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Leave No Youth Behind

Meaningful Engagement with Youth Peacebuilders as Agents of Change



A Compendium of Approaches and Lessons Learned from Mindanao, the Philippines



Published by:

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices:

Bonn and Berlin, Germany

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As at:

June 2022

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GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)



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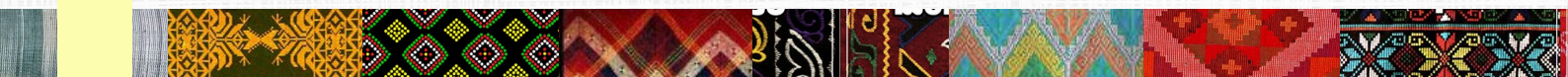




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Acronyms

BALAOOD Mindanaw	Balay Alternative Legal Advocates for Development in Mindanaw
BARM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BIWAB	Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CDP	Comprehensive Development Plan
ComVoMujer	Combating violence against women in Latin America
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CPEM	Consortium of Peace Educators in Mindanao
CPS	Civil Peace Service
CRISP	Crisis Simulation for Peace e.V.
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DepEd	Department of Education
DILG	Department of the Interior and Local Government
DNH	Do No Harm
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
FSUU	Father Saturnino Urios University
GBV	Gender-based violence
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
GMRC	Good Manners and Right Conduct
IATF	Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IP	Indigenous Peoples
KK	Katipunan ng Kabataan
KMMKM	Kamalitanan Te Matigsalug Manobo Kalumanen Ne Migsabeka
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others
LGU	Local Government Unit
LYDC	Local Youth Development Council
LYDO	Local Youth Development Office



Acronyms

LYDP	Local Youth Development Plan
MBHTE	Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MPSC	Mindanao Peace Studies Conference
MSU-IIT	Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology
MSWD	Municipal Social Welfare and Development
MWDECC	Moro Women Development and Cultural Center, Inc.
NAPWPS	National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
NAPYPS	National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NYC	National Youth Commission
OPAPP	Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process
OPAPRU	Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity
PhilDHARRA	Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas
PVE	Preventing violent extremism
SK	Sangguniang Kabataan
SSG	Supreme Student Government
STREAM	STRengthening youth Engagement and Action towards peace in Mindanao
UCP	Unarmed Civilian Protection
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions
UnYPhil-Women	United Youth of the Philippines-Women
VCA	Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
VYSS	Virtual Youth Safe Spaces
YOUCAP	Youth for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence in Mindanao
YVCA	Youth-Focused Vulnerability-Capacity Assessment

Foreword

All over the world, young people are shaping the future of tomorrow. They are at the heart of initiatives to tackle today's political, environmental, economic, and societal challenges – from standing up to raise awareness of climate change, gender discrimination, and racism to building peaceful communities, smart cities, and inclusive democracies. They shoulder responsibility, especially in challenging times, and are actively engaged. The same is true for young people in Mindanao, southern Philippines.



So first, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the youth of Mindanao. Maraming Salamat for your commitment, your passion, and your drive for creating a peaceful Mindanao. Maraming Salamat for having tirelessly participated in and contributed to the 'Youth for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence in Mindanao' (YOUCAP)

project, with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU)¹ as the main implementing partner.

This compendium is dedicated to you. Without your knowledge and commitment, this product would not have been realized.

In 2019, there were about 1.2 billion youth aged 15 to 24 years in the world, or one in every six persons². Simply looking at the demographics, the importance and potential of young people for positive change cannot be overlooked. Young people not only shape the present of any country, but they will profoundly determine its future. The youth of today will be substantially affected by the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and therefore need to play a key role in reaching its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although there are several important national and international policies which recognize and encourage the role of youth in peacebuilding – such as the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security of December 2015 – there is still limited engagement of youth in national and international peacebuilding processes.

The YOUCAP project was led by the conviction that youth can and do play an important and positive role in peacebuilding in conflict-affected societies and must be included as equal partners in peacebuilding initiatives. Seeing youth as peacebuilders and agents of change does not mean ignoring the challenges and troubles they often face due to marginalization, violent conflict, and limited education and employment opportunities. Their specific needs must be acknowledged and addressed without patronizing them and without denying them the right to be valued as meaningful partners of change.

The YOUCAP project was implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) in partnership with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU) and commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It was financed out of the Special Initiative 'Tackling the Root Causes of Displacement, Reintegrating Refugees,' which addresses the root causes of displacement by preventing conflict and violence as well as marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination. In this context, YOUCAP aimed to strengthen the capacities of

¹ The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) was re-organized and renamed to OPAPRU on December 27th 2021, through Executive Order No. 158.

² https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2019/08/WYP2019_10-Key-Messages_GZ_8AUG19.pdf



young people to contribute to peacebuilding and non-violent conflict transformation in order to reduce the vulnerability of Mindanao to political, social, and economic instability. The project applied a multistakeholder approach, working closely with state actors, educational institutions, and civil society to achieve its goals. Always at the center of action were the youth of Mindanao. Through active participation, young people were empowered to play a vital role in their own development and that of their communities. The youth involved in the project were highly committed and have shown remarkable capabilities. We have been impressed and energized by their desire to drive positive change and their willingness to be seen as powerful and responsible citizens. They easily adapted to new digital technology approaches such as the Peacebot ([see chapter 8](#)), they showed empathy which makes them great mediators in schools ([see chapter 1](#)), they are great community mobilisers which allowed them to create and implement their own peacebuilding projects in their communities ([see chapter 5](#)), and they are responsible citizens which enabled them to successfully influence local development planning processes ([see chapters 14, 15 & 16](#)). The young people achieved all of this in the midst of a global pandemic, which placed enormous challenges on them, their families, their homeland, and the world.

Cooperating with our implementing partners and the youth involved, we have gained a lot of valuable knowledge, learnings, and experiences along the way. With this knowledge product, we would not only like to share the project's experiences with others, but also express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to all those who have made these experiences successful. We wish for them to be able to nurture and cherish what they have started to construe. We have learned a lot from our partners and thank them sincerely for their dedication which, despite the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, has resulted in the joint implementation of a successful project.

This compendium has been developed to assist and inspire government actors, development agencies, civil society organizations (CSO), youth groups, and educational institutions that aim for meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding projects and programs. It intends to raise awareness about and advocate for the immense potential of youth participation and youth empowerment in peacebuilding. The innovativeness and creativity of young people need to be met and leveraged in designing and implementing the activities. Therefore, this publication goes beyond the rhetorical strive for youth empowerment by providing tested approaches that can guide organizations and actors to engage youth in meaningful ways.

This compendium contains a collection of approaches implemented by YOUCAP and our partners and gives readers insight into the lessons learned and success factors to work more effectively and creatively with and for young people.

With this, we invite you to become an advocate for the empowerment and meaningful participation of young people in peacebuilding.


GUNHILD SCHWITALLA-RUF

Mindanao Cluster Coordinator & Principal Advisor

Project 'Youth for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence in Mindanao' (YOUCAP)

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH





How to use this Compendium?

How to use this Compendium?

This user-friendly compendium contains a collection of practical, innovative, and creative approaches to engage youth in peacebuilding and conflict transformation. The approaches were developed or adapted by YOUCAP and its partners and have been pilot tested in selected areas of Mindanao, the Philippines. With this compendium, we would like to share our experiences and lessons learned.

The compendium can be used as a reference guide for government actors, CSOs, youth groups, and educational institutions looking for new ideas and practical guidance for promoting meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding projects and programs around the world.

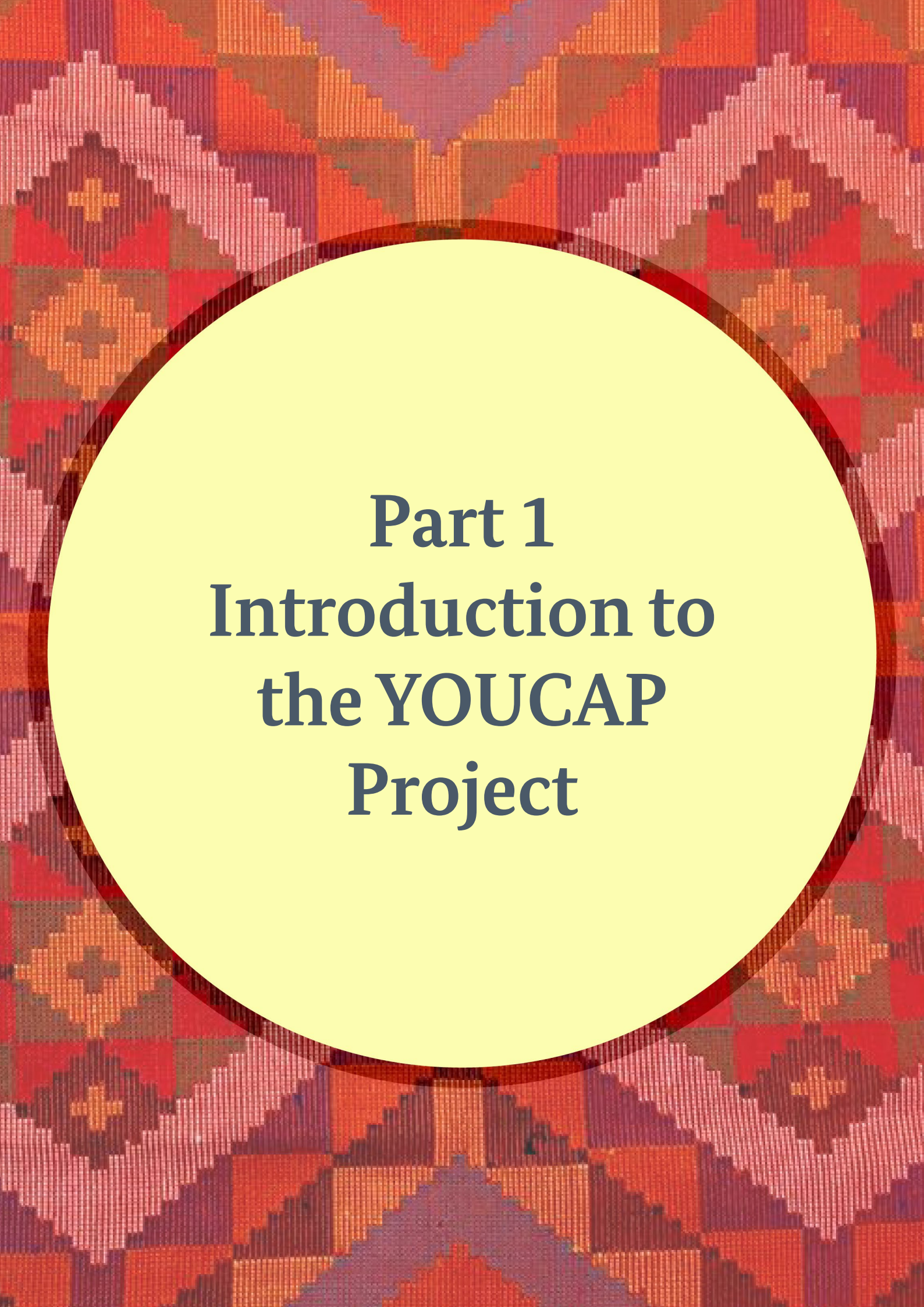
The publication is structured in four parts:

- 🕒 **Part 1: Introduction to the YOUCAP Project**
Provides insight into the background, aims and methodology of the YOUCAP project and explains key terminology. Attention is also paid to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the project and how these were dealt with.
- 🕒 **Part 2: What Principles Guided YOUCAP?**
Provides an overview of some of the main guiding principles that were integrated into YOUCAP's interventions in a cross-cutting way. These include conflict-sensitivity as well as two principles that were of special relevance

in engaging with youth and implementing the project in the middle of a pandemic. Each guiding principle includes lessons and insights, practical recommendations, and examples from the project's experiences.

- 🕒 **Part 3: Empowering Young Peacebuilders – Approaches and Lessons Learned**
A collection of 16 approaches for empowering young peacebuilders in their communities. It starts with a summary table of all the approaches to give the reader an idea which of these might fit their organization's needs and objectives. Readers can easily jump from this table to the approaches that interest them to find out more and learn from YOUCAP's experiences of piloting the approaches in practice. Links are provided to training manuals, guidelines, tools, and other resources to assist practitioners in replicating the approaches in their own working contexts.
- 🕒 **Part 4: What do we want to leave behind?**
An overview of measures taken to ensure that the impacts of the interventions continue after the YOUCAP project ends. These measures include a series of workshops – the Sustainability Series – and the establishment of Mindanao-wide learning exchange fora to encourage the exchange of knowledge and lessons learned.





Part 1
Introduction to
the YOUCAP
Project



Youth for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence in Mindanao

Challenges and opportunities

Mindanao, the southernmost island region of the Philippines, is marked by a decades-long history of violent social and political conflicts. The conflicts are highly complex and dynamic and involve a wide range of actors. Clashes between conflicting groups have disrupted society on many levels, resulting in loss of lives, forced displacement, destruction of communities, and deepening social divides. The situation poses major challenges to sustainable and inclusive development in Mindanao, which remains the poorest of the three main island groups in the country.

Young people are disproportionately affected by the conflicts, which makes them more vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by violent extremist groups. At the same time, Mindanaoan youth have become increasingly active in peacebuilding in recent years. Considering that 15-30 year-olds make up almost a third of the country's population³, there is an enormous potential to harness the enthusiasm and talents of young people in the pursuit of lasting peace in the region.

YOUCAP's objective

The 'Youth for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence in Mindanao' (YOUCAP) project aimed to strengthen the capacities of state and non-state actors to contribute to gender-sensitive and youth-oriented peacebuilding and non-violent conflict transformation in selected areas of Mindanao.

The project partnered with educational institutions, CSOs, and government actors to create the enabling conditions for young people to make their voices heard and participate as political and social actors in building peaceful communities.

At the center of YOUCAP's work were young people aged 15 to 30 in Northern Mindanao (Region 10), Davao Region (Region 11), Caraga (Region 13) and

parts of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Care was taken to maximize inclusiveness by ensuring diversity in terms of religion, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, and abilities of youth participants. Emphasis was placed on empowering youth groups that are particularly vulnerable to conflict-induced hazards and other forms of violence to ensure no one was left behind.

YOUCAP was implemented by GIZ and commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project term was from March 2019 to December 2022. The main political partner was the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU).

Vulnerability

YOUCAP aimed to engage vulnerable youth in peacebuilding. However, there is no universal definition of vulnerability or vulnerable youth, and it is not as simple as singling out certain sociocultural groups (e.g., Indigenous Peoples (IP), women, Muslims) as vulnerable. The following explains how YOUCAP understood the concept of vulnerability and dealt with it in practice.

Vulnerability has two dimensions: exposure and sensitivity

Some individuals or groups are particularly vulnerable to conflict-induced hazards due to their proximity and exposure to these hazards as well as a varying economic, sociocultural, and political factors, which limit their capacities to cope with or adapt to these hazards.

Vulnerability is context-dependent and determined in relation to specific types of hazards. In this publication, the use of the term relates to conflict-induced hazards and other forms of violence, unless otherwise specified.

³ <https://psa.gov.ph>



Identifying vulnerable youth groups

The Youth-Focused Vulnerability-Capacity Assessment (YVCA) is a tool that can be used to measure vulnerability and understand which youth groups are most vulnerable to conflict-induced hazards in a given locality. The tool was used with local government partners, in particular youth councils (Sangguniang Kabataan (SK)), to identify these groups, hear their voices, and include their needs in local development plans (see approach 14). The tool was not used in all YOUCAP's interventions. When working with CSOs, the project built on their extensive knowledge, experiences, observations, and local networks to identify and reach out to groups deemed vulnerable at the community level.

Youth are so much more than their vulnerability

Although understanding which youth are most vulnerable is key to ensure no groups are left

behind, young people should not be defined by their vulnerability. Vulnerability is not a constant characteristic of an individual or group but exists on a continuum and can be reduced or increased due to external factors as well as actions by the youth themselves. Labeling young people as vulnerable risks to affect their self-esteem and push them into the role of passive victim. Being vulnerable to certain hazards does not exclude other qualities. As Fatima Star U. Lamalan, former project coordinator of Salaam Movement, rightly said: "We might be vulnerable, but it doesn't mean we are not powerful!"

YOUCAP made a consistent effort to highlight and strengthen the capacities of young people to cope with and adapt to hazards, reduce their vulnerabilities, and contribute to lasting changes in their communities.

Methodology

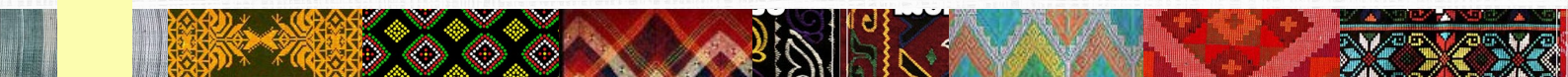
In close cooperation with its partners, YOUCAP developed and piloted a range of practical approaches for strengthening youth-oriented and youth-led peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Through these interventions, the partners, including youth partners, were supported and capacitated in the following ways:

- Educational institutions: Formal and non-formal educational institutions were supported in strengthening youth-oriented approaches for peacebuilding and preventing violent extremism and integrating these into their programs and training activities for teachers.
- Civil society: CSOs, including youth-oriented and youth-led organizations, were supported

in strengthening and enhancing their peacebuilding initiatives that cater to the specific needs of vulnerable youth groups.

- State actors: SKs, local government units (LGUs) and national government agencies were supported in enhancing youth participation in local governance, including youth needs in local peace and development plans and programs, and aligning these plans with regional and national plans and strategies.

In addition, for each of the three stakeholder groups, Mindanao-wide learning and exchange fora were organized to promote a regular exchange of experiences and lessons learned about effective approaches for youth-oriented and youth-led peacebuilding.





Political structures for youth participation in peacebuilding and nation-building

The Philippine Government promotes stronger youth participation in peacebuilding and nation-building through the drafting of the National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security (NAPYPS), the adoption of the Philippine Youth Development Plan 2017-2022, and through Republic Act No. 10742, otherwise known as the ‘Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015.’

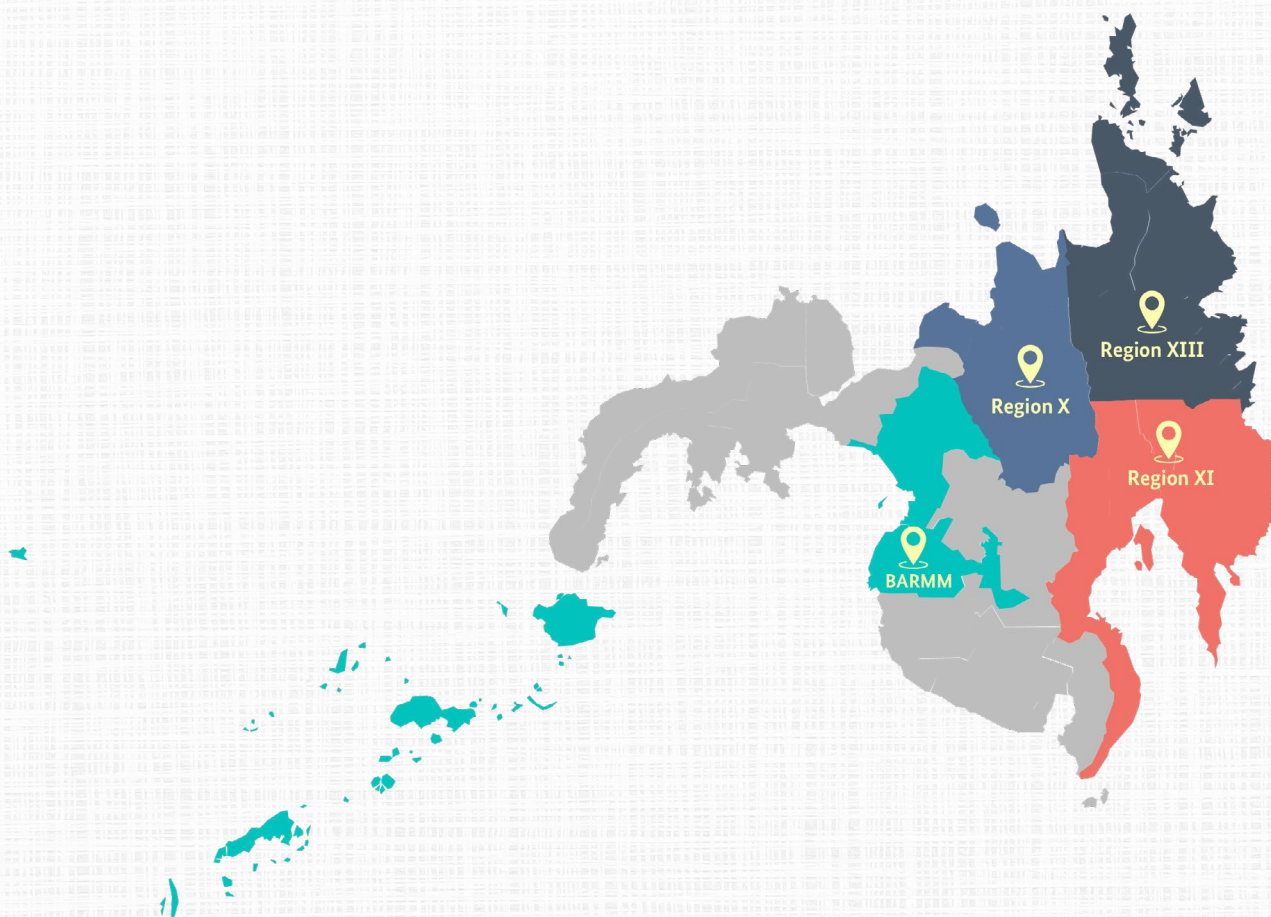
Below is a brief explanation of relevant terms and key political structures for youth participation in the Philippines that are touched upon in this publication.

