PHILIPPINES:
LOOKING AT MINDANAO

ICAF Report

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From October 26 to November 10, 2010, an inter-agency US Government team conducted an in-country application of the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) for Mindanao at the request of US Embassy Manila. The ICAF analysis examines Core Grievances, Social and Institutional Resiliencies, Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors, as they describe the forces dominating the social system in Mindanao. Using this analysis, the ICAF team made four main diagnostic findings:

- o Finding 1: Sources of conflict and instability in Mindanao are complex and predominantly not grounded in religious beliefs or differences; the core of conflict and instability revolves around many people's perception that their ability to meet their basic needs of security, recognition, vitality, and identity is being thwarted by others.
- o Finding 2: A mixture of separate but interrelated interests in maintaining a condition of "no peace, no war" work against stability, conflict resolution, and widespread development in Mindanao and, at the same time, work to contain violence from escalating into chaos.
- o Finding 3: In Mindanao, there is evidence of active social resilience and indigenous stability manifesting in the form of leaders who are reforming the social agenda and bridging gaps in public service provision. Some resilience also manifests through small and medium sized entrepreneurs and businesses creating and expanding on opportunities for themselves while benefiting larger segments of society.
- o Finding 4: In the short term, several opportunities present themselves for local, national, and international actors to foster the forces that strengthen indigenous resiliencies and protect against an escalation of conflict and instability.

These potential "points of entry" (detailed below) include identifying and nurturing changes already present in Mindanao that increase the potential for the system to become healthier. Some of the components of the system where change is already occurring include local and national level leaders who are working for real change for the benefit of the larger community. Some of these *"reformist leaders"* act in formal capacities, some informally, but each is seen as legitimate and trusted by their communities. Another place where change is already occurring and to which these *"reformist leaders"* might be linked are *community groups* that are clamoring for a bigger role in the peace process. These community groups are seeking more inclusive and representative, "bottom-up" approaches to the peace process and to community life generally. Another potential point of entry is incorporating local cultural norms and values into methods and mechanisms used to improve the health of the system. This includes, for example, finding ways to capitalize on an apparently innate spirit of *entrepreneurship,* the *importance of relationships*, and a *willingness of families to sacrifice* for a better future.

It should be noted that the ICAF process relies on impressions, observations and emotions shared by interviewees. It does not evaluate the accuracy of those perceptions or seek independent validation. For that reason, the views cited should not be considered as endorsed by either the U.S. Embassy in Manila or the Department of State. These views do, however, offer excellent insight into the stresses and opportunities perceived by residents of Mindanao, and very usefully inform the findings.

INTRODUCTION

The Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) is a tool for understanding factors that contribute to the social environment in a particular location. Grounded in theory and practice, the ICAF process is designed to help decision makers take a systemic view of the areas in which they operate (see Appendix 1 for a longer description of the ICAF tool). Because the ICAF assessment teams are composed of members from throughout the US Government (USG), from headquarters and field offices, it helps break out of agency- and location-specific perspectives. There have been 20 ICAF applications since its inception in July 2008.

The Philippines ICAF, with its focus on Mindanao, started with a Washington, DC-based, daylong workshop on September 14, 2010. The session included 22 representatives from across the USG (including the US Embassy in Manila) as well as academics and experts from think tanks. For the field-based portion of the ICAF, a 17-person team was assembled to conduct focus group interviews and other research between October 26 and November 5, 2010, in Manila and Mindanao. This team included six members from S/CRS and technical experts, seven members from the Embassy in Manila, two from USAID, and two from US DOD (Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTF-P)). Because of security concerns, the team was limited in its movements in Mindanao and conducted group interviews (focus groups) in lieu of one-on-one interviews. These focus groups included a wide range of people, from government officials, academics, students and out-of-school youth, religious leaders, local NGO representatives, Indigenous People, police and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) members, artists, business leaders, former combatants, and others. Focus groups were held in Manila, Zamboanga City, Cotabato City, Cagayan de Oro, Davao City, and General Santos City. Focus group members came from rural areas as well as from urban areas and included representatives from the Sulu archipelago and central Mindanao.

Between November 6 and 9, the ICAF team analyzed the data gathered in these interviews and reported their preliminary analysis on November 10 for Ambassador Thomas at the US Embassy in Manila, and for PACOM on November 15. From these analyses, the ICAF team pulled out four main findings.

Finding 1: *Sources of conflict and instability in Mindanao are complex and predominantly not grounded in religious beliefs or differences. The core of conflict and instability is the perception of many people that their ability to meet their basic needs of security, recognition, vitality, and identity is being thwarted by others.* The ICAF team heard repeatedly from residents of Mindanao that the causes of conflict and violence in Mindanao are complex and interrelated. Although religion often serves as a divider, it is not seen by many as the real root of the conflict. Rather, political rivalries, disrespect, and the lack of jobs were more often singled out as more relevant to tension and violence. Many that were interviewed felt that a peace deal between the GPH and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was important, but that in itself it would not address issues underlying conflict and insecurity such as crime, poverty, and ineffective and corrupt government. Many felt that military intervention could not be the primary solution for their problems. In addition, land tenure was often cited as a source of conflict in Mindanao. However, as with religion, land conflicts were seen as rooted more deeply in disregard for diverse cultures, political rivalries, and greed (especially with increasing land values in parts of Mindanao) than in a cultural predisposition to fight for land. The issue of ancestral domain, while an important contextual variable that will affect Mindanao for many years, was seen as a label for conflict rather than an explanation for it. Once the "land" label is applied to a set of circumstances, the perception becomes that inefficient governmental bodies, which many feel are corrupt, as well as political rivalries and greed exacerbate violence that is often attributed to land conflicts.

Finding 2: *There is a mixture of separate but interrelated interests in maintaining a condition of "no peace, no war" that work against stability, conflict resolution, and widespread development in Mindanao and, at the same time, work to contain violence from escalating into chaos.* These "interests" include a range of actors, from the international, national, and local levels, that benefit from an unstable, lawless environment in Mindanao. These can be smugglers, political dynasties, armed groups, or even elements of the AFP and police. In many cases, this instability makes it possible to profit from corruption or illicit markets, but can be more mundane. Some of those interviewed expressed concern that parties to the ongoing peace negotiations between the government and Muslim insurgents were not sincere in their efforts, since a peace agreement would require the parties to begin the more difficult task of addressing long-standing problems. As one interviewee put it, the "government is not interested in a peace agreement because if there was peace, they would have to start grappling with the real problems."

