

There is a NGO Collaboration Grant Aid Programme which is a provided to Japanese NGOs and is also applied to support for Mindanao. “Peacebuilding Project through Peace Education in Pikit Municipality, a Conflict Area of Mindanao,” in short “School of Peace project” is one of them. Implementing this program is the International Children’s Action Network (ICAN) based in Nagoya. ICAN is actively developing poverty countermeasures, emergency humanitarian assistance, and peacebuilding projects around the world, especially for those dealing with children. In the Philippines, it has long been providing support for activities involving street children in Manila.

ICAN turned its attention to the Mindanao conflict, and since November 2011, has used the scheme of grant assistance for Japanese NGO projects to support both “hard” and “soft” sides of development: the construction of elementary school buildings in Pikit, North Cotabato Province, and the “School of Peace” to teach students and residents of the town. Mindanao’s long-standing conflict has hurt many children and creates a culture of



The elementary school in Bualan built by J-BIRD



Christian and Muslim children studying together at Bualan Elementary School

violence that can lead to armed conflicts between clans. Even children's fights or quarrels over livestock in the neighborhood lead to large-scale violence, or *rido*, between families. To bring true peace, you need to get rid of people's hatred at the local level and learn how to solve problems without resorting to violence. Students, teachers, parents, communities, and religious leaders have been trained in these methods in order for ordinary schools to become "Schools of Peace." ICAN's work is groundbreaking, with the newly constructed school building as the stage to create a peaceful world through education with the involvement of students, teachers, parents and community people.

J-BIRD has developed many infrastructure facilities based on the needs of villages in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. Many of the communities' needs include schools, health centers, agricultural storage warehouses, crop-drying plants, small-scale irrigation facilities, multi-purpose hall, and agricultural roads. J-BIRD has not only improved the educational environment for children through the Bualan Elementary School and ICAN's "School of Peace," but it has also contributed to the improvement of the villagers and the village itself. A "building," such as a school, training facility, or multipurpose hall, can change people and improve a village. I believe in the "power" of buildings to bring about peace and vowed to continue my efforts to bring peace to Mindanao.

Section 8

The Upland Rice-based Farming Technology Transfer Program for the Bangsamoro (URTP-B)

It was early on the morning of September 21, 2016 in the barangay of Tataya in Balabagan, Lanao del Sur. In this barangay, located on a corner of the massive Camp Abubakar, the former headquarters of the MILF, thirty villagers and members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) began their training in agricultural techniques.

Normalization

The Philippine government's comprehensive peace agreement with the MILF makes reference to "gradual normalization." The term "normalization" is used in the Mindanao peace process in lieu of the more common "disarmament, demobilization, reintegration" because the MILF felt that its soldiers were not being reintegrated into society

but rather being allowed to carry out normal lives. This distinction was made because the BIAF's soldiers had received no salary from the MILF or any of its affiliates. Instead, they had engaged in agriculture on the ancestral lands of the Bangsamoro, making a living through their own efforts. This was "self-reliance," one of the fundamental principles of the MILF's approach to struggle.

Under the peace agreement, one third of the BIAF's 45,000 soldiers were to be demobilized at the time of the enactment of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) and another third at the time of the establishment of the Bangsamoro government. The remaining soldiers would be demobilized, completing the normalization process, once all of the peace agreement has been fulfilled. As part of normalization, the MILF is working to improve the daily lives of demobilized soldiers and their families by carrying out development projects in the communities surrounding the BIAF's thirty-one military camps. A symbolic act of disarmament had taken place in June 2015 when 145 soldiers were demobilized, and 75 guns turned in. But with the delay of the BBL's enactment, the schedule for the overall normalization process fell far behind.

The public service delivery and community development component of the CCDP project contributed to regional stability and the normalization process by working to improve the lives of all residents of left-behind areas (largely conflict areas), regardless of background, and preserve their desire for peace. To this end, it carried out community development focused on agriculture (these areas' primary industry) by improving farming techniques and expanding small-scale infrastructure. Assisting normalization falls well within this component's area of responsibility.

Farmer Soldiers

Many BIAF soldiers were primarily engaged in farming, taking up their uniforms and arms only when called to patrol or in emergencies. They were essentially "Farmer soldiers," as we came to understand it. Once demobilized, they would work in agriculture, becoming full-time farmers. We also learned from a survey we conducted on conditions at Camp Abubakar that many of the BIAF's Farmer soldiers wanted to be able to fully devote themselves to farming.

Of the MILF's thirty-one military camps, six were designated as priorities

for normalization: Abubakar, Omar, Rajamuda, and Badre in Maguindanao, and Busrah and Bilal in Lanao del Sur. Using the Abubakar survey, the CCDP used certain criteria to choose twelve barangays where BIAF soldiers from the camp lived. Knowing that these farmer soldiers would likely be demobilized in the near future, it began training them in agricultural techniques for making the transition to full-time farmers.

As can be understood from the program's name – the Upland Rice-based Farming Technology Transfer Program for the Bangsamoro (URTP-B), this project was intended to improve the lives of area residents by teaching them how to farm rice, fruits, and vegetables, and to cultivate freshwater fish like tilapia. The guidance for this training was largely carried out by staff of the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), an organization that JICA has long supported, and the ARMM Department of Agriculture Fisheries (DAF-ARMM).

The government had long stopped providing administrative services to the conflict areas where the selected bases were located. The soldiers had had to provide themselves with not just agricultural technology but also medical care, education, and social welfare. They had fought for more than fifty years to protect their families and ancestral lands, to secure justice for the Bangsamoro. This extended period of warfare had given their communities a palpably pessimistic view of life. It was important that the light of hope not die out, for these people to believe that past injustices would be corrected with the creation of the Bangsamoro government. The URTP-B program also incorporated lectures on Muslim values by the BDA and training in leadership and management by the Bangsamoro Leadership Management Institute (BLMI).



BIAF soldiers undergoing agricultural training

Many of the thirty people who came to Tataya, Balabagan for training that morning arrived with automatic weapons slung over their shoulder. Others were carrying concealed pistols. Naturally, with the conclusion of the comprehensive peace agreement, no fighting with the Philippine military would break out during the training. But this was what teaching agricultural techniques to farmer soldiers was like. Providing hands-on technical training in anticipation of the future day when they could become full-time farmers is a form of development assistance that can be provided while the normalization process continued to be delayed. The URTP-B was JICA's attempt to contribute to the normalization process through development.

The Bangsamoro Development Agency

Incidentally, one of the JICA's most important counterparts – the BDA – is a product of the Tripoli Agreement signed by the MILF and the Philippine government. The BDA did not have any legal standing; it is actually a part of the MILF. It didn't have corporate status either. It is entirely the product of the peace negotiations. But it is recognized by the parties to the conflict. For this reason, any official requests by the BDA to the Japanese government or JICA have to maintain the appearance of coming from the Philippine government. This kind of arrangement would normally be unthinkable for Japanese development assistance but here it allows peacebuilding assistance to proceed smoothly. It allows JICA to extend the hand of cooperation to a part of the MILF, an "anti-government" organization. And being able to recognize the BDA as a direct partner to the MILF on various cooperation projects has been groundbreaking, allowing JICA to greatly expand the reach of its support for the Bangsamoro peace process.



From right: BDA Executive Director Yacob, BDA Deputy Executive Director Windel, the author

The BDA borrows an old government building in Cotabato to use as its office. It was there that I first met BDA Executive Director Danda Juanday in 2007. An obstetrician by trade, he also runs a clinic in the city. With a warm smile and quiet tone, he explained the social and economic issues facing the Bangsamoro to me and what he saw as the path to solving them. As he got warmed up, however, he began speaking eloquently about the history of the persecution the Bangsamoro have faced, why a doctor like himself had decided to become involved in their struggle, and the necessity of regional development. It was difficult for me to understand how someone could be both a doctor and an anti-government fighter, but I could understand why he had been put in charge of the BDA. There was no question that his passion was directed at creating a developed Mindanao. Incidentally, Dr. Juanday later left the BDA to become the administrator of Cotabato city, a role in which he continues to promote the development of Mindanao (while working in his original calling as an obstetrician).

In 2016, around the time that the URTP-B program was launched, Dr. Juanday was replaced at the BDA by Mohammad Yacob. Executive Director Yacob is a clergyman trained in Islamic theology. Islamic scholars are greatly respected in Mindanao; they are the only ones to be addressed with the honorific Ustadz. I was honestly initially skeptical of how well a clergyman would be able to understand the work of development. But when I met Executive Director Yacob (a slightly younger man than myself) for the first time, he seemed an extremely friendly man, a far from the tight-laced, strict image that I had of the clergy. I had the feeling that he would be able to do his work well. And over time, that feeling turned into trust.

The Survey into Actual Conditions at Military Camps

In late 2015, the CCDP undertook a groundbreaking survey of the BIAF soldiers at Camp Abubakar. Neither the Philippine government nor local government unit had been providing administrative services to those regions of Mindanao that had been experiencing protracted conflict. The national census hadn't covered these areas and no voter registration had taken place there. The government had absolutely no idea how many people were living in these areas or what their demographics were. What was known was that some of the people living in barangays in areas under MILF control belonged to military organizations that were recognized

by the MILF Central Committee and that their families tended to be five people or more. That was it. The number of schools and clinics, the types of farms and their sizes, the state of the agricultural infrastructure, the number of wells... this kind of basic information, the sort needed for improving socio-economic development, was completely missing. And so, we needed to begin our efforts with a basic survey into actual conditions in these areas.

The “Survey into Actual Conditions at Camp Abubakar” was carried out by a survey team from IC NET (a Japanese company) in conjunction with the CCDP as part of the Bangsamoro Development Plan (BDP). As this area had long been cut off from the outside world, a technical working group (TWG) was formed with our counterparts at the BTC, BDA, BLMI, and BIAF to avoid any unnecessary friction with local BIAF soldiers and their families. Two coordinators from the BIAF were essential to ensuring the smooth operation of the investigation: Basir Calim and Jaber Makakua. Bashir was a little under forty at the time while Javert had only graduated from college a few years earlier.

The following example shows how helpful their presence could be. As JICA proceeded with the survey, we frequently found that those we interviewed had high expectations of receiving some kind of benefit from their participation later. The purpose of our survey was to gather basic information and survey local needs for future potential assistance projects. But it’s difficult to ask about local conditions and needs without raising residents’ expectations. And managing the expectations of the BIAF soldiers and their families was extremely challenging for outsiders like us. Yet we couldn’t conceal the fact that we were from JICA and conduct the survey in secret. If we were discovered, all of our work would come to nothing.



Women being surveyed at Camp Abubakar

One day I accompanied Koji Demizu, a CCDP expert in charge of the camp survey and the URTP-B program, as he accompanied a survey team. It took us about two hours by car to reach the site from the CPO office. We left Cotabato early and arrived at about nine. The respondents were divided into certain groups and interviewed. I sat in on one of these groups, a number of men (BIAF soldiers). Bashir began the discussion by giving instruction in the local Maguindanao language. Sam, the CCDP senior field coordinator, sat next to me and provided a translation: "The JICA survey being carried out today is only being done to ascertain the actual conditions of BIAF soldiers and their families. It will be conducted fairly. You absolutely must not expect that this survey will be followed by money or other benefits. We have fought for more than forty years, risking our lives to secure justice for the Bangsamoro. Now, that justice is within reach. I ask that you not do anything with any foolish expectations in mind." Bashir was an important officer on the BIAF general staff, and his words had a significant impact on the soldiers. I would not have had the skill to give his solemn instructions. Looking at Bashir and the other members of the BIAF, I likened them to the samurai of the late 19th Century. And I hoped that, just as the modernization of Japan had dawned with the Meiji Restoration, dawn was now coming for the Bangsamoro.

The Philippine Rice Research Institute

With the conclusion of the survey, we had ascertained the conditions at Camp Abubakar and the needs of the BIAF soldiers living there and their families. These farmer soldiers wanted to be full-time farmers. The question of what the best crops to plant would be is an important one for such farmers. Our eyes soon set upon rice as the answer. The Philippines reportedly consumes more rice than any other country in the world, enough so that it is imported from Thailand and Vietnam as domestic production is insufficient to meet the demand. The area surrounding Camp Abubakar is located at a high altitude ranging from 500 to 2,000 meters above sea level. And not only has highland rice long been cultivated there, but it is consistently sold at a high price not just in Mindanao but throughout the Philippines. Thus, we decided to go with rice.