Local government unit (LGU): There are three levels of LGUs: provinces, cities and municipalities, and barangays. Barangays are the smallest LGUs, comparable to the neighborhoods or suburbs of a city or the villages that make up a larger municipality. In line with common usage, the term LGU in this publication refers to the municipal or city level, unless otherwise specified.

Sangguniang Kabataan (SK): A political structure at the barangay level which provides a platform for young people to shape policies and programs on local youth issues and concerns. SK officials are elected by the larger youth contingent of each barangay called the Katipunan ng Kabataan (KK). Every SK is part of a municipal or city SK Federation.

Local Youth Development Council (LYDC): A multi-sectoral youth council composed of youth and youth-serving organizations at the provincial, city, and municipal levels, headed by the concerned SK Federation President. The LYDC supports the SKs in planning and executing projects and programs.

Local Youth Development Office (LYDO): An office at the provincial, city, and municipal levels, which supports local youth organizations in getting registered and assists the LYDC in formulating the Local Youth Development Plan (LYDP) of the LGU.



Peacebuilding in Times of COVID-19

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the rapidly spreading coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a pandemic, plunging the world into uncertainty. The Philippine Government reacted swiftly with a series of lockdowns and restrictions, implemented by the COVID-19 Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF). The measures, which varied between LGUs, included stay-at-home orders, curfews, restrictions on gatherings, closure of non-essential businesses, and a nationwide closure of schools and universities. For a long time, children and youth below the age of 18 were ordered to remain indoors at all times.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to profound social and economic impacts. It put enormous stresses on the health system, affected lives and livelihoods, and reinforced the drivers of instability and violent conflict in Mindanao.

Implications for YOUCAP

The onset of the pandemic marked a turbulent time for YOUCAP. Entering its second year of implementation, the project had to adapt to the new and uncertain situation. Project staff had to transition to working from home and ongoing and planned activities had to be transferred to the virtual space. This brought enormous challenges, not only in a practical sense but also on a fundamental level since the essence of peacebuilding is bringing people together.

One of the most difficult challenges in working virtually was ensuring no one was left behind. Particularly young people living in remote areas and far away from city centers were difficult or impossible to reach through virtual activities, as they often lack access to electronic devices or the needed digital literacy to participate in online activities. Furthermore, in many places the internet is slow and unstable and in some areas there is no internet signal at all.

Building trust was another major challenge. Trust building is crucial when working on sensitive topics related to conflict and violence, but establishing relationships and trust in a virtual setting takes time and requires adapted approaches.

In these challenging and unpredictable times, it was key to stay as flexible as possible and maintain close communication with partners and youth. More than ever, it was important to be empathetic to the difficulties young people were facing in attending online activities and listen and respond to their needs. For interventions that could not be done virtually and had to be organized face-to-face, it was critical to make sure the IATF rules were followed to guarantee the safety of everyone. Throughout the project, special care went out to protecting the mental and psychosocial well-being of the youth participants, as well as within the project team. Every situation was different and needed different actions; there was no one-size-fits-all approach.

Despite the challenges, the project successfully implemented a wide range of activities and achieved positive outcomes. All the same, the interventions and learnings in the following chapters need to be understood against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic.



More Information

- [School-based Peer Mediation Program - Guide for Peer Mediators](#)
- [School-based Peer Mediation Program - Guide for Trainers](#)





Part 2
What Principles
Guided YOUCAP?



Overview of Guiding Principles

The YOUCAP project was designed, implemented, and evaluated based on a number of overarching guiding principles, shown in the diagram below. Three of the main guiding principles are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

We view youth as powerful agents of change

This was done by:

- Engaging with youth as equal partners.
- Listening and responding to their needs.
- Giving young people responsibilities.
- Strengthening young peoples' skills and confidence.

We strive to be culturally sensitive

This was done by:

- Promoting respect, dignity, and an open attitude towards youth from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

We leave no one behind

This was done by:

- Empowering youth groups that are particularly vulnerable to conflict-induced hazards and other forms of violence.
- Creating platforms and channels for young people to communicate their concerns and needs to decision-makers.

YOUCAP

We take mental health and well-being seriously

This was done by:

- Integrating well-being considerations into trainings and activities.
- Stimulating bonding and sharing among young people.
- Creating safe spaces for discussing traumatic experiences.
- Using peer-to-peer approaches.
- Building local capacities for providing effective psychosocial support.

We strive to be gender-sensitive

This was done by:

- Promoting equal opportunities and rights for all youth regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identities.
- Conducting activities in a transformative way, fostering critical examination of gender roles, regimes, and practices, while promoting equitable gender norms and dynamics.
- Spreading awareness and developing strategies aimed at the prevention of gender-based violence.
- Paying special attention to the needs and concerns of young LGBTQ+.

We strive to be conflict-sensitive

This was done by:

- Capacitating partners and youth in conflict sensitivity.
- Establishing a conflict-sensitive monitoring system and updating conflict and context analyses regularly.
- Promoting conflict-sensitive communication and interactions.
- Being aware of and sensitive to the needs and value systems of different groups in society.



We Strive to Be Conflict-Sensitive

When implementing peacebuilding projects in conflict-affected areas like Mindanao, it is important to remain aware of how the interventions interact with the conflict context in order to mitigate unintended negative effects and influence conflict positively wherever possible.

To this end, YOUCAP mainstreamed conflict sensitivity into all components and stages of the project, from

project design and planning to implementation and monitoring. This was done in three main ways: by capacitating partners and youth in conflict sensitivity, by conducting regular conflict analyses, and by promoting conflict-sensitive communication and interactions. In addition, conflict sensitivity was combined with gender responsiveness and cultural sensitivity to ensure adequate attention to the needs and values of different groups in society.

Conflict sensitivity begins with the understanding that any intervention that enters a conflict-affected context automatically becomes part of that context. Interactions between an intervention and its context may strengthen local capacities for peace or feed into existing sources of tension. The types of resources you transfer, the people you work with and the messages you send all affect local perceptions of your role.

Do No Harm is a practical principle and approach for applying conflict sensitivity in the implementation of projects and programs. It provides tools to monitor the interactions between interventions and context, and guides stakeholders to act on this information to minimize harm and achieve positive outcomes.

How it's done

- **Strengthen capacities for conflict sensitivity**
Throughout the project phase, YOUCAP strengthened the capacities of its partners and youth participants in conflict sensitivity and the Do No Harm framework. This included

trainings on the foundations, methods, and tools for conflict sensitivity and exploring together which steps they could take to integrate conflict sensitivity into the planning and implementation of youth-oriented peacebuilding interventions.

Capturing the stories of female-ex combatants in conflict-sensitive ways

In one of the pilot interventions, young women and girls from conflict-affected communities were trained as peer researchers to capture the stories of female ex-combatants of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in compelling videos ([see approach 6](#)). Interviewing female ex-combatants is a task that requires a high degree of conflict sensitivity, both in the selection of

local researchers and in the drafting of interview questions. The selected young researchers were trained in ethics, conflict-sensitive journalism, and basic research principles, through which they learned how to let the women tell their stories independently while avoiding retraumatization. It was also important to consult with the MILF in advance to ensure that the researchers had access to military camps and that the project was generally accepted and supported by the local authorities.



- **Conduct regular conflict analyses and remain flexible to respond to changing needs**

Prior to project implementation, YOUCAP and its partners conducted a thorough conflict analysis, including a stakeholder analysis, in the different project regions to gain deeper understanding of the conflict dynamics and identify the needs of vulnerable youth. In the second half of 2020, another conflict analysis was conducted to reassess the project’s interventions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that the pandemic reinforced the drivers of instability and violence. Among others, the results showed increases in gender-based violence (GBV) and mental health issues among Mindanaoan youth. YOUCAP used the findings to adapt its interventions to include a stronger focus on GBV prevention and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), highlighting the importance of being flexible to respond to changing circumstances.

In addition to these analyses, YOUCAP also strengthened the capacities of its partners to systematically analyze the local conflict dynamics

in their areas of work. One of the analysis tools was the YVCA, which was used by young government officials (SK) ([see approach 14](#)) and young members of civil society organizations ([see approach 5](#)) to better understand the specific conflict contexts and needs of their target groups and design relevant and effective interventions. Vulnerable youth from the community level were closely involved in the analyses and empowered to voice their concerns, needs and priorities.

- **Promote conflict-sensitive communication and interactions**

YOUCAP actively encouraged consistent conflict-sensitive and non-violent communication and interactions with and among partners and youth participants. Facilitators played a key role in establishing and upholding rules and norms for engagement during training sessions to avoid tensions within the groups and promote peaceful and respectful interactions. Making it a habit to communicate in conflict-sensitive ways helped to prepare the participants for engaging with their target groups in their own communities after the trainings.

Non-violent communication for resolving conflicts between students

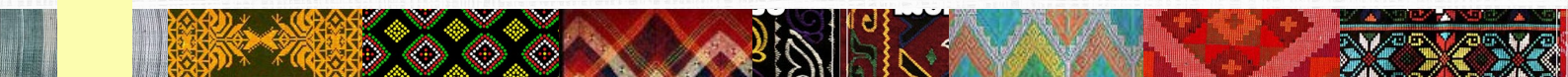
Learning and practicing how to communicate in conflict-sensitive and non-violent ways was a key element in YOUCAP’s peer mediation program ([see approach 1](#)), through which high school students were trained in resolving conflicts among their peers. In the program, students practiced expressing


their feelings and observations clearly, while avoiding labels, words, and phrases which could exacerbate existing tensions. They also practiced empathy and compassion with themselves and others, respectful listening, and refraining from judgment. The trainings built the capacity of the young peer mediators to de-escalate conflicts, forge mutual understanding between conflicting parties, and achieve win-win agreements.

- **Combine conflict sensitivity with gender and cultural sensitivity**

Being conflict-sensitive also implies being aware of and sensitive to the needs and value systems of different groups in society. Conflict and violence

affect young women and girls differently than men and boys, and the challenges faced by young lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, queers and people with other gender identities and sexual orientations (LGBTQ+) may be different than those





experienced by their peers. Likewise, young IP, Christians and Muslims might each have different values and needs which need to be understood and respected in order to design effective and inclusive peacebuilding interventions. YOUCAP

aimed to take these diverse values, vulnerabilities, and needs into account by embedding gender and cultural sensitivity into all its work as integral elements of its conflict sensitivity approach.

Conflict, gender, and culturally sensitive simulation games

In the pilot intervention ‘Gaming for Peace’ (see [approach 9](#)), young civil society actors were empowered to use simulation games as a tool for peacebuilding. The games focus on highly sensitive topics (gender-based violence and inter-faith dialogue), therefore utmost care was taken to ensure that the educational materials and methodologies were conflict, gender, and culturally sensitive. All game materials were


developed in close cooperation with national consultants who have extensive knowledge of the local conflict context. In the development of the game scenarios, particularly for the game on inter-faith dialogue, it was important to avoid stereotypical or misleading representations of actors and religious thoughts and habits, as this could fuel existing tensions among the participants. To minimize the risks, the game scenario did not include Christian or Islamic actors but was based on other religious groups.

We View Youth as Powerful Agents of Change

Local peacebuilding actors, especially CSOs, have long championed initiatives aimed at building relationships and addressing structural causes of conflict in Mindanao. These organizations have developed a wide range of peacebuilding interventions in the fields of peace education, localized conflict resolution, peace advocacy, community-building, humanitarian support, livelihood development, trauma healing, and reconciliation.

Yet despite many efforts of state and civil society actors, young people in Mindanao – just like in many other places around the world – often remain sidelined in peacebuilding projects and programs. The Visayan expression *ulahi sa duyan*, which literally translates to ‘late in the cradle’, describes the intergenerational relationship between young people and elders, in

which young people have no legitimacy to question an elder’s wisdom. This helps to explain why young people are often excluded in conversations about peace. Aside from being considered only as a vulnerable sector of society, young people are often labeled as either victims or perpetrators of violence rather than social and political actors who have the potential to contribute to peaceful solutions. The power of the media in portraying young people, focusing on their vulnerabilities and not on their capacities and contributions to peace, further overshadows the fact that most young people do not participate in violence. This one-sided dominant narrative and narrow framing of young people makes them less likely to be heard and given space to participate in society, thereby perpetuating patterns of exclusion and marginalization.



YOUCAP and its partners aimed to contribute to a shift in narrative and recognize the agency of young people and the vital role they can play in peacebuilding and violence prevention. Across its interventions, the project focused on promoting meaningful participation of young people by strengthening their capacities, listening and responding to their needs, and treating them as equal partners.

YOUCAP's experience working with young people and youth organizations in Mindanao shows that despite being labeled as victims or perpetrators, many young people choose to participate in peacebuilding and have incredible capabilities and motivation to drive change in their communities. Their engagement in peacebuilding has evolved, as they can be seen at the forefront of tackling social injustice, advancing the peacebuilding agenda, and addressing issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following lessons, recommendations, and examples are based on YOUCAP's experiences with empowered young people as active agents of change.

How it's done

- **Engage with youth as partners**

YOUCAP aimed to recognize and engage with young people as partners rather than beneficiaries. This was done in various ways, starting by referring to youth and their organizations as partners in communications, promotion materials, and when organizing activities. Young people were involved in context analyses, planning and design of interventions, co-facilitation and co-organization of activities, in reflection, and evaluation. Fostering meaningful participation of young people in decision-making and implementation of activities was essential to build ownership and ensure relevance of the support provided.

Youth as partners and co-organizers of a regional workshop in Caraga

In response to the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250, OPAPRU, in coordination with GIZ and the National Youth Commission (NYC), organized a consultation workshop on the National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security (NAPYPS). The goal of the workshop was to promote learning between stakeholders in Caraga Region and strengthen their capacities for building a culture of peace.

Throughout the 3-day face-to-face activity, meaningful youth participation and non-formal learning were promoted through diverse methods, such as plenary discussions, games, break-out sessions, and reflections. The third day of the workshop was fully organized and led by young people. One of the activities was an intergenerational and partnership dialogue, during which the youth presented specific planned activities while the other partners were invited to respond and share their insights. Collaborations and commitments were discussed and forged, especially with government partners. The activity allowed the youth to practice and improve their presentation, dialogue, and facilitation skills and helped to build their confidence in discussing peace and security issues with adults.

Motivated by the success of the activity, some youth participants volunteered to help co-facilitate a virtual consultation workshop for stakeholders from Luzon and Visayas regions. They were also invited to share their ideas and suggestions for improving the online event. Furthermore, the youth organized themselves and formed the Batan-ong Caraganon para sa Kalinaw Coalition, a regional coordinating body that supports the crafting of the NAPYPS.

- **Listen to young people and respond to their needs**

Especially in online environments, empathy and listening to young participants are essential to ensure youth-responsiveness of the activities. Organizers should not assume that participants' interest in activities also means that they can fulfill their tasks. It is important to be aware that youth have other responsibilities at home or in school that might compete with their online participation. Participants have different experiences, needs, struggles, and coping mechanisms to face their challenges. It is important to always consider the case-by-case aspect of their participation.

For example, in the 10-week Virtual Youth Safe Spaces training program (see approach 4), the facilitators noticed that some youth participants had difficulties attending the training sessions. The facilitators encouraged the youth to express the challenges they were facing in a safe space environment. They found out that almost half of the group struggled with competing family responsibilities, while some experienced mental health issues. In response, the training sessions were shortened from 2.5 hours to 1-1.5 hour and the facilitators organized a learning exchange on coping mechanisms in times of COVID-19, which was highly appreciated by the participants.

- **Do not underestimate young people!**


YOUCAP's experience of giving young people responsibilities showed that they can fulfill a wide range of tasks and deliver exceptional results if given the time and space. For example, the participants of the photography masterclass (see approach 3) and the participatory videomaking training (see approach 12) were quick to pick up new technical and creative skills and developed impressive and tangible outputs that can be used by educational institutions and CSOs as tools for peacebuilding and violence prevention.

Furthermore, young people in the government planning processes (see approaches 14, 15 & 16) organized and facilitated workshops with vulnerable youth groups and successfully lobbied the mayor and other LGU officials to include their findings into government plans and programs.

- **Empowerment is a gradual process. Support and accompany the youth in their journey**

While it is important to recognize the potential of young people as political and social agents, keep in mind that effectively unlocking this potential can take time. At the start, young people may lack specific skills or confidence to make their voices heard or lead the implementation of activities. YOUCAP provided needs-based trainings to build relevant skills and deepen youth understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the world around them. Most of the training programs included coaching and mentoring support to accompany the youth in applying their learnings in practice to allow them to gain experience and confidence.

For example, the participants in the #You4Youth program were supported with weekly check-ins and mentoring sessions throughout the 6-month planning and implementation of their own youth peace projects (see approach 5). In the peer mediation program, the facilitators introduced role plays to enable the young participants to practice their mediation skills and prepare themselves for mediating real-life conflicts between their peers (see approach 1).



We Take Mental Health and Well-Being Seriously

In conflict-affected areas around the world, violence, forced displacement, discrimination, long-term stress, breakdown of community structures, and other conflict-induced hazards can have a devastating effect on the psychosocial well-being of young people. The COVID-19 crisis further exacerbated the challenges and highlighted the need for greater attention to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in peacebuilding interventions.

In the Philippines, the psychosocial well-being of young people has been particularly affected by the unprecedented periods of lockdowns, isolation and uncertainty associated with the pandemic. Studies indicate a rise in stress, anxiety, and depression among young people⁴, as well as an alarming spike in youth suicides⁵. Yet despite the pressing and growing need for psychosocial support, Filipino youth face numerous barriers to accessing mental health services – including economic barriers, a low number of mental health practitioners, and a strong stigma towards seeking mental health support.

Left unaddressed, mental suffering among young people further interferes with their ability to cope with and adapt to the hazards causing the distress. In addition, mental health concerns can make young

people more susceptible to radicalization and violent extremism⁶, thereby potentially contributing to the complex conflict dynamics in Mindanao.

At the same time, mental health problems can pose an obstacle for youth to fully harness their potential as active agents of positive change. Psychosocial distress can get in the way of learning, personal growth, and constructive relationships with others, which limits young people's opportunities to lead fulfilling lives and contribute effectively to the well-being of their community. It is crucial to address the mental health and psychosocial needs of youth in order to build peaceful societies.

Realizing the growing need for psychosocial support among Mindanaoan youth during the pandemic, YOUCAP integrated MHPSS as a cross-cutting component into its interventions. This was done in various ways, from incorporating games and energizers into regular training sessions to strengthening local capacities for providing effective psychosocial support to youth at the community level. The following learnings, recommendations, best practices, and examples were derived from YOUCAP's experiences.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

MHPSS refers to measures designed to preserve and improve psychosocial well-being. It emphasizes that mental health and psychosocial well-being are interlinked, and that psychological dispositions and social circumstances go hand in hand. Mental health care is a highly specialized form of psychosocial support for people with

clinically relevant mental health conditions, which is delivered by psychotherapists or psychiatrists.⁷ Psychosocial support refers to all measures, actions, and processes that promote the holistic psychosocial well-being of individuals in their social world and help people deal with psychological problems and related social conflicts and stresses. It includes support provided by social workers, teachers, psychosocial counselors, family, and community.

⁴ <https://mecp.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s43045-021-00116-6>

⁵ <https://www.atlanticfellows.org/project/youth-suicide-rates-have-escalated-in-the-philippines>

⁶ Matteo Vergani, Muhammad Iqbal, Ekin Ilbahar, and Greg Barton (2018), "The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull, and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence About Radicalization into Violent Extremism", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*.

⁷ GIZ (2019), *Recommendation Paper on Training and Capacity Development in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Development Cooperation: As Exemplified in the context of the Crises in Syria and Iraq*.



“[W]hen we think of building long-lasting peace and transforming the conditions that generate destructive conflict in communities, we cannot ignore the mental, psychological and emotional health of community members.”

- Asako Okai

**UN Assistant Secretary-General
and Director of UNDP’s Crisis Bureau**

How it’s done

- **Integrate well-being considerations into the design and implementation of activities**

YOUCAP made a conscious effort to take the psychosocial well-being and needs of youth into account in the design of interventions, the timing of activities and the choice of venues. During training sessions, the facilitators introduced energizers, icebreakers, and games, which helped to prevent training fatigue and keep everyone focused and engaged. In addition, the facilitators played a key role in setting and upholding clear rules and group norms to create an accepting environment, where everyone felt respected, valued, cared for, and comfortable to actively participate without fear of being judged or discriminated against. A crucial component were the post-activity evaluations, which served to ensure that the learning objectives were achieved and to provide the participants with a space to share their feelings and experiences.

- **Actively stimulate bonding and sharing among youth participants**

Across its training programs, YOUCAP created

opportunities for youth participants to connect with each other on a personal level, form friendships, and feel a sense of belonging. Facilitators invested time and energy in teambuilding, trust building and creating spaces where participants could interact with each other in small groups. Participants were encouraged to talk about their mental health issues instead of keeping these to themselves, which contributed to overcoming the stigma surrounding mental health and well-being.

Various creative methods were used to encourage participants to open up. In the Virtual Youth Safe Spaces training program (see [approach 4](#)), the facilitators started each weekly session with a Kamustahan (‘How are you doing?’) with guided questions. They realized that when simply asking participants how they were doing, they would reply they are “ok” and want to move on. Instead, the facilitators came up with more purposive questions like: ‘What are 3 things you are grateful for this week?’ or ‘My wish is...’ As the training progressed, the participants became more open to each other about their feelings and struggles.

- **Create a safe environment for discussing traumatic experiences**

When organizing interventions involving potentially traumatized groups, such as youth who have been exposed to armed conflict or other forms of violence, it is essential to create a space in which the participants feel safe and are not exposed to any further harm.