Finding 3: *In Mindanao, there is evidence of active social resilience and indigenous stability manifesting in the form of leaders who are reforming the social agenda and bridging gaps in public service provision. Some resilience also manifests through small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs creating and expanding on opportunities for themselves while benefiting larger segments of society.* In contrast to the well-entrenched interests that want to maintain the status quo and instability in Mindanao, there are also many people and groups committed to changing things for the better. Many of these groups feel excluded from the peace process, want to play a larger role, and believe

they have much to offer. For example, some in the business community noted that the peace process had not harnessed the influence of the private sector. This feeling was echoed by some politicians who are working for community change and fighting corruption, as well as some religious leaders, community activists, educational leaders, and NGO workers. In fact, many potential leaders said they feel disempowered by the current political system because power is held, and jealously guarded, by entrenched interests. It is very difficult for those who want change to work for it outside of the government, but also equally difficult for them to be elected to office, at least without joining an established political party, buying votes, and effectively become co-opted by the very entrenched interests they are trying to overcome.

Finding 4: *In the short term, several opportunities present themselves for local, national, and international actors to foster the forces that strengthen indigenous resiliencies and protect against an escalation of conflict and instability.* This report highlights potential points of entry related to identifying and supporting the latter. There are upcoming critical events (see Windows of Uncertainty below) that present opportunities and challenges to those who want to strengthen peace and development in Mindanao. The discussions of Nested Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors and the Mindanao Systems Analysis (see below), identify the potential entry points that can be used to leverage key people and social dynamics in Mindanao to support lasting change.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The ICAF analysis recognizes that certain features of Mindanao are well-entrenched and not subject to change in the near or medium term. A more detailed discussion of these contextual factors is contained in Appendix 2. A few examples are worth highlighting here. For example, history and historical memory shapes the views of many in Mindanao. This might be the memory for many Muslims of forcible "subjugation and incorporation" of "Muslim Mindanao" into the Philippines by the Spanish and Americans. More generally, there is also a sense in Mindanao (by Christians, Indigenous People and Muslims alike) of being a land of diverse wealth in natural resources like timber, wildlife and minerals and cultural knowledge and traditions but suffering marginalization and deprivation at the hands of Filipinos outside of Mindanao. One interviewee lamented how Mindanao's natural resources are exploited by outsiders who give nothing in return, while another described it as a place where political leaders have historically ignored or broken their promises.

The overwhelming majority of Mindanaoans interviewed expressed the perspective that violence and guns are disliked but considered inevitable aspects of society. Similarly, discrimination, which is experienced by Muslims, Indigenous People, and Christians in Mindanao in various contexts, is also described as a part of life there. One of the important cautions about understanding contextual factors on Mindanao is to avoid confusing them with causes of conflict. People on Mindanao were clear that while differences and historic conflicts exist between people who are Christian and Muslim, it is not religion itself that is the cause of conflict. Similarly, the concept of *rido*, which is

defined as "feuding between families and clans," may define how disputes are carried out and resolved, but the presence of the concept itself is not a driver of conflict.[1]

CONFLICT DRIVERS AND MITIGATING FACTORS

Against this background of contextual factors, the ICAF analysis identifies a series of key features that affect the conflict situation in Mindanao. These include Core Grievances (key ways that identity groups feel that their ability to satisfy their basic needs are not being met), Social and Institutional Resiliencies (ways in which identity groups persist and meet their basic needs), Drivers of Conflict, (key actors' mobilization of identity groups around core grievances in ways that increase the potential for conflict) and Mitigating Factors (key actors' mobilization of groups around resiliencies in ways that lessen the potential for conflict). The ICAF team's findings of each of these components are listed in Appendix 3. Additionally, a key contribution of ICAF analysis process is moving beyond identification of these important variables in isolation and illustrating the dynamic interaction among these elements so that decision makers can better understand potential consequences of various strategies and interventions and improve effectiveness.

Nested Models of Drivers and Mitigating Factors

Results of an ICAF application illustrate this dynamic interplay in two ways. First, the ICAF team describes how the analytical conclusions of conflict drivers and mitigating factors exist in a "nested" fashion. This description of local conflict drivers and mitigators resting within larger national- and international-level drivers and mitigating factors facilitates assessing the sustainability of low-impact or short-lived resolution of local conflict conditions when national- and international-level patterns of behavior exist. (For the conclusions regarding Nested Drivers and Mitigators of Conflict, see Appendix 3) Second, the results of an ICAF application depict key dynamics of the Mindanao social system in a "systems map." The systems map demonstrates the interaction of the various dynamics and how they are likely to respond to inputs of energy, such as diplomatic policy, strategy, or assistance programming. Social systems tend to co-opt inputs of resources to continue and strengthen existing patterns. Connecting more of the system to itself by linking actors, behaviors or assets already present in the social system with others elsewhere in the social system may be one way to help the system get healthier, on its own terms. (The systems map and discussion on this topic can be found in Appendix 6)

Nested Drivers of Conflict

More important than understanding the discrete drivers of conflict is understanding the interrelationships between them. An important way to understand these interrelationships is to

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[1] Wilfred Magno Torres III, ed. (2007). *Rido: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao*, The Asia Foundation, Manila, The Philippines.

distinguish drivers of conflict that are thematically related but emanate from different levels (e.g. the international, national, and local levels). This is important because even if one were to address a particular driver of conflict at the local level, pressures from other levels would keep this dynamic driver of conflict alive. This is illustrated in the following nested drivers of conflict.

Nested Driver 1: Addressing grievances to vie for influence

One of the patterns involving Drivers of Conflict specifically relates to behaviors of key actors, at the international, national, and local levels, who vie to maintain or increase their influence in Mindanao by addressing grievances of various identity groups. Examples of this type of Driver include:

- *International Level*: External actors use grievances to vie for influence
- *National Level*: Peace process opponents mobilize constituencies against the expansion of Muslim autonomous areas
- *Local Level*: Political dynasties and warlords mobilize Mindanaoans' fear of political exclusion to protect their own interests

There are actors at the international, national, and local levels that all have an interest in preserving or expanding their influence in Mindanao. Some actors vie for influence by addressing grievances intending to destabilize the social structure in Mindanao. Others intend short-term, partial stabilization of the situation to enable continuation of criminal activities. Still others intend long-term stabilization, but vie for influence by addressing grievances as the mode of engagement. The fact that the behaviors of key actors at all levels reflect a similar pattern may contribute to the persistence of the "negative" pattern at the local level, where criminal intent sometimes motivates, even though the intent at the international level may be to relieve the country of international terrorist cells. It may also provide an explanation of why local-level "hearts and minds" are not won over as a result of well-intended efforts to provide stability and security; the behaviors reflect and reinforce an indigenous pattern that reduces the health of the social system.