But it would be difficult for us to dispatch Japanese rice experts to a region due to its security situation. Also, the CCDP in principle procured the resources for its assistance activities from within the Philippines. Expert Demizu and I consulted with Maiko Morizane and Maan Bakisan of the

Mindanao section of the JICA Philippines Office. They suggested that we approach the Philippines Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) and we immediately agreed that that was a good idea. PhilRice is a research institute under the auspices of the Philippine Department of Agriculture and had been founded to facilitate the Green Revolution in the Philippines. JICA had assisted PhilRice into becoming a first-class developmental organization by providing technical and grant aid assistance from the 1990s on. But by the 2010s, PhilRice had become a partner of JICA rather than an aid recipient and assisted in capacity-building projects for governmental organizations like the DAF-ARMM. With their agreement to help, we had secured a means of transmitting the agricultural techniques needed for upland rice.

But a major problem still remained: PhilRice was hesitant to enter areas under MILF control. Sailila Abdula, the director of PhilRice Midsayap (the branch stationed in North Cotabato) was worried that their security couldn't be guaranteed. He said that while they were concerned about going alone, they'd be willing to do so if accompanied by JICA. Director Sailila is a Muslim from Mindanao, a man who truly wanted to contribute to ending the Mindanao conflict. He could see the significance in having PhilRice participate in the peace process's normalization program. But the safety of his personnel was primary. Meanwhile, the MILF weren't enthusiastic about PhilRice's participation. They said that as PhilRice was part of the Philippine government, it couldn't be allowed within a MILF military camp. The comprehensive peace agreement had been signed but, at that time, neither the transitional authority nor the relevant laws had been put into place yet.



The model farms jointly operated by JICA, PhilRice, and DAF-ARMM in Maguindanao were opened even in areas under MILF control

Direct Negotiations

Thus, we went to speak directly to the MILF. We had to convince its leadership to trust PhilRice. Expert Demizu and I visited MILF's headquarters at Camp Darapanan to see BIAF Chief of Staff Sammy Al Mansor. I told him that if he trusted JICA, then I wanted him to trust PhilRice as well.

I had once visited Sammy Al Mansor's headquarters in Gambar, Maguindanao in 2011 while I was working for the IMT. Gambar is located at the mouth of Linguasan Marsh, two hours by motorboat from Cotabato upstream along the Tamontaka River. I was a little nervous as I spent those two hours in a small boat, wondering what would happen if it cap-sized. After all, a massive six-meter-long crocodile had been captured in a barangay in Bukidnon province in eastern Mindanao shortly before my trip. People had started to go missing from the barangay and it had begun to be suspected that they had been eaten by a crocodile. The militia began a fervent search whereupon they found the massive beast. While they didn't find any evidence that it had eaten anyone, the possibility couldn't be rejected given its size.

Chief of Staff Sammy Al Mansor assured me that the crocodiles living in the Linguasan Marsh would never attack the Bangsamoro. He boasted that the reason that they had yet to be defeated by the Philippine military was because they were under the crocodiles' protection. Ah, so the BIAF is invincible because of the crocodiles.

Chief of Staff Sammy Al Mansor has command over 45,000 soldiers on



The author (far left) met Chief of Staff Sammy Al Mansour (center, in a white shirt) in 2010 while working for the IMT. IMT Head of Mission Rahim is third from the right.



A house in the Linguasan Marsh

Mindanao and its associated islands. The first time I met him in Gambar, he had an iPad tucked under his arm. A BIAF ceremony was scheduled for the same day as my visit and he began to give a speech, reading it off the tablet's screen despite being in a location with inadequate electricity. It's well-known in the Philippines that people give long speeches, and this was no exception. I was a little worried that his finger would start to hurt as he rapidly scrolled down the screen as he read.

Chief of Staff Sammy Al Mansor was already familiar with me and it seems that my outrageous but frank words – “if you trust me, then please trust [PhilRice] too” – had made an impact on him. Bangsamoro warriors value trust and loyalty above all else.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Expert Demizu is a former electrical engineer who threw himself into the world of peacebuilding with an indomitable will. He has engaged in peacebuilding assistance activities in Sri Lanka, Indonesia (Nias), and Djibouti for NGOs and in Afghanistan and South Sudan for JICA. He is a true professional when it comes to peacebuilding and is very familiar with working on-location. During his two years in Djibouti, he had to put up with an extremely limited living environment consisting of just his office and its immediate surroundings. It's rare to find someone with his knowledge and experience with peacebuilding who has such a stable mentality.

Expert Demizu and I invited the BIAF leadership and the BIAF soldiers who had assisted us during our survey of conditions at Camp Abubakar to a field in Maguindanao where PhilRice and JICA were carrying



Expert Demizu in the field (far right)

(Credit: CPO)

out agricultural assistance. We had suspected that our chest-thumping wouldn't be enough and figured that a study tour would help as "a picture is worth a thousand words." We thus arranged for the BIAF and PhilRice to meet under ideal circumstances. Fortunately, having the BIAF personnel talk with the farmers in field was far more effective in convincing them than any theoretical explanation we could have given them. Perhaps it was because the blood of farmers flowed in their veins. In any case, the MILF leadership and other relevant figures were invited to Cotabato a few days later to hear the results of the Camp Abubakar survey.

As expected, once they'd heard the results, the comments from the leadership essentially boiled down to asking, "What kind of solutions does JICA have for improving the livelihood of our soldiers?" It was a question that we'd been waiting for. Expert Demizu, IC Net's Yukitoshi Matsumoto, and I replied that "Camp Abubakar is located at a high elevation. In addition to the vegetables grown there now, upland rice has also been produced there. Upland rice has a stable, high price not just in Mindanao but across the Philippines. We believe that JICA, together with the Philippine Rice Research Institute, should undertake a project to improve the agricultural technology of the BIAF's farmer soldiers with a focus on the cultivation of upland rice." Our proposal received unanimous agreement.

Agricultural instructors from PhilRice and the DAF-ARMM were sent with their assistants to six municipalities bordering Camp Abubakar: Barira, Buldon, and Matanog in Maguindanao, and Kapatagan, Balabagan, and Marogon in Lanao del Sur. Over the course of two years, they provided lectures and practical training using demo farms to about 480 people (mainly BIAF farmer soldiers), 360 in the first year and 120 in the second. Using training modules developed by PhilRice, they taught cultivation techniques for "upland rice," a crop with high market value that can be grown in MILF camp communities lacking irrigation facilities. They also taught them how to grow ten varieties of vegetables that could be used for consumption at home.

A Relationship of Trust Between Teachers and Students

The URTP-B program was the first instance of community development assistance by an outside organization to occur in MILF military communities. A comprehensive peace agreement may have been reached with the MILF but inviting Philippine government and ARMM personnel into

these communities caused uneasiness among their residents. Memories of the armed conflict had not yet faded. It was also a challenge for those from the government who did not feel safe there. The residents continued to feel wary about the outsiders until they came to understand their humanity. And PhilRice repeatedly expressed concern for the safety of their staff, requiring BDA and BLMI personnel be present when they were carrying out activities in the project areas.

As the activities at the sites continued, bonds of trust gradually formed between the Philippine government personnel (PhilRice and ARMM) who provided lectures and the BIAF soldiers and local residents who benefited from them. These two parties had repeatedly fought one another, but JICA's mediation and presence was able to help foster trust between them at a local level.

The result was that organizations affiliated with both parties to the Mindanao peace process – the Philippine government and MILF – carried out community development and worked to improve upland rice cultivation techniques jointly through the URTP-B program. The introduced techniques were extremely effective for the farmer soldiers who had previously only been familiar with traditional agricultural methods, which only yielded a single harvest of rice each year. Using the type of upland rice introduced by PhilRice, it was possible to harvest two or three times a year. The existence of this cultivar was also new information for DAF-ARMM. The acreage devoted to upland rice expanded on many of the program's target sites. I also heard from a BIAF coordinator that the increased financial leeway introduced to the families of the farmer soldiers had led to reduced domestic discord (as families no longer had



Harvesting rice through the URTP-B program
(Credit: CPO)

to buy their everyday rice at the market and the soldiers' level of debt decreased). It was thanks in no small part to the role played by the BIAF coordinators in their interactions with the local communities that we were able to smoothly carry out this program together with PhilRice, the BDA, and the BLMI.

Some URTP-B locations saw great success, such as Buldon where the acreage devoted to rice cultivation expanded greatly to 2,000 hectares.

Prior to this point, the farmer soldiers who participated in the program had lived in fringe areas removed from the provision of any government services. We found from a survey conducted following the completion of the project that this training, intended to improve their livelihoods by teaching them better agricultural techniques, had increased their level of trust in the Philippine government. Fostering trust between conflict parties – especially between governments and anti-government organizations – is a major goal of JICA's peacebuilding assistance. The CCDP had proved that it could increase the chances of that happening.

A Historic Moment

A ceremony was held at the MILF's headquarters at Camp Darpanan on March 8, 2017 to mark the end of the first phase of the URTP-B program. When Director Sailila contacted me to inform me of the event, one of the things he mentioned came at quite a surprising to me: he said that he wanted to invite Agriculture Secretary Piñol. While surprised by the idea, I knew that it had the potential to be a historic occasion. For he was one of the major actors responsible for the failure of signing of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) in 2008 just as it was to be signed by the Philippine government and MILF.

Secretary Piñol (then the governor of North Cotabato) had been one of the politicians who had filed suit against the agreement with the Supreme Court on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. The ultimate decision by the Supreme Court to strike down the agreement led to the outbreak of armed conflict and the withdrawal of the IMT. In a single move, Secretary Piñol had made himself a prominent figure in the history of the Bangsamoro peace process. Christian residents praised him as a hero while he became seen by the Bangsamoro as one of their worst enemies. Would the MILF really invite one of their worst enemies into their stronghold of

Camp Darapanan for the ceremony? After an anxious wait, their answer came: "Yes, Welcome."

Another attendant at the ceremony was JICA Philippine Office Chief Representative Susumu Ito, who came down from Manila. The venue became choked with emotion as the chief representative gave a speech in which he spoke about the history of the URTP-B program, its trials and accomplishments. Then Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim embraced Secretary Piñol. In that moment, it seemed like all of the past, everything that had happened up to this point, was being washed away. In his speech, the chairman turned to the audience (which included the BIAF soldiers who had participated in the program) and shouted "Let us forget the past! And boldly walk towards a peaceful future!"

Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim was born in September 1945 and stopped studying at university while in the final year of his study as sacrifice to join the revolution with MILF. When former chairman Salamat Hashim split off from the MNLF to found the MILF, Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim accompanied him and became one of the organization's top military leaders. He was serving as the MILF's chief negotiator with the Philippine government when Chairman Hashim passed away in 2003. He has been the chairman of the MILF ever since.

Once, while discussing the CCDP with Mohajirin Ali (one of our counterparts of the project) at the CPO, the topic of our fathers came up for some reason. His father, a former MILF leader, belonged to the same generation as Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim but had been ill for a long time. My own father had already passed away in 2014. The conversation then turned to Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim and I noted that should something happen to Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim and the current MILF leadership, the job of taking up the reins would fall to his generation. Mohajirin replied that "My generation is in no way prepared to take on the responsibilities of the Chairman and the other leaders."

"Responsibilities." There were 45,000 soldiers in the MILF. If we were to add their families and the ordinary people who supported the MILF to that number, how large would it become? How many tens or hundreds of thousands of people? In one of his first television interviews, Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim had been asked how many people there were in the MILF. He had replied that the MILF enjoyed the support of all the

Bangsamoro living in Mindanao, in the Philippines, and in the world. The MILF, he said, numbered in the millions.

I can't begin to imagine the degree of enmity that Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim must have had towards Secretary Piñol as a man with the future of millions of people resting on his shoulders. But on stage, he was nothing but smiles. Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim that I knew was always smiling. He had joined the struggle for the Bangsamoro as a college student and, during the time when the fighting against the Philippine government was raging, lived in the jungle for years. As I watched him embrace Piñol, the impression I got was not of a man who desired to forget the past. Rather, it was of one determined to make the past into a foundation upon which a future could be built.

The failure of the MOA-AD in 2008 cost many people their lives. But a comprehensive peace agreement was reached six years later in 2014 and the parties were now working to achieve peace and a stable society. JICA has long used development to support the realization of peace for the Bangsamoro. While the embrace between Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim and Piñol might seem like the kind of thing that always happens at these events, it was a landmark event in the history of the Mindanao conflict. It may be seen as a historic moment one day. That JICA was able to create the venue for this event through the URTP-B program is another example of what development can do.



The embrace between Chairman Murad (front) and Secretary Piñol during the completion ceremony for the URTP-B program

Section 9 The Market-Driven Local Industry Promotion Sub-Project for the ARMM

The third component of the CCDP – economic enhancement – is intended to contribute to the creation of an industrial base that makes good use of the regional characteristics of Mindanao. It works to foster agribusiness and improve their access to markets so that they may serve as a catalyst for regional development.