In YOUCAP’s youth-focused dialogue approach (see [approach 15](#)), MHPSS is integrated into all stages of the dialogue process. Creative exercises for self-expression, such as body movements

and the use of images and sounds, are used to make the participants feel at ease and stimulate them to share their aspirations, experiences, and concerns. In addition, the facilitators are trained in stabilization techniques to support young people in shock or acute distress to calm down while also preventing retraumatization. This is done by making them feel safe and helping them to regulate their physiological reaction.

- **Use peer-to-peer approaches to promote mental health awareness**

Several of YOUCAP's training programs included a chapter on MHPSS, which provided the participants with practical guidance for coping with stressors and challenges. The young participants were encouraged to use their new knowledge and insights to spread awareness about mental health among youth in their communities.

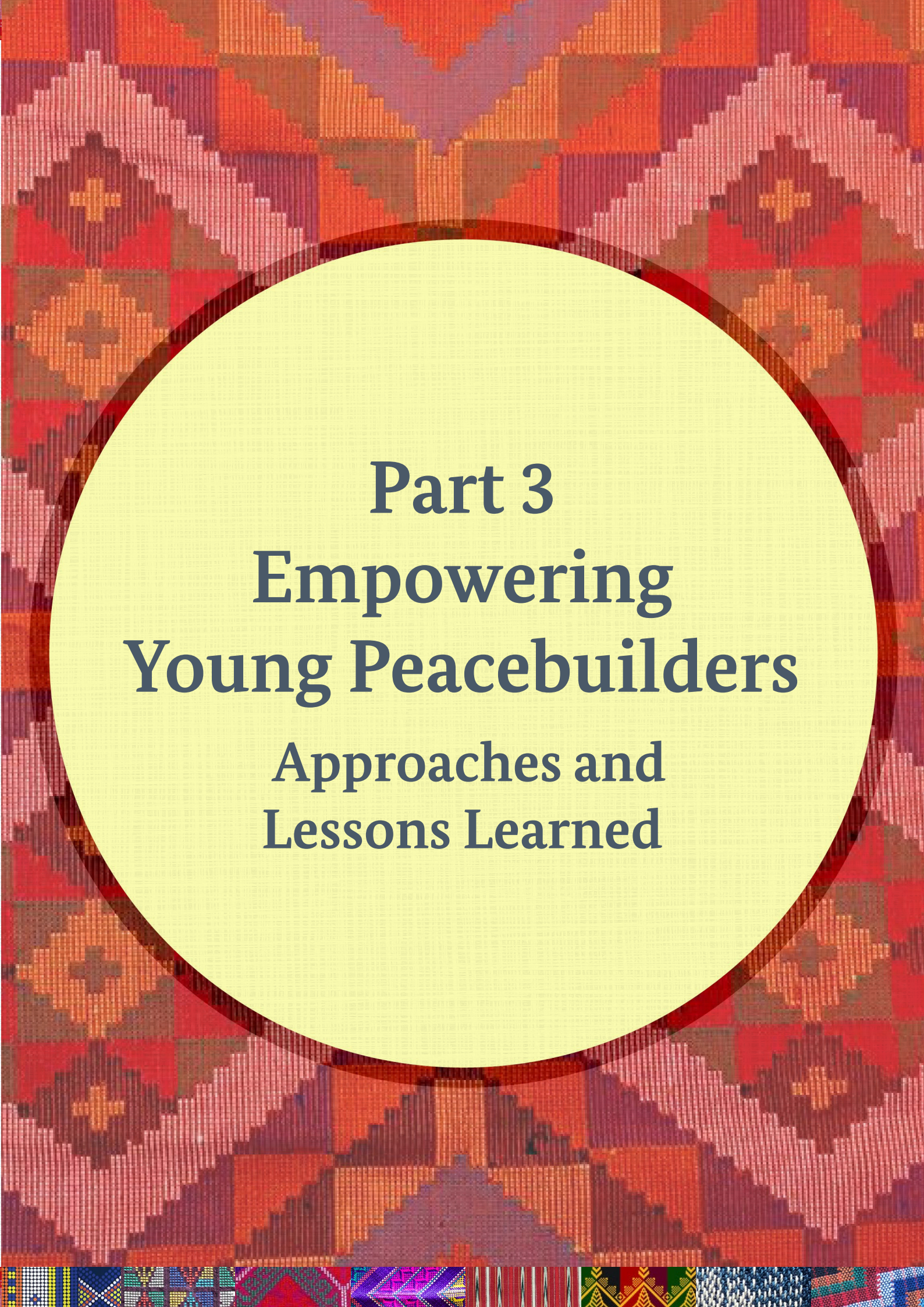
For example, young SK officials trained in developing social media campaigns set up multiple campaigns about protecting mental health and nurturing inner peace during the pandemic (see

[approach 13](#)). In another intervention, youth leaders organized community outreach activities to provide reliable COVID-19 health information, including information about mental health and well-being ([see approach 7](#)). Through these approaches, young people acted as role models to their peers in normalizing the discussion about mental health and communicating that there is no shame in reaching out for support.

- **Strengthen community-based capacities for MHPSS**

Across its training pro There is a wide gap between the large and growing need for psychosocial support among Filipino youth and the access to such services. Religious actors are often the first source of psychosocial support and have experience-based expertise in supporting people in distress. YOUCAP strengthened these existing community-based capacities through an extensive MHPSS training program, which helped to improve access to effective psychosocial support for youth in marginalized areas, which will continue after the project ends ([see approach 10](#)).





Part 3
Empowering
Young Peacebuilders

Approaches and
Lessons Learned

YOUCAP's Approaches

This section contains a collection of 16 practical, innovative, and creative approaches for empowering youth as peacebuilders and changemakers in their communities. It offers a glimpse into the experiences, achievements, and learnings from pilot testing the approaches on the ground and provides guidance and resources to assist practitioners in replicating the approaches in their own working contexts.

Each approach is described following the same structure:

- **Introduction:** Explains the approach in a nutshell. It highlights the main objectives and provides insight into the methodology.
- **Pilot details:** Facts and figures to give an idea of the scope of the pilot intervention, the number of young people reached, and which partners and other stakeholders were involved.
- **Suggested steps:** A short step-by-step guide

for implementing the approach, with the time needed for each step.

- **Achievements:** Highlights the main achievements of the pilot intervention. It includes changes and achievements at the individual, organizational and societal levels.
- **Lessons learned:** A selection of lessons learned, practical recommendations, best practices and insights based on the experiences and challenges during the pilot. Each lesson is accompanied by background information on how the lesson was learned, the benefits of using the lesson, and/or additional suggestions.
- **More information:** Links to manuals, training materials, articles, and other resources to support replication or for further reading.

The approaches are accompanied by quotes, case examples, and photos, which illustrate the results and learnings.

Table of Approaches

Approach	Objective	Useful for	Keywords	Page
1. Peer Mediation Program for Students and Teachers	Empower high school students to transform and resolve conflicts among their peers in non-violent ways. Set up peer mediation programs in schools to create a safe learning environment.	Schools, universities, ministries of education	Conflict, peer mediation, high school	32



Approach	Objective	Useful for	Keywords	Page
2. Photography Competition and Exhibition	Through a photography competition, empower youth to share their stories, narratives, and practices of how they and their communities are acting as advocates for peace. Photos are exhibited and shared online to spread positive peace messages and stimulate a collective and intercultural dialogue about peace.	Schools, universities, government, civil society	Photography, peaceful messaging, visual storytelling	36
3. Photo Masterclass Picturing Peace: Digital Storytelling through Photography	Build youth capacity to use photography and visual storytelling as tools for peacebuilding. Develop a photobook that can serve as a non-formal peace education resource.	Schools, universities, ministries of education	Photography, masterclass, photobook, visual storytelling	40
4. Virtual Youth Safe Spaces	Build youth capacity for linking prevention of violent extremism (PVE) with conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Creation of virtual safe spaces.	Civil society, educational institutions, government	PVE, conflict transformation, safe spaces	44
5. Youth-led peace projects	Build youth capacity and practical experience in project development and project cycle management. Implementation of youth-led peace projects.	Civil society, educational institutions, government	Project cycle management	47
6. Female Ex-Combatants and the next generation: Dialogues on lessons of fighting for justice	Empower young women and girls to amplify the hidden and forgotten voices of female ex-combatants through videos. Foster intergenerational dialogue on conflict history, preventing violent extremism and peacebuilding.	Peacebuilding community, civil society, academe, government	Participatory video, intergenerational dialogue, female ex-combatants	53



Approach	Objective	Useful for	Keywords	Page
7. Building peace-oriented youth organizations and training youth leaders in times of COVID-19	Strengthen organizational and individual capacities for peacebuilding and conflict transformation in times of COVID-19 at the grassroots level.	Civil society, government	Leadership, conflict transformation, COVID-19	57
8. PeaceBot – Digital peace messaging using Artificial Intelligence	Youth-centered development of a chatbot for peace. Empower youth to spread their peace messages to other youth through the peace bot.	Educational institutions, government, civil society	Chatbot, peace messages	60
9. Gaming for Peace - Simulation games for inter-religious and gender-sensitive peacebuilding in Mindanao	Build youth capacity to use simulation games on gender-based violence (GBV) and inter-religious dialogue as tools for peacebuilding.	Civil society	Simulation games, GBV, inter-religious dialogue	63
10. Peace of Mind: Supporting religious and faith-based actors in providing youth-oriented psychosocial support in times of the pandemic	Strengthen the capacity of faith-based actors to provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Improve access to effective psychosocial support for youth.	Faith-based organizations, health sector	MHPSS, faith-based actors	66
11. #WeWriteAgainstGBV A Letter Campaign to End Gender-Based Violence	Empower survivors of gender-based violence to share their stories, bring together civil society actors through a joint letter campaign, and raise awareness about the topic.	Civil society, government, educational institutions, health sector	GBV, letter campaign	70

Approach	Objective	Useful for	Keywords	Page
12. Participatory video as a tool for youth-led peacebuilding	Build youth capacity to use participatory video and storytelling as tools for peacebuilding.	Civil society, government	Participatory video, storytelling	74
13. Promoting peace and non-violence through youth-led social media campaigns	Empower young government actors and youth leaders to counter disinformation and spread truthful and peaceful narratives through social media campaigns.	Government, civil society	Social media campaigns	77
14. Amplifying the voice of youth in local development planning through the YVCA	Build the capacity of local government actors and non-state youth leaders to use the Youth-Focused Vulnerability-Capacity Assessment (YVCA) to enhance youth participation in local development planning.	Government, civil society	YVCA, development planning	81
15. Youth-Focused Dialogues: platforms for peer socialization and empowering youth as agents of social change	Build the capacity of local government actors and non-state youth leaders to use the Youth-Focused Dialogue method to gain a deeper understanding of the issues faced by vulnerable youth to inform planning and programming.	Government, civil society	Youth-Focused Dialogue, development planning, programming	85
16. Conflict, Gender, and Culturally Sensitive Local Youth Development Planning	Strengthen the capacity of young local government actors to formulate conflict, gender, and culturally sensitive Local Youth Development Plans (LYDPs) in a participatory planning process.	Government, civil society	LYDP, participatory development planning	89

1. Peer Mediation Program for Students and Teachers

The high school environment presents an important opportunity for students to learn how to deal with conflicts in their daily lives. In the peer mediation program, selected students are trained as peer mediators and empowered to transform and resolve conflicts among their peers in non-violent ways, with little to no intervention by adults. Teachers are closely involved in the trainings and assist the students in setting up a peer mediation program in their own schools, in order to create a safe and peaceful learning environment for everyone.

Pilot Details

- 16 eighth-grade students (13-14 years old) participated in the peer mediation training of trainers.
- 4 teachers were trained as coordinators.
- It is expected that the trained peer mediators will train another 120 students (around 30 per school). Once the peer mediation programs are set up in the 4 pilot schools, around 5,000 students will benefit from the programs.

Partners

- 4 public secondary high schools: Luyungan IP High School and Jasaan National High School (Region 10), Madrid National High School (Region 13), Kapatagan National High School (BARMM)
- Department of Education (DepEd) Region 10 and Region 13
- Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE)
- Duyog Marawi Inc.



Suggested steps

1. Preparation (2 weeks)

- Present the peer mediation concept to potential partners to obtain institutional support at the regional level.
- Per school, the regional partners and school administration select 4 students and 1 teacher to participate in the training program. One of the main criteria for student selection is active membership in a student organization, such as a Peace Club, Muslim Student Association or Supreme Student Government (SSG), or as classroom officer. Students should be in Grade 8 to ensure that after completing their training, they have at least two years left to train other students and set up the peer mediation program.

2. Peer mediation training (3 months)

The 3-month online peer mediation training program consists of 4 chapters, subdivided into a total of 18 episodes of 2 to 3 hours each. In the first chapter, a training needs assessment is conducted to finetune the program to the needs of the school communities. In chapters 2 and 3, the students gain knowledge and practical skills and tools to prevent, resolve and transform conflicts and prevent escalation into violence. In the last chapter, the students receive coaching and mentoring to set up a peer mediation program in their own schools.

Chapter 1 – Preliminaries

- Training needs assessment
- Episode 1 – Expectation setting, introduction and orientation to the training, house rules for online modalities

Chapter 2 – Foundations in peer mediation

- Episode 2 – Team building
- Episode 3 – Self as a peacebuilder
- Episode 4 – Introduction to peace education
- Episode 5 – Communication skills
- Episode 6 – Non-violent approaches to conflict management

Chapter 3 – Basic skills in peer mediation

- Episode 7 – Introduction to peer mediation
- Episode 8 – Roles and responsibilities in peer mediation
- Episode 9 – Techniques in peer mediation – preliminaries
- Episode 10 – Techniques in peer mediation – mediation proper
- Episode 11 – Conducting a simulation exercise
- Episode 12 – Creating a space for mediation
- Episode 13 – Planning a peer mediation program

Chapter 4 – Debriefing, upskilling, coaching, and mentoring

- Episode 14 – Debriefing and conducting a learning workshop
- Episode 15 – Social media as a tool for peacebuilding
- Episode 16 – Peace Education and Prevention of violent extremism
- Episode 17 – Mental health and psychosocial support for peace
- Episode 18 – Culmination and celebration

How does peer mediation work?

In the event of a conflict between two or more students, the trained peer mediators work in teams to assist the conflicting parties in reaching a mutually acceptable resolution. The mediators clearly explain the rules of the mediation process. Each party is invited to tell their side of the story while the others are encouraged to listen and develop an understanding of each other's perspectives

and emotions. The mediators then facilitate constructive, non-violent dialogue processes using a variety of techniques and tools to jointly search for solutions and come to agreements. Although initially applied within the school setting, the conflict mediation training provides students with lifelong skills that can also serve to address conflicts in their homes or communities.



Achievements

- **Empowered peer mediators and teachers**
The trained students have strengthened their conflict mediation skills, which include active listening, non-violent communication, problem solving, negotiation, and dialogue facilitation. The teachers have gained an understanding of the peer mediation process and can provide guidance and support if issues are too serious for the mediators to solve.
- **Foundations laid for setting up peer mediation programs in the pilot schools**
The peer mediators have developed action plans to establish and institutionalize peer mediation programs in their schools, which have been submitted to their principals for approval. The trained teachers will coordinate the programs and maintain a record-keeping and filing system to monitor the programs' effectiveness.
- **Commitments towards nationwide replication**
DepEd 10 formed a Technical Working Group through Regional Memorandum No. 306 s. 2021 to replicate the peer mediation program in other schools in the region. DepEd 10 has identified and started training youth formation coordinators, SSG officers, and SSG teacher advisers at the regional, division, and school levels to handle peer mediation programs.



Lessons Learned

- **Build on existing relationships within the education sector**

GIZ's long-standing relationship with DepEd 10 helped secure commitment and support for rolling out the pilot program. It also provided an added value to convince other partners to join the program.

- **A needs assessment helps to assure relevance and promote early buy-in**

At the start of the program, a training needs assessment was conducted to determine the needs, knowledge and skills of the students and teachers and the available capacities and level of commitment of the schools. The findings provided insight into the most common conflicts in the schools and the students' previous experiences with mediation. The findings were used to refine the training program to maximize relevance for the participants. The needs assessment was also a good opportunity to begin building relationships with the youth and secure their buy-in as they started to think about the topics at hand.

- **Use simulation exercises to build empathy and practice new skills**

The facilitators introduced creative simulation exercises based on real-life or relatable conflict situations in schools, such as bullying or competition between student leaders. The participants took turns playing different roles, which allowed them to practice their mediation skills while also helping them understand the perspectives of others and develop a sense of empathy. The simulation exercises were also an effective tool to encourage everyone to actively participate and connect with each other despite the virtual barriers.

- **Support the students in developing action plans**

It is recommended to build on the individual capacities of the trained students to achieve broader impacts at the school level. The students received support to develop action plans for setting up a peer mediation program in their schools, through which they will train other groups of students. The action plans include clear strategies for attracting fellow students, such as promotional videos and seeking collaboration with class presidents.

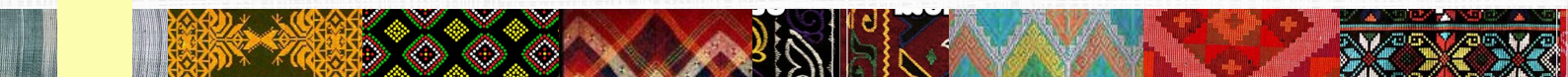
- **Mobilize teachers for sustainability and support**

One teacher from each school attended the training program together with the students. These teachers are expected to act as coordinators for setting up, monitoring, and institutionalizing the peer mediation programs in the different schools. Involving teachers provided an additional benefit in the context of online learning. During the pilot, consistent participation of the students was a challenge due to internet connectivity issues and personal reasons. The teachers were mobilized to support the students in catching up on missed lessons, which helped keep the students engaged while also avoiding delays in the training implementation.



More Information

- [School-based Peer Mediation Program - Guide for Peer Mediators](#)
- [School-based Peer Mediation Program - Guide for Trainers](#)





“

“If we students work together to promote peace and establish peer mediation within the school, we will be able to make the school a friendly learning environment.”

- Harlyn Estrada, trained peer mediator

”



“

“During our online training, my highlights were when my name was called and asked questions to answer. Through that, I really built my confidence.”

- Norhabi Bara, trained peer mediator

”



2. Photography Competition and Exhibition

Photography is a powerful medium to tell stories, draw awareness to issues, or move people to action. When used in peacebuilding, photos have the potential to bridge generational, linguistic, cultural, and ideological divides and unite people around shared emotions and experiences.

Through a photography competition, young people are encouraged to capture photos that tell their own stories of hope, resilience, and opportunities for peace. Accompanied by compelling captions, the photographs are exhibited and shared online to spread positive peace messages and stimulate a collective dialogue about peacebuilding and social change.

Pilot Details

- 112 young people from across Mindanao submitted entries for the photo competition, which was organized three times, with the following themes:
 - Celebrating Connection – Living Peace (2019)
 - Peace for Mindanao in the New Normal (2020)
 - Youth(ful) Expressions: Keeping a Lens on Peacebuilding in Mindanao (2021)
- All photos were exhibited on social media and in virtual galleries of three editions of the Mindanao Peace Studies Conference (MPSC).
- The winning photos and captions were shown and discussed during a talk show in the Sunny Side Webcast of the FSUU on the last day of the conference, which was streamed on their official Facebook Page and YouTube Channel.

Partners

- Father Saturnino Urios University (FSUU)
- Civil Peace Service (CPS)



Suggested steps

The photo competition and exhibition were included in the program of the Mindanao Peace Studies Conference (MPSC), an annual multi-day event organized by the FSUU over the past six years. It is also possible to organize the competition and exhibition as a standalone activity.

1. Preparation (1 month)

- Develop the concept for the photo competition, including theme, target audience and selection criteria. To promote inclusiveness, allow photos to be taken with a digital camera or a smartphone. The tool used should not affect the participant's chances of winning.
- Develop competition guidelines and promotional materials.

2. Promotion of the competition and submission of entries (3 months)

- Promote the competition to the target audience through social media, websites, and partner networks. Provide links to the competition guidelines and consent forms.
- Emphasize that the photo entries need to be accompanied by a written caption (max 150 words) explaining the story behind the image.

3. Judging process and popular vote (2 weeks)

- Select a jury composed of around 5 individuals. For the pilot, the jury was composed of 3 youth and 2 adult representatives of the implementing organizations.
- The jury reviews the submitted entries and ranks the 20 best photos based on predefined selection criteria, such as relevance to the topic, creativity and originality, depiction of

diversity, and a compelling message.

- Additionally, organize a popular vote on social media. During a one-week period, invite followers to like and share their favorite picture and caption. Use this opportunity to encourage non-violent discussions about peacebuilding among the photographers and the young audience in the comments section.

4. Virtual exhibition and announcement of winners (1 week)

- Announce the 20 best entries on social media. In this pilot, the top 20 photographers were invited to attend the MPSC and join a follow-up photography masterclass (see approach 3).
- Exhibit all entries in virtual galleries on social media, partner websites and during the event (if applicable).
- Organize an awarding ceremony to announce the top 3 photos and congratulate the winners. In the pilot, the ceremony was held on the last day of the MPSC, after which the winning 3 photos and captions were prominently shown and discussed during a talk show.



Achievements

- **Young people empowered to share their peacebuilding stories**
Through the photography competition, young people have been empowered to share their stories, narratives, and practices of how they and their communities are acting as advocates for peace. Subsequent participation in the MPSC helped to further strengthen the participants' knowledge and understanding of peacebuilding topics.
- **Partners committed to replicate the photo competition and exhibition**
The partners have improved their capacity to organize the photo competition and exhibition

and use photography as an entry point for discussions about peacebuilding. The FSUU has expressed its commitment to replicate the activities during the MPSC 2022.