The actions these actors take in pursuit of this influence can drive conflict when these actions increase the potential for violence and/or aggravate underlying core grievances. For example, people in Mindanao saw some foreign business interests as exploiting feelings that the GPH or Local Governmental Units (LGUs) are unable to improve living conditions because they are incompetent or uncaring (or both). This core grievance is exploited to build local dependence on some foreign businesses as a source of economic development, even though many locals see these foreign businesses as mainly exploiting the people of Mindanao while giving little in return. For example, some respondents noted their dismay that some foreign business interests seemed to be exploiting government corruption or lack of regulatory enforcement to take de facto control of resources, with little lasting benefit for locals. This practice seemed to be tolerated because there is no alternative source of economic development coming from governmental sources.

In a similar way, *opponents of the peace process in Mindanao mobilize constituencies in Mindanao against the expansion of Muslim Autonomous regions*. Those who oppose a peace deal, and/or the idea of Muslim autonomy in Mindanao, fan fears among non-Muslims of being dominated by, and losing control to, Muslims in their communities. They also play on fears that Muslims are treated disproportionately well compared to non-Muslims. The effect is to increase the potential for violence by stalling the peace process and straining Christian-Muslim relations (see the explanation of the key social systems in Mindanao, below). Perceived manipulation from the national level also feeds into a perception in Mindanao of what one interviewee labeled "Imperial Manila," or another described as a one-sided relationship, saying, "Manila only takes from Mindanao, but does not give back."

The impact of "Imperial Manila" also feeds a local dynamic of *political dynasties and warlords mobilizing Mindanaoan's fear of political exclusion to protect their own interests*. There are many groups that perceive themselves as marginalized or excluded in their communities: Muslims feel marginalized in a country that is predominantly Christian; Christians feel marginalized in communities that are substantially Muslim; and Indigenous People feel marginalized by both Muslims and Christians. Political dynasties and warlords exploit these feelings of exclusion by holding themselves out to these groups as the only way to protect their interests. As with the international dynamic, local groups see the warlords and political dynasties as predominantly predatory, but accept them as a necessary evil.

The key purpose to understanding this, or any of the nested drivers of conflict, is that even if one were to stop local actors, such as a warlord or the head of a political dynasty, from exploiting grievances for their personal gain, there would be interests from outside Mindanao, from rival political clans in Manila to some foreign business interests that would continue to exploit grievances for their individual gain.

Nested Driver 2: Frustrating the Peace Process

- *International Level*: International actors that have a vested interest in "no peace, no war" perpetuate conflicts and resist efforts to build peace and development
- *National Level*: The GPH's conduct of the peace process reinforces a feeling of discrimination and exclusion among Mindanaoans
- *Local Level*: The New People's Army (NPA) mobilizes disenfranchised Indigenous People in Mindanao to fight the GPH for equal rights and recognition

There is a great deal of frustration in Mindanao over the stagnant status of the peace process with the MILF and the lack of full implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). There are many factors that contribute to this feeling. At the international level, some international non-governmental actors are seen as *having a vested interest in "no war, no peace" in order to perpetuate the violence and instability and resist efforts to build peace and development*. For example, smugglers from other countries have an interest in preserving a significant level of instability and lawlessness because it allows them to freely move

goods in and out of Mindanao without governmental interference. At the same time, these smugglers do not want to see the situation escalate to all out war because that too would interfere with their ability to conduct business and make big profits. An interviewee said that a common saying on Mindanao is "peace = no profits."

At the national level, the GPH's efforts in the peace process have *reinforced a feeling of discrimination and exclusion among Mindanaoans.* Although President Aquino's choices for the government's Peace Panel were cited by many as a source of optimism for the future, some interviewees said that the people the GPH has historically picked for the Peace Panel strengthen a perception in Mindanao that the process will not address the real needs of Mindanaoans. More importantly, Mindanaoans are frustrated by what they perceive to be a lack of inclusiveness and transparency in the peace process. Also, the ICAF team heard many times that the GPH only talks to the armed groups and not to the people and groups that are most affected by the violence or who could be effective in bringing real peace to Mindanao. One business leader wondered aloud that perhaps if the business community carried guns they would have a more meaningful role in the peace process.

The feelings of exclusion and marginalization from the peace process expressed by Mindanaoans are exploited by armed groups, such as the NPA, which *mobilizes disenfranchised Indigenous People to fight the GPH for equal rights and recognition*. By no means is the NPA the only armed group that affects the lives of Indigenous People, nor does it only recruit Indigenous People. Moreover, feelings of exclusion and marginalization are not only products of the peace process, but have many other antecedents (as noted throughout this report). Still, several interviewees noted that the NPA is the most active group in areas where many Indigenous People live and the NPA recruits fighters from the Indigenous People by giving a voice to their marginalization and lack of recognition by the GPH and Mindanao LGUs. However, some Indigenous People interviewed noted that fighting for the NPA has *not* improved the situation for Indigenous People, but rather has increased their feeling of victimization by yet another group. An IP interviewee said that they are in a no-win situation; if they don't agree to join the NPA, the NPA attacks them for being supporters of the GPH. If they agree to help the NPA, by fighting or providing supplies, then the GPH arrests them for aiding or being insurgents.

Nested Driver 3: Exploiting "governmental inefficiencies"

- *International Level*: Investors take advantage of the national and local governments' unequal enforcement of the laws in order to exploit Mindanao's resources
- *National Level*: Politicians and "fixers" exploit the government's inefficiencies to reap personal reward
- *Local Level*: Some local politicians engage in vote buying and election violence to maintain or gain political power

There are many vested interests that profit from the government's "inefficiencies," from corruption to clogged courts, which are problems found throughout the Philippines. In Mindanao, however,

there is a unique concern, particularly on the part of the local business community, that *some investors take advantage of the national and local governments' unequal enforcement of laws to exploit Mindanao's extensive natural resource wealth.* People in Mindanao value foreign investment and are anxious to attract more. At the same time, there are visible examples of investment, such as mining concessions, where outside/international developers were able to circumvent established laws. Some interviewees said that mining laws in the Philippines are not transparent, and hence there is ample room for actual or perceived abuse.