The Development of Local Industry through Agribusiness

The ARMM suffers from a much higher poverty rate than the Philippines as a whole: 53.7% vs. 21.6% (2016). The leading cause of this was the protracted conflict in the Muslim Mindanao region. Most residents of the region make their living through agriculture and fishing – industries that were held back by the conflict. It is important for us to nurture local industry in the region (which is based on agribusiness) to improve its poverty rate and stabilize its security situation.

In JICA’s 2012 “Study on Local Industry Development in the ARMM Region,” we proposed promoting growth industries in the ARMM, in accordance with significant and valuable suggestions made by former Regional Secretary of Department of Trade and Industry Ishak Mastura, particularly agriculture (abaca, cacao, cassava, coconut, coffee, and mangosteen), aquaculture (seaweed, abalone, grouper, mud crab, tilapia, and milkfish), and livestock (cows, goats, and chickens). While specific industries in Mindanao have great potential for growth, they have unfortunately been held back by the region’s various problems which hinder business activity and investment.



Coffee cluster training (Credit: CPO)

By promoting and developing local industries through an industry cluster approach, we have worked to create employment and improve residents' livelihoods, thereby contributing to peace in Bangsamoro. More specifically, we have carried out technological transfers as a means of promoting local industries through an industry cluster approach. We selected six agricultural products (coconuts, coffee, palm oil, rubber, abaca, and seaweed) from the five provinces of the ARMM for this project and then targeted stakeholders involved in their research, development, production, transportation, and sale (producers, middlemen, private businesses, industry groups, local governments, government organizations, universities, research organizations, etc.). We named this the "Market-Driven Local Industry Promotion Project" (MDLIP).

The Sixth Industrialization Concept

From August 1-16, 2017, seventeen people involved with MDLIP clusters were invited to Hiroshima for training through which they could learn from the prefectural and municipal governments' experiences nurturing industry clusters. These participants belonged to the ARMM government, private businesses, industry groups, universities, and MILF organizations. The goal was for the participants to learn effective means of promoting local industries by reviewing the policies used in Hiroshima, learning about the relative roles played in building a collaborative relationship between business, government, and academia, and going on tours where they could see these lessons in action.

Over the course of the two weeks of training, the participants received many valuable ideas from the aforementioned collaborative relationship and the concept of "sixth industrialization," a framework under which farmers become involved not just in the production of agricultural products but also in their processing, transport, and sales. By becoming independently and comprehensively involved in the economic cycle for their products, these farmers can personally benefit from the value added by secondary and tertiary industries.

Hiroshima had special significance for these participants from the conflict affected areas in Mindanao. They told us that Hiroshima's experience recovering after the World War II was extremely useful for Mindanao's post-conflict recovery in a number of ways. The participants also attended the annual peace ceremony held at Hiroshima Peace Park on August 6.

Their thoughts focused on those who have perished in war and their resolve to contribute to the development of Bangsamoro became stronger.

Maki Yamagishi, the expert in charge of the CCDP project's economic enhancement component, was also present for the training in Hiroshima. Unlike the CCDP's other experts, she works at the CCDP's Davao office in eastern Mindanao where she is in charge of promoting the balance socio-economic development of all of Mindanao, both the conflict regions of central Mindanao and its associated islands as well as the island's western and northern areas that have seen remarkable economic development in recent years. Expert Yamagishi studied agricultural engineering in college and graduate school and only devoted herself to the field of peacebuilding later in life. Many of those involved with local peacebuilding assistance have had unique careers, something that I think proves that the field is one that accepts a wide array of people. She worked in conflict areas in Sri Lanka and Bosnia and Herzegovina before coming to Mindanao. Immediately prior to being sent to Mindanao, she worked with me in the Social Infrastructure and Peacebuilding Department in Tokyo. She's an extraordinarily flexible thinker and is quick on her toes, qualities that are needed when providing peacebuilding assistance. Our work is greatly influenced by the surrounding political and security situations, which means that we must always be able to adapt. It is not a good field for those who are very unyielding or strait-laced. They eventually crack.



Visiting an asparagus field during the Hiroshima training. Expert Yamagishi is at far right.
(Credit: CPO)

ARMM Regional Secretary of Department of Trade and Industry

When those who observed local industry in Hiroshima returned to the Philippines, they were burning with the desire to make good use of the knowledge they had gained, something that I was extremely happy to see. Following the conclusion of the training, a cooperative society had been formed in which participants in the training were the primary members. A social networking service was also setup for the trainees and the members of the cooperative society to exchange information and provide reports on their activities. Some of the participants were inspired by a business model they had seen in Hiroshima where vegetables grown in greenhouses and farmers' gardens were then sold directly to consumers in front of the farmers' homes. They began growing lettuce in greenhouses on the highlands of Upi, Maguindanao and selling it wholesale to the Cotabato market. This was successful and developed into a regular business for them. I felt a sense of fulfilment from having been able to provide them with opportunity to "learn from Japan" as Chief Negotiator Chairman Mohager Iqbal had told CCDP personnel that he wanted the Bangsamoro to do. Of course, the important thing would be whether they would be able to make good use of what they had learned in Japan now that they were back home. But even if I couldn't provide them with immediate results, I was glad to have at least shown them the way.

Secretary Anwar Malang of the ARMM Department of Trade and Industry (DTI-ARMM) had served as the leader of the trainees in Hiroshima. When we first met in January 2009 at COP3 in Penang, Malaysia, he was participating in the seminar as the representative of the Mindanao Human Rights Action Center (MinHRAC), an important Mindanao NGO. When he spoke, he was frequently sarcastic, bombastic, and extremely blunt. But it was difficult to refute his words as he was also entirely honest and logical. He was later appointed ARMM executive secretary in 2011 and then as secretary of the interior and local government. Now he was secretary of trade and industry. He had served as either a direct or indirect counterpart for JICA projects while in all of these positions. He gave us logical, honest (and sometimes quite sarcastic) advice. Once we had returned from Hiroshima, Secretary Malang spoke at length to myself and Expert Yamagishi about the usefulness of the "sixth industry" concept in his usual vigorous tone: "In Hiroshima, I saw how private businesses like farmers, middlemen, and retailers have joined together with governmental and academic organizations to efficiently produce agricultural

products with a high level of added value. It really made an impression on me. I want to get this framework to work in Bangsamoro as well.”

His words were now entirely free of sarcasm. It seemed that Hiroshima had taught him quite a bit. Afterwards, we regularly held meetings for the coconut, coffee, palm oil, rubber, abaca, and seaweed clusters in Davao that were co-hosted by the DTI-ARMM. At the first meeting, each of the six industry clusters produced their own action plans. All of these products were in demand. But they faced the hurdle of being able to regularly and consistently provide products of a certain quality and quantity. Their action plans therefore emphasized improving production aspects of their industries. Commitments were made by the participating government assistance organizations (DAF-ARMM, the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute, and the Philippines Coconut Authority, for example) to provide support for the action plans that had been produced. For example, a proposal was made to provide general technical assistance for the distribution of seedlings.

Secretary Malang was always in attendance at the cluster meetings and frequently took the lead in their discussion, giving the participants his vigorous encouragement. The personal participation of departmental secretaries at meetings where they can voice their department’s policies and their own personal positions should be warmly welcomed as it can provide a strong boost to the execution of developmental assistance projects. I was always a little pleased to see Secretary Malang’s behavior, sarcasm and all.

The Japanese Challenge

Of all the Japanese who became involved in the development of the Bangsamoro, there are two that I will never forget: Takeyoshi Sumikawa and Yoichi Amano. After retiring from Takasago Thermal Engineering, Sumikawa had been drawn as if by fate to Muslim Mindanao where he ended up assisting the Bangsamoro liberation movement through business. Amano had lived in Davao for more than thirty years and become a prominent figure there.

I encountered the pair for the first time in the summer of 2011 at the municipal hall of Datu Paglas. While meeting with the mayor, he mentioned that “some other Japanese people are here today” and asked me if I knew

them. When I said I didn't, he took me to a workshop (which had a roof but no walls) where the two had come for some sort of business. I was honestly shocked. What were other Japanese doing in a place like this? After we had gotten our introductions out of the way, we asked each other what we were doing there. They told me that they were carrying out an experiment to see if buckwheat could be grown in the municipality. As Amano was a prominent figure, he frequently received business proposals of various kinds. The experiment was the result of one of these, but it wasn't going well. Datu Paglas had an elevation of about 200 meters and wasn't well suited to the crop. At the time we met, they'd decided that it was time to try somewhere else.

Their next stop was Bumbaran, Lanao del Sur (which has an altitude of more than 1,000 meters). I traveled to the location in the spring of 2012 after getting word from Amano that they'd been successful. Arriving, I was greeted by a magnificent view of white buckwheat flowers along a gentle slope. Sumikawa and Amano (both of whom were in early old age) had bursting smiles and their happiness was contagious.

The municipality of Bumbaran has large populations of both Muslims and Christians and there have been incessant problems between the two groups. The town has been governed by Muslim mayors for generations and they had been able to provide well-balanced administration. Bumbaran was enthusiastic about promoting the cultivation of buckwheat, with an eye on making Japan its major target market. They have begun constructing farm roads through a grant with the goal of reducing poverty by promoting local industry and reconciliation between the Muslims and Christians. Linking production areas with markets with roads not



At the buckwheat field in Bumbaran. Amano is on the far right.



Constructing a farm road through grant aid

only facilitates the transport of goods but increases the spread of information and makes it easier for people to travel. Farm roads through the 1,000-meter highland will make the lives of the residents of Bumbaran and its surrounding barangays more prosperous. The community development efforts in Bumbaran are the result of the collaboration between Sumikawa and Amano's agricultural project (buckwheat cultivation) and JICA's infrastructure expansion project (farm road construction). As an example of non-governmental cooperation in a conflict region, it was groundbreaking.

Unfortunately, Amano fell ill and had to leave before he was able to witness the completion of the road. But while Sumikawa may have lost an irreplaceable partner, his efforts to help the Bangsamoro did not end with buckwheat. Even now he is active throughout the region and working to secure a prosperous future for the Bangsamoro, finding business opportunities such as producing clothing from banana fibers, cultivating organic coffee in the highlands, and constructing housing as part of the recovery of Marawi.

AtCCDP, I always thought that it would be revolutionary if the experience, knowledge, and technical capabilities of Japanese companies could be utilized in poverty reduction and economic growth of Mindanao. One of JICA's private sector support schemes was a survey on the ability to help small and medium-sized enterprises expand abroad (currently, Small and Medium Enterprises and SDGs Business Supporting Surveys). We promote matching the development needs of developing countries with the excellent products and technologies of Japanese SMEs, and support gathering information to utilize these products and technologies in ODA projects and planning business opportunities after ODA projects are implemented. Using this survey scheme, Dari K Co., Ltd., headquartered in Kyoto City, came to Cotabato in January 2017.

Dari K undertook a "Project Survey on the Improvement of Cacao Productivity and High Added Value in the Mindanao Region" in the hopes to contribute to the development of the cacao industry in the Bangsamoro region in light of the growing calls for developing and expanding the industry. Dari K's business includes the import and wholesale of cocoa, manufacture and sale of chocolates and confectionery, and the planning, manufacture and sale of foods and health foods associated with cacao and chocolate. Since its founding in 2011, it has worked to increase the income

of producers and improve the quality of cacao beans through technical guidance for producers in Sulawesi, Indonesia. Dari K is not just a chocolate manufacturer or seller. Dari K is a noble company with a vision of “changing the world through cacao.”

Keiichi Yoshino, president of the company, and I dined one time in a restaurant in Cotabato where we talked about the creation of peace through business in Mindanao, while enjoying the Maguindanao cuisine. A colleague at JICA’s headquarters told me that Dari K’s chocolates are delicious. I wanted to try it before I met President Yoshino, but since I was in Cotabato and had no way of getting any in time, I ordered some online and had them to my home in Tokyo. I called to see how my family liked them and was told it was “Super delicious.” When I met President Yoshino for the first time, I said to him his chocolate was “super delicious,” using the same expression my family used. He was surprised and asked how I came to acquire the chocolate there in Cotabato, and told him that I had actually ordered it online and checked with the family. He smiled at my honesty and responded, “Well, I brought some with me so please try it yourself.” It indeed was “super delicious.”