- **Creation of opportunities for collaboration**
Participation in the photo competition and MPSC opened opportunities for the young photographers to expand their networks and seek collaboration with other youth and organizations that work in the field of peacebuilding in Mindanao.



Lessons Learned

- **Link the photo competition and exhibition to an existing events**
Although the competition and related exhibition can be organized as a standalone activity, there are clear benefits to linking it to an existing event like the annual MPSC. Embedding the activity into the event's program and promotional activities helps to reach a wider audience, allows the sharing of resources, and facilitates yearly replication. Closely involve the event organizers and other partners in every step of the process to ensure ownership. Alternatively, the photography competition and exhibition could be linked to a well-known celebration, such as the International Day of Peace.
- **Establish clear guidelines and close communication with the entrants**
When sending out a call for photography entries, it is important to include clear guidelines explaining the theme, the technical criteria which need to be met, and the selection criteria for choosing the winner. However, incomplete submissions cannot entirely be avoided. Several participants in this pilot did not include a caption or consent form or sent a low-resolution screenshot of their photo instead of the original file. The organizers

reached out to these photographers to advise them how to complete their submission, which helped avoid unnecessary rejections and ensured everyone had a fair chance of winning.

- **Use the photos to stimulate dialogue and engagement**

It is important to keep in mind that the selection of winners is not the end goal of the activity. Explore creative ways to use the photos to spread positive peace messages, stimulate dialogue, and encourage youth engagement in peacebuilding. In the pilot, the photos were used as an entry point for discussions on social media and during the MPSC, and the enthusiasm of the participants was harnessed to engage them in the follow-up photography masterclass, in which they

could further strengthen their photography and peacebuilding capacities.

 **More Information**

- Virtual galleries of the photo competitions:
 - [Peace for Mindanao in the new normal \(2020\)](#)
 - [Youth\(ful\) Expressions: Keeping a Lens on Peacebuilding in Mindanao \(2021\)](#)
- [Competition Guidelines \(2020\)](#)
- [Social Media Poster 1 \(2020\)](#)
- [Social Media Poster 2 \(2020\)](#)

Winner of the 2019 photo competition ‘Celebrating Connection – Living Peace’

Violence is never the answer. Peace can only be brought through free will, dialogue, empathy, and forgiveness. We should not descend to the same level as someone who is violent and therefore continues the vicious cycle of prejudice, discrimination, and violence. People acting out their prejudices cause violence, and opportunities in life are lost and personal relationships damaged. Change cannot happen and peace cannot be established if people act upon their prejudice, and violence does not change anything. Let’s spread the love!

- Maria Elizabeth Jubasan Caga



Winner of the 2020 photo competition ‘Peace for Mindanao in the New Normal’

Aldahas Kanakan, a 30-year-old peacebuilder from Maguindanao, interacts with a traditional leader of a municipality in Lanao del Sur. They are discussing how to counter the threat of violent extremism in the province. The narrative from the sultan can be a vital defense against the possible eruption of another bloodbath and destruction of lives, for the effects of the current pandemic can be a trigger to escalate violent extremism. A dialogue with the grassroots, even at the time of a pandemic, makes them feel that someone is listening to them and this gives them hope. The peacebuilder and the sultan in this image are a representation of hope that the ideas and stories from the ground can be heard by the authorities that have the capabilities to directly act on the underlying problems which hinder peace to prosper.

- Rico-Teodoro Jose III Carrasco



Winner of the 2021 photo competition ‘Youth(ful) Expressions: Keeping a Lens on Peacebuilding in Mindanao’

S'abbad Dasa! (One Prayer)

If you were to pray, what would you pray for? Would it be a prayer for health, wealth, to be successful in life and other beneficial things? Being part of a Bagobo-Tagabawa ethnic group, my family and I value peace more than anything. Time brings changes in our peaceful life and that was the moment when chaos spread its dark wings upon our barangay and robbed us of our life of peace. Rebels, earthquake and pandemic have drained our peace and this continues to happen, but after all those events, our prayers for peace never wavered to the dangerous life being in the area where rebels hide, with earthquake destruction and the occurrence of the contagious virus. To achieve peace we must unite and that unity starts with our family. My father and my cousins unite on top of the mountain of Barangay Luayon after praying for peace.

- Nasarina Aguanan



3. Photo Masterclass Picturing Peace: Digital Storytelling through Photography

In the photography masterclass, youth learn how to become visual storytellers and explore ways how photography can be used as a tool for peacebuilding. The course covers technical aspects of photography, as well as responsible and conflict-sensitive media use. The students reflect on how peace can be captured visually and conceptually and capture images from their daily lives which express what peace means to them. These images are used as an entry point for dialogue about topics like displacement, violent extremism, and gender-based violence and the role photography can play in communicating ideas and shaping perceptions. After the course, the participants work together on a book with compelling photos and peace messages, which can serve as educational material or to inspire positive change.

Pilot Details

- 30 young people from across Mindanao participated in the photography masterclass, which was organized in 2020 and 2021.
- The photobook created by the participants of the 2021 masterclass will be shared with YOUCAP's educational institution partners (DepEd, MBHTE, CPEM and FSUU).

Partners

- Father Saturnino Urios University (FSUU)
- Civil Peace Service (CPS)

on peacebuilding experience and interest in photography. In the pilot, the winners of the 2019 and 2020 photography competitions ([see approach 2](#)) were invited to join the masterclass.

- Design or adapt the photo masterclass program to the needs of the participants.

2. The photography masterclass (3 months)

The 3-month online photography masterclass program consists of 13 episodes of around 2 hours each. The episodes include theory, homework assignments, and group discussions and reflections. The course ends with a closing session to reflect on learnings and collect ideas on how to utilize the new skills and photographs in tangible peacebuilding activities.

Episode 1: Getting Started (Priming: Activity Overview, Training Rules, Expectation Setting, Introduction of Facilitators and Participants)

Episode 2: Understanding Self: Getting-To-Know-You

Episode 3: Understanding the Concepts of Peace and Violence (PVE, GBV, etc.) & Conflict and Situational Analysis

Episode 4: Conflict Management / Transformation Styles

Episode 5: Non-violent and Gender-sensitive Communication

Episode 6: The Basics of Photography

Episode 7: Legal Framework: Consent and Ethical Considerations

Episode 8: Lenses of Peace and Conflict: Using the Art of Photography for Peacebuilding

Episode 9: Storytelling and Dialogue: The Power of Image



Suggested steps

1. Preparation (1 month)

- Select participants for the masterclass through a photography competition or based

Episode 10: Responsible Use of (social) Media

Episode 11: Dissemination of photographs / stories (online / print)

Episode 12: Closing Session

Episode 13: Follow-up Session (Coaching and Mentoring)

3. Production of the Photobook (4 months)

- Discuss the concept and theme for the photobook with the masterclass participants and brainstorm about reflective questions to accompany each chapter. Support the participants in developing their ideas for photos and stories.
- Over the course of one month, the participants prepare their entries for the photobook, using photos and stories from their lives and communities.
- Perform a quality review of the entries, ensuring that all submissions are conflict, gender, and culturally sensitive and that consent forms are available for all photos. Translate final texts so that all texts are available in English and the local languages.
- Book layout, final editing, and publishing (print and digital).
- Book launch and dissemination to educational institutions and other relevant stakeholders. This can be done virtually or face-to-face.



Achievements

- **Masterclass participants empowered to use photography in peacebuilding**
The masterclass participants have strengthened their knowledge and understanding about the causes and effects of conflict and violence and the power of digital storytelling and photography as tools for peacebuilding. They have improved their technical and creative photography skills

and can apply these to capture peace and conflict concepts in visual ways.

- **Creation of a photobook for use in peace education and peacebuilding activities**
The masterclass participants produced a photobook, which can be used by universities and schools as peace education material. The photobook can also serve as a point of cooperation between local actors (such as youth groups, CSO's, or local governments) towards addressing issues and improving relations between different groups at the community level.
- **FSUU committed to replicating the photo masterclass**
During the awarding ceremony of the last photo competition, on November 24th 2021, FSUU committed to organize and fund a masterclass for the 2021 winners.



Lessons Learned

- **Use photography exercises to stimulate creativity and reflection**
After every training episode, the participants were given a homework assignment to capture a photo that illustrates a certain topic, such as peace or gender. This encouraged the participants to practice their technical skills and stimulated their creativity, as they had to think about how to capture abstract concepts visually. The photos formed an entry point for dialogue and reflection among the participants about the role photography can play in communicating ideas and shaping perceptions and how this can be applied to peacebuilding.
- **Support the participants to translate their learnings into tangible outputs**
After the training program, the participants worked together to develop a photobook. They

proposed and discussed ideas about which topics and experiences they wanted to portray and set out to collect photos and written stories. This activity allowed the participants to put their learnings into practice and gain experience in creating a tangible and coherent body of work, which they can add to their portfolios and use in peacebuilding activities.



More Information

- [Photobook - A Piece for Peace: Narratives from Young Mindanaos](#)
- [Photo Masterclass - Documentary - Participatory Video](#)

“

“This photo masterclass was an insightful and fun experience for me, and it has given me a better understanding on how to use photography as a medium to tell stories and its importance in delivering reliable information to people. [...] I also like the lessons because they have given me a better understanding on what is peace, conflict, and violence. I believe an understanding of what these are can help me forge better relationships with others.”

- Aaron Vidal, masterclass participant

”

“

“I am now more inspired in documenting everyday life and to be involved in reform through sharing my vision, using photojournalism.”

- Rico-Teodoro Jose III Carrasco, masterclass participant

”

Photobook – A Piece for Peace: Narratives from Young Mindanaoans

The 2021 masterclass students produced a photobook containing a collection of peace narratives depicting their different experiences of peace, hope, empathy, solidarity, resilience, and inspiration in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is divided into four chapters focusing on peace with the environment, peace with one's cultural and individual roots, peace with life as collective resilience, and peace with one's self. The peace with one's self chapter contains first-hand stories of gender-based violence and discrimination experienced by young girls and boys, young members of the LGBTQ+ community, IP and Moro youth, out-of-school youth, and in-school youth, which were collected as part of the letter campaign #WeWriteAgainstGBV (see approach 11).

The photobook will serve as a starting point and inspiration for young people who aspire to contribute to peacebuilding through the art of storytelling, whether using photography, letters, videos, or other means, in their organizations, schools and communities.



Photos and essay by Gabriel Villani

"Our ancestral domain is like the blood that runs through our veins; we are inseparable."



Lolita Mangado shows a triumphant smile after winning the dispute against a private business that attempted to steal their ancestral domains for the last two years.

Lolita, 31, and married with three (3) children, originated from the ethnolinguistic group called Manobo Pulanghion in Mindanao. Their primary source of livelihood is agriculture which can barely support the daily needs of their family.

To Lolita, it was tough to be put on a pedestal. People who have received fewer opportunities in formal education, may face challenges in earning value and respect and avoiding mistreatment. But Lolita and her clan were brave and persistent and these have always been their edge in winning every battle.

For the past two years, their family had to move from one place to another, pained with the thought of owning a land they cannot even live in.

Every day was a struggle. With barely any food to feed their children, Lolita and her husband were overcome with fear and hopelessness. But this didn't stop them from fighting for what they deserved.

They sought the help of a public lawyer in the hopes of being reunited with their land. The land is the future of their generation, one that they should protect and preserve.

After two years of fighting and hoping, their prayers were answered. They regained their rights to their ancestral land. Lolita and her family were grateful to the Philippine government for extending their protection and support to their community.

Indeed, it was a battle worth fighting for, not only for Lolita and for her family — but for a community and their identity. May this remind us that persistence and bravery can overcome any form of inequality.

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4. Virtual Youth Safe Spaces

Youth across Mindanao are vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups due to a variety of push and pull factors. The Virtual Youth Safe Spaces (VYSS) training of trainers deepens the understanding of young people about the drivers of radicalization and violent extremism and the effects of conflict and violence on different groups. The training empowers the participants with skills and tools to facilitate interventions towards preventing violent extremism (PVE), conflict transformation, and peacebuilding and disseminate their learnings within their youth organizations. A unique element of the training format is the creation of virtual safe spaces where the participants are given the opportunity to check in on each other, discuss personal concerns, build friendships, and feel a sense of belonging.

Pilot Details

- 32 young people (in two batches) participated in the VYSS training of trainers.
- The participants are affiliated with civil society organizations, educational institutions, and the government (SK) and come from across Mindanao.

Partners

- Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT), Mindanao Centre for Resiliency
- Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism (iDove) - GIZ sector program Religion and Development



Suggested steps

VYSS is based on a training of trainers program focused on PVE and developed by iDove – a joint initiative by the African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate and GIZ. Originally a face-to-face activity mainly implemented in Africa, the training has been adapted to an online format and to the context of Mindanao, and the content has been broadened to include peacebuilding and conflict transformation topics.

1. Preparation (2 months)

- Adapt the program to the local context, especially the examples and case studies in the manual.
- Send out a call for applications through social media, partner networks, and posters at universities. Select participants based on their experience in peacebuilding, PVE, interfaith approaches, and facilitation while ensuring gender, religious, and cultural diversity.
- Request the selected participants to fill out a peacebuilding competence-assessment questionnaire in which they rate their level for different peacebuilding competences (= knowledge + skills + attitudes). Invite them to reflect on their assessment and come up with 3 learning goals for the project. Use the results to adapt the training design to the participants' needs and goals.

2. VYSS Training of Trainers (3 months)

- Weekly plenary training sessions: In 2-hour online sessions, the participants gain deeper understanding of the concepts of conflict and violent extremism, learn interfaith and intercultural approaches for PVE, conflict



transformation and peacebuilding, and practice online facilitation skills. Each weekly training module also includes readings, activities, and assignments, which require about 6-8hrs of work.

- » **Module 1: Identity, Youth, and Peacebuilding**
- » **Module 2: Understanding Core Concepts in Peacebuilding**
- » **Module 3: Understanding Violence and Violent Extremism**
- » **Module 4: Culture and Religion in Peacebuilding**
- » **Module 5: Conflict Transformation Approach**
- » **Module 6: Contributing to Peace in my Community**

- Weekly mentoring sessions in smaller groups – the safe spaces: In parallel to the plenary sessions, set up virtual safe spaces where the participants can meet each other in smaller groups to connect with each other and discuss personal concerns regarding the training as well as peace and conflict issues in their own environment.


3. Evaluation and recommitment

- Conduct mid-term and end evaluations with the participants to reflect on their experiences, learnings, and achievements.
- Optionally, offer the participants a chance to ‘recommit’ themselves to a follow-up program, through which they can put their learnings into practice by implementing youth peace projects in their communities. In this pilot, the follow-up program was titled #You4Youth (see approach 5).



Achievements

- **Youth participants empowered to lead interventions and disseminate their learnings**
The participants have improved knowledge and understanding about interfaith and intercultural approaches for PVE, conflict transformation and peacebuilding and can disseminate these learnings among other members of their organizations.
- **Supportive interrelationships and increased confidence**
Through the safe spaces and the time spent together, the participants became more open to each other about their feelings, opinions, inner struggles, and difficulties. They also became more vocal about their learning needs and started proposing feedback on how the sessions could be improved, with the more vocal participants encouraging the quieter ones to also share their ideas. The sessions became a collective practice of building confidence and supporting each other.
- **Access to a worldwide network and opportunities for continued learning**
The participants have become part of the iDove youth network, through which they have access to knowledge, good practices, and a community of likeminded youth across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. The participants have also been included in a pool of potential facilitators for future iDove youth forums and activities, which will allow them to further develop their skills as peace trainers.
- **Learnings applied in practice through project management workshop**
A project management workshop was introduced through which the participants applied their learnings from the YVSS training of trainers in



practice. The workshop was part of #You4Youth, which capacitated the youth peacebuilders to develop and implement their own peace projects and share their knowledge with their communities and fellow youth.



Lessons Learned

- **Focus on bringing added value**
To keep the participants engaged and committed, explore ways to make the activity not only relevant but also with added value to them. The peacebuilding competence assessment questionnaire is a useful tool to discover participants' strengths and needs and stimulate them to formulate personal learning goals. The outcomes were used to adapt the training program to ensure it provides added value for everyone. A mid-term evaluation and constant reflection throughout the course allowed to further finetune and adapt the training to changing needs and circumstances.
- **Creating safe spaces online takes time and care**
Real safe spaces, in which young people feel comfortable enough to open up about their personal feelings and experiences, require more than a few weeks of online sessions. Time and energy need to go out to strengthening teambuilding and trust-building among the participants and creating a safe and open atmosphere. The facilitators also realized the importance of building personal relationships with the participants, being open to them as they are to each other, and letting them know they are heard and cared for.
- **Organize a learning exchange on self-care and well-being**
Halfway into the training program of the second group, it became clear that the participants were experiencing difficulties which were getting in the way of their learning goals. A 2-hour

learning exchange on self-care and well-being was organized, where the participants shared their worries and learned from each other's coping mechanisms and strategies for dealing with stress – especially in the context of virtual fatigue and the pandemic. The session helped to facilitate discussions around sensitive topics, thereby strengthening the virtual safe space aspect of the training program. It also helped to build understanding among the facilitators about the struggles the youth were facing, which led to an agreement to shorten the lessons to better suit the participants' needs.

- **Link the trainings to concrete youth-led peace projects**
Originally, the training program was meant to be conducted in person, with ample time for practicing face-to-face facilitation. When this was not possible due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the idea was born to support the youth in putting their learnings into practice by implementing youth-led peace projects in their own communities, either virtually or through limited face-to-face formats in line with pandemic regulations. At the end of the YVSS training program, the participants were given the opportunity to 'recommit' themselves to the next phase (#You4Youth) through a recommitment questionnaire. This allowed them to make a conscious choice and take responsibility for that choice. Linking the trainings to concrete peace projects strengthened the sustainability of the approach, as the learnings were disseminated within the participants' youth organizations while also leading to impacts on the ground.



More Information

- [Virtual Youth Safe Spaces – Documentary - Participatory Video](#)

5. Youth-Led Peace Projects

Addressing the vulnerability of young people to radicalization and recruitment by violent extremist groups calls for genuinely youth-led and context-specific interventions. Two initiatives have been piloted, which empower youth to develop and implement peace projects in their own communities, demonstrating better options than violence to their peers. In the process, the youth gain knowledge and experience in all steps of the project management cycle. They learn to assess the needs of vulnerable youth in their area, develop sound project proposals and budgets, facilitate activities, and monitor their progress. Through their projects, the youth act as powerful role models, showing that young people can be active agents in building peaceful communities.

Pilot Details

- In total, 9 youth-led peace projects were developed through two separate initiatives: #You4Youth and 'Salaam Corps: Across Borders and Cultures.

#You4Youth: Kabataan para sa Kabataan

- 32 young people were supported in project development and management.
- Around 320 youth in Mindanao were reached through 6 youth-led peace projects developed and implemented by participants.
- The key areas of coverage were Lanao del Sur, Bukidnon, Maguindanao, General Santos, Cotabato and Zamboanga. Some of the projects were open as Mindanao-wide initiatives.
- Partners: participants' own youth organizations, other CSOs, and government partners.

Salaam Corps: Across Borders and Cultures

- 120 young people attended a regional workshops series on peace and project development.
- Over 50 young people in Mindanao were

reached through 3 youth-led peace projects developed and managed by participants.

- The projects were implemented through the Salaam Corps Local Chapters in SOCCSKSARGEN and Davao, Lanao, and Mainland BARMM.
- Partner: Salaam Movement

The #You4Youth and Salaam Corps initiatives both combine youth capacity development with mentoring and coaching support to translate these capacities into conflict, gender, and culturally sensitive youth-led peace projects at the community level. The main differences between these two interventions are the timeframe, intensiveness, and involvement on an organizational level. The steps for each are outlined below

#You4Youth (11 months)

#You4Youth is a follow-up to the YVSS training of trainers ([approach 4](#)), in which the participants gained understanding of the concepts of peacebuilding, PVE, and conflict transformation as well as skills in facilitating online trainings and workshops. The following steps assume prior capacity building has taken place, through the YVSS or a similar program.

1. Preparation (1 month)

- Develop the #You4Youth workshop outline and content.

2. Training and mentoring to develop project proposals (6 months)

- Over the course of 6 months, 6 training sessions are organized of 2.5 hours each. The participants are organized into smaller geographical groups, which each develop a comprehensive project proposal, complete with a theory of change, an M&E framework, a budget, etc. The groups receive continuous

- » **Session 1: Analysis and Assessment**
Youth-Focused Vulnerability-Capacity Assessment (YVCA) and Conflict Analysis
- » **Session 2: Measuring Impact**
Theory of Change, Impact Chain, Results-based Monitoring
- » **Session 3: Project Management Cycle**
Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, and Project design
- » **Session 4: Resource Mobilization**
Financial and Human Resources
- » **Session 5: Security (online and offline)**
Risk management, conflict-sensitivity, and COVID-19
- » **Session 6: Pitching and peer-to-peer evaluation of projects**

3. Implementation of youth-led peace projects (3 months)

- Once the project proposals are approved for funding, the groups establish partnerships with their own organizations and other relevant institutions to sustainably implement their projects at the community level. Support the youth through weekly check-ins and mentoring sessions, particularly on their program content and sustainability plan

4. Implementation of youth-led peace projects (3 months)

- Each youth-led peace project develops its own evaluation process. The #You4Youth trainees gather feedback from their participants to further enhance the next steps or replicate the initiative.
- Organize a culmination activity, where the different groups present their project results, feedback, and next steps to the other groups.

Salaam Corps: Across Borders and Cultures (7 months)

The Salaam Corps is the volunteer arm of the Salaam Movement of the Al Qalam Institute of Ateneo de Davao University. A regional workshop series titled ‘Salaam Corps: Across Borders and Cultures’ was organized to encourage and support the young volunteers to set up peacebuilding initiatives in their own communities. The intervention built on a previous inter-cultural and inter-religious skills training activity.