Further, some of the land conflict in Mindanao may be attributable to outside speculators (national and international) who instigate competing land claims. Interviewees pointed to conflicting land management laws in Mindanao that can result in two claimants having valid title to the same land. One title might be held by the resident on the land (who may have been a settler who obtained a limited license to the land) and the other may be held by an indigenous person who obtained title to the land by making a claim to the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP), which can grant titles to Indigenous People who make claims based on ancestral domain. Because there is no expedited process or special process to manage these competing claims, a petitioner's only recourse is to file a regular court case, which could take several years to resolve. While most Indigenous People's claims may be based on legitimate claims to ancestral domain, several interviewees noted that, in some cases, Indigenous People's land claims were initiated by outside developers who want access to valuable land (land values in parts of Mindanao have been rising significantly). Allegedly, these developers pay Indigenous People to file the claim and then buy the title to the land from them. This allows developers to legally or illegally push the resident titleholder off the land.

Not all of these developers are from outside the Philippines. There is a feeling that there are also a range of *politicians and fixers (from Mindanao and other parts of the Philippines) that exploit the government's inefficiencies to reap personal reward.* For example, interviewees cited examples of political families/parties from Manila that would fund heads of political dynasties in Mindanao so that they could maintain their local power base (through corruption or other abuses) in exchange for the Mindanao political dynasty supporting the Manila political family. On Mindanao, there is a booming business for "fixers" or people that know how to work the political system, such as to acquire a license to work, get regulatory approval for a business, or resolve a legal dispute. These fixers can demand exorbitant fees for their services. For example, a teacher complained that in order to get her teaching license to teach, she would have to pay a fixer the equivalent of two years of her salary. As a result, she never got her teaching license, despite completing her teacher preparation education.

At the local level, *some local politicians engage in vote buying and election violence to maintain or to gain political power.* Because there is little enforcement of electoral or anti-corruption laws many local elections are determined by who can buy the most votes. Many interviewees said that there is a "culture of impunity" among politicians, with the Maguindanao Massacre as an extreme example. Contributing to the perception of a culture of impunity is the perception that the number of attacks and killings targeting prosecutors are rising.

Nested Driver 4: Perpetuating a "lawless image" for Mindanao

- *International Level*: Lawless elements that have ties to international terrorist organizations engage in violence that fuels an image of Mindanao as being lawless and a security risk
- *National Level*: Media portray a negative image of Mindanao, which discourages investment and job creation
- *Local Level*: Local insurgent and criminal groups pay impoverished Mindanaoans to fill their ranks.

The lawless and insecure image of Mindanao, especially that held by people from outside the region, has two main causes. First, there are many incidents of violence. Second, as the ICAF team heard repeatedly from nearly all the focus groups, people on Mindanao feel that the region's negative image is blown out of proportion by the media and others, such as foreign governments who issue braod travel warnings, and the lack of curriculum on Mindanao or Muslim culture in textbooks outside of Mindanao. There are *lawless elements, such as rogue elements of various insurgent groups that may have formal or informal ties to international terrorist organizations such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) or home-grown terrorist organizations, such as the Abu Sayaf (ASG), that engage in violence* in Mindanao. The fact of these ties to international terrorist groups brings a lot of international attention to the violence perpetrated by these groups. However, many in Mindanao see the actions of these groups, especially by some elements that claim to be ASG, as common criminal activity. For example, some ASG members were seen more as "thugs for hire" rather than as having an international terrorist agenda. There was no mention of any threat from JI in the Focus Groups and in one group an interviewee said "we have no more ASG…ASG has died down."

As referenced in the systems analysis below, the acts of violence are amplified by the impact of media reporting. This refers to both the amount of reporting (e.g. the media "highlights every crime that occurs in Mindanao") and the way the reporting is done (e.g. media reports are filed from cities, which makes cities seem violent, while most of the incidents are in specific rural areas). Also, potential ties between groups and terrorist organizations fuels perceptions that all Muslims are violent. Many, especially in Mindanao's business community, feel that this *media mis-portrayal of Mindanao discourages investment and job creation*. Several members of the business community on Mindanao told stories of potential investors who came to various cities in Mindanao to explore investment possibilities only to decide against investment because of a general preconceived notion that Mindanao was unsafe (despite what they saw on their visit).

In turn the lack of private sector investment and job creation contributes to the underlying causes of violence (and further perpetuates the negative image of Mindanao). The lack of legal employment options creates the conditions for *local insurgent and criminal groups to pay impoverished Mindanaoans to fill their ranks*. Many interviewees felt that there was a growing number of "professional thugs" who were recruited to intimidate people off their land (to settle a land dispute), take retribution against a political rival, or to engage in other organized criminal activity.

<u>Nested Mitigating Factors</u>

Another novel feature of an ICAF process is that the ICAF teams collect and use information on social and institutional strengths and resilience, as well as factors that mitigate conflict. As the drivers of conflict are nested to demonstrate relationships between drivers at the local, national, and international levels, so are the mitigating factors are also nested to highlight the contexts that apparently nurture and reinforce local, national, and international forces mitigating conflict and strengthening the social fabric (for examples, see below).

Nested Mitigators 1: Using cultural norms to resolve disputes

- *International Level*: International NGOs support the work of and partner with local NGOs to implement programs that peacefully resolve *ridos*
- *National Level*: The GPH-MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) attempts to resolve clan-based disputes and promote peaceful coexistence through the use of traditional dispute resolution
- *Local Level*: Barangay Justice Advocates (BJAs) peacefully settle some land and family disputes by tapping into a community's cultural norms and values that promote peaceful dispute resolution

Several interviewees brought up the tension between the need for people and communities in Mindanao to break away from existing ways of doing things (especially ways that contribute to violent conflict) versus the power of recognizing and building on traditional cultural norms and values. One interviewee expressed this as a tension between "modernity versus cultural sensitivity." The ICAF team heard several examples where key actors, from the international, national, and local levels, were managing this tension successfully. *Some international NGOs, including some funded by USAID, supplied local NGOs with resources and training, which in turn allowed these local NGOs to work through local structures* (e.g. clan or religious-based) *to resolve ridos* peacefully using cultural norms that put a high value on relationships. For example, a local NGO built on the common cultural value of the importance of relationships to bring together a parent from a rebel group with the parents of a killed AFP officer.

Similarly, *CCCH members have begun to address ridos that have the potential to negatively impact the peace process* or lead to a break down in the ceasefire. Again, this is a nationally-based actor that is working with local communities to resolve disputes by working with Local Government Units (LGUs) to peacefully resolve *ridos* in ways that are consistent with local processes and values. This same theme is echoed in the success of the *Barangay Justice Advocates who are local actors that have been trained by USAID-funded programs to address land and family disputes in ways that build on local cultural norms to promote peaceful dispute resolution*. Interviewees reported that the BJAs have been successful in lessening the burden on local courts and other formal structures.