In recent years, the Philippine government has been actively working to foster the cacao industry. The number of chocolate makers who make everything from the site of fermenting cocoa beans to the actual production of chocolate, the so-called “Bean to Bar” process, has increased and the economy is booming, as a result, with the number of cacao producers increasing, mainly in Davao City in eastern Mindanao. However, this wave has not yet reached the Muslim Mindanao region. With President Yoshino’s passion to change the world with cacao and Dari K’s technology and sales power, Mindanao’s farmers will one day increase their incomes, such



Dari-K Keiichi Yoshino on left under Cacao Tree

as on the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia, where Dari K has operated. The day will surely come when this region will be peaceful and prosperous. President Yoshino, who was enjoying Maguindanao cuisine, asked, “Mr. Ochiai, what do you hope for from our company?” I responded without hesitation, “to create jobs,” adding, “Most of the people in this area are farmers. Even if the farmers’ children finish school, there is no work in the local area other than agriculture. Their agricultural productivity is low, and they are being taken advantage of by the brokers. Moreover, because the land is limited, it is often not possible for the third and fourth, etc., sons to go into agriculture. Therefore, there are always young people with guns instead of kites. If you can make good cacao, the more you can sell it, the more young people will stay in the village and engage in agriculture with a bag instead of a gun.

The results of Dari K’s project investigation were good. I met many farmers who were active in the production of cacao. The criollo species, a rare type of cacao, was found in a farmer’s field in a mountain village. It was also confirmed that the Muslim Mindanao region is suitable for cacao production. Above all, President Yoshino was convinced of the potential of this region. Our expectations for changing Mindanao through cacao production increased with President Yoshino’s enthusiasm.

However, this is a conflict-affected area. Six months after President Yoshino and his colleagues visited the site, a large-scale battle between the Philippine armed forces and Islamic extremist organizations broke out in Lanao del Sur Province, a short distance away. As long as there was a security problem, JICA could not continue to support the dissemination, demonstration, and business-related projects that followed the project investigation. I truly regretted this. One day, I believe that the day that farmers who grow cacao, which is the raw material for Dari K chocolate, will become a common site in Mindanao.

The Japanese government and JICA have worked together to assist in the development of the Muslim Mindanao region, but it will be with the arrival of Japanese private businesses that we will start to see full-fledged socio-economic development of the area. One of the most important roles of government is preparing an environment in which private businesses can safely invest and operate. This is one of the important roles of the CCDP and something I want JICA to help make a reality.

Section 10**The Armed Occupation of Marawi City, Our Withdrawal, and Reconstruction**

Just before the beginning of Ramadan in May 2017, a local terrorist organization linked to the Islamic State (ISIS) attacked Marawi, one of the cities in Mindanao with the strongest ties to Islam. The CCDP's Japanese experts were withdrawn to Manila for their safety in the wake of the attack. During our six months stay in Manila, we found ways to continue carrying out our support projects remotely and tried to suppress our feelings of frustration at being unable to personally visit them.

Islamic Violent and Extremist Organizations

On the afternoon of May 23, 2017, just before the beginning of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, the Maute Group and Abu Sayyaf began an armed occupation of Marawi, Lanao del Sur. These were Islamic extremist organizations that had pledged their loyalty to the Islamic State. The Duterte administration declared martial law throughout Mindanao and moved to rapidly subdue the terrorists but the fighting took far longer than expected. The thorough preparations by the Maute Group (in terms of weaponry, provisions, and funding), the ease with which Islamic extremist organizations had been able to enter the city, and the Philippine military's lack of experience with urban warfare all made the operation more difficult than had been foreseen. The fighting finally came to an end five months later on October 23. By the time the government declared the situation resolved, the final human cost was 1,174 dead: 165 Philippine soldiers and policemen, 962 members of the Maute Group and other extremist organizations, and 47 civilians. More than 250,000 residents of Marawi had fled to nearby Iligan City and other areas, becoming internally displaced persons.

The Maute Group's occupation had not come entirely out of nowhere. There had been warning signs such as the discovery of ISIS flags in Abu Sayyaf compounds, the pledge of loyalty to ISIS by Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of Abu Sayyaf, the Maute Group's occupation of the municipality of Butig, Lanao del Sur, the bombing of Davao's night market, and the arrest of Maute Group members committing crimes.

Abu Sayyaf split off from the MNLF in the 1990s and is based on the islands of Sulu and Basilan. Originally a separatist group, it changed

following the death of its founder from being an organization based on Islamic teachings to a terrorist and criminal organization that has repeatedly carried out kidnappings for ransoms. The Maute Group was a terrorist organization founded in 2016 by the brothers Omar and Abdullah Maute from Butig, Lanao del Sur. The brothers came under the influence of Islamic extremism while studying in the Middle East. They were first active in Indonesia but then returned to their hometown and worked to expand their organization, absorbing impoverished, disaffected youths by asserting that society should embody the principles of the Islamic State.

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) are an extremist organization founded by former MILF commander Ameril Umbra Kato in 2011 after he rejected the MILF's policies (i.e. continuous peace negotiation despite the obvious lack of sincerity from the side of the GPH) and led an uprising in central Mindanao. While they only played a secondary role in the occupation of Marawi, they were the ringleaders behind the Mamasapano Incident which prevented the passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law during the Aquino administration. The group has repeatedly attacked Philippine military barracks and police stations. Abu Sayyaf, the Maute Group, and the BIFF were all once part of either the MILF or MNLF. The phenomenon of extremist organizations arising from anti-government groups is a global one and one that will be difficult to completely eliminate so long as the root causes of conflict – injustice, inequality, and poverty – remain.

Evacuation to Manila

JICA made the decision to withdraw the CCDP's experts back to Manila immediately following the outbreak of violence on May 23. After arriving



Marawi burning

in Manila, we tried to continue carrying out and managing our assistance projects remotely through the CPO's field coordinators. We had initially been optimistic, believing that we would be back in Cotabato within a couple weeks. The number of Maute Group fighters and their weaponry greatly exceeded expectations, however, and our time in Manila would last for six months, finally coming to an end on November 24.

We frequently make use of "remote control" when providing peacebuilding assistance in areas where Japanese personnel are unable to go. We work with our counterpart organizations and residents in the conflict affected areas in Mindanao through on-site personnel like local consultants and NGOs. We also invite members of our local counterpart organizations to seminars and workshops in locations that Japanese experts are able to access. In the case of the CCDP project, this could be Cotabato, Davao, Manila, or Japan.

When on earth would we be allowed to return? During our six months in Manila, the CCDP's Japanese experts continued to offer support to our counterparts and area residents through careful remote control of the CPO's field coordinators. JICA had a legacy of peace assistance to Mindanao and the Bangsamoro, one based on "always being there on location" and "contributing to peace through development." We needed to maintain and treasure that legacy, no matter the form. Our field coordinators, who normally oversaw administration and projects, were the key to our remote project management. Because the incident occurred during the month of Ramadan, these employees worked from home rather than going to the CPO. As Ramadan ended and things gradually calmed down in Cotabato, they went from entirely working at home to spending mornings in the office to a normal all-day schedule. During this period, the Japanese experts in Manila conducted regular video conferences with the Cotabato staff at 9 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. These were used to exchange information, make progress reports, and confirm instructions.

Remote Control

Carrying out projects through remote control was like trying to scratch your foot through your shoes. I spent six months suffering from an itch that I just couldn't reach. I commuted to JICA's Philippines office every day and worked quietly at the CPO's temporary office (a meeting room). It was good to be able to discuss things face-to-face with Etsuko Masuko

(the representative of the Philippines office in charge of Mindanao) and the others who I usually only communicated with through e-mail and calls. And the 40th floor window of our office offered a fine view of a city with soaring buildings. It was a far different from the view of Cotabato city that I was used to seeing from the CPO's second story. It was astonishing to realize that both were part of the same country.

Travelling back and forth between my hotel and JICA's office every day and living a normal, predictable by-the-numbers lifestyle made me entirely acclimated to city life. Perhaps because I was impatient to have our projects achieve results, my feelings went into an entirely negative direction. Would we be able to maintain our relationships of trust with the locals? I was worried that, because we were unable to meet and discuss things directly with our counterparts in a timely fashion, we would miss out on opportunities and do harm to the precious trust that we had worked hard to build up. Would our projects fall behind? Because we were forced to rely upon remote control, we were only able to coordinate with our partners at specific times and through limited methods and that could hinder the smooth execution of our activities.

Would the quality of our projects go down? The problem was essentially that, because the Japanese experts were unable to directly carry out technological transfers while in the same location as their counterpart organizations and beneficiaries, JICA was unable to exercise the same kind of careful management than it normally did. We thought that this would lead to wasted time and effort, corrections and compromises, and a remarkable decline in quality. We were also concerned that this would result in our projects requiring larger budgets. Our Japanese experts could only operate in Manila and Davao. That meant that activities that would normally have taken place in Cotabato, such as workshops, would now require additional funding so that our many counterparts and guests could travel by plane from inland Mindanao to one of those cities.

Strength Training

One of the ways I tried to prevent these negative thoughts from taking over was to make sure that I continued to engage in strength training while I was in Manila. This is something I've done since I was in my twenties. I always go to the gym on the weekend and go through my exercise schedule. I do the same thing in Cotabato, where the gym welcomes all.

Muslims and Christians sweat together there. The only thing the friends I've made at the gym know about me is that I'm Japanese. They were surprised at first to see a Japanese person lifting barbells, but they'd soon get used to it and then start talking to me about anime and J-Pop (topics they are far more knowledgeable about than I am). Thanks to television and the internet, even people in the middle of a conflict region have a strong interest in Japan.

My hotel in Manila had a small training space on the top floor, one that couldn't really be called a gym. I never saw anyone else there, so could spend as much time there working out as I wanted to. I've heard that most people become mentally detached while they engage in strength training, but it's the opposite for me. When I train, all the chaotic thoughts running through my head come together and organize themselves. Ways of dealing with things that I've been worried about just pop into my head. I don't know where these ideas come from, but they fall into place as I grunt and shout. Strength training hones my body and puts my thoughts in order. It's truly killing two birds with one stone. Thanks to my time training at my hotel, the negative thoughts afflicting me while I was in Manila gradually changed to positive ones.

Had the occupation of Marawi only had negative consequences for us? Engaging in peacebuilding assistance necessarily carries with it the risk that bullets might begin flying at some point. Even if you aren't personally targeted, there's always the increased chance of getting caught up in something. When carrying out peacebuilding assistance, you have to do all you can while still taking into account all projected risks. And even if we hadn't known about the occupation of Marawi, having to evacuate for security reasons had been a foreseeable risk. We had been able to maintain the minimum needed level of project management during our six months in Manila through remote control. Yes, we had had to adjust the plans for our projects and their results to conform to the new reality, but we had also strengthened the bonds between our Japanese experts and the CPO's staff. And the ties between the CCDP and our counterpart organizations could even be said to have become better now. We had shown them that we would continue to carry out our support activities without interruption even under tough circumstances.

Returning to Cotabato, the Promised Land

With President Duterte's declaration that the occupation of Marawi was over, we could finally return to Cotabato. As I stepped off my "usual" Philippine Airlines flight and step foot in Cotabato on November 24, 2017 after six long months in Manila, I was filled with a sense of elation and relief. Long ago, when King Hussein of Jordan returned home after seeking medical treatment in the United States, he kissed the tarmac upon his arrival, filled with happiness and gratitude at having been able to return to his homeland. I, too, gave the concrete at Cotabato Airport a light kiss upon descending the ramp from my flight. I was filled with joy at being able to return to my place of work. I hoped that I would never have to be evacuated again.

Marawi had been destroyed during the fight against the Islamic extremist organizations. Its recovery was a pressing task of the greatest importance for peace in Mindanao. There's a concept in disaster recovery: "Build Back Better." As the name suggests, it means trying to make things better than they had been before the disaster occurred. It is a concept that Japan has adopted in its domestic disaster recovery operations and one that JICA brings to its international recovery assistance projects (in concert with the government of the affected nation). The Philippines is current acting expanding its infrastructure under the Duterte administration's "Build, Build, Build" policy.

It is also important to take into consideration the feelings of the local residents. The Maranao people living in Marawi have a unique culture, an amalgamation of Islam and their ancient indigenous culture. The recovery of Marawi should proceed in a way that incorporates "Build Back Better,"



Cotabato Airport

“Build, Build, Build,” and the Maranao culture. Those providing support need to prioritize moving in accordance with the feelings of the Maranao people.

Section 11 Under One Roof, A Home is Built

Eventually, my time in Cotabato had to come to an end. Over its course, the CCDP project had adapted to keep up with the complicated path followed by the Mindanao peace process. It serves as a point of continuity, an important framework that connected the beginning and end of JICA’s lengthy support for that process. It contributed to bring the Bangsamoro people together.

Farewell Cotabato, Until We Meet Again!