1. Preparation (3 months)

- Organize regionwide gatherings to foster connections between youth volunteers.
- Develop the regional workshop concept and program.

2. Regional workshops on peace and project development (4 weeks)

- The program is conducted over the course of 4 weeks, with one full-day workshop session per week during the first three weeks and a 1-hour closing session in the fourth week. The participants are organized into smaller groups. After training sessions on community organizing, youth governance, and digital advocacy, each group develops a project proposal and pitches their idea. The winning team from each region receives funding and mentoring support for project implementation.

- » Session 1: Introduction of Participants and Sharing of Youth Peacebuilder Personal Experiences
- » Session 2: Project Planning – Proposal Writing, Work Plan, Financial Plan and Pitching
- » Session 3: Project Pitching and Feedback
- » Session 4: Announcement of grant winners and closing ceremony

3. Implementation of youth-led peace projects (2 months)

- Provide mentoring support to the volunteer groups to refine their project proposals and implement their peace projects at the community level, ensuring that resources are utilized efficiently to address actual needs and build social cohesion while allowing the youth to lead.

4. Project evaluation and results presentation (1 month)

- Each group conducts a post-evaluation to gather feedback from their participants.
- Organize a closing event, where all the volunteers present their results and discuss their youth initiatives.



Achievements

• Youth peace projects implemented and sustained through the youth organizations

The youth training participants applied their learnings by developing and implementing their own peace projects, while their organizations became their partners in sustaining these initiatives. The organizations provided co-funding and embedded the projects into their organizational structures, establishing true ownership and ensuring continuation of the projects after YOUCAP support ends.

• New partnerships and networks

New collaborations and partnerships have been established between the different youth organizations as well as with government actors, educational institutions, and other civil society organizations in the co-implementation and co-funding of the youth peace projects. In the

Salaam Corps intervention, nationwide networks have been created of youth leaders committed to building peace in their communities.

• Meaningful impacts on the ground

Needs assessments were conducted using the YVCA tool, which resulted in the design and implementation of interventions that address the actual needs of vulnerable youth in the communities. In addition, the participating youth leaders acted as a source of inspiration to their peers, demonstrating that young people can play a key role in society.



Lessons Learned

• Build capacities for the entire project management cycle

Although there are many projects and resources geared towards strengthening individual capacities for facilitation, there is a need for more practical approaches to translate these learnings into concrete youth-led peace interventions. To ensure effectiveness and sustainability, it is important to capacitate and support youth and their organizations in the entire project management cycle, from writing project proposals and budgets to implementing activities and monitoring progress.

• Provide initial funding support

GIZ provided initial funding support to the youth peace projects based on the submission of a sound project proposal and budget. It motivated the youth to know that their ideas could become a reality and stimulated them to search for other partners for additional funds and resources.

• Align support with the capacities and advocacies of the participants and their organizations

The participants are active actors in their youth

organizations, which have their own advocacies and local networks through which they can create an impact. It is important to align support measures with these existing capacities and structures and focus on bringing added value not only to the youth as individuals but also to their work, their organizations, and their communities. This helps to ensure relevance for and harness support from the organizations in question, thereby contributing to long-term sustainability.



More Information

- [#You4Youth](#)
- [Salaam Corps](#)
- [Salaam Movement-Documentary-Participatory Video](#)

"I currently lead an organization in our university that caters to youth-led peace initiatives in Western Mindanao. The usual trainings I attended cannot compare to the on-hand mentoring provided in this workshop. We learned so much from the training and we were able to apply these in our own peace projects. The most significant was learning the importance of change in what to implement in our communities.

- Michael John Alipio, #You4Youth participant

"I grew up in a place where conflict is present, so I took the opportunity to join this workshop. Aside from the topic and activities of the program, the youth peace champions are there to share our learnings with one another. One of the best things about the training is the opportunity to create our own peace projects. We are very thankful for the chance to create an impact in our community."

- Rico-Teodoro Jose III Carrasco, masterclass participant

Overview of the youth-led peace projects

#You4Youth

1

Project YouCAN: Promoting responsible social media use and conflict-sensitive positive messaging. 15 youth were trained and 5 advocacy campaigns were launched by the participants.

2

Project Sindao: Peace formation and aftercare program for the reintegration of youth rebel returnees and prevention of violence. 35 vulnerable youth were trained, 18 were given masonry scholarships, 17 were provided carpentry scholarships, and 2 were given technical education scholarships.

3

Letters for Peace in Mindanao: A group of youth writers retell their experiences and hopes for a peaceful Mindanao. 10 young people were trained and crafted 10 peace narratives that will be published in a book.

4

AgriPAZ Caravan: A youth discussion on the intersection between peacebuilding and agriculture. 119 youth from Mindanao and other countries exchanged ideas and experiences and a radio talk was held to promote the role of youth in agriculture, food security, and peace.

5

Gear Up: Uplifting Gender Equality through Awareness Raising (in celebration of the Mindanao Week of Peace). 30 youth were trained in gender-sensitivity and inclusiveness and produced 7 creative writeups and artworks to raise awareness about gender equality.

6

PHVote: Voter education for young people. 113 youth gained knowledge about their rights and responsibilities as voters to make well-informed choices in the upcoming national elections.





Salaam Corps: Across Borders and Cultures

7

Project Green: Peacebuilding through pot making and storytelling with cultural minorities. 15 youth were trained in peace messaging and Kalinow pot making.

8

Project Sindao: Providing learning materials to internally displaced children. Learners from Grade 1-7 were taught peace education and other subjects.

9

Project Suwara: Conflict-sensitive journalism, featuring young peacebuilders in a radio program. 20 youth from diverse faiths and cultures were trained in journalism and radio broadcasting.

6. Female Ex-Combatants and the Next Generation: Dialogues on Lessons of Fighting for Justice

Women play an active role in armed conflicts all over the world, sometimes comprising up to 30 percent of armed groups. Yet the voices and experiences of these women often remain unheard in peace negotiations and post-conflict settings.

This approach empowers young people in Mindanao, especially young women and girls from conflict-affected communities, to amplify the hidden and forgotten voices of female ex-combatants by capturing their stories in compelling videos. The stories are used to stimulate dialogue between the older ex-combatants and the younger generation about their concerns, hopes, and ideas for preventing violent extremism and building sustainable peace.

Pilot Details

- 4 young women were trained in participatory action research and filmmaking.
- 7 female ex-combatants from the Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade (BIWAB) and 5 women from the younger generation of BIWAB combatants and members were interviewed for the videos. BIWAB is an all-female force that constituted a part of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) armed forces.
- Around 74 people participated in intergenerational dialogue events (2 in total).
- The participants come from conflict-affected communities in BARMM.
- Around 700 people will be reached by the online video material and printed copies of the manual.

Partners

- Berghof Foundation
- Moro Women Development and Cultural Center, Inc. (MWDECC), Kadtabanga Foundation for Peace and Development Advocates as supporting partner



Suggested steps

This approach was implemented by the Berghof Foundation in cooperation with MWDECC. The approach builds on the expertise gained and lessons learned in the project 'From Female Combatants to Post-War Democratic Leaders' implemented by the Berghof Foundation and funded by the GIZ sector program 'Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Rights.'

1. Preparation (3 months)

- Select young women from the communities to train as peer researchers. The researchers need to be accepted and trusted by the target group.
- Select female-ex combatants to be interviewed, ensuring diversity in terms of experience, geographical location, tribe, and age.

2. Participatory action research and film training (3 months)

- Train the selected peer researchers in participatory action research methods, the development of questions, interview techniques, scriptwriting, and filming.

3. Participatory action research in the communities (5 months)

- The trained peer researchers conduct video testimony interviews with female ex-combatants in their communities.

4. Production of video clips and short documentary film (3 months)

- The video materials are edited to produce two types of videos: video clips for social media and a short documentary film that compiles the different stories.

5. Intergenerational dialogue workshops (1 month)

- Conduct dialogue sessions bringing together the peer researchers, the interviewed female ex-combatants and other community members. Show the videos to stimulate discussion about issues of concern for both generations and encourage mutual learning.
- Suggestions for discussion topics:
 - Experiences and motivations from their time as women in war
 - Lessons learned for the next generations
 - Experiences of the youth in the communities during the conflict
 - Hopes and frustrations around the peacebuilding process
 - Ideas for preventing violent extremism
 - Existing options for non-violent social and political engagement
 - Aspirations for the future of the country and the next generations

6. Public dissemination

- Disseminate the videos through social media, public screenings, or other channels to raise awareness of how conflict affects women and youth and to enrich the discussion around gender-specific aspects of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.



Achievements

- **Female ex-combatants and the younger generation empowered to share their stories**

The interviewed women feel heard and empowered, having been given a space to tell their stories about their time as women in war, their experience of gender roles and dynamics in the movement, and their aspirations for the future of their country and the coming generations. The young researchers gained skills and hands-on experience in interviewing and filmmaking to

support others in making their voices heard.

- **Contribution to the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAPWPS)**

The NAPWPS is the response of the Philippines to various international instruments on women, peace, and security, especially to the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and 1820. The project put an emphasis on supporting female ex-combatants and their daughters and thereby contributed to Action Point 11 of the NAPWPS.

- **Intergenerational learning**

The generational gap between older and younger women in the communities has decreased, as the dialogues enlightened the daughters who were deprived of a lightsome family life while their mothers were in the struggle. The project brought together families that suffered the burden of being disunited for a long and uncertain time.

- **Creation of videos that can serve to raise awareness and promote discussion**

The recorded and documented narratives of the female ex-combatants serve as a historic document and vital reference for the next generation as well as for policy makers and the peacebuilding community at large. The Berghof Foundation and local partners will disseminate the videos through an international social media campaign to raise awareness about the experiences of women and girls in conflict-affected areas and promote intergenerational conversations around peace and justice. The videos will also be shown in screening events for selected audiences (civil society, academe, LGUs, etc.) in Mindanao.



Lessons Learned

- **Build on existing trust-building processes**
Gaining the trust of local leaders and community members in far-flung, highly conflict-affected

areas such as BARMM can be a long process, especially when dealing with sensitive topics like the experiences of ex-combatants in armed conflict. This intervention built on the relationships and trust-building processes established during a previous project, which greatly facilitated access to the target group and allowed to implement the intervention within a relatively short timeframe.

- **Obtain support from local leaders prior to the start of implementation**

During the preparation phase, MILF leadership and local government representatives were informed about the proposed project to harness their support and secure their agreement for producing and disseminating the video testimonies of female ex-combatants. Getting their buy-in was essential to ensure that the women could talk freely about their experiences during conflict without compromising their safety.

- **Intergenerational dialogue allows to build a shared understanding of the history of conflict**

In post-conflict settings, many stories of armed struggle exist only in the memories of those who lived them. Intergenerational dialogues can be used as a tool to ensure that these stories are not lost and forgotten but passed on to the next generation. The dialogue sessions in this pilot enabled the youth to gain deeper understanding of the hardships endured and the sacrifices the older generation had to make in the fight for freedom. The discussions allowed to build a shared understanding of the history of the Bangsamoro struggle and draw lessons from these experiences for preventing violence in the future. The use of intergenerational dialogues merits to be explored further in other youth-oriented peacebuilding projects in Mindanao or other areas with long histories of violent conflict.

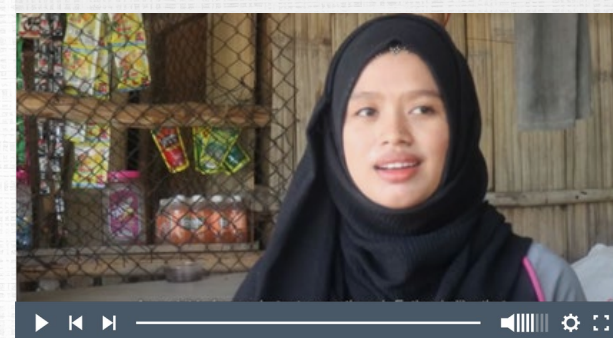
- **Intergenerational dialogues can serve as a platform for hearing and discussing family trauma**

When mothers take up an active role in armed conflict and are separated from their families for long periods of time this can have a strong impact on their children. The intergenerational dialogue sessions provided a safe space for bringing some of these issues to light. The discussions led to emotional reactions, especially among mothers and daughters, as the daughters understood why their mothers had left them and the sacrifices they had to make in times of war. At the same time, the process allowed the mothers to better understand the impact of the situation on their children. The experience highlights the potential of intergenerational dialogues as a platform for discussing family traumas and fostering mutual understanding between young people and their parents – an indication that the method could also be of value in other youth projects.



More Information

- [Manual for Organizing Intergenerational Dialogues about Fighting for Justice and Peace in Mindanao](#)
- [Booklet – Asking my sisters: Intergenerational voices of women from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Mindanao](#)
- [Video documentary – Narratives of Bangsamoro Women. Narratives of Peace](#)
- [The publications and video can be found on the Berghof Foundation’s project page](#)



*Screenshot from video documentary:
Narratives of Bangsamoro Women. Narratives of Peace.*



Intergenerational voices of women from the MILF

7 female ex-combatants and 5 women from the younger generation have been interviewed about their experiences, learnings, hopes, and dreams. In the resulting documentary, the women tell powerful stories of pain and suffering, but also of armed mobilization and social activism for religious freedom, self-governance, gender equity, sustainable development, and education. These are some of their voices:

“

“If you ask me how hard it is for mujahidin to raise children, it’s very hard. You have to leave them with nothing because you have duties and responsibilities to fulfill.”

- Pahmia Sebing Hamid

”

“

“We need to have programs for the youth for a brighter future. If they are disregarded now, it will be hard for us to help them in the future. We need to extend and expand programs for the youth to ensure the success of the next generation. We also need to give attention to our senior citizens. Unlike the youth, they might not be able to harvest the fruit of their sacrifices. We are not sure if they will still be alive when that time comes. So I hope that they will be given attention.”

- Umno Weedad Mimbantas

”

“

“We want to achieve the recognition of the community and especially, we want our efforts as women to be recognized by the Bangsamoro leaders and that we also have rights to serve the community”

- Maliya Madato

”

7. Building Peace-Oriented Youth Organizations and Training Youth Leaders in Times of COVID-19

Young people living in highly conflict-affected areas of Mindanao are particularly vulnerable to violence, recruitment by violent extremist groups, displacement, and other effects of armed conflict. This approach targets some of the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups to strengthen capacities for peace and conflict transformation at the grassroots level. Local peace-oriented youth groups are supported through organizational development and institutionalization, improving their functioning and performance to achieve greater impact of their engagement for peace in their communities. Their leaders are empowered with a wide range of knowledge and skills, such as non-violent conflict resolution, leadership skills, and crisis management, to deal with the myriad of challenges presented by dynamic and volatile conflict contexts and address the needs of youth in their localities in times of COVID-19.

Pilot Details

- 6 youth organizations with 550 active members were established and strengthened to become active and functional organizations beyond the project timeline.
- 260 young members of the organizations participated in the leadership trainings.
- The participants are from highly conflict-affected areas in Maguindanao (BARMM) and IP communities in Bukidnon (Region 10).

Partners

- Nonviolent Peaceforce
- United Youth of the Philippines-Women (UnYPhil-Women)
- Kamalitanan Te Matigsalug Manobo Kalumanen Ne Migsabeka (KMMKM)



Suggested steps

1. Preparation (6 months)

- Organize orientation sessions at the community level to introduce the project, map existing peace-oriented youth groups in the area, and seek support and participation from youth participants and other local stakeholders.
- Conduct a baseline study and training needs assessments of the target groups.

2. Establishment and strengthening of peace-oriented youth organizations (11 months)

- **Organizational development:** Support the youth groups in setting up or strengthening organizational structures and processes. Activities may include awareness-raising, orientation on roles and responsibilities within an organization, conflict-sensitive selection of youth leaders, and support measures to improve organizational functioning and performance.
- **Institutionalization:** Support the organizations in meeting documentary requirements for registration and accreditation through local bodies (LYDC and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE))

3. Capacity building of youth leaders (11 months)

In parallel to the organizational capacity building activities, support the young leaders of the youth organizations through a range of leadership trainings tailored to the specific needs in the different communities.

- **Leadership trainings to empower youth as peacebuilders**
Strengthen the capacities of youth leaders as active agents of peace in their communities. Include lessons on conflict, gender, and cultural

sensitivity, intra-faith dialogue facilitation, and peacebuilding in times of COVID-19.

- **Trainings on non-violent conflict transformation**
Equip the youth leaders with knowledge and skills for non-violent conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, constructive dialogue facilitation, and crisis management using the Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) approach.
- **Leadership trainings for SK officials**
Strengthen the capacities of young government officials for peace-oriented local governance, enhancing the participation of women and youth in governance, and conducting context and conflict analyses (including the impact of COVID-19) to inform youth-led projects and plans.
Community sessions on COVID-19
Strengthen knowledge and awareness about COVID-19 health protection measures, including MHPSS.

organizations and activities have been accepted as partners in local (peacebuilding) interventions, which will facilitate their participation in decision-making processes, policy formation and local development planning.



Lessons Learned

- **Regularly update context-analysis in highly conflict-affected areas**
The pilot was implemented in highly conflict-affected areas with constant changes to the conflict context, in addition to the frequently changing COVID-19 restrictions. During these challenging and rapidly changing times it was important to regularly revise the context and conflict analysis and adapt plans and activities accordingly, closely involving local implementing partners in the process.
- **Tailor support to the needs and capacities of the organizations**
This pilot supported youth groups with varying levels of organizational capacities and experience. Some already had an organizational structure and considerable experience implementing activities, while others were more loosely defined and informal. For the latter category, support measures first focused on setting up a functioning organizational structure and leadership before moving towards institutionalization. For groups that were more organized, some of the basic steps could be skipped and support measures were geared towards further improving their functioning and performance. A needs assessment was conducted to ensure relevance of the support provided.



Achievements

- **Youth leaders empowered to lead peacebuilding interventions**
Young leaders of the youth organizations have improved capacities to lead peacebuilding and conflict transformation activities in the context of COVID-19 and pass their learnings on to other youth in their communities. They embody and internalize peacebuilding norms and values and consciously adjust their behavior towards nonviolence.
- **Stronger youth organizations**
6 youth organizations have been established, their structures and processes have been strengthened, and they have been institutionalized through the accreditation to official local bodies, which enables access to funding.
- **New partnerships for peace and development**
Young leaders have been empowered to engage in dialogue with community leaders in their own barangays and nearby communities. Their youth



More Information

- [STREAM project – Documentary -Participatory Video](#)



From training to practice: Raising awareness about COVID-19

The trained youth leaders were encouraged to put their learnings into practice by setting up and leading activities at the community level through their youth organizations. Some leaders organized a recorrida (awareness-raising activity) in far-flung areas to provide information about COVID-19 and recommended health protection measures. The activity was well received. One of the community members said:

“We are very grateful that despite living in secluded barangays we can access information about COVID-19 through the brochures that we can read in our language. We even heard the information of COVID-19 loudly and clearly from the sound system of the mobile vehicle. We are thankful for this initiative.”



8. PeaceBot – Digital Peace Messaging Using Artificial Intelligence

The Philippines is known as the social media capital of the world⁸. Especially young people use social media platforms to connect and interact with each other on a daily basis. However, the connecting potential of social media has also been discovered by violent groups, who increasingly exploit the platforms to spread extremist ideologies, hate speech, and other forms of online violence targeting youth.

This approach empowers young people to shape a peaceful and powerful online counter-narrative through the design and use of a chatbot. A bot is a computer program that simulates human conversation through artificial intelligence. The peace bot sends out targeted peace-related messages, created by the youth and for the youth of Mindanao. The bot “speaks” English, Tagalog, and Visayan.

Pilot Details

- Around 50 young peace champions developed the first peace messages that the bot will send out.
- The messages will target youth throughout Mindanao.

Partners

- Ateneo de Davao University, Al Qalam Institute and Salaam Movement
- MSU-IIT
- ASSIST Asia



Suggested steps

1. Preparation (10 months)

- Make sure data security laws and security policies are followed to ensure the protection of user data.

- Conduct user research through local data researchers to understand the needs of the target group. For this pilot, over 2000 young Filipinos participated in the user research.
- Search for capable partners that have the resources to sustainably maintain the bot.

2. Software development (6 months)

- Contract a software development firm to develop the bot.
- Ensure young people and partners are consulted and involved in the design process.

3. MessagingLab (2 to 3 hours)

- Organize a MessagingLab, an activity where young people from the target group are brought together to develop the short messages the peace bot will send out. This can be a stand-alone activity or part of an existing event.
- Present the concept of the peace bot to the participants.
- In smaller groups, the participants discuss, research, and co-create messages for different categories (culture and arts, civic education and good governance, MHPSS and well-being, etc.). At the end of the activity, each group presents their messages to the other participants.
- Give the youth as much guidance as needed and as much creative freedom as possible.

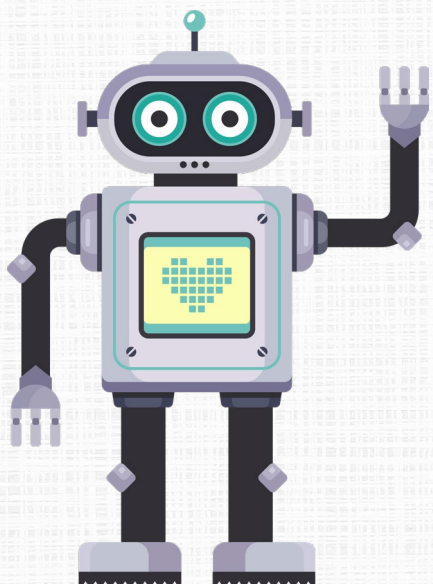
4. Putting the peace bot into action

- Hand over the peace bot to the partners and organize an official launch event with partners and youth.
- Following the launch, the partners promote the bot among the target group through a marketing campaign, continue the development of short messages, and conduct technical maintenance of the bot as needed.