Nested Mitigators 2: Improving intergroup relations through the private sector

- *International Level*: Dole and Del Monte create corporate social responsibility programs that mobilize communities to work for poverty alleviation
- *National Level*: Some national-level business leaders (e.g. Petron, Sunpower) in Mindanao make efforts to hire and train Muslims, ex-combatants, and marginalized individuals
- *Local Level*: Some local business leaders promote respect and cooperation among employees from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds in pursuit of common business goals

There was a strong current of opinion that the private sector is a powerful engine for improving peace and stability on Mindanao, and one that is not fully utilized. Certainly, the ability of the private sector to create jobs is critical and could be strengthened (see the Mindanao Systems analysis below). However, there are also many examples of businesses being engines for promoting better inter-group relations and stronger communities. International investors, such as *Dole and Del Monte, use their social responsibility programs to work with communities to address issues of poverty.*   In this way, these international companies are having a positive impact on local communities that goes beyond the direct economic benefit of the jobs they bring. Other small and medium sized businesses make an affirmative effort to *hire and train people from marginalized groups (Muslims, ex-combatants, Indigenous People, etc,).* While there are business owners who do not think this way (e.g. one Christian businessperson said that it is better to be "simply friends" with Muslims rather than being business partners), the ICAF analysis asks participants to uncover and understand local and indigenous resilience. In Mindanao, many business people demonstrated they are committed to improving social conditions in Mindanao as well as running a successful enterprise. As one businessperson said, "I hire Muslims. I do not discriminate. I grew up with Muslims. I have 600 employees, some used to be MNLF rebels, but I train them to be welders, drivers, etc. They are good workers. They say they will protect the company because they value their job. I put in a mosque, because I respect their religion."

Some local businesses take this a step further and *use the workplace as an engine to improve relations between groups*. Others held dialogues to help workers from different backgrounds (IPs, Muslims, and Christians) to understand each other's culture. Several business people reported that bringing people from different backgrounds together and helping them to focus on a common goal (e.g. a profitable company) gives them a positive sense of accomplishment and breaks down cultural barriers.

Nested Mitigators 3: Actors and groups draw on bridging/coping skills

- *International Level*: Foreign donors collaborate with local NGOs to provide livelihood opportunities and education to out-of-school youth
- *National Level*: National NGOs facilitate access to government services and assist people in meeting their basic needs

- *Local Level*: The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), acting at the local level, sometimes partners with local NGOs to encourage Local Government Units (LGUs) to enact good governance measures, including accountability

Many international and local key actors address the government's inability to provide basic services by providing needed services and opportunities (see the "Social Safety Net Loop" in the Mindanao Systems analysis, below). For example, the *training and support programs targeting out-of-school youth* meet an important need in helping unemployed and unschooled young people, who might otherwise engage in criminal behavior, contribute to their communities. One interviewee, an orphaned indigenous person living on the streets in Cagayan de Oro, was taken in by a program, given remedial education, and now supports himself as an artist and is enrolled in a University. Others received job training and training in entrepreneurial skills. Other organizations fill a key role, which is *to connect people and organizations with government programs* that can help meet basic needs for healthcare and job training. For example, an interviewee in Cagayan de Oro said, "I am the third of seven children. I gave my older siblings the way to study in college. I want to go to college. I am enrolled in a vocational school so at least I can have a job after. I trust my parents. I also trust the Educational Development Center (EDC), which is funded by USAID. I study computer hardware and service." Another added, "In my community, I am very proud of USAID funding projects with ex-combatants of the MNLF. We asked them what they wanted for livelihood. They said tailoring shops, bakeries. We have seen the community rise. Once people see you are sincere, it is better."

In more severe situations, some *Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) units, working with local NGOs, can help provide services to communities without functioning LGUs* or to build the capacity of LGUs that are struggling to cope with the demands placed on them.[2]

Nested Mitigators 4: Promoting better interfaith relations

- *International Level*: International NGOs (e.g. Indonesia's Muhammidya) cooperate with Philippine NGOs to promote the role of Islam in democracies
- *National Level*: Interfaith groups (e.g. Bishops Ulama Conference) bring together Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous People for dialogue around shared values
- *Local Level*: Religious and secular schools sponsor interfaith dialogues

One of the strongest themes throughout the ICAF Focus Groups was an emphasis on the importance of education, not just to equip people with basic abilities, but to use education and educational institutions to promote cultural understanding, build better relations, and encourage better values formation and renewal. This might take the form of a religious organization, like *Muhammidya*

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[2] The ICAF team did hear various complaints that aid funds were not well spent, but this is in reference to a perception that corrupt government officials, at the national, provincial, and local levels, siphoned off development funds for their own enrichment.

from Indonesia, which educates people about the role of Muslims in a democracy, or the *Bishops Ulama Conference* sponsoring dialogues among Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous People to help members of these groups find shared values and build better cultural understanding. Many schools, *both religious and secular,* use their diverse student populations to take advantage of opportunities for inter-group dialogue and education. For example, at Southern Christian College in General Santos City, there is a program where 30 students from different backgrounds live in a house for a month. While there, the students are given courses in conflict resolution (including indigenous approaches) and get to know each other by living in close proximity. The Mindanao Systems Analysis below elaborates on the importance of programs that promote inter-group dialogue and better inter-group relations.

WINDOWS OF UNCERTAINTY

The factors that drive or mitigate conflict in Mindanao take on additional dimensions when certain expected events create uncertainty about the future. As part of the ICAF analysis, the team identifies and considers the potential impact of these events, or "Windows of Uncertainty" because they can either trigger escalation of conflict or enable significant progress toward stable peace. A complete list of potential Windows of Uncertainty described during the analysis is at Appendix 5. However, the ICAF team felt that three windows deserved special attention; (1) Elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM); (2) Land Decertification (set to begin in 2012); and (3) Reports from various USG and Philippine policy reviews that are due in 2011.

Elections in the ARMM. Elections for regional governor and regional assembly are due to take place in the ARMM in August 2011 -- the third election for Mindanao within a 16-month timeframe. (The other two elections were the May 2010 national/local elections and the October 2010 barangay elections.) As one interviewee put it, "each election brings violence with it." He suggested that the local population might be safer if these were consolidated into one election. Many of the drivers of conflict listed above dealt with the practice of vote buying and use of intimidation during elections. Elections also fuel *ridos* as political groups vie for influence. The Philippine Congress is considering proposals to delay the ARMM elections scheduled for August 2011 to synchronize them with the next national election in 2013. The long-standing drivers of conflict that affect (and are affected by) elections, as well as the endemic system of "Patron-Client" politics (as discussed below), may not be likely to change significantly if elections are delayed. Whenever they take place, there will be a need to deal proactively with the potential violence, but there will also be opportunities to build on some of the mitigators of conflict (like the use of inter-group dialogue) and to use the threat of election violence to improve inter-group relations.