On March 30, 2018, only four months after my return from Manila, my three-year assignment as the Head of CPO and the Chief Leader of CCDP came to an end. My final months in Cotabato city seemed to fly by.

I can certainly not make the claim that when I departed the Philippines, I did so leaving nothing left undone behind me. Let’s be frank: there was still a massive amount of work to be done. There were many numbers of fresh and promising ideas that had been born during my strength training in Manila. Unfortunately, I did not have the time to bring these to fruition. As I departed Cotabato, I left that work to my fellow experts – Nishimaru, Nakada, Demizu, and Yamagishi. I’ll leave the question of whether I fulfilled my duties as a samurai during the restoration of the CCDP to the appraisal of future generations.



A certificate of appreciation to those who have helped me

During my flight, I reflected on the efforts I'd made as part of JICA's technical cooperation projects.

SERD-CAAM, CD-CAAM, and the CCDP

The progress of the peace process has ebbed and flowed over the time since the CCDP project was created in July 2013. The Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) was signed in October 2012 and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in March 2014. The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) was established in February 2019 following the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in July 2018.

It seems fair to say that the CCDP's predecessors – Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development of Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (SERD-CAAM) and Capacity Development in Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (CD-CAAM) – contributed to the realization of the FAB and CAB agreements. After the creation of the CCDP project in July 2013, it was strongly affected by the fluid security and political circumstances it found itself in like the breakdown of congressional deliberations on the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) in the wake of the Mamasapano Incident (large-scale fighting between Bangsamoro extremist organizations and government security forces in 2014) and the changes in policy on the Bangsamoro peace process that came with the change from the Aquino to the Duterte administrations. But it made major contributions to the task of achieving peace in Mindanao through the successful creation of the Bangsamoro government.

SERD-CAAM, CD-CAAM, and the CCDP all had the ultimate goal of facilitating the Bangsamoro peace process. JICA's technical cooperation projects generally involve making specific technological transfers to counterpart organizations (ODA recipients). But these three projects went well beyond those bounds. Through the execution of their projects, they sought to create reciprocal relationships between the formerly hostile parties to the conflict, ones that could become bonds of trust. They were an attempt to create and maintain a peace that permeated through every aspect of Mindanao politics, economics, and society. The efforts undertaken in the process of carrying out JICA's projects, that trial and error, can be considered to have been a precious foundation and asset for the transition period leading to the creation of the new Bangsamoro government.

Amidst a situation marked by political and security instability, one where there was no peace agreement in place, only a ceasefire, JICA sought the conclusion of a peace agreement, the enactment of a basic law, the creation of a transition authority, and finally the establishment of a new autonomous government. It fearlessly carried out grand assistance projects to contribute to the Bangsamoro peace process. It showed perseverance during the many difficulties and frustrations it encountered along the way. The unceasing efforts of countless JICA members merged to form a twelve-year long legacy of technical assistance, one that stretches from SERD-CAAM to the CCDP.

President Rodrigo Duterte

When President Duterte, who had served seven terms as the Mayor of Davao, took office in May 2016, he made the Philippines' transition to federalism a top priority of his administration. He also created a "roadmap" for the resolution of the Bangsamoro issue, a sign that he considered achieving peace in Mindanao as a political task of continued importance. The inability of previous presidential administrations to create a situation that all of the many parties to the Mindanao conflict could accept (to at least a certain degree) can be regarded as one of the reasons that they had been unable to secure a final peace agreement. For this reason the roadmap, operating under the assumption that the peace process had entered the stage of moving from peace negotiations to actually carrying out items laid out in the peace agreements, focused on finding a final resolution of the Bangsamoro issue while comprehensively involving the many stakeholders involved: not just the MILF, but also the MNLF, traditional leaders (datus and sultans), indigenous groups, and Christian settlers.



President Rodrigo Duterte

The Bangsamoro Basic Law that the Aquino administration had been unable to pass was reviewed by a reconstituted Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) in February 2017 on the basis of the comprehensive peace agreement with the MILF, the Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF, the law establishing the ARMM government, and the Indigenous People's Rights Act. In addition to the MILF, the commission included representatives of the MNLF, indigenous peoples, and Christian groups. An amended draft of the BBL was submitted to Congress in July 2017 and passed in July 2018 following lengthy hearings in both chambers. President Duterte signed the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) at Malacañang Palace. The territory of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was determined in referendums held from January 21 to February 6, 2019. In addition to the five provinces that had made up the ARMM, Cotabato City and sixty-three barangays in North Cotabato voted to join the BARMM. While six municipalities in Lanao del Norte voted to join the BARMM, this was rejected in the referendum at the provincial level.

The BTA Swearing-In Ceremony

In accordance with the CAB and BOL, President Duterte swore in the eighty members of the Parliament of Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) at a ceremony on February 22, 2019. Forty-one of these members were recommended by the MILF and thirty-nine by the government. MILF Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim was named as chief minister of the BTA. The BTA's role is to serve as a transitional government for the BARMM during the three-year period leading up to the official establishment of the Bangsamoro government following its parliamentary elections in June 2022.

Of the forty-one BTA parliament members recommended by the MILF, eighteen belong to the MILF Central Committee, five are BIAF commanders, three are members of the MILF's political committee, five are women, three are traditional leaders, two were youth representatives, one was a Christian, one was a member of an indigenous group, and three were from other sectors. Many of these had served as leaders for organizations that acted as counterparts for JICA and worked with us as we carried out our efforts to assist in the creation of political systems, improve livelihoods, and build personnel capacity.

Meanwhile, the thirty-two BTA parliament members recommended by the Philippine government included nine members of the MNLF, six women, one member of an indigenous group, one Christian, and fifteen members of other sectors. Many were former leaders of the ARMM government and local governmental figures who had been involved in the development of JICA's long-standing assistance projects.

The ministers of the BTA were: Chief Minister and Minister of Public Works Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim (MILF chairman), Minister of Basic, Higher and Technical Education Mohager Chairman Mohager Iqbal (MILF chief negotiator), Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Sammy Al Mansor (BIAF chief of staff), Director of the Planning and Development Office Mohajirin Ali (BTC member), Minister of Finance and Budget Eduard Guerra (chairman of the Joint Normalization Committee), Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform Mohammad Yacob (Executive Director of the BDA), Minister of Social Welfare Raissa Jajurie (BTC member), Minister of Local Government Naguib Sinarimbo (BIAF legal advisor), Minister of Health Zafrullah Dipatuan (chairman of the BDA), Minister of Public Order and Safety Hussein Munoz (BTC member), Executive Secretary Mike Pasigin (executive director of the BTC), and Minister of Transportation and Communications Dickson Hermoso (chairman of the Joint Normalization Committee). MILF 1st Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar was named speaker of the Bangsamoro Parliament with MILF 2nd Vice Chair Ali Solaiman serving as deputy chief minister.

All of the above were important figures in the MILF and had served as counterparts in various assistance projects by JICA. JICA had continually provided support for the realization of peace in Mindanao. As I saw their faces, I vividly recalled times when I had worked with each of them on



The swearing-in ceremony for the BTA

assistance projects intended to help create a new world for the Bangsamoro and how their reliable partnership had produced results.

During the three-year transitional period prior to the election of the Bangsamoro Parliament and the official establishment of the Bangsamoro government in June 2022, the BTA will take the ARMM's place in providing administrative services to the residents of the BARMM. And yet, with few exceptions, the ministers that the MILF had chosen had little experience with administration and governing. It is expected that many of the officials that will make up the BTA's ministries will come from the existing ARMM government. It will be important for these ministries to provide administrative services without delay in accordance with appropriate policies and management by ministerial officials.

In accordance with the provisions of the CAB, one of third of the MILF's military forces (about 15,000 soldiers) are to be normalized at the time of the enactment of the BOL. It will be important to rapidly and effectively disarm and demobilize these soldiers while also taking measures to improve their livelihoods. If the actions taken here are lacking, it could become a security risk.

The key question is whether the MILF-led BTA will be able to operate smoothly during the three-year transition period and provide administrative services to the satisfaction of the BARMM's residents. If it fails at this, it could result in the MILF losing the trust of these residents. If the legitimacy of the MILF is weakened, it could endanger the peaceful establishment of the Bangsamoro government in 2022, something that would in turn have significant consequences for the residents of the BARMM and the region's political stability. Mindanao continues to have security problems, as shown by the alarming actions of terrorist organizations like Abu Sayyaf. It is absolutely premature to announce that peace has completely arrived. The transition period lasting from the creation of the BTA to the formal establishment of the Bangsamoro government in 2022 will be a crucial time for peace in Mindanao. It is vital that assistance from the international community (including JICA) continues.

Where there is a will, there is a way

On July 4, 2019, a final briefing was held in a large conference room at the offices of the BTA in which the accomplishment that the CCDP project

had achieved over the six years it had been in operation were announced. JICA dispatched personnel from Tokyo and the Philippine office to attend alongside its experts from Cotabato city. Several of the BTA's ministers and directors were in attendance, including Executive Minister Pasigan. All had struggled beside us over the course of the CCDP.

In addition to this report on the CCDP's overall activities, specialists like Chief Advisor Hiroshi Takeuchi gave reports on the results achieved by each of the CCDP's components (governance, public service delivery and community development, and economic enhancement). Executive Secretary Pasigan voiced his deep gratitude to JICA for providing such wide-ranging and necessary assistance through the CCDP for the creation of a peaceful future for the Bangsamoro people. He mentioned its work to expand the region's legal system, strengthen its organizations, improve the livelihood of its residents, and promote its economy.

When my colleagues at the CPO sent me photographs from the occasion, I saw something that made me so grateful that I was dumbfounded: the words written on the banner placed behind the participants read "The Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro." There was no "A" or "B" attached at the end, just "for the Bangsamoro." It was proof of the fact that the ARMM and BTC had merged to become one Bangsamoro.

When the CCDP was formed six years earlier, we had experienced a great failure. We had based our plans on the premise that the MILF and ARMM were living together under one roof. When the project finally began, it did so by treating the situation as one where there were two houses under one roof. We thought that if maintained the outward formalities while changing the actual state of things, things would steadily progress until a time when they became one. MILF and BDA personnel worked alongside officials of the ARMM at worksites for the URTP-B and QIP projects. They collaborated during JICA projects on everything from planning to execution. This broke down the invisible walls between them, bringing "that" time closer. It became a "clasp" linking the MILF and ARMM together. It was a role that JICA could play because we are who we are.

It was initially believed that the peace process would go as planned and the BTA would be established within three years. But then the peace process broke down in the wake of the terrible Mamasapano Incident.

The idea of the two houses unifying became fanciful. With the arrival of the Duterte administration, the peace process was left to the mercy of the new administration's political considerations like the introduction of a federalist system. When I departed Cotabato in March 2018, I had held the somewhat sad belief that the MILF and ARMM would still be separate when the CCDP project drew to a close.

But then, at the very end, the two became one. I grew up being told by my grandparents from another generation that men didn't cry. But I was so happy when I saw that photograph that I cried tears of joy. And the words of Shingen Takeda, the lord who my maternal ancestors had served as samurai, came to my lips: "Where there is a will, there is a way."

Chapter 4: The Role of Development in the Mindanao Peace Process

Japan and JICA first became involved in the Mindanao peace process following the reaching of a final peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF in 1996. We have continually provided assistance since that time. We gave support during the transition period that will lead to the complete resolution of the conflict, for the 2014 comprehensive peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the group that had continued the fight for the liberation of the Bangsamoro, and for the future establishment of a Bangsamoro government.

Let us consider the significance of the Japanese government and JICA's development assistance for the resolution of the Mindanao conflict and what its characteristics have been.

Section 1 On Support for Peacebuilding

The Japanese government and JICA's peacebuilding assistance was born through trial and error, shaped by the history and in the context of its development assistance.

Human Security and Development Aid Policy

In her September 2006 visit to the Philippines, JICA President Ogata gave voice to JICA's determination to assist in achieving peace on Mindanao, telling President Aquino and Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim that "development has a role to play in the Mindanao peace process." She also stressed the importance that "human security" could have in furthering that process.

Human security is the concept of providing security through a framework under which protection from above and empowerment from below grants each individual freedom from fear, freedom from want, and the freedom to live with dignity. Both the Philippine government and MILF were favorable to the idea of adopting a human-centered approach towards resolving the threat of conflict and developmental issues, one that focused

on “fear,” “want,” and “dignity.” During the protracted conflict on Mindanao, many Muslims, Christians, and members of indigenous groups had been oppressed, languished in poverty, and had their human rights violated. Development assistance based on the idea of human security pays consideration to ordinary people like these and delivers practical assistance directly to them.