Achievements

- **Empowered and inspired youth participants**
The participants of the MessagingLab shared that they felt empowered by how easily they can reach other young people and inform them about peace and peace initiatives in their communities and beyond. They expressed that the concept of the PeaceBot is new to them and that they are inspired and want to learn more about using chatbots for peacebuilding.
- **Creation of an innovative and relevant tool for partner universities**
The partner universities highlighted that they are confronted with an increase in online violence and recruitment, and that the idea of the PeaceBot resonated with their reality and desire to invest in formal and non-formal education in the digital space. Through the PeaceBot, the universities can broaden their peacebuilding activities in an innovative way. In addition, they can further explore the use of the tool beyond peacebuilding, for example for university communications.
- **Interregional cooperation between universities**
The intervention fostered new interregional cooperation between two universities in Mindanao, which have committed to jointly maintain and host the bot and replicate the MessagingLabs, ensuring sustainability of the intervention.



Lessons Learned

- **Design and create the bot with the youth, rather than for the youth**
When creating digital solutions, it is important to involve the target group in all steps of the process. User research was conducted to learn about the internet usage of youth in Mindanao, the devices and platforms they use, and their experiences with bots. The research findings formed the basis for software development, during which the partners were invited to test prototypes and contribute design ideas. The messages the bot sends out also come from of the youth themselves. They know best what matters to them and what influences them in a positive way.
- **Use innovative, fun, and creative approaches**
The MessagingLab was not a training but a space where the participants were given the creative freedom to co-create the messages with their peers. This led to a lively and fun atmosphere. The participants were excited to contribute to the PeaceBot and came up with a wide variety of messages. The experience highlights the value of coming up with innovative, creative, and fun approaches and activities to engage youth in peacebuilding.
- **Carefully choose partners which are not only motivated, but also have sufficient means and resources**
Even though the interest in the bot was very high, it was key to carefully choose partners that were not only motivated but also had the human and financial resources for the technical maintenance of the bot, yearly server costs, and organizing regular MessagingLabs to create up to date content. It is important to carefully assess the resources needed before the start of the intervention and make clear agreements with the partners to ensure sustainability after project support ends.

- **Be aware of who you can and cannot reach with the bot**

Through its automated nature, the PeaceBot can reach large numbers of youth over a wide area and potentially achieve a scale and scope that would be difficult to attain through more traditional projects and programs. It is important, however, to remain aware of the bot’s limitations. Users need basic literacy skills, access to a mobile phone, and internet connectivity, which can form

an issue for the most remote and marginalized groups.



More Information

- [PeaceBot](#)



Meet PeBo the peace bot

PeBo is a chatbot that simulates human conversation through artificial intelligence. PeBo sends short positive peace-related messages directly to the phones of young people in Mindanao. The messages feature information and tips on social events, youth peace initiatives, important dates, mental health and well-being, movies, books, etc.

An example of one of PeBo’s peace messages, which was developed during the MessagingLab: “In celebration of Peace Month and in line with Rotary International cause to promote peace, the Rotary Club of San Juan Del Monte is honored to share with you, Hijab: a beautiful story. The video fosters a conversation that encourages a deeper understanding of different cultures to create lasting peace.”



“PeBo is such a promising project. Learning how to contribute a peace message is significant for us, plus asking these messages from us Mindanaoans made the whole experience even more great. Awesome!”

- Buhary Abusama, MessagingLab participant



“The PeaceBot is a really great tool to fast track the spread of positive narratives to a much larger pool of people. Through PeBo, people on the internet will view Mindanao as a peaceful place, contrary to the different conflicts reported here. That may be true in some areas, but it is essential to also know that thousands of youths are creating a change for a more peaceful and united region.”

- Sittie Sakhira Dambong, MessagingLab participant



9. Gaming for Peace – Simulation Games for Inter-Faith and Gender-Sensitive Peacebuilding

A simulation game is a simplified model of reality in which the players take on a role and explore different types of behavior. In this approach, young civil society actors are empowered to use simulation games as a tool for peacebuilding. Through a face-to-face training of trainers, the young participants gain knowledge and skills for facilitating simulation games about gender-based violence (GBV) and inter-faith dialogue, after which they put their learnings into practice in their own localities. The playful method allows the participants to experience conflict dynamics in a safe environment and develop empathy and understanding for other positions and perspectives. The game provides an entry point for discussions about real-life issues in the communities and stimulates the search for constructive and peaceful solutions.

Pilot Details

- 27 young people participated in the simulation games training of trainers.
- The participants are members of 11 CSOs in Region 10 and Region 13.
- 250 young people participated in the simulation games on GBV and inter-faith dialogue at the community level.

Partners

- CRISP - Crisis Simulation for Peace e.V.

gender sensitivity and having experience in community peace and development work. Each organization selects 2 participants to take part in the training in tandem.

- Sign agreements with the youth organizations on commitments and outcomes.

2. Development of tailor-made simulation games (6 weeks)

- Determine the learning goals for the games based on the needs and background of the target groups.
- Develop two scenarios, one focusing on GBV and one on inter-faith dialogue. It is advised to set the scenarios in a fictional country but based on elements of the situation in the target area.
- Conduct a detailed analysis of the main actor groups in each scenario and their different interests and positions. Use the results to develop individual actor profiles.
- Develop workshop curricula and corresponding facilitation manuals that can be used by the facilitators in the long-term.

3. Simulation games trainings of trainers (2 x 4 days)

- Conduct two 4-day face-to-face trainings of trainers, one on GBV and one on inter-faith dialogue. These trainings equip the participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate simulation games in their communities.
- In the trainings, the participants learn the theory behind the simulation games method and practice facilitating the simulation game within the group. Organize a feedback session to discuss the current version of the scenarios and possible needs for adaptations.



Suggested steps

1. Preparation (2 Weeks)

- Identify and select youth organizations based on conflict-sensitivity criteria, like demonstrating cultural, religious, and

4. Simulation game workshops in the communities (8 weeks)

- In pairs, the trained trainers organize and facilitate 2-day simulation game workshops with youth in their organizations and communities. Each workshop involves 15-20 young participants.
- Besides the simulation game itself, the workshops also include sessions in which the participants reflect on the actual situation in their communities and develop ideas for initiatives to tackle the identified challenges.

5. Evaluation Workshop (1 day)

- Organize a workshop to exchange experiences and lessons learned from implementing the simulation games in the communities and discuss plans for future use of the method.

and improved negotiation skills

The participants of the workshops at the community level developed a deeper and more nuanced understanding of GBV and inter-faith dialogue. They reflected on the relevance of the simulation game topics for their communities and brainstormed about possible youth-led initiatives to address the identified issues. By stepping into the role of other characters, the participants developed empathy and understanding of different viewpoints. It also strengthened their negotiation skills, which will be useful when advocating for causes in real life.

• Relationships established between youth organizations

The training fostered relationships between the organizations. They actively supported each other and provided venues to each other for conducting the workshops.



Achievements

• Training participants and their organizations are empowered and enthusiastic to replicate the simulation games

The simulation games method was a new and innovative tool for the organizations and the trained trainers, some of whom already had years of experience facilitating peacebuilding activities. They were excited to learn a new method that they had never heard about. In response to the highly positive feedback from the communities, the trainers expressed their willingness to continue making use of the method and the organizations have started to adopt simulation games as one of their training methodologies. In addition, the method will be replicated with the LGUs of Talisayan (Region 10) and Carmen (Region 13), facilitated by selected trained trainers and with a focus on gender-based violence.

• Young community members gained a deeper understanding of conflict and violence topics



Lessons Learned

• The scenarios should be relatable yet abstract and fictive

The tailor-made scenarios and actor profiles should contain elements the participants can easily relate to yet be sufficiently different from their own reality. This is challenging but also critical as the fictional element makes it easier for participants to distance themselves from their roles in real life and explore the topic under discussion from a different perspective. A solid understanding of the local context and the target group is essential for drafting the scenarios.

• The innovative and playful method works well to engage youth

The new and playful method of the simulation games was positively received by the trainers as well as by the young participants in the local workshops. The game mechanics motivated and

challenged the participants to play their roles well, which led to a healthy dose of competition and a fun experience. Overall, the simulation games were an effective method to elicit active participation from the youth and formed an attractive approach for learning and discussing about sensitive topics around conflict and violence.

- **Multiplier scheme as basis for sustainability**

The most important base for sustainability was the multiplier scheme. There are now 27 trainers in Mindanao who are familiar with the new methodologies and connected to local youth organizations. Having trained simulation game multipliers among their members and

staff enables organizations to easily replicate the experience, institutionalize the method, and include it in the programming for other interventions.

More Information

- [Manual - How to facilitate a simulation game](#)
- [Local workshop session facilitation guide gender-based violence](#)
- [Local workshop session facilitation guide interfaith dialogue](#)



“Playing a role that is the complete opposite of my principles and advocacies is unnerving, but I challenged myself on how far I can take it. Consistently disconcerting but somehow I got to see and understand the perspective of the other as I wore their shoe. Now, I can deal with individuals like them better in real life.”

- Lowinjoy Comiling, training participant



Inter-faith dialogue scenario

In the fictive city of Lakuna, tensions are rising between the Sikh minority and the largely Buddhist majority. To ease the tensions and find ways towards peaceful coexistence of all groups, the mayor of Lakuna organized a multi-stakeholder conference. One of the topics discussed was the future use of a contested area in the Kalasa neighborhood, which was once home to one of the country’s biggest and oldest Gurdwaras (holy sites of the Sikh). Stakeholders from different sectors were invited to present their vision for developing the space and find synergies for a common way forward.



In this photo (taken during the simulation game training of trainers), the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce negotiates her proposal with the President of the Vendors, while a political journalist closely follows their conversation.

10. Peace of Mind: Supporting Religious and Faith-Based Actors in Providing Youth-Oriented Psychosocial Support in Times of the Pandemic

Religion holds a central place in Mindanao, with the majority of the population subscribing to Christianity, Islam, or indigenous belief systems. Religious actors are trusted persons within their communities and often the first source of guidance and psychosocial support during crises, especially in marginalized areas where other support systems are limited. With the rise in mental health issues among youth during the pandemic, the gap between the need for and the availability of mental health services has only increased.

This approach strengthens the capacity of religious actors in conflict-affected areas to provide effective psychosocial support to youth through their existing networks. In a training of trainers, religious actors are equipped with the knowledge and skills to counsel young people with mental health problems using science-based and creative arts approaches. The trained actors integrate the MHPSS interventions into the activities of their faith-based organizations, improving access to psychosocial support for youth in their localities.

Pilot Details

- 29 religious and faith-based actors participated in the MHPSS training of trainers. These include youth leaders, Islamic educators, tribal leaders, pastors, priests, and church staff.
- The participants are members of 14 religious CSOs and other faith-based organizations in 5 regions in Mindanao (regions 10, 11, 12, 13, and BARMM).

Partners

- Bishop Ulama Conference (Mindanao Tripartite Youth)
- Duyog Marawi
- Asian Youth Commission
- Archdiocese of Davao



Suggested steps

1. Preparation (3 months)

- Gather information about the main issues and MHPSS needs of vulnerable youth groups.
- Identify religious and faith-based organizations which have youth groups or youth-oriented activities. The organizations select participants for the training.
- Conduct a training needs assessment and use the results to design the training program.

2. MHPSS training of trainers (3 months)

The online training of trainers program provides the participants with a solid foundation in youth-oriented MHPSS. The trainings are conducted by mental health professionals who introduce the participants to a range of creative arts methods and tools for providing effective psychosocial support. The program consists of 6 training modules of 4 hours each:



Module 1: Welcome & introduction

Experiencing psychosocial processing (self-care); Introduction to mental health and well-being.



Module 2: Understanding the youth today

Mental health problems among youth during the pandemic and in conflict contexts; Community leadership and governance; Conducting a needs assessment.



Module 3: The Whys and Wherefores of MHPSS

Mental health law; MHPSS & the pyramid of intervention; MHPSS principles; Community resource mapping.

➤ **Module 4: Creative Approaches in MHPSS**
Elements of expressive arts in providing effective psychosocial support online and face-to-face.

➤ **Module 5: Education-based psychosocial Support**
Psychological first aid, introduction to suicide prevention; Communication.

➤ **Module 6: Preparing to implement a psychosocial intervention**
Facilitating psychosocial processing using creative approaches.

3. Design and implementation of MHPSS pilot activities (3 weeks)

After the trainings, the participants put their learnings into practice by designing and implementing a pilot MHPSS activity for youth in their communities.

- The activities are organized in teams composed of a youth leader and a religious mentor from the same faith-based organization. The teams meet online or face-to-face to design and practice their pilot MHPSS activity.
- The teams present and demonstrate their proposed activity to the other training participants. Provide coaching and mentoring support to each group to strengthen their activity design.
- Once the designs are approved, each group implements their pilot MHPSS activity at the community level through their faith-based organizations.
- Organize a group evaluation and feedback session to exchange experiences and lessons learned.



Achievements

- **Religious actors have improved capacities for**

providing youth-oriented MHPSS

The training participants have enhanced their experience-based MHPSS expertise with science-based methods and tools, allowing them to provide more effective psychosocial support to young people suffering from mental health issues. The methods focus on supporting youth in expressing their emotions, creating a sense of belonging, and rebuilding trusting relationships. The participants have been capacitated to transmit their learnings to others within their organizations.

- **Improved access to psychosocial support for youth in marginalized areas**

After the pilot, various trained religious actors have started implementing MHPSS activities through their organizations. By actively promoting the MHPSS activities, the religious actors help to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and improve access to effective psychosocial support for young people in their communities.




Lessons Learned

- **Provide tools for conducting both online and face-to-face MHPSS activities**

The training program included tools and methods for conducting online and face-to-face MHPSS activities to enable the participants to provide psychosocial support in areas with pandemic-related mobility restrictions. Although born out of a necessity, the tools and capacities for providing online support will allow the participants to reach youth across a wider area, even once the restrictions are lifted.

- **Tailor MHPSS activities to the local context and needs**

MHPSS should not be treated as a one-size-fits-all approach. Individuals and communities have different MHPSS needs, depending on



their history, gender, age, culture, exposure to violence, economic circumstances, and other factors. The training participants conducted a needs assessment in their communities to identify the specific needs of vulnerable youth and map available resources. This allowed them to design relevant and culturally sensitive MHPSS activities.

- **Embed MHPSS activities into existing structures and activities of the organizations**

The faith-based organizations of the training participants have existing activities where they meet and engage with local youth. Rather than encouraging the creation of new structures, the participants were asked to create an action plan for integrating MHPSS activities into existing and recurring faith-based activities, such as masses and gatherings. This facilitates implementation and continuity of the MHPSS activities and allows to link up to existing budgets of the organizations.

- **Establish linkages between the religious actors and the health sector**

It is important to acknowledge that the

MHPSS training has its limitations. The course strengthens the capacities of the participants to provide psychosocial support to youth suffering from a range of mental health issues and fills an important gap, but it does not make the participants medically qualified to treat severe cases. To avoid doing harm, it is crucial that the participants are trained in recognizing critical symptoms and understand when they need to refer youth to professional support services. It is recommended to establish linkages between the trained religious actors and local health units to allow easier referral of youth while also creating opportunities for continued learning and capacity development.



More Information

- [Peace of Mind - Manual for faith-based actors on youth-oriented MHPSS](#)

“*[The training] brought young people together regardless of faith and culture to learn together and understand mental health, recognize stressors and threats (especially in the context of Mindanao, e.g., war and terrorism, killings), and address those through the use of MHPSS.*”

- *Father Jomil C. Baring, training participant*



MHPSS pilot activity: The Mandala Pie

Several participants of the MHPSS training of trainers piloted the Mandala Pie activity in their communities. In this group activity, the young participants are encouraged to express their thoughts, experiences, and feelings through creative arts and connect with their peers, thereby creating a sense of belonging.

The participants are organized into small groups. Each person receives a triangular sheet of paper, folded into a few sections. For each section they receive a question, such as 'What is stress to you?', 'What is the effect of this stressor on your body, mind, emotions, and relationships with others?', 'What is helpful in your stress management?' Everyone draws their answers on their paper, taking inspiration from the designs and symbols on their traditional attire. The group members share their answers with each other, after which they lay their triangles in the center to form a big mandala. Then they search for commonalities, shared values, and stories that connect them and agree on a title for their mandala that represents them as a group. The title of the mandala in the photo is Makakalikasan, or nature loving.



11. #WeWriteAgainstGBV: A Letter Campaign to End Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) against young people is a pressing issue in the Philippines. According to the findings of a context and conflict analysis commissioned by YOUCAP in November 2020, the situation worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw an unprecedented rise in domestic violence, incest, rape, and online sexual exploitation of children. The topic of GBV is still a major taboo and the experiences of survivors remain largely unheard and overlooked.

This approach brings together a wide range of civil society actors in a joint letter campaign to break the silence surrounding GBV. The organizations reach out to vulnerable youth groups to collect first-hand stories of GBV and discrimination and empower survivors to tell their stories safely and anonymously, in their own words and images. The anonymous stories are disseminated to raise public awareness about the issue and identify pathways towards GBV prevention.

Pilot Details

- 375 letters were collected from young survivors of GBV through the letter campaign #WeWriteAgainstGBV
- The letter writers came from all over Mindanao and included young members of the LGBTQ+ community, IP and Moro youth, out-of-school youth, and in-school youth.
- 1,011 young people were reached during the first part of the campaign through lectures, radio programs, youth camps, and small group discussions. In the second part, a doodle video with the survivors' stories was disseminated to reach and sensitize a wider audience.

Partners

- Balay Alternative Legal Advocates for Development in Mindanaw (BALAOD Mindanaw)
- Various CSOs, local youth groups, and student groups
- Commission on Human Rights Region 10



Suggested steps

#WeWriteAgainstGBV was inspired by the letter campaign 'Cartas de Mujeres,' an initiative of the 'Combating violence against women in Latin America' (ComVoMujer) program implemented by GIZ in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Paraguay. The steps and approach have been adapted to the context of Mindanao.

1. Preparation (4 weeks)

- Reach out to youth-oriented organizations with diverse networks to get them on board as partners in the campaign.
- Conduct a pilot letter writing activity.

2. Campaign launch (1 day)

- Launch the campaign through multiple channels to gain a wide reach. For this pilot, the campaign launch consisted of a guest appearance in a weekly radio show and a virtual press conference with partner organizations and the media.
- Use the launch activities to present the campaign and its objectives and respond to questions from the young online audience.

3. Letter collection (4 months)

- The partners collect anonymous and hand-

written letters from youth in their networks by organizing letter writing activities or integrating such activities into their regular programs.

- At the start of these activities, the partners present the campaign and provide an orientation on GBV, including information about existing support structures for GBV survivors.
- The youth are then given time to write or draw their experiences of GBV and discrimination. At the end of the activity, the youth deposit their letters without names in a closed box to ensure anonymity of the submissions.

4. Analysis of the letters (2 Weeks)

- Read the stories to identify key issues and patterns and gain deeper insight into the experiences of GBV among the target group.

5. Raising awareness and encouraging action towards GBV prevention (2 weeks)

- Use the letters collected to develop videos, posters, and other communication materials which amplify the voices of the survivors.
- Disseminate these materials through social media and partner networks among youth and the general public to raise awareness about GBV.
- Share the materials and letter analyses with relevant government agencies and LGUs for use in schools and universities and to stimulate them to take action to address GBV.



Achievements

- **GBV survivors empowered to share their stories**
Young survivors of GBV have been empowered to share their personal stories and experiences and make their voices heard. Their stories have been

widely disseminated to raise awareness about GBV and its impacts on survivors.

- **New collaborations and a stronger focus on GVB among partners**

A wide range of actors, particularly civil society organizations and local youth groups, worked together to carry out the campaign. The partners embedded the campaign into their organizational activities and are developing ideas for sustaining the initiatives. BALAOD Mindanaw, the main implementer of the campaign, has begun providing support to GBV survivors who have come forward with their stories. The organization has committed to continuing the campaign and is exploring ideas to further enhance its strategies to include a focus on women and child trafficking.



Lessons Learned

- **Anonymity is essential, but also a limitation**
From a Do No Harm perspective, it was essential to protect the identities of the GBV survivors who shared their stories. Guaranteeing anonymity was also a way to encourage survivors to open up about sensitive topics. In practice, collecting letters while ensuring anonymity was a challenge. Collecting letters through email, social media, and other online platforms was ruled out due to data privacy concerns. This greatly limited the reach of the campaign, especially since many young people were confined to their homes due to mobility restrictions, yet more than ever connected online for their classes and social interactions. Setting up mailboxes in schools and universities was not possible either since all schools were closed. To collect letters, the intervention relied on the partners, who integrated the campaign into their face-to-face activities when pandemic restrictions allowed this.



- **Make use of partner networks and creative methods to maximize inclusiveness**

The campaign aimed to reach and include young people from particularly vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQ+, out-of-school youth, and IP youth. To achieve this, partnerships were established with diverse youth-oriented organizations, which reached out to youth through their existing networks. The partners used various methods to promote the campaign at the local level and gather hand-written letters. They integrated the campaign into regular workshops and trainings, set up small group discussions about GBV, conducted a house-to-house campaign, and organized a creative writing workshop. The participants were encouraged to express themselves in any way they wanted (letters, drawings, posters, poems, etc.), which allowed youth not comfortable in writing to participate as well.

Relying on partner networks to reach youth also has its limitations. Some groups such as youth with disabilities and young ex-combatants could not be reached, since the few organizations that work with these groups did not participate in the campaign.