Land decertification. In the late 1980s and 1990s, stewardship arrangements were set out wherein settlers from outside Mindanao could obtain 25-year licenses to use "public lands." Indigenous People consider many of these public lands to be their "ancestral domain." Many of these licenses will expire beginning in 2012. A few licenses expired in early 2010 and were linked to the killing

of an entire family involved in a land dispute. Given the general confusion, inefficiencies, and violence around land issues (see Nested Driver 3, above) and the lack of any special land courts or land dispute resolution processes, the expiration of these land licenses and attempts to take back land may trigger violence and economic hardships.

Report outs from policy reviews. There are two important policy assessments being conducted by the U.S. government that are due out in 2011: 1) a Department of Justice analysis of the ICITAP program to assess its effectiveness and prospects for the future; and 2) a review by USAID of its programming in Mindanao. Each of these reviews addresses policies, strategies, and programming affecting issues of peace, security, and development. Significant changes in policy or programming as a result of these reviews will have important impacts on the drivers and mitigators of conflict in Mindanao. In addition, the Philippine National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) and the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) have been working on long-term plans for Mindanao's development, called, respectively, the Mindanao Strategic Development Framework and the Mindanao 2020 Peace and Development Framework Plan, which are undergoing review within the government.

As described below in the following section, finding and supporting opportunities linking portions of the Mindanao social system to itself, also in terms of components relating to these "Windows of Uncertainty" may provide options at the policy, strategy and programmatic levels.

MINDANAO SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

How people respond to these key windows of uncertainty, and how the USG might best interface with Mindanao, will be affected in large part by the dynamic interplay among the key drivers and mitigators of conflict. Following the analysis and description of conflict drivers and mitigating factors, the ICAF team generated a systems map of Mindanao. This was done using social systems processes to draw, in graphic form, relationships between various causes and effects relating to conflict drivers and mitigating factors in Mindanao. Depicting dynamic forces in this way allows a reviewer to observe not only how various forces interact, but also how the system apparently co-opts externally supplied resources to strengthen rather than reshape existing patterns. For example, inputs of resources meant to strengthen host government legitimacy may in fact be absorbed by the system through an unnoticed, negative, self-reinforcing feedback loop and may actually be contributing to delegitimizing the government.

SELF-REINFORCING FEEDBACK LOOPS

Some of these patterns, or systems, serve to increase the level of conflict and instability in Mindanao, while others work to reduce the potential for violence and build stability and development. There are eight social patterns that were developed as part of the ICAF analysis (see Appendix 6):

1. Common crime loop
2. Patron - Client/power struggle loop
3. Patron client/identity exploitation loop
4. Disaffection with the peace process loop
5. No peace = no jobs loop
6. *Peace = jobs loop*
7. *Community perseverance loop*
8. *Social safety net loop*

The first five social patterns serve to increase the potential for violence and instability while the latter three patterns have the opposite effect. NOTE: terms that appear in the systems maps are shown in italics in the text below.

All these social patterns build off a central dynamic, which is the relationship between the general level of *violence and instability* and the *ability of people to satisfy their basic needs* (e.g. security, identity/recognition, vitality, community). The higher the level of violence and instability, the harder it is for people to meet their basic needs (e.g. high levels of violence may mean that there is a lack of jobs and income or that people are pushed off their land, etc.).[3]

In the **Common Crime Loop,** when people are unable to meet their basic needs they are more prone to resort to *common crime* or to work for criminal gangs or armed groups in order to generate income for their families (see Loop 1 in Appendix 7). For example, many in the focus group interviews talked about an increase in "motorbike jacking." People described having their motorbikes stolen at gun or knife point by thieves who would sell the bike engines to criminal groups who used them to power small boats for use in smuggling in the Marsh or other waterways in Mindanao. Several students reported seeing an increase in prostitution in their neighborhoods and common crimes like theft on buses which made it unsafe to travel to school. They attributed the increase to tougher economic conditions and growing poverty. This loop underscores the finding that much of the violence and insecurity on Mindanao is not a function of different religions, but is driven in a significant way by common crime and other factors.

The inability of people to satisfy basic needs also fuels the **Patron Client/Power Struggle Loop** (see Loop 2 in Appendix 7). When people are struggling to meet their basic needs, they have an

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[3] Obviously, there is relationship between people's ability to meet their basic needs and the level of crime (e.g. people may resort to crime to survive or join an armed group to provide income for their family). For simplicity in drawing the eight social systems, this feedback relationship is expressed through the various feedback loops.

incentive to seek a "patron;" someone who can provide income or fill some other core need. For example, politicians routinely buy votes during elections and some people are said to sell their vote two or three times in the same election. Two elected officials at the Barangay level said that it was an open and established practice in their area that elections are decided by who is better at buying votes. Also, patrons, after they are elected, use their position to aid their supporters through bureaucratic decisions, granting licenses, helping a business, or resolving a land dispute in favor of their supporter. The impact of this form of *patron-client politics* is to undermine respect for the *rule of law* in that people feel that the stated rules (e.g. free and fair elections) just do not apply. In turn, lack of respect for the rule of law allows and even incents *power struggles* among elites and their supporters for political and economic power (e.g. many land disputes are seen as politically motivated). And these power struggles serve to further increase the level of *violence and instability* and decrease *people's ability to satisfy their basic needs*. The Ampatuan Massacre is an extreme example of a power struggle directly fueling an increase in violence and instability.

Increasing the degree of Patron-Client politics also has the impact of lessening the *perceived legitimacy of political representation*. This is the basic feeling the ICAF team heard over and over that most people believe that their political representatives work to further their own selfish interests and have very little faith that their representatives are working for the best interests of the communities they are supposed to serve. This phenomenon touches off another key dynamic, which is the **Patron Client/Identity Exploitation Loop** (see Loop 3 in Appendix 7). When the *perceived legitimacy of political representation* decreases, it causes people to be *alienated from the mainstream*. This means that many people do not put their loyalties with the elected government (local, regional, or national) but cling instead to other identities for security such as being Christian, Muslim, being from a certain clan or tribe, etc. This alienation is exploited by outside influences (e.g. other countries or religious organizations), and private armed groups who act as alternative patrons for people and groups (e.g. as defenders of indigenous tribes, Christians, or Muslims). This in turn further strengthens the practice of *patron-client politics*.