One of the seven important issues named in the “ODA Midterm Policy” that Japan adopted in 1999 was “Development and Conflicts/Disasters.” This document stated that the prevention and resolution of conflicts and post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery were important development tasks for the international community. It stated that Japan would “play an active role in conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery through development assistance.” Continuing this trend, “peacebuilding” was one of the four important tasks laid out in the 2003 revision of “Japan’s Official Development Assistance Charter.”

The first edition of JICA’s “Thematic Guidelines on Peacebuilding” was written in response to the Japanese government’s policy. And through an initiative of President Ogata, a new viewpoint closely related to peacebuilding was introduced that emphasized “human security” and “the continuity between humanitarian assistance and development assistance.” It was during this period that the Japanese government and JICA embarked on the “Mindanao Package,” a full-fledged support program for the Mindanao peace process, and multiple projects were launched that were heavily focused on human security.

In the 2015 revision of the “Japan’s Development Cooperation Charter” (the successor to Japan’s Official Development Assistance Charter), it is clearly stated that creating peaceful and safe societies sharing universal values is a priority policy. And that the way to accomplish this is through continuous peacebuilding assistance based on the concept of human security. This policy emphasizes not only helping the people living in areas ravaged by conflict, but also eliminating and alleviating the root causes of those conflicts through peacebuilding with development.

Filling in the Gap between Humanitarian and Development Assistance

It is important for humanitarian assistance and aid for recovery and

development to be carried out without interruption so that development can proceed continuously from conflict to recovery. And yet, it has been noticed that during peacebuilding assistance, the organizations providing urgent humanitarian assistance are often different from those providing development assistance. And that this can lead to a gap when making the transition from one to the other. Assistance organizations in Mindanao have worked hard to be more conscious of the potential for this gap while carrying out their activities and to eliminate it by engaging in close collaboration and coordination with other organizations. While engaged in peacebuilding assistance to Mindanao, the Japanese government and JICA have participated in cluster meetings with the Philippine and ARMM governments, UN humanitarian assistance organizations (UNOCHA, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, etc.), and international and local NGOs and worked hard to gather information, arrange coordination, and engage in collaboration wherever possible.

Recent conflicts have shown a tendency to be protracted and to repeatedly flare back up after having seemingly died down. Under these conditions, an incremental, linear progression through assistance types – first urgent humanitarian assistance, then recovery assistance, and finally development assistance – may not necessarily be realistic. And because incidents often occur in parallel, adopting a multilayered and concurrent approach to humanitarian and development assistance is necessary. The Japanese government and JICA first became directly involved in development assistance to Mindanao during a stage of the conflict in which the need for urgent humanitarian assistance was high (the period between the outbreak of the conflict and the conclusion of a peace agreement) as we arrived immediately after the signing of a ceasefire agreement. The proactive and resolute approach we've taken in our peacebuilding assistance has been innovative.

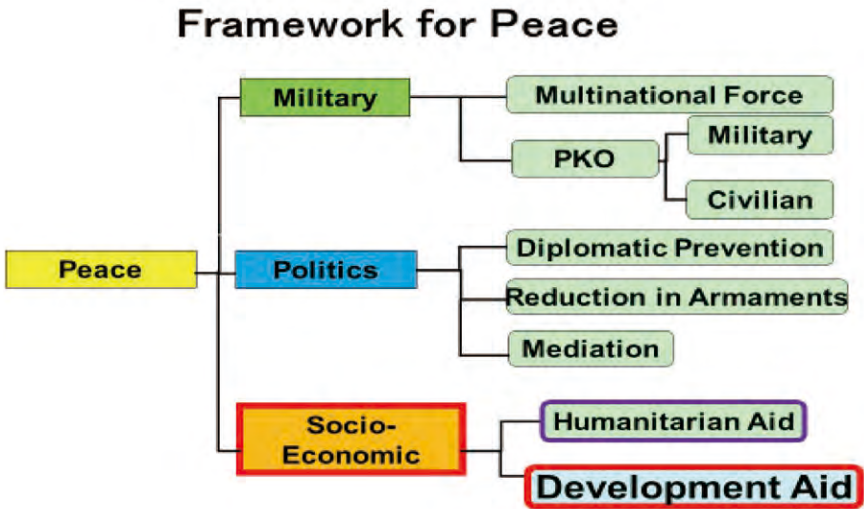
Section 2 The Philosophy Behind Providing Support for Peace in Mindanao

Japan's peace assistance to Mindanao has been based on its own experiences with nation building in the late 19th Century. The lessons learned from Japan's modernization will be used to contribute to the creation of a bright future for the Bangsamoro.

A Three-Pronged Approach

Japan’s support for peace in Mindanao has been multilayered. The Japanese government and JICA have adopted a three-pronged approach that incorporates the important mechanisms of the peace process: “peacekeeping” through the military framework of the IMT, “peacemaking” through the political framework of the ICG, and “peacebuilding” through the developmental (recovery) framework of J-BIRD. Using this approach, we have been actively involved in the peace process and comprehensively contributed to achieving peace and stability in Mindanao.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Japan’s support for peace in Mindanao is that it began carrying out obvious developmental assistance projects during the period of insecurity and instability that preceded the conclusion of a peace agreement. The Japanese contingents to the IMT played an important role in facilitating the effective and efficient deployment of Japanese foreign policy and development assistance. JICA personnel are given appointments as diplomats and then dispatched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to serve as socio-economic development advisors at the IMT. These contingents have served as a meeting point for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and JICA’s support for peace in Mindanao.



Framework for Peace (JICA Guidline for Peacebuilding Assistance)

A “Mindanao Taskforce” has also been established by the Japanese embassy and JICA offices in Manila to improve the level of collaboration between foreign policy and developmental assistance. This taskforce has met on a monthly basis since 2006 to facilitate the sharing of information on local conditions and serve as a mechanism for policy coordination and decision making. The discussions held at the taskforce are shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and JICA headquarters in Tokyo so that they can be incorporated into Japan’s foreign and developmental assistance policies. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and JICA (as well as their subsidiary branches) thus act in concert to provide support for peace in Mindanao.

The peace dividends produced by developmental assistance serve to facilitate our diplomatic efforts, the important political framework through which we seek to resolve the conflict. The developmental assistance initiative J-BIRD has been an effective means of maintaining this framework.

By producing “peace dividends” through J-BIRD’s projects, Japan has been able to support the continued desire of the residents of the conflict affected areas in for peace and stability. This has been useful for the “political agenda” of having developmental assistance provide backing for the peace process. That is, developmental assistance has been used strategically as a means of ensuring that the parties to the conflict (and those under their influence) did not stray from the peace process and instead continued to make progress. As can be seen in its support for peace in Mindanao, Japan’s peace diplomacy has been the embodiment of its policy of Proactive Contribution to Peace based on international collaboration. It has made active use of development assistance to produce peace dividends and political solutions.

The Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approach (JICA’s Support for Peacebuilding)

JICA’s support for peacebuilding has the goal of “producing resilient states under which conflicts neither occur nor reoccur.” It seeks to accomplish this by “establishing governments trusted by their peoples” and “forming resilient societies” (JICA’s website).

A state where “conflicts neither occur nor reoccur” is a resilient state that is able to maintain stable governance and respond to political, social, and

physical shocks and changes, whether they come from home or abroad. Based on this fundamental idea and the lessons it has gained through its experience providing support for peacebuilding, JICA has adopted two approaches: the top-down approach of “establishing a functional, comprehensive, and responsive government trusted by its people” and the bottom-up approach of “forming a resilient society capable of self-development and conflict resolution.” The peacebuilding support that JICA has provided to Mindanao has been undertaken on the basis of this thinking.

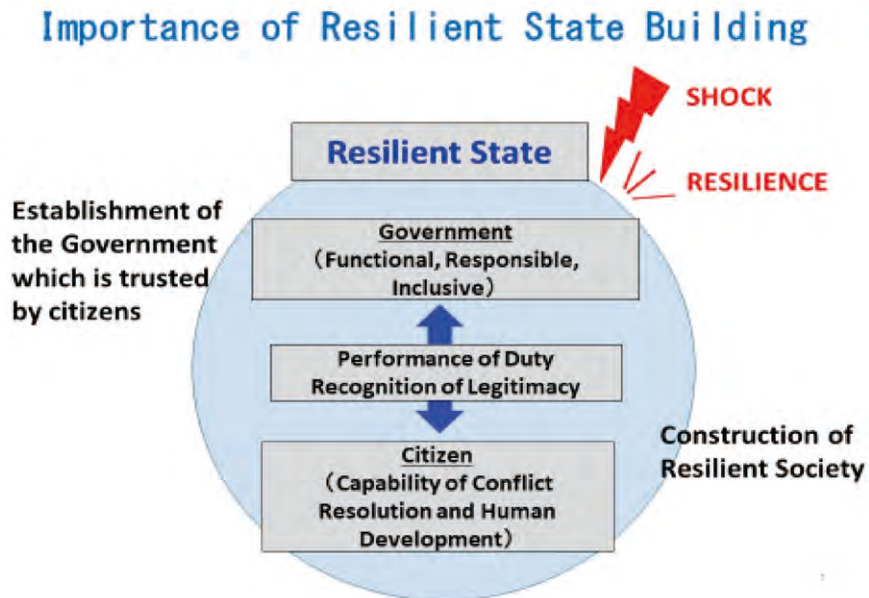
In the case of the Mindanao peace process, one of the results brought about by the resolution of the conflict has been the establishment of a highly autonomous Bangsamoro government within the sovereign state of the Philippines. While not the creation of a new state, it has taken the place of the previous ARMM government. The new Bangsamoro government must be an autonomous government trusted not just by the Muslims living within its territory but also by the Christians and indigenous groups found there. The absence of such trust can lead to the abuse of authority, unequal political participation, economic disparities, and the marginalization of certain areas. And these could cause the resumption of the conflict.

The Japanese government and JICA has carried out a wide range of aid projects in pursuit of the establishment of a “functional, comprehensive, and responsive autonomous Bangsamoro government trusted by its people” (a top-down approach). They have taken care to ensure that these were done in a comprehensive, transparent, and fair fashion. These have included providing support for the drafting of the Bangsamoro Basic Law and various regulations, determining the structure of the Bangsamoro government, investigating the state of human resources in Bangsamoro, expanding infrastructure, drawing up development plans for the Bangsamoro, carrying out structural reform of the existing ARMM government, improving the functionality and administrative capacities of that government, improving the administrative capacities of the local governments located within the ARMM, and capacity building of the personnel who will oversee the operations of the future Bangsamoro government.

At the same time, Bangsamoro society is a diverse one, made up of Muslims, Christians, and indigenous groups. Efforts must be made to foster harmony, reconciliation, and trust between these communities or else political and social tensions could lead to a resumption of the conflict. As

such, the Japanese government and JICA have also made the “formation of a resilient society capable of self-development and conflict resolution” a goal (a bottom-up approach). Here too, they have taken care to ensure that their numerous aid projects were carried out in a comprehensive, transparent, and fair fashion. These have included producing peace dividends through the QIP project, aiding in community development through the construction of small-scale infrastructure facilities and the creation of cooperative societies, providing assistance for normalization through agricultural training in areas associated with MILF military camps, and fostering local industry through industry clusters. These efforts have also contributed to regional stability.

Incidentally, the only agreement in place when Japan began providing support for the peace process between the Philippine government and MILF in 2006 was the 2001 Tripoli Agreement. This agreement was not just intended to create a ceasefire between the two parties; it was meant to create conditions under which humanitarian assistance and socio-economic development could be carried out and the parties’ peace negotiations could continue in a stable fashion. It was important that the ceasefire remained trustworthy. Carrying out humanitarian assistance



and socio-economic development served this purpose by improving the livelihoods of the people and stabilizing the security situation.

The Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) was created by both Philippine Government and MILF on 2001 Tripoli Agreement to facilitate humanitarian assistance and socio-economic development during the peace process. As the BDA is very much under the control of the MILF, it is subject to the desires of the MILF Central Committee. The development projects carried out through BDA are in alignment with the desires of the MILF, meaning that they are carried out within the boundaries permitted by the Philippine government. Cooperating with the BDA, an organization granted legitimacy by both parties to the conflict, was an innovative means of allowing JICA to maintain its impartiality and carry out its projects with increased effectiveness. JICA's support could continue in a way that did not overly favor either of the parties and it could continue in its efforts aimed at the formation of a resilient society (its bottom-up approach).

Learning “Bangsamoro Spirit, Japanese Knowledge” from Japan’s Own Experience

Following their meeting with JICA President Ogata, the MILF leadership (including Chairman Al-Haji Murad Ebrahim) expressed a strong desire to learn from “the experience of Japan.” More specifically, they were extremely interested in learning from its development into a modern state during the late 19th Century and its economic recovery following the Second World War. They wanted to know how Japan had escaped invasion and colonization by the Western powers and transformed from a feudalistic state to a modern one where power was centralized in the figure of the emperor. And they wanted to know the history of how, despite having been reduced to ashes during its great war against Britain and America, it recovered and became an economic power.