- **Consider adding an open dialogue with survivors**

Besides the practical challenges of ensuring anonymity, to an extent it also contradicts the objective of the campaign to break the silence and speak openly about GBV. Multiple letter-writers asked to have their names published with their letters, as they believed it would encourage more young people to come forward and share

their stories. Humanizing the experiences and engaging in an open dialogue with GBV survivors could potentially help to reduce the stigma and shame around the topic. This avenue could be explored further in follow-up interventions – with utmost sensitivity and consideration for Do No Harm.

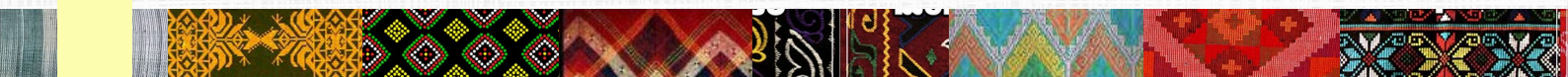
- **Use the stories to encourage action towards GBV prevention**

Besides amplifying the voices of survivors and pushing the topic into public awareness, the campaign also presents an important opportunity to encourage action towards GBV prevention. The communication materials can be used to call for the collective condemnation of GBV and promote a change in socio-cultural behavior patterns. Furthermore, the findings from the letter analysis can be used to stimulate further collaboration between state and non-state actors to develop programs to address the structural causes that perpetuate gender inequality and violence.



More Information

- [A selection of letters is featured in the photobook produced by the participants of the photography masterclass \(see approach 3\)](#)



A letter from a young member of the LGBTQ+ community

Hi readers!

I am a 25-year-old college student from Cagayan de Oro City taking up a Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship. I experienced bullying because of my gender. You may call me 'Unknown'.

Since I was 19, I've learned to be an independent person. It has not been easy to live on my own and rely on myself to survive, but being disowned by my father because of my gender preference is even harder.

I remember when my father told me that he would never accept me as long as I remained a member of the LGBTQA community. Despite this, I never pretended to be someone I'm not. Instead, I showed my father who I truly was.

They say that time is a great healer. Over time, despite our misunderstandings and differences of beliefs, my father has learned to accept me, my father helped me to accept myself and that helped me to freely express myself too.



The youth participants in the #WeWriteAgainstGBV campaign folded their letters in these sheets of paper before depositing them in a closed box. Through the letters, they expressed their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and emotions regarding GBV.

12. Participatory Video as a Tool for Youth-Led Peacebuilding

Participatory video is a creative method to engage a group or community in making their own film. In this approach, youth are empowered with the knowledge and skills to use participatory video as a tool for peacebuilding. Through a training of trainers, the participants learn the technical aspects of filming and editing as well as participatory tools and facilitation skills. They apply their learnings in practice by organizing participatory video workshops in their communities, in which they bring together a group of young people to explore common conflict-related issues and collectively create a video that communicates their ideas, needs, messages, and stories. In addition to the participatory videos, the training participants learn to produce short documentaries of peacebuilding interventions implemented by their youth organizations. The videos can be used to raise awareness, stimulate dialogue, or inspire action towards positive change.

Pilot Details

- 12 young people participated in the participatory video training of trainers and the follow-up documentary video training.
- The participants are affiliated with youth organizations, educational institutions, SK Federations, and LGUs in 5 regions in Mindanao.
- 52 young people were involved in making the participatory videos at the community level.
- 15 short films have been produced in total.

Partners

- Glocal Films



Suggested steps

1. Preparation (3 months)

- Identify local youth organizations and select 2 training participants per organization or institution who will work in pairs to produce the videos. For this pilot, youth were selected who previously participated in other YOUCAP pilot activities.
- Design training program and materials.

2. Training of trainers: Participatory video and basic editing (10 days)

- Using theory lessons and practical exercises, train the youth participants in interview skills, the technical aspects of filming, basic editing using smartphones, the participatory video method, and workshop facilitation.
- Coach and mentor the participants in making an awareness video about a topic of their choice. This allows them to practice and strengthen their technical and creative filming and editing skills.

3. Participatory video workshops in the communities (1 month)

- In pairs, the youth develop a concept and plan for a participatory video workshop in their community and identify and invite their target youth participants.
- Each pair implements and facilitates their workshop. They use a range of methods and tools to stimulate participation from everyone in identifying and prioritizing the issues they wish to portray, writing the script, and creating and editing the video.
- Provide regular supervision and check-in meetings to support the youth from the

planning stage to the final output.

4. Follow-up training: Documentary video and advanced editing (6 weeks)

- In this follow-up training, the participants expand their knowledge and skills in filming and editing. Using theory lessons and practical exercises, train the youth in advanced filming techniques, scriptwriting, copyright, and editing on laptops.
- After the training, the participants film and edit short documentaries about peacebuilding interventions implemented by their youth organizations. Provide mentoring and coaching support throughout the process.

5. Celebratory screening (1.5 – 2 hours)

- Conduct a celebratory screening event to showcase the films to members of the youth organizations, interested partners, and other relevant stakeholders. After the screening, allow time for discussions and exchange of experiences and learnings.



Achievements

- **Training participants empowered to use filmmaking to make their voices heard**
The training participants realized the potential and benefits of using short films to raise their voices and support their peacebuilding efforts and other advocacies. With their new skills and experience, they can continue making films for the causes they believe in.
- **Youth organizations have new tools to engage their target groups**
The training participants learned how to transmit their participatory filmmaking skills to other members of their organizations, providing the organizations with a new method for engaging

young community members in peacebuilding. In addition, the organizations have tangible video materials they can use to raise awareness about their activities or as an entry point for dialogue.

- **Interest from other stakeholders**

The guests of the celebratory screening were impressed by the films presented. An LGU officer, for example, showed interest in engaging the trained youth in producing a video to raise awareness about environmental issues.



Lessons Learned

- **Participatory video can serve as a peacebuilding tool in multiple ways**

The pilot demonstrated that participatory video can serve as a creative tool for youth-oriented peacebuilding in several ways:



Firstly, the participatory process at the community level stimulated discussions between the young participants about real-life, conflict-related issues that directly affect them. For example, in one community the youth exchanged visions and ideas for preventing bullying in schools. The process empowered the community members to translate their ideas and messages into a compelling format that can be used to make their voices heard.



Furthermore, working together towards a collective output was in itself a practice in using peacebuilding skills. Agreements needed to be reached about the topic of the video, the storyline, the message, the persons portrayed, and all creative aspects of the video. This allowed the young facilitators to practice and strengthen their skills in

non-violent communication, constructive dialogue, and negotiation – skills which can be of use in future peacebuilding interventions of their organizations as well as in other aspects of their lives.

Finally, the videos can serve as peacebuilding tools when used as an entry point for dialogue or to inspire action towards positive change.



More Information

- [Participatory videos documenting YOUCAP approaches](#)



“Before, I had a passion for filmmaking, but it got interrupted when I got to college. Through the training, I enhanced my skills really well. It is amazing to be able to edit on my mobile phone. People focus on social media, so why not use those media to tell your message?”

- Rogyn Edpalina, training participant



Parallel Worlds – An awareness video



Screenshot from video “Parallel Worlds” from Baihannah M. Pangalao

I named this 1-minute short awareness video ‘Parallel Worlds.’ I imagined parallel lines or perpendicular lines that never meet but are just there, with the same structure, same size, and same angle. The two worlds we see [the Muslim and the Christian worlds] are quite the same as the parallel lines. It is true that these worlds are with different entities or characters like the lines, but at the end of the day, they are still equal, the same, and can coexist without becoming non-parallel lines meeting at one point while one line is always over the other. I guess what I am trying to convey is that we can coexist without disturbing each other. What we need is more acceptance, respect, and understanding, not tolerance because there is nothing to tolerate in the first place.

- Baihannah M. Pangalao, training participant

13. Promoting Peace and Non-Violence Through Youth-Led Social Media Campaigns

In the Philippines, where some 67 percent⁹ of the population uses social media, young people are increasingly exposed to fake news, hate speech, and other forms of online violence. This approach empowers young government actors and youth leaders to counter disinformation and spread truthful and peaceful narratives through their own social media campaigns. Using evidence-based strategies and non-violent messages, the young leaders reach out to youth in their localities and engage them in inclusive dialogues about peacebuilding, COVID-19, gender equality, and other development topics that directly affect them. The campaigns expose the young audiences to more positive and diverse voices and inspire action towards a culture of peace, both online and in the real world.

Pilot Details

- 173 youth leaders (SK and KK) participated in the training on developing social media campaigns.
- The approach was piloted with two different groups:
 - #SKonektedKontraCOVID-19 (120 participants):**
the main focus was on providing truthful information about the extent of the COVID-19 pandemic, government responses, and recommended health protocols.
 - #KabataangDigitalForKaliNOW (53 participants):**
the main focus was on promoting peace, gender equality, and mental health and well-being through positive messaging online in the new normal.
- The participants of the two groups set up 43 social media campaigns, which gathered 117,550 views and 8,829 engagements (likes, shares, or comments) from followers during 30-day campaign sprints.

- The campaigns focused on the following topics: mental health (10 teams), youth governance (8 teams), COVID-19 (5 teams), peace (6 teams), gender equality (5 teams), animal rights (1 team), climate justice (1 team), and economics (1 team).

Partners

- 14 LGUs in regions 10, 11, 13, and BARMM
- Keamanan, Inc.



Suggested steps

1. Preparation (2 months)

- Select training participants based on set criteria, such as actively advocating for a culture of peace and promoting dialogue and social change through social media platforms; demonstrated potential to mobilize other youth in their communities in promoting peace; and possessing a laptop or smartphone and internet connection.
- Conduct a training needs assessment with the selected participants and design training modules based on the findings.

2. Social media campaigns training (1 month)

- In a month-long training program, the young leaders are equipped with the knowledge and skills for developing and implementing conflict, gender, and culturally sensitive social media campaigns around peace and development topics. The program consists of 10 interactive webinars of 1.5 hours each, covering the following topics:

1. Basics of Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm Framework

⁹ <https://medialandscapes.org/country/philippines/media/social-networks>

2. Gender Equality and Prevention of Gender-Based Violence
3. Mental Health in Conflicts and COVID-19
4. Non-Violent Communication
5. Social Media and the Social World: Use and Do No Digital Harm
6. Countering Disinformation
7. Media and Information Literacy
8. Content Creation: Basic News and Feature Writing
9. Basic Photography, Videography and Graphic Design
10. Introduction to Social Media Campaigns

- In the last session, divide the participants into groups of 3-4 people based on their geographical location. Provide coaching to each group to design a social media campaign around their chosen theme.

3. Implementation of social media campaigns (1 month)

- The groups create a campaign page on social media and launch their campaigns.
- In 30-day sprints, the groups aim to engage at least 500 followers (especially young people) from each LGU to like, share, and comment on the posts.
- The groups monitor the impact of their posts by analyzing statistics and the comments they receive. Organize a weekly feedback and reflection session, where the groups present their results and discuss strategies for improving the campaigns based on the findings.

4. Virtual Culmination program (1.5 hours)

- Organize a closing session to evaluate the activity, exchange experiences, and reflect on lessons learned.



Achievements

- **Youth leaders empowered to engage with youth in their localities**

The participating youth leaders have increased knowledge and skills in peacebuilding, conflict sensitivity, and non-violent communication and use this as their foundation for engaging online with youth in their localities. Implementing the social media campaigns strengthened the role and capacity of the SK to meaningfully participate in local governance and peacebuilding.

- **Strengthened relationships and collaboration**

Working together on their campaigns helped build relationships between the young SK officials and created opportunities for future collaboration. The process also contributed to strengthening relationships between the SKs and the LGUs. The LGUs identified various support and sustainability measures to continue the collaboration, such as including the social media campaign activities of the youth in the LGUs' annual investment plans, lodging the campaign pages in the official social media accounts of LGUs, and allocating funding towards institutionalizing and sustaining the campaigns in Local Youth Development Plans (LYPD).

- **Young people have greater access and exposure to truthful and peaceful messages**

Through the online campaigns, youth in the pilot LGUs have greater access and exposure to truthful information and peaceful narratives about a variety of topics, including gender-based and other forms of violence, mental health, peacebuilding, and COVID-19.



Lessons Learned

- **Encourage consistent conflict-sensitive communication during trainings**

After introducing the theoretical concepts of conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm at the start of the training, the participants were encouraged to apply these principles in their communication with each other and the facilitators throughout the course. Practicing how to ask and respond to questions in conflict-sensitive ways helped instill habits and prepared the participants for engaging with their audience during the campaign and after the project ends. YOUCAP also developed a training manual for strengthening the peacebuilding capacities of SK, which includes modules on conflict sensitivity and non-violent communication. Trainers from DILG and NYC are the direct users of this training manual and young government officials, mainly SK, will benefit from the course.

- **Include a stronger MHPSS component when organizing campaigns around COVID-19 or mental health**

One of the training modules focused on mental health and included advice and ideas for shaping mental health-related campaigns and messages. The session opened up emotions among the participants, some of whom shared their mental health had been affected by the pandemic. In replicating this intervention, specifically when supporting youth in organizing campaigns around COVID-19 or mental health, it is recommended to include a more intensive MHPSS training or offer one-on-one support to participants who might be suffering from mental health issues themselves.

- **Offer additional mentoring in graphic design based on participant needs**

For some participants, designing and creating digital campaign materials was a challenge. This was notably the case for out-of-school youth, who tended to have less previous experience in using digital tools and technologies than the other participants. To level the playing field and ensure no youth was left behind, additional mentoring sessions in basic graphic design were offered to those who needed this.

- **Involve LGU partners closely in the whole process**

When piloting the approach with the first group, participants routinely missed training sessions. Due to the large number of participants (around 120) and the frequency of the webinar sessions (every other day), it was a challenge for the facilitators to follow-up with participants individually. For the second group, LGU representatives (LYDO and MSWD officers) were closely involved in the whole process. They attended the training alongside the youth and checked in on them between the sessions, resulting in more consistent participation while also strengthening relationships between the SKs and the LGUs.



More Information

- [#SKonektedKontraCOVID-19 campaign teams](#)
- [#KabataangDigitalForKaliNOW campaign teams](#)

“

“SKonekted gave us the opportunity to raise our concerns, share our ideas, and be socially active despite the pandemic and the protocols.”

- Karen Joy Caballero, MessagingLab participant

”

“

“The Do-No-Harm approach gives you a wider understanding of how you can intervene when immersing yourself in the community. [...] It is important to put the community first - their feelings and protect them at the same time. I became aware that in doing publicity for your project, you need to make sure that the beneficiaries feel safe.”

- Baihannah Pangalao, training participant

”



Kalinaw – A campaign for peace

The campaign Kalinaw, which means ‘peace,’ spreads the message that achieving peace starts with peace within oneself.

The campaign engaged its young followers through a hashtag challenge, asking them to share what brings them peace in order to inspire others. It led to diverse answers such as listening to K-pop music, reading stories, expressing feelings to close friends, prayers, pets, spending time alone, family, and the sound of laughter. The young followers provided heartfelt explanations of how these things bring them hope and calm during the pandemic and in other times when they most need it.



14. Amplifying the Voice of Youth in Local Development Planning Through the YVCA

Youth-Focused Vulnerability-Capacity Assessment (YVCA) is a participatory and inclusive method for analyzing conflict-induced hazards and other forms of violence affecting youth at the community level.

This approach builds the capacities of local government actors and non-state youth leaders to use the YVCA for enhancing youth participation in local development planning. With the help of participatory tools, youth from vulnerable and marginalized groups are actively involved in identifying and analyzing conflict-induced hazards, vulnerabilities, and capacities in their community, drawing from their own experiences and those of their peers. The findings can be used to design evidence-based interventions that effectively address the source of conflict-induced hazards and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.

Pilot Details

- A local core group composed of 10-12 members (youth leaders and LGU officials) was capacitated in the YVCA process. Selected youth leaders were trained and mobilized as workshop facilitators.
- Around 15 young community members participated in the YVCA workshop. They represent different vulnerable groups in the community: IP youth, out-of-school youth, in-school youth, youth with disabilities, young women, fishers, and farmers.
- Other LGU actors, such as the mayor and heads of offices, were involved in the preparation phase and during the presentation of the results.

Partners

- 4 LGUs: Talisayan and Iligan City (Region 10); and Carmen and Gigaquit (Region 13)



Suggested steps

The YVCA is an adaptation of the Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) tool, which has been in use since the 1990s. The tool was popularized by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and has mainly been oriented towards disaster risk reduction in the context of natural hazards. YOUCAP has adapted the tool to include a focus on youth and conflict-induced hazards.

1. Preparation (1 month)

- Conduct a half-day YVCA orientation workshop to explain the YVCA to LGU officials and youth leaders to secure acceptance of the tool.
- Form a local core group composed of SK officials, representatives of youth organizations, and LGU officials. This group will lead the YVCA process on the ground.
- Train the local core group members in the technical steps for preparing for and conducting the YVCA workshop. Train selected youth leaders in workshop facilitation, MHPSS, and conflict, gender, and cultural sensitivity.
- The local core group selects and invites around 15 young community members to the workshop, who represent groups in the community that are likely vulnerable based on prior observations of hazards.

2. YVCA workshop (2 days)

The YVCA workshop is attended by the 15 youth participants from the community and led by 5-6 facilitators from the local core group. The workshop is conducted over the course of two

days and consists of 5 steps of 2.5 to 3 hours each:

1. Context analysis
2. Identification and analysis of conflict-induced hazards
3. Identification of the most vulnerable groups
4. Measurement of baselines of vulnerabilities
5. Measurement of individual, organizational and institutional capacities.

Guided by the facilitators, the participants identify and assess the conflict-induced hazards, vulnerabilities, and capacities in their community, drawing from their own experiences. Various methods and tools (such as storytelling, mapping, and breakout sessions) are used to encourage meaningful participation by everyone. The workshop ends with a debrief session in which the participants discuss the findings and reflect on what actions they can take to reduce their vulnerabilities and strengthen their capacities.

6. Preparation and presentation of YVCA report (1 week)

The youth leaders in the local core group package the results of the YVCA into a report and present the findings to the mayor and other LGU officials.

7. Follow-up activities

The results of the YVCA can be used to inform local youth development planning processes ([approach 16](#)) or as a basis for organizing youth-focused dialogues ([approach 15](#)) to deepen understanding of the identified issues. The results can also serve as a context analysis or baseline for other types of youth-oriented peacebuilding and development interventions.



Achievements

- **Vulnerable youth empowered to voice their**

concerns and needs

The representatives of vulnerable youth groups became more aware of their political agency and asserted their right to be heard. They improved their ability to analyze the situation and voiced their experiences and perspectives on political, socioeconomic, and environmental issues in their communities.

- **Youth leaders have improved capacities to promote meaningful participation of vulnerable youth in local governance**

The young SK officials gained experience organizing and facilitating the YVCA workshop and using the process to involve vulnerable youth in local governance. The process led to cooperation and synergies between the SK, the LGU, and various youth-oriented civil society organizations.


- **LGU acceptance of the YVCA as a tool for planning**

The LGUs accepted the use of the YVCA as a tool for planning and mobilized staff to support the preparation for the YVCA workshop. The results of the YVCA led to greater understanding at the SK and LGU level about conflict-induced hazards and other forms of violence affecting youth in their localities as well as recognition by the LGU of the importance of considering these hazards in local development plans.



Lessons Learned

- **Secure political acceptance of the YVCA**
For every plan LGUs are required to develop, official guidelines exist which include an overview of recognized instruments and tools to support the preparation of the plan. The YVCA is not yet included in these guidelines. Prior to the start of the intervention, meetings were held



with planning officers to explain the relevance and added value of the tool in local planning processes. It was emphasized that currently recognized tools for disaster risk reduction mainly focus on natural hazards, with limited attention for conflict-induced hazards. These meetings helped to secure political acceptance of the YVCA and get the LGUs on board for using the tool in local planning. Discussions are underway with the DILG and NYC to incorporate the YVCA into the LYDP guidelines, which would facilitate replication of this approach in local government planning processes nationwide.

- **Form a diverse and committed local core group**
The local core group leads the YVCA process at the local level. It should be composed of government actors and youth leaders with diverse networks in order to reach and include a wide range of vulnerable youth groups. Forming a diverse and committed local core group was important for the success of the intervention, as it created a bridge between the LGU, the community, and YOUCAP. It is recommended to sustain the local core group after the YVCA process and mobilize its members in follow-up processes (LYDP formulation and youth-focused dialogues) and when replicating the YVCA in the future.
- **Plan sufficient time for preparing stakeholders and building local capacities**
During the preparation phase, several workshops were conducted to train the core group members in the technical steps and processes for implementing the YVCA in practice. It is

recommended to plan sufficient time for this to ensure an efficient and smooth YVCA workshop. Selected youth leaders received additional training to act as co-facilitators during the workshop. The capacity-building activities strengthened local ownership of the YVCA process and contributed to the sustainability of the intervention.

- **Provide facilitators with MHPSS methods for managing trauma-related stress**

It is important to bear in mind that the discussions around conflict and violence during the YVCA workshop could trigger emotional reactions from the participants. An MHPSS component was added to the YVCA facilitators training, as well as to the trainings of the follow up processes (youth-focused dialogues and LYDP formulation). The facilitators learn to apply methods and techniques for managing signs of trauma-related stress among participants, to help them calm down and avoid retraumatization. The Municipal Social Welfare and Development (MSWD) Office can provide additional assistance and make referrals to professional support services in the locality.



More Information

- [Youth-Focused Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment \(YVCA\) - A Practitioner's Guide](#)
- [YVCA - Documentary - Participatory Video](#)



Participatory tools: storytelling, historical timeline, and mapping



During the identification and analysis of conflict-induced hazards (step 2 of the YVCA), the participants use storytelling to share individual experiences and perceptions of which hazards are most significant to their welfare and development. They draw and write these events and issues on colored metacards. After the individual storytelling, the metacards are combined into a historical timeline, which allows to visualize similarities and differences in experiences over time. Next, the events and issues are overlaid on a map to better understand their geographical distribution.