Many of these alternative patrons are also part of a larger group of actors that have vested interests in continuing a level of instability and conflict in Mindanao (see Loop 4 in Appendix 7). For example, if people feel insecure, then they are more likely to support or even join private armies who can provide them with protection. Further, there are economic interests, such as smugglers, for whom peace and an increase in the rule of law would be bad for business (e.g. the current lawless environment in parts of Mindanao means that they can operate freely). Many have also pointed out that in the AFP, soldiers get double pay and increased supplies (such as bullets) if they are serving in a combat zone. There is also the issue of arms trading between smugglers and private armed groups. Some interviewees voiced a belief that rogue elements of the AFP were suspected of being involved in trading arms.

For all of these groups, peace processes, strong local communities, and good links between Mindanao politicians and National-level politics would be a threat to their operations and hence many of them, and their political allies in provincial and local governments, actually hinder development programs. For example, a road project might help local farmers bring their produce to

a market. However, the same road would also allow for better freedom of movement for AFP forces and be a threat to armed groups operating in the region. Ironically, these same vested interests in "no peace' also do not want the level of violence and instability to get out of hand (which would also be bad for business), so they have an incentive to prevent an escalation into a situation of total war. In addition, many people perceive that development resources are siphoned off by these same vested interests as well as political officials to further their own positions in the form of corruption or the use of public monies (Internal Revenue Allotments) to finance vote buying. All of these factors lead many communities to be disaffected with the peace process.

This feeling is augmented by the belief that communities and community groups feel left out of the formal peace process – even though the government believes it has consulted with Mindanaoans. A group of business people said they had a session to provide input into the peace process but that the resulting report misrepresented their input. Many focus group members commented that they think the peace process, even if successful in producing an agreement with the MILF, will largely be irrelevant to the issues that cause them most concern (e.g. meeting basic needs, crime, economic development, rule of law, etc.). They felt such an agreement would be symbolically important, especially in terms of improving Mindanao's negative image, but that it would not make a difference at the local level (especially given the fact the 1996 agreement has not yet been fully implemented). This dynamic, in which the government is telling itself it has consulted with local people and incorporated their views while the people feel the government is not genuinely interested in their opinions, creates yet another negative, self-reinforcing feedback loop that works against the peace talks.

Moreover, many community groups that the ICAF team heard from felt that their groups had a lot to offer the peace process. Many cited the need for a "bottom-up" process, where peace and community issues could be addressed by local groups. One interviewee said that "local community groups can better hold their leaders accountable" and work to create more democratic barangays. There is a link between the disaffection of communities with the peace process, which they see as driven by Manila, and a general resentment of what people called "Manila Imperialism," or a feeling that the national government in Manila is more concerned with its needs than the needs of the people of Mindanao. Again, communities' disaffection with the peace process decreases the perceived legitimacy of political representation and contributes to greater violence and instability.

An increase in the levels of violence and instability kicks off another dynamic, the **No Peace, No Jobs Loop** (see Loop 5 in Appendix 8), which further increases level of violence and instability. Current incidents of violence, on top of a history of violence on Mindanao, lead people outside Mindanao to see the situation there as much more violent and unstable than it actually is (or at least more violent than people in Mindanao perceive Mindanao to be). This is a result of several factors. The ICAF team heard over and over, in all five cities they visited, that the media gives a mistaken impression of the level of violence in Mindanao.   For example, if an incident happens in a rural area, say outside General Santos City (GenSan) a reporter will file their report with a dateline marked "General Santos City," which in turn leads people outside Mindanao to think that the violence was in GenSan. If five incidents happen in the rural areas outside GenSan in a month,

people think that all five happened in GenSan and that GenSan itself is a very violent and unsafe place. This is augmented when foreign countries issue travel warnings for the Philippines, which might be for very specific locations, but have the net effect of making all of Mindanao look unsafe.

Contributing to these negative perceptions of Mindanao is a general phenomenon of the suspicion and fear that Filipinos outside Mindanao have of Muslims in general.[4] Several people interviewed noted that the lack of knowledge of the history of Muslims in Mindanao, let alone "Muslim heroes" and Muslim culture, in the rest of the Philippines means that there is no counterbalancing narrative about Muslims; they only hear reports of the Moro insurgent groups (MILF, MNLF) and violence involving Muslims on Mindanao. The absence of prominent, nationally-recognizable Muslim Filipinos with platforms to counter these narratives hinders opportunities to counter these negative perceptions. In addition to feeling aggrieved that their region is unfairly portrayed in the media, many Mindanaoans believe this bad press deters Manila-based Filipinos and foreign companies from investing in Mindanao. This impediment to private sector investment, in turn, reduces the amount of jobs, which further reduces the ability of people to meet their basic needs and reinforces the loop.

In parallel to the **No Peace, No Jobs loop** is a strong dynamic, the **Peace = Jobs loop** (see Loop 6 in Appendix 8) that increases the amount of jobs/economic growth and people's ability to meet their basic needs. There are many areas in Mindanao that have managed to create and maintain sufficient levels of stability ("community stability" in the diagram R6) so as to allow investment and economic development. Cities like Davao, GenSan, and Cagayan de Oro (CDO), have seen increasing rates of economic growth and investment. There are also many Local Government Units that have seen stability and growth in the business and agriculture sectors. Focus groups repeatedly cited the positive impact of USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) program as playing an important role in this regard.

Areas that have seen higher levels of community stability provide a conducive environment for what interviewees referred to repeatedly as an innate spirit of entrepreneurship among Mindanaoans. Many indigenous and donor supported efforts feed and develop this spirit of entrepreneurship in more stable areas. For example, one administrator from a leading university on Mindanao said that they are working to prepare students that "will not just be looking for jobs when they graduate, but will be working to create jobs." Others cited a need for continued training and support for out-of-school youth that emphasized building entrepreneurial skills, helping them access capital, and even giving grants to start small enterprises. Still others identified themselves as models for their children and their children's friends as they built and grew their own businesses. Farmers have benefited from training in marketing, management, and the use of technology so that they could capture more of the value chain related to their products, and some in turn, have reached out to their neighbors to provide assistance, such as food, money or technical assistance. In turn,

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[4] It is not that some people in Mindanao are not suspicious of Muslims, but that the ICAF team heard more intense and less informed views of Muslims outside Mindanao than inside Mindanao.

higher levels of community stability and entrepreneurship help increase investment that creates jobs and increases the ability of people to satisfy their basic needs.