The MILF goal is to have the new Bangsamoro government rule over a peaceful and prosperous land. This seems to me to have much in common with the vision laid out in the Charter Oath, a document released in 1868 that outlined the approach that the newly established Meiji government would take in governing.

The oath consists of five articles, the first of which says that “Deliberative

assemblies shall be widely established, and all matters decided by open discussion." This idea, that superior individuals throughout Japan should assemble and decide on matters of state through debate, can be connected to the ultimate establishment of the Diet. The second article says that "All classes, high and low, shall be united in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state." This meant that all classes of Japanese society were to be allowed to participate equally in governing the nation. The third article laid down that "The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall all be allowed to pursue their own calling so that there may be no discontent." The idea that the government, samurai, and ordinary citizens should fulfill their responsibilities and achieve their own goals referred to contemporary policies of general conscription and industrial promotion. The government and citizens were to be unified to protect public order and expand Japan's industrial base. The fourth article said that "Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature." This was a declaration of the government's intent to modernize Japan, to do away with the old, poor practices of the previous feudal government and adopt the advanced customs of the West. The final article read "Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule." This showed the government's determination to both cherish Japan's traditions and seek knowledge from abroad that could be used for Japan's development.

Now, if we were to take the articles of the Charter Oath and put them in a form that represents the world sought by the Bangsamoro people, it might look like this: 1) Policies shall be determined and enacted through a government and legislature formed by the leading individuals of Bangsamoro. 2) All the people of Bangsamoro have the right to be treated equally, be they Muslim, Christian, or a member of an indigenous group. 3) All the people of Bangsamoro shall cooperate and fulfill their roles and responsibilities. They shall work hard for the public welfare and to maintain public order. 4) A modern society shall be formed by sublimating old customs and embracing international universal values. 5) Knowledge from across the world will be absorbed while still valuing and passing on the culture of Islam and the Bangsamoro. We will achieve a form of development unique to the Bangsamoro.

The MILF leadership are also familiar with the national policies adopted by the new Meiji government: "public discussion" and "rich nation, strong army." The first referred to democratic governance through the

establishment of a national legislature and constitution. The second to increasing national power through economic strength and the possession of a strong military that could rebuff interference by foreign powers. The Meiji government laid out policies for national development as it sought to become a modern state.

In the case of the Bangsamoro, policies are being peacefully implemented to provide peace and safety for all those who live in the BARMM. Local industry is being cultivated on Mindanao. Rather than increase the size of its military, former MILF soldiers are to be capacitated to live as civilians after being demobilized. A Bangsamoro government and parliament are being created and the Bangsamoro Basic Law, the equivalent of a constitution, has been drafted.

The “lessons of Japan’s experience” that the MILF seek to learn can be found in the beliefs of the Japanese leaders of the Meiji period and the determination shown during the Meiji government’s attempt to become a modern state. These can be found in the Charter Oath and the policies of “public discussion” and “rich nation, strong army.” It was Japan’s latent strength, its “translative adaptation” (Maekawa 1994) that meant that when it found itself under pressure from the Western powers, it was able to develop from a late-agrarian state into one that could rival those powers rather than submit. It was able to take the stimuli provided by foreign enemies and use it for the benefit of its own growth. The perspective shown here strongly matches the opinions that MILF-CCCH Chief Secretariat Rasid Ladiasan used to passionately voice to me before his death.

The Bangsamoro people seem to have special feelings when it comes to Hiroshima, the city which was bombed with an atomic weapon in the final stages of the Second World War. For them, it is a place that embodies peace and recovery. During their visit to Hiroshima in March 2013, the fifteen members of the BTC met with the governor of Hiroshima and the mayor of Etajima. They paid rapt attention as the two men gave detailed accounts of the struggles faced during Hiroshima’s postwar economic recovery and the ingenuity that its residents showed. They seemed to be trying to find the key to making the change from war to eternal peace in the experiences of Hiroshima.

Both the MILF and Philippine government voiced a strong desire for

the 6th Consolidation for Peace in Mindanao seminar (COP6) to be held in Hiroshima in June 2014. With the conclusion of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), there seemed no better place than Hiroshima for discussing peace in Mindanao. Then, in August 2017, DTI-ARMM Secretary Malang participated in the ARMM Market-Driven Local Industry Promotion project's industrial promotion training in Hiroshima and observed the implementation of the sixth industry concept there. Upon his return home, he seemed like a man possessed as he pushed for the introduction of the concept in Bangsamoro as well. The Bangsamoro people risked their lives to secure peace. Hiroshima's postwar recovery serves as a special model for them as they strive to create their desired world.

In the Japanese government and JICA's approach to supporting peace in Mindanao, there was one element that answered the desire of the Bangsamoro people (as expressed through the MILF) to learn from the experiences of Japan: having Japanese specialists directly speak about those experiences. In areas where the poor security situation prevents Japanese experts from visiting, Filipino experts who have learned philosophies and techniques based on Japan's experiences pass them on. Unique Bangsamoro philosophies and techniques are born as Japanese philosophies, experiences, techniques, and know-how are taken and applied to the unique systems that have been continually refined within the Muslim communities of Mindanao.

"Bangsamoro spirit, Japanese knowledge" – a concept not unlike the "Japanese spirit, Western knowledge" concept during Japan's modernization – has come into existence on the sites that the Japanese government and JICA have provided support for the Mindanao peace process.

Linking the Bangsamoro Through Their Trust in Japan and JICA

Ukon Takayama, a Christian lord of the late 16th Century, is an important figure in the history of Japan-Philippines relations. In 1614, he departed Japan following Ieyasu Tokugawa's edict expelling Christians. He arrived in Manila in December, where he was warmly welcomed by the Spanish governor, Jesuits, and the people of the city. Ukon Takayama would die of illness within a year of arriving in the Philippines, but his Japanese followers and their descendants built a Nihonmachi (Japanese Town) within Manila. Today, a statue of Ukon Takayama stands in the city's

Paco district.

While relations between Japan and the Philippines were severed shortly thereafter due to the Edo shogunate's policy of isolation, immigration resumed in the early 20th Century. A Japanese society was founded in Davao that ultimately boasted more than 20,000 members. A Nihonmachi prospered in the city's Mintal district and featured Japanese schools and businesses, a Japanese-language newspaper, and a Japanese consulate. Japanese immigrants managed abaca plantations in the areas surrounding the city and exported products like copra, wood, and fish. Many Japanese crossed the sea, seeking a new paradise in Mindanao. While life in their new paradise was certainly not easy, it was filled with hope.

Today, Japan and the Philippines have strong economic ties. Japan is the leading destination of Philippine exports and is the country's second-largest source of imports (2016). Filipinos are the third largest group of foreign residents in Japan and personal relations between the two populations are flourishing. Security ties have been increasing in recent years as the two countries have come to view each other as strategic partners. As one of Japan's neighbors across the sea, the Philippines is an extremely important country in historical, economic, cultural, social, and security terms.

As former JICA president Ogata said on an NHK television program broadcast to mark the seventieth anniversary of the end of the war, "Japan has a responsibility to the Philippines." And as part of aiding the development of the Philippines, I believe that it is Japan's responsibility to bring stability to the political and security situations on Mindanao and to carry out the development assistance needed to make its economy vibrant. The Japanese government's ODA to the Philippines began as reparations following the Second World War. Ever since, the Philippines has consistently been one of the top recipients of Japanese ODA. Having received a total commitment base of \$21,684,750,000 from 1960-2014 (DAC statistics), the Philippines rank fourth (after Indonesia, China, and India) in terms of total ODA received from Japan.

Over the course of the long history between our countries, one that stretches back to Ukon Takayama in the early 17th Century and beyond, the Philippines and Japan have built a multilayered and vibrant relationship. Trust has been established between these two peoples, societies, and countries. And it is this trust – supported and cultivated by our lengthy

history – that serves as an undercurrent for the peace assistance that the Japanese government and JICA provide to Mindanao. It is no exaggeration to say that it is the history that was woven together by our ancestors in Japan and the Philippines that has supplied the foundation that allowed us to be trusted by the Philippine government and Bangsamoro people (as represented by the MILF).

According to academic research into the concept of trust, the following three things are considered important for gaining the trust of others: shared values, recognition of the skills you provide to the other party, and recognition as a fair actor by the other party (Nakayachi, 2015).

The difficult history of the Bangsamoro people's lengthy struggle to secure justice has much in common with the difficult history of the creation of Japan's development into a country that stands alongside the Western powers and contributes to international peace and development, a process that has taken from the late 19th Century to the present day. We were always attentive of the fact that we shared universal democratic values. This meant giving due consideration to their values and respecting them was only proper.

The ODA provided by the Japanese government to the Philippines from the early postwar period to today has been carefully carried out in accordance with their needs and has contributed to its national development and improving the lives of its people. The result has been that the Philippine government and MILF are well aware that the ODA provided by Japan is of a high quality in terms of both scale and value.

Finally, we also conduct detailed analyses of the circumstances that target organizations and groups are in. This allows us to respond in a comprehensive and transparent manner towards all relevant stakeholders and eliminate bias when providing assistance. This has naturally resulted in our counterparts acknowledging that we always deal with them fairly.

The support provided by the Japanese government and JICA for peace in Mindanao thus meets the three criteria for trust listed above and we have indeed been able to gain the trust of the conflict parties and other relevant figures. Using that trust, we have supported and pushed the peace process forward through by carrying out aid operations at the community, municipality, regional, and national levels.

During the preliminary stages of the CCDP project, we planned it in such a way that the existing ARMM government was partnered with the MILF-affiliated organizations (the BTC, BDA, etc.) that would oversee the future Bangsamoro government. But the lack of trust between these groups made it difficult to actually execute the project in a completely unified way. We thus put effort into facilitating the growth of mutual trust between these groups, creating “Ba / spaces” at our projects where figures from both sides would work together.

To give a specific example, we formed joint teams at URTP-B project sites that consisted of personnel from the MILF-affiliated BDA and BLMI, PhilRice, and the DAF-ARMM and had them instruct MILF soldiers in rice agriculture techniques together. There had been very few cases of the MILF, ARMM, and Philippine government participating in projects together. These groups recognized that it was important to cooperate for the future of Mindanao, but they just found it too difficult to make it happen. We provided spaces at projects that would trigger collaboration between the three groups and then actively worked to have them create something together. In the case of the URTP-B project, they were able to add value to human resources (in this case, MILF soldiers) by teaching them new skills. In other words, we brought together the dynamics of “spaces” and “co-creation.”

The Philippine government, MILF-affiliated organizations, and the ARMM government were the major parties in the Mindanao conflict. All three would have to walk together in the future under the auspices of the Philippine government. We worked to simultaneously push the peace



Connected by trust. From left: a BIAF soldier, the author, a Philippine Army soldier

process forward and create situations under which firm bonds of trust would form between them. The three coming together is proof of the trust they all have in the Japanese government and JICA.

A Conversation with the President of JICA

Shinichi Kitaoka, who was appointed president of JICA in 2015, visited the MILF's headquarters at Camp Darapanan outside Cotabato on March 3, 2016. He met with important MILF figures like Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar and Chief Negotiator Chairman Mohager Iqbal and they exchanged views on the current state of the peace process and the problems that remained. President Kitaoka told them that the Mindanao peace process was a fine model for conflict resolution and would become an example of good practices for effectively making use of the human security concept. It had been ten years since President Ogata had become the first president of JICA to visit a MILF stronghold.

At the time of her visit, there had only been a ceasefire agreement in place. The peace process had made impressive progress in the time that had passed. The Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (2012) and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (2014) had been signed, as had an agreement on the creation of a new Bangsamoro government that would replace the ARMM. As extensively covered in this book, the Japanese government and JICA had spent this time supporting the peace process and working to secure peace dividends for the people living on Mindanao. We had done this on every level, from working



A handshake of trust: a firm handshake by President Kitaoka (second from left) and Vice Chair Jaafar (second from right). They are standing with Chief Negotiator Iqbal (far left) and 2nd Vice Chair Solaiman (far right)

with the Philippine government to assisting individual communities and residents. We had carried out assistance projects in a variety of fields, building capacities for governance and helping to develop communities and local economies. In providing this support, JICA played a major role in the conflict affected areas. Despite delays caused by Mindanao's everchanging political, economic, and security situations, these ten years of support – spanning three JICA presidents – showed that development can contribute to peace. The peace on Mindanao has been created and maintained by development. It goes without saying that it was because the Japanese government, JICA, and all those we worked with shared this vision – that development contributes to peace – that we were able to achieve such remarkable results through our support for the Mindanao peace process.