Summary of key YVCA findings

- **Most significant conflict-induced hazards in the pilot LGUs:** insurgency, criminality (related to illegal drugs), and violence against persons and groups (sexual violence, discrimination, bullying, domestic violence).
- **Most vulnerable youth groups in the pilot LGUs:** out-of-school youth, IP youth, young women, LGBTQ+, youth with disabilities, and youth with broken families.
- **Vulnerabilities that need urgent attention:** physical harm, mental health issues, insurgency recruitment, social exclusion.



15. Youth-Focused Dialogues: Platforms for Peer Socialization and Empowering Youth as Agents of Social Change

Some groups in society are particularly vulnerable to or affected by conflict-induced hazards due to their exposure to these hazards as well as varying economic, sociocultural, and political factors. The Youth-Focused Dialogue approach provides state actors with a tool to listen to the voices of the most vulnerable youth in their localities and gain deeper understanding of their specific concerns. Young people with similar backgrounds are brought together in a safe space to discuss shared experiences, voice issues and concerns, and reflect on practical and realistic solutions for addressing their needs. The process enables the participants to view and position themselves as a collective with shared interests and empowers them to approach decision-makers and lobby for the inclusion of their concerns in government programs and plans.

Pilot Details

Youth-focused dialogues have been conducted in 3 LGUs. In each LGU, the following local stakeholders were involved in the activities:

- Around 7 youth leaders (SK, LYDC) were trained and mobilized as dialogue facilitators.
- Around 20-25 young community members from 3-5 different vulnerable groups participated in the dialogues. These groups include young women, farmers, fishers, indigenous youth, out-of-school youth, in-school youth, youth with disabilities, and victims of sexual violence.
- Various LGU actors, such as the mayor and heads of offices, were involved in the preparation phase and during the presentation of the results. OPAPRU joined the round-up dialogue in Carmen.

Partners

- 4 LGUs: Talisayan and Iligan City (Region 10); and Carmen and Gigaquit (Region 13)



Suggested steps

The Youth-Focused Dialogue approach is an adaptation of the Reflective-Structured Dialogue approach, which was developed by the Public Conversations Project and has been used in other GIZ projects such as ‘Strengthening Capacities for Dealing with Conflict-Induced Forced Displacement in Mindanao’ and ‘Responsible Land Governance in Mindanao.’ While the original approach focuses on interfaith dialogue, YOUCAP’s adaptation is religion-neutral, focuses on youth vulnerable to conflict-induced hazards and violence, and includes additional storytelling and solution mapping exercises.

Before embarking on the stepwise process outlined below, it is advised to conduct a context analysis to understand the characteristics of the communities and identify participants. Prior to this pilot, YVCA assessments ([see approach 14](#)) were conducted in each LGU and the 3 to 5 most vulnerable youth groups were selected for the dialogues to gain deeper understanding of their issues and needs.

1. Preparation (1 month)

- Organize workshops to explain the youth-focused dialogue concept to local stakeholders.
- Form a local core group to lead the youth-focused dialogue process at the local level. If a YVCA was conducted, mobilize the same group.
- Train youth leaders (SK, LYDC) from the local core group in MHPSS, conflict, gender, and cultural sensitivity, and facilitating the dialogues.
- The local core group identifies and invites youth from vulnerable groups to participate in the dialogue events.

2. Youth-Focused Dialogue Cycle (1 month)

- The youth-focused dialogue cycle consists of multiple separate dialogue events. Each dialogue event consists of a dialogue between youth from a specific vulnerable group and takes around 5-8 hours for a group of 7 participants. The dialogue events follow a 6-step process:
 1. Meet and greet
 2. Briefing on methodology and procedures
 3. Priming
 4. Agenda setting
 5. Dialogue on priority issues and concerns
 6. Debrief and reflection
- During the dialogue event, the participants discuss group-specific priority issues and concerns based on their personal experiences. Various methods and tools are used to stimulate participation by all stakeholders and ensure non-violent communication. For every topic, the participants propose and discuss practical solutions, which can either be done by themselves or need to be relayed to higher authorities
- The dialogue cycle ends with a round-up dialogue. Representatives of each group present their priority issues, concerns, and proposed solutions and engage in a dialogue with government agencies to secure their commitment for support. In the pilot, the round-up dialogue was conducted 2-4 weeks after the dialogue events to allow time for the youth to prepare their presentations.

3. Optional follow-up activities

- The results of the youth-focused dialogues can also be used to inform local youth development planning processes ([approach 16](#)) or influence government or civil society projects and programs.



Achievements

- **Vulnerable youth empowered to voice their concerns and shape solutions**

The youth expressed a sense of fulfillment that their competencies were recognized and respected. The dialogue process boosted their self-esteem and empowered them to voice their concerns, shape their own solutions, and lobby for government support to act on their ideas. The process also enabled them to engage with other youth with similar backgrounds and experiences, exchange lessons and coping strategies to deal with common challenges, and feel a sense of belonging.
- **Youth leaders empowered to engage with the most vulnerable youth groups in their localities**

The youth leaders have improved capacities to organize and facilitate the youth-focused dialogue process and create an enabling environment for vulnerable youth to inform local development planning and programming. Some of the youth leaders from civil society organizations expressed interest in using the youth-focused dialogue tool within their organizations.
- **Constructive dialogues between LGUs and the youth**

The LGUs accepted the dialogue tool and processes and were actively involved in the preparations and during the conduct of the dialogues. They recognized the political agency of the youth and the importance of listening to the previously unheard voices of the most vulnerable groups. The round-up dialogues led to productive and open exchanges of views and information between the youth and the LGUs as well as commitments by the LGUs to act on the proposed solutions.



Lessons Learned

- **Invest time in analyzing the target group and preparing processes and stakeholders**

To prepare for the dialogue events, it is important to conduct an initial analysis of the local context and target groups using the YVCA or another method. This helps prioritize issues and concerns and allows the facilitators to prepare questions to guide the discussions. Furthermore, it is important to equip the facilitators with MHPSS methods and tools to manage possible signs of trauma-related stress among participants. Other important preparatory measures include finding or creating a safe space for the dialogues and explaining the process to the participants and other stakeholders so that they know what to expect.

- **Actively seek out participants from the most vulnerable youth groups**

When youth-focused dialogues are carried out in the context of local development planning and programming, it is important to include the most vulnerable youth groups (as identified in the YVCA) and make sure none are left out. The local core group members play a crucial role in actively seeking out potential participants at the community level and convincing them to join the activity. Plan ample time for this, as the target participants might initially be reluctant to join

and share their vulnerabilities in a setting they are not familiar with. The core group members should be able to clearly explain the benefits of participating, notably the opportunity to meet other youth in similar situations and engage in a direct dialogue with relevant government actors to lobby for support.

- **Aim for tangible results**

Although the youth-focused dialogues are a valuable opportunity for the young participants to engage with each other, they are not simply conversations but structured results-oriented processes. The proposed solutions that come out of the dialogues should be practical and realistic, and conditions need to be created to allow sustainable follow-up. For the round-up dialogues, it is important to invite all government agencies and offices relevant to the groups in question and their proposed solutions. If possible, liaise with the mayor to invite the right persons with decision-making powers to attend.



More Information

- [Youth-Focused Dialogue - A Practitioner’s Guide](#)



“Each participant shared heavy burdens, but without losing sight of his/her dream in life.”

- Cheanne Magatines, youth leader and dialogue facilitator, Carmen



“

“The youth should speak and be heard. The issues and concerns are important for the local government to know.”

- Spencer Rosal, MSWD Officer, Talisayan

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Identifying solutions to water conflicts



During the youth-focused dialogue process in one of the pilot LGUs, community conflicts over scarce water supplies were identified as one of the priority issues of the IP, farmer, and fisher youth. The IP youth explained that a large-scale pineapple plantation had expanded onto their ancestral lands and that pesticides and fertilizers from the plantation were contaminating their potable water sources. The situation sparked conflicts between communities over the access to and use of the increasingly scarce water supply.

The youth identified various practical solutions for addressing the conflicts and the water scarcity situation and presented these to the LGU during the round-up dialogue. Solutions the youth can act on themselves include approaching the water district to request improvements in the water supply to their area, organizing a community meeting to resolve tensions, and seeking scientific advice for finding alternative water sources. The main solution identified for the LGU was to take action to control the use of agricultural chemicals coming from the pineapple plantation. Due to the scale and complexity of the issue, this would entail seeking cooperation with other LGUs in the area, national government agencies, IP leaders, and big players in the plantation industry.

16. Conflict, Gender, and Culturally Sensitive Local Youth Development Planning

In the Philippines, SK Federations are tasked with developing a 3-year Local Youth Development Plan (LYDP) to promote the welfare of the youth in the LGU. A well-formulated LYDP is crucial as it forms the basis for budget allocation and guides the pathway for development.

This approach strengthens the capacity of young local government actors to formulate conflict, gender, and culturally sensitive LYDPs, using data and findings from the community level. Through a participatory and inclusive process, the state actors work closely with young community representatives to design tangible and realistic programs and interventions that effectively respond to the needs of vulnerable youth groups and promote peaceful and inclusive development. The resulting plans are integrated into the Comprehensive Development Plans (CDP) of the LGUs to enable the implementation of the planned youth interventions on the ground.

Pilot Details

3 LYDPs have been formulated (Talisayan, Carmen and Gigaquit) and 1 has been updated and enhanced (Iligan City). All 4 plans have been integrated into the CDPs of the respective LGUs. It is estimated that over 100,000 young people will be directly affected by these plans.

In each LGU, the following local stakeholders were involved in the activities:

- 3-5 youth leaders (SK, LYDC) were trained and took the lead in LYDP formulation.
- 3-5 young community members representing vulnerable groups participated in an LYDP writeshop.
- Coordination with LGU planning officers throughout the process. Other LGU actors, such as the mayor and heads of

offices, were involved in the preparation phase and during the presentation of the results.

Partners

- 4 LGUs: Talisayan and Iligan City (Region 10); and Carmen and Gigaquit (Region 13)
- PhilDHRAA



Suggested steps

Before formulating the LYDP, it is important to gain a sound understanding of the specific local context and needs of young people in the area, particularly the needs of the most vulnerable groups. This can be achieved by doing a context analysis using the YVCA ([see approach 14](#)) or a similar method. In addition, youth-focused dialogues ([see approach 15](#)) can be conducted to deepen understanding of the issues identified. The findings of these activities are used to inform the LYDP formulation.

1. Preparation (1 month)

- Form a local core group to lead the LYDP process at the local level. If a YVCA was conducted, mobilize the same group. Orient the members about the LYDP process.
- Train youth leaders (SK, LYDC) from the local core group to facilitate the LYDP writeshop and formulate conflict, gender, and culturally sensitive development strategies and programs.
- Based on the most vulnerable youth groups identified in the YVCA, the local core group selects and invites representatives of those groups to participate in the writeshop.

2. LYDP writeshop (2 days)

- The 2-day writeshop is attended by around 5 youth leaders from the local core group and 5 representatives of vulnerable youth groups.
- Through a participatory process, the participants identify and prioritize youth-oriented peace and development interventions that address the vulnerabilities and strengthen the capacities identified in the YVCA.
- The outcomes of the discussions are used to start formulating or enhancing the LYDP.

3. Finalization of the LYDP (1 month)

- After the writeshop, provide coaching and mentoring to the youth leaders to finish formulating or enhancing the LYDP.
- The LYDP should include the priority youth interventions, recommended budget allocations, and a monitoring and evaluation section.

4. Integration of the LYDP into the CDP (1 week)

- The youth leaders present the final LYDP to the mayor, planning officer, and budget officer and lobby for the inclusion of the plan into the CDP.
- Once the LYDP is endorsed by the mayor, it will be forwarded to the municipal council for integration into the draft CDP for budget allocation towards implementation.

as a vehicle to deliver concrete youth-oriented peacebuilding and development programs and activities and promote equitable distribution of resources.

- **Improved collaborations and confidence**

The pilot interventions fostered improved collaboration between SK, LYDC, and relevant LGU offices in carrying out development planning processes and engaging vulnerable youth in local governance. Through the activities and interactions, the youth leaders strengthened their confidence in presenting and defending their plans in front of the mayor and other LGU officials.

- **Learnings shared with others**

The youth leaders in this pilot were consulted about their learnings and experiences during an interregional learning exchange forum organized by the DILG regional offices in Caraga and Northern Mindanao, OPAPRU, and NYC Mindanao in celebration of the Local Government Code Month. In addition, the planning process guides developed based on the experiences in this pilot have been adopted by the NYC and a roadmap is being developed to institutionalize the use of these guides nationwide.



Achievements

- **Vulnerable youth empowered to design concrete solutions to address priority needs**
Representatives of vulnerable youth groups actively contributed to designing and prioritizing interventions to address the needs in their communities. The interventions have been included in the approved LYDPs, which will serve



Lessons Learned

- **Invest time and resources in analyzing and understanding the local context**
Conducting a context analysis (using the YVCA or a similar tool) prior to plan formulation is essential, as it allows to tailor the plan to the specific local conditions, needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities. It is important to be thorough in the analysis and involve a wide and diverse range of vulnerable youth groups to ensure none are left behind in the design of projects and programs.

- **Involve local planning officers early on in the process**

It is recommended to involve LGU planning officers early in the LYDP formulation process, while training and supporting the youth leaders. This ensures that the planning officers fully understand the youth issues, needs, and plans and helps to avoid delays in the review and approval processes.

- **Align activities with government planning and budget cycle**

LGUs have fixed planning and budget cycles, with strict deadlines for submitting documents. It is important to align the LYDP formulation activities (as well as supporting activities such as the YVCA) with these timelines to ensure the plan is finalized on time for inclusion into the CDP. For the YOUCAP project team, which was also bound to its own its own project management cycle, aligning support measures with the schedules and timelines of the 4 LGUs was a challenge. Using the experiences from this pilot, process guides have been developed which outline clear steps and timelines to guide the LYDP formulation and CDP integration process.

- **More is needed to move from plan to implementation**

Municipal and city LGUs are required by law to allocate 10% of their Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) to youth projects and programs in the approved LYDP. However, this budget is issued directly to the barangay LGU. To access

these funds, barangay SK officials first need to formulate a Barangay Youth Development Plan that aligns with the approved LYDP. In a follow-up intervention, it is recommended to focus on synchronizing the municipal and barangay youth development planning and budgeting processes to allow effective and timely implementation of the planned youth projects and programs on the ground.

It is, however, important to keep in mind that the 10% of the IRA is not the only possible funding source. SKs are encouraged to also lobby for the inclusion of youth-oriented interventions into the budgets of relevant government agencies and offices, such as the MSWD office or the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO).



More Information

- [Process Guide - Conflict, Gender, and Culture-Sensitive Local Youth Development Planning](#)
- [Process Guide - Integrating Gender, Conflict, and Culture-Sensitive Local Youth Development into the CDP](#)
- [Foundation Course in Peacebuilding for Sangguniang Kabataan \(SK\) Officials - Trainers Manual](#)

“It feels refreshing and empowering to be working hand in hand with different offices within the LGU, especially with planning officers, in the formulation of the LYDP and ensuring that the programs, projects and activities defined by the youth will be adopted and funded.”

- Jay Pagulong, LYDO Gigaquit



“

“I was very happy that the youth is actively engaging in the development planning, especially because they have the overflowing energy and fresh and innovative ideas that they can bring to the planning.”

- Mayor Rommel Maslog, Talisayan

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“Having formulated a Local Youth Development Plan and going through different processes - from YVCA to dialogues to the writeshops - it is our pride and our legacy that we will pass on to the next set of SK of Carmen. And it feels amazingly good.”

- Ann Marjorie Betio, SK Federation President, Carmen

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Part 4
**What do we want
to leave behind?**



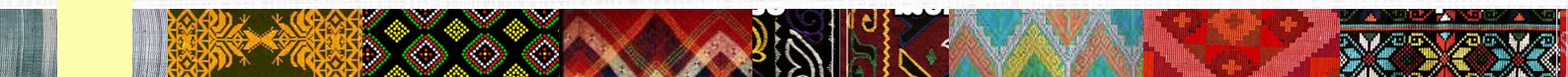
YOUCAP ends, impact continues How the project supports sustainability



YOUCAP ends, impact continues - How the project supports sustainability

The last 92 pages have showcased YOUCAP's comprehensive and rich experiences and learnings over the past three years. Since the project's inception in 2019, YOUCAP has developed and pilot-tested 21 approaches with partners from the academe, civil society, and government, 16 of these approaches have been described in this compendium.

One of the most critical challenges in development cooperation is ensuring that the impacts continue after project support ends. Sustainability was one of the core imperatives throughout the entire duration of the YOUCAP project. In the last months of project implementation, YOUCAP and partners focused on developing plans and strategies for sustaining the initiated processes and approaches and integrating these into the partners' organizational structures. This will help to leverage the valuable built up resources and capacities as well as the incredible motivation and energy of the young people of Mindanao.



YOUCAP initiated a Sustainability Series, a workshop series that capacitated partners to build their respective sustainability action plans, promotes stakeholder cooperation towards institutionalizing the tested approaches, and facilitates the exchange of lessons learned. The series was organized in two parts:

- Part 1 consists of Basic Sustainability Workshops, which have two key objectives: 1) Overview of theoretical knowledge on sustainability including definitions, key elements and frameworks; and 2) Introduction to the preliminary phase of sustainability action planning, which is centered around understanding the partners' ecosystems – primarily their organizational agency, opportunities within a given environment and potential strategic positioning. 6 Basic Sustainability Workshops with 24 partners from the academe and civil society were conducted in May and June 2022.
- In Part 2 of the series, YOUCAP directly addresses the specific needs of the different partners. The partners reflect on how they proceeded with implementing the youth approaches after the YOUCAP activity and therefore the funding ended. The goal is to explore what support is still needed to sustainably integrate the tested approaches into their organizational structures. YOUCAP's role is to provide targeted guidance to the CSO and academe partners and connect them with appropriate stakeholders such as LGUs and state agencies.
- As a result of the series, the partners develop their own Sustainability Action Plans, which support the partners to apply the learned knowledge in the long run. 13 Deep-Dive Workshops are organized between July and August 2022.

But it is not only through the Sustainability Series that YOUCAP ensures that gained knowledge is broadly shared. Another essential component of the project was the establishment and strengthening of learning and exchange fora. In total three learning and exchange fora have been organized, strengthened and established, one for each of the sectors (academe, civil society and government) and many further exchanges were organized. These events bring together actors from the same sector to promote the interregional exchange of knowledge and learnings about effective youth-oriented peacebuilding approaches and facilitate the creation of Mindanao-wide networks of practitioners. The central questions in a learning exchange are: 'What practices can I learn from other people in this space?' and 'What knowledge can I contribute to this space?' During a learning exchange, models, techniques and good practices were shared and a dialogue space was created for learning and asking questions and developing collaborative solutions. The learning and exchange fora will ensure continued learning and knowledge sharing among a wider audience in the years to come.

Finally, this compendium itself serves to anchor and disseminate the experiences and learnings of the YOUCAP project. We hope that its use will be of value in making long-lasting contributions to youth-oriented and youth-led peacebuilding in the Philippines and beyond.

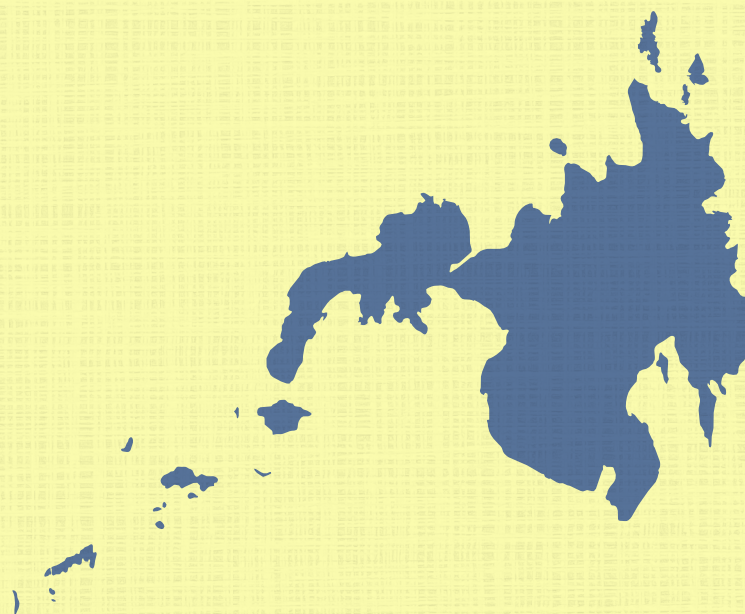
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giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
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Youth for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence in Mindanao, Philippines (YOUCAP) Project

About the Design:

Mindanao, the Philippines' second largest island, has rich and diverse cultures. These distinctions have long been a source of contention. It is time to rebuild a culture of peace regardless of faith, tribe, or gender.

A rich, bright, and unique clothing pattern emerged from several Mindanao tribes textiles. The textile designs were woven together to form a pattern (banig). This, like weaving (banig), represents collaborating on ideas, approaches, dialogue, and participation of youth and other stakeholders to promote a culture of peace. Combining fabrics created pixels that resembled the vibrant, contemporary, and youthful traditional banig.

The three hands represent Mindanao's three peoples: Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous People. This is a symbol of cultural and social unity in Mindanao. These hands represent the project's education, civil society, and government partners, both state and non-state.

These elements form a modern peace sign and the letter "Y," representing Youth, the sector at the center of the YOUCAP Project's activities. Also, the letter "Y" stands for YOUCAP, a project that works with partners to strengthen state and non-state actors in Mindanao to contribute to culture-sensitive, gender-sensitive, and youth-oriented peacebuilding and non-violent conflict transformation.

Published by:

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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Bonn and Berlin, Germany

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