In his conversation with Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar, President Kitaoka told him that “You should all be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize if peace in Mindanao is a success.” The MILF leaders present deeply nodded, as did I. I hope that the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to the people of Mindanao, more than 150,000 whom have lost their lives in the struggle to achieve justice for the Bangsamoro.

Epilogue

What Sort of Peacebuilding Can JICA Do?

I participated in a seminar on humanitarian assistance and development sponsored by the Tokyo Office of the UNHCR in the fall of 2014, shortly after I returned from serving on the IMT for Mindanao. I gave a talk about JICA's peace building activities, particularly with regard to its proactiveness in the world's conflict zones such as Cambodia in the early 1990s, Bosnia, East Timor, Aceh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Darfur, South Sudan, Syria, etc. Among these endeavors, JICA's efforts in Mindanao were quite unique as there was no peace agreement in place, only a truce. Despite this unstable situation, Japan started direct assistance on the ground there.

Former JICA President Ogata was at the seminar as a guest speaker.

Just before I was scheduled to speak, I remembered a conversation I had with her in 2003, just after she had become the president, when I was working at the Jordan Office. She had asked me what sort of peacebuilding activities could JICA be involved in. Eleven years had transpired in the interim. Through my presentation that day, I wanted her to hear just how hard JICA had worked and what sort of results we had realized. I was in a cold sweat speaking in front of her, but afterwards she said that "JICA has done pretty well." I, as the descendent of the Samurai who had served for Lord Shingen Takeda, had been raised in the samurai way to believe that men are not supposed to cry but I felt my eyes tearing up after she said that as someone who devoted himself so hard on the ground.

Nakasone Yasuhiro Award

The International Institute for Policy Studies, now known as the Nakasone Yasuhiro Peace Institute, gave me the Nakasone Yasuhiro Award for precisely these efforts on the ground. The ceremony was held on July 1, 2016, and I received the award from former Prime Minister Nakasone himself. This award is given to individuals in the fields of politics, economy, cultural, and science and technology, etc., who have made a significant international contribution. My efforts on the front lines of the conflict in Mindanao to build trust between the Islamic armed groups and the Philippine government contributed to peace building work of

the Japanese government and JICA leading to the realization of a peace agreement. Joining me as fellow recipients that day were Professor Satoshi Ikeuchi of Tokyo University and Professor Naoko Kumagai of the International University of Japan.

I stated in my acceptance speech at the event that I believed “the award is meant to honor the work that JICA as a whole has done in supporting Mindanao, not that of a single individual. My ‘prioritiz[ing of] close communication with the local people affected by the conflict’ was in particular highlighted, and for someone that is involvement in development work, I am grateful it was noticed and it will encourage me to continue to do so in the future.” I truly thought that the award was in honor of the long quiet and study work JICA had done to bring peace to Mindanao. I was very happy. I felt that the people of Bangsamoro had also in some way recognized our contribution to their region.

Joining JICA to be able to work in the field of international cooperation was my dream job and being sent to Mindanao and meeting the people of Bangsamoro fighting with their lives to realize justice was destiny. Over time my interactions with the people expanded and with specific individuals like Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar and Rasid Ladiasan greatly deepened. I began to imagine if I had been born in the same area what my life would have been like. As someone born in Japan, the descendent of samurai, what could I do living today and working as a professional in the field of international cooperation to help the peace process in Mindanao through development? I have long been thinking of this question and have sought to implement the solutions I have come up. The peace process in Mindanao is not finished yet. Peace has not fully come yet to



Nakasone Award. Former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone (center) and the author (left).

the region. The people of Bangsamoro still live in a state of uncertainty.

It was my respected mentor Jurō Chikaraishi, the resident representative of the Philippine Office at the time, who had given me the name of “*jibeta-ha*,” or someone who likes to work in the front line on the ground, close to the scene. I intend to continue to be like this, and to work for peace and development in Mindanao.

Return to Allah

On the morning of March 13, 2019, I received a text message on my phone from a friend who lives in Cotabato. It said, “MILF Vice Chairman Jafaar passed away this morning.” For some reason, I was not able to process the information right away. I had just seen him the month before in Manila at the Malacañang Palace when members of the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority took their oaths. Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar was in a wheelchair and looked unwell but I did not think that he would return to Allah so quickly. He was 75 years old. Since 2007, I had met with him often. In the early days of our meetings, at the place he maintained outside of MILF Camp Darapanan. His frank, unaffected, and sometimes playful manner endeared him to me as well as many other Japanese.

He used to say many times to me: “Ochiai, the Japanese sense of order and discipline is wonderful. It is something the Bangsamoro people need to learn.” At first, I just thought he was being polite but after hearing him talk about order and discipline at Bangsamoro gatherings, I realized I, too, had to clean up my act. In 2016, after Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar became the Chairman of the BTC, which meant he became the direct counterpart of the CCDP Project, I visited his home on a large farm to hear his views on the future of the Bangsamoro and his desires for JICA. Conversations with him was for me like traveling through time in historical novels to speak with some of the great figures in Japanese history during the time of the Meiji Restoration. It was stimulating opportunity—I was both slightly nervous and in awe.

Unfortunately, I received other bad news as well. On May 9 the same year, I learned of the passing of Mindanao Development Authority Secretary Abul Khayr Alonto. He was 73 years old. He was one of those who helped found the MNLF with Nur Misuari. He was a great man who dedicated his life to peace for Mindanao, a leader in famous family in Lanao del Sur.

Because MinDA was an important counterpart of JICA, I often met with the Secretary. Secretary Alonto represented the image of the Bangsamoro fighters, and it was hard to stop him talking, so passionate he was, once he began to speak about the history and meaning of the struggle.

I was always deeply impressed by sense of purpose and mission Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar and Secretary Alonto held as members of the first generation in the Bangsamoro's fight for justice. It is sad to think about the fact that they, and some of other members of the first generation are not here to see the birth of the new autonomous government for Bangsamoro.

Time is limited. I strongly hope that the ordinary citizens of Mindanao, who have had to be patient for so long, are able to finally experience peace and to build their own futures by themselves as called for in the roadmap for the autonomous government of Bangsamoro.

Afterword and Acknowledgments

Looking back on things, I feel that the world has completely changed since I first joined JICA in 1991. At the end of the Cold War, the world appeared as if it was becoming one, and was entering a peaceful and orderly era. However, conflicts over religion and ethnicity emerged and have yet to stop in many parts of the world, which is tormented by the violent extremism of non-state actors such as Al Qaida and the Islamic State. And that is not all. Climate change, infectious diseases, natural disasters, and other threats that can shake the world are always increasingly common. From the unipolar system led by the United States, the world is now becoming multipolar.

Meanwhile, in Mindanao, the Philippine government led by President Ramos and the Moro National Liberation Front signed the final peace agreement in 1996 after twenty years of negotiations. In 1997, President Ramos began peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). But the policies of President Estrada, who succeeded Ramos, caused the MNLF to leave the autonomous government of the ARMM and the MILF suffered a devastating blow, including the loss of its Camp Abubakar, in the operations led by the Philippine Armed Forces to annihilate it. For President Arroyo, who succeeded Estrada, the improvement of the national economy, which was sluggish during the previous administration, was a top priority. In order to achieve the balanced development of the country, she felt it necessary to resolve the Mindanao conflict in a peaceful manner and took a conciliatory approach toward the peace talks which

she re-opened. In March 2014, after the administration was replaced by President Aquino, the Philippine government signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on Bangsamoro with the MILF after 17 years of negotiations. In July 2018, based on the central concept of an inclusive peace for Bangsamoro, and under the leadership of President Duterte, who places importance on the participation of all stakeholders, including the MILF, MNLF, Muslims, Christians, indigenous people, settlers, traditional clans, etc., the Bangsamoro Organic Law was passed and signed into Law and in March 2019 the Bangsamoro Transition Authority established. The autonomous government of Bangsamoro is expected to be launched in 2022.

Despite the fact that the world seems unable of escaping from chaos, a resolution to the Mindanao conflict has been steadily moving forward, albeit with twists and turns. The leaders of both sides have devoted their hearts and souls to finding unity and balance between successive government administrations' policies toward the Bangsamoro and the ideology of the liberation movement symbolized by the MNLF and MILF as representatives of the Bangsamoro people. The result is what we have now.

The Japanese government and JICA, recognizing Mindanao as a conflict-affected area after the 1996 Bangsamoro Final Peace Agreement, came to strongly realize Japan could contribute to regional peace and development there. In 2001, Japan introduced the Mindanao Support Package as part of diplomatic and ODA policies, and began full-scale participation in the peaceful resolution of the Mindanao conflict. Since October 2006, in order to underpin the peace process between the Philippine Government and MILF, Japan has actively contributed to the Bangsamoro peace through a multifaceted approach, such as participation in the International Monitoring Team and the International Contact Group, as well as implementing the Japan-Bangsamoro Reconstruction and Development Initiative. What's more, Japan began its involvement from the pre-peace agreement days, when only a ceasefire agreement existed. Japan's support for peace in Bangsamoro through both diplomacy and ODA is a landmark effort that embodies the concept of active pacifism.

This book has explained the history of the Mindanao conflict and the peace process, as well as Japan and JICA's support for the peace process, in great detail. It also introduces the many people who were involved in this history, including myself, who worked on the ground for many years. By

chance, this story of my and JICA's involvement begins in the early Heisei years and finishes at the end of the Heisei Era. The Bangsamoro Transition Authority began at the same time the new reign era called Reiwa started in Japan. With the opening of a new era in Japan, the Government of Japan and JICA will support the peace efforts of Bangsamoro in its next stage. Without the deep understanding about the Mindanao conflict and support for the Bangsamoro peace process by former Presidents Ogata and Tanaka, and current President Kitaoka, it would have been unlikely that JICA would have been this involved, and would have the successes in cooperation that it did. It was a great honor to have been involved in the work that could deliver the hopes of JICA's top leaders to the people of Bangsamoro.

I would like to dedicate this book to four individuals who did not get to see the launching of the autonomous government of Bangsamoro, MILF Vice Chairman Ghazali Jafaar, MILF CCCH Chief Secretariat Rasid Ladiasan, GPH-CCCH Chief Secretariat Major Carlos T Sol and Mr. Yoichi Amano. I am so lucky to have met them and hope to see them in heaven one day.

I am deeply grateful to my family who allowed me to work in Cotabato City in the conflict affected area for five years without them as a member of the IMT and of JICA.

Finally, if there are any mistakes in this book, I alone am responsible for them. Furthermore, the contents of this book are based on my personal insights and experiences and do not represent those of the organization to which I belong.

Naoyuki Ochiai
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Abbreviations

ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASG	Abu Sayaff Group
BBL	Bangsamoro Basic Law
BDA	Bangsamoro Development Agency
BDP	Bangsamoro Development Plan
BIAF	Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BIWAB	Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade
BLMI	Bangsamoro Leadership Management Institute
BOL	Bangsamoro Organic Law
BTA	Bangsamoro Transition Authority
BTC	Bangsamoro Transition Commission
BTC-SEO	BTC Socio-Economic Office
CAB	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
CBCS	Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society
CCCH	Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities
CCDP	Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro
CD-CAAM	Capacity Development in Conflict Affected Area in Mindanao
COP	Consolidation for Peace in Mindanao
CPO	JICA Cotabato Project Office
DAF	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EU	European Union
FAB	Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro
FFS	Farmers Field School
FP	GRP-MNLF Final Peace Agreement
GPH	Government of the Philippines
GRIPS	Graduate Institute for Policy Studies
ICG	International Contact Group
IMT	International Monitoring Team
ISIS	Islamic State
J-BIRD	Japan – Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency

LGU	Local Government Unit
MCL	Mindanao Children Library
MDLIP	Market Driven Local Industry Promotion
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MinHRAC	Mindanao Human Rights Action Center
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MinDA	Mindanao Development Authority
MOA-AD	Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NP	Nonviolent Peaceforce
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OODA	Observe, Orient, Decide and Act
OPAPP	Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process
PDCA	Plan, Do, Check and Action
PDM	Project Design Matrix
PKO	Peace Keeping Organization
PhilRice	Philippine Rice Research Institute
QIP	Quick Impact Project
REAL	Revenue Enhancement Assistance for ARMM LGUs
SERD-CAAM	Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development in Conflict Affected Area in Mindanao
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
URTP-B	Upland Rice-based Farming Technology Transfer Program for the Bangsamoro
WFP	World Food Programme

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