Just as community stability and the Mindanaoan spirit of entrepreneurship in the **Peace = Jobs loop**, the **Community Perseverance loop** leverages a *cultural value on relationships* and a *willingness of families to make sacrifices for the common good* to increase the ability of people to satisfy their basic needs (see Loop 7 in Appendix 8). A common theme throughout the focus group interviews was how people in Mindanao counted on personal and social relationships to help them deal with their problems and needs. For example, when asked "who do you turn to for help?" many would say they turned to people with whom they had a good relationship, be it family, friends, tribal leaders, NGOs, or religious leaders (e.g. a shaman, pastor, or imam). One person summed up what several people said, which was that "we know we need partners or we die." Another said that "the critical principle for organizing Filipinos is collaboration." A level of stability allows people the space to act on this value put on relationships and collaboration. It also may help explain why top-down approaches and or ones that are not grounded in local cultural traditions are less effective in fostering community perseverance. It should be noted that the ICAF team also heard that legitimate and credible leadership is also vital for addressing community needs.

The ICAF team also heard of cases where the value on relationships was used to settle conflicts. For example, one NGO worker cited a *rido* that arose between rival clans when a member of one clan killed a person from the other clan. To resolve the *rido*, the tribal elders agreed to have the family of the perpetrator adopt the orphaned children of the victim's family. This settlement also illustrated the value Mindanaoans place on sacrificing for the common good, especially parents sacrificing for the good of the children. This is especially prevalent in the area of education (also highly valued), where parents will work multiple jobs and make other sacrifices in order to send their children to school. The value of education, and the willingness of people to sacrifice to afford it, was one of the strongest common themes the ICAF team heard.

In areas where the willingness to sacrifice for the common good and value on relationships is strong, it has encouraged the emergence of *reformist leaders*. These leaders are willing to step out of the traditional patron-client politics (e.g. to resist vote buying, or punishing opposition politicians) and to take risks in order to benefit their communities (e.g. to reach out and build relationships across lines of conflict, such as the Christian-Muslim divide, to settle conflicts). Sometimes these reformist leaders were elected officials, such as one Barangay captain of a Christian community who said that he used his good relationship with the Barangay captain of a neighboring Muslim community to settle disputes before they became violent. There are also mayors who work to mediate election disputes that might cause violence. For example, some mayors mediate deals between rival candidates to alternate holding a particular elected office in order to prevent the violence that would result if the candidates fought each other to get votes.

In many cases, these *reformist leaders* are not governmental representatives in a community but ordinary citizens. Especially in areas where elected officials are seen as corrupt and illegitimate, people said that there were legitimate, honest, and respected leaders that people trusted, but that

these leaders need to be supported, groomed, and otherwise empowered. They might be tribal elders, NGO workers, business owners, religious leaders, etc. For example, we heard of religious leaders from Christian and Muslim communities that worked together to resolve *ridos* based on common community values.

In fact, the power of these *reformist leaders* is their ability to draw on traditional community values and marry them with newer democratic structures. One interviewee said that, in the provinces, a democratic process is "far, far away from the reality." Another commented that in many communities there is "a democratic system imposed on a traditional system and as a result, neither works well," leading to corruption and violence as well as corruption and inefficiency in the judicial system. In the alternative, interviewees cited examples where reformist leaders would bring together families from across conflict lines to find common spiritual values and practical strategies for resolving disputes and improving their communities. This was referred to as creating "linkages" and "unburdening." For example, this might involve a family providing orphaned children from a rival clan with material to make clothes, but having the receiving clan actually sew the clothes. Further, these leaders were also good at linking these families with appropriate supports, like NGO or governmental health or education programs.

One of the most important manifestations of these leaders is to create more *inclusive institutions* that promote better *intergroup relations*. For example, several schools instituted programs to bring Christians and Muslims together to learn about each other's culture. There were also several examples of private sector businesses bringing Christians and Muslims together. One Christian business owner said to his employees, "here we are not Christians or Muslims, we have only the business."

These reformist leaders and inclusive institutions promote *inter-communal dialogue*, which in turn fosters better *inter-group relations*. These dialogues might happen informally, such as in an inclusive workplace or educational institution, or may be more structured. A good example of an effective and structured dialogue processes are the Tri-People Commissions, composed of Muslims, Indigenous People, and Christians. One interviewee described why these processes are effective: "Dialogue helps people understand each other's culture. Understanding builds respect. When you respect another's culture, you don't feel compelled to interfere in each other's lives and you don't need to use violence to get respect."

The mutual understanding and respect that can result from inter-communal dialogue can thus lead to better intergroup relations and less violence, which in turn improves the *ability of people to satisfy their basic needs*." Thus, the **Community Perseverance Loop** and the **Peace = Jobs Loop** work to increase the health of the overall health of Mindanao and strengthen community stability.

The last dynamic, the **Social Safety Net Loop,** works to stabilize communities where there is not a base level of stability (see Loop 8 in Appendix 8). In areas where there is less community stability, there are other mechanisms or bridging leadership that seem to be able to help people cope with or counteract the negative impacts of increased levels of violence and instability. In some areas of

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Mindanao there is no functioning LGU. For example, in Zamboanga, the ICAF team heard several times that "Zambo is home to 48 mayors," referring to mayors from communities in the Sulu Archipelago who chose not (or who do not feel safe enough) to live in the communities that elected them. In these areas there is a large gap between the needs of the local population (e.g. for security, income, education, and basic services) and the ability (or inability) of an LGU to help people meet those needs. However, in these difficult cases, there were examples of what one AFP officer, who serves in a rural part of Jolo, termed as "*bridging leadership*." He referred to the role his unit plays in helping communities meet their basic needs. For example, his unit helps to mediate the peaceful resolution of *ridos*, provides free and safe transportation for children to get to school, and provide security for communities and NGOs that may be present. There were also examples of the positive impact of AFP units, operating in similar situations, which provide training for community members in a culture of peace and the importance of civil society.

In some rural communities that have no functioning LGU, some AFP units provide *bridging leadership*: the provision of services the people cannot supply for themselves. In other cases, the AFP provide a more secure environment for NGOs to provide services, such as health programs, livelihood training and other educational activities, and economic and infrastructure development projects. In turn these initiatives and the efforts of the AFP help increase the ability of people in these communities to satisfy their basic needs and helps counter the negative impact of violence and instability in their areas.

POTENTIAL POINTS OF ENTRY

Connecting More of the System to Itself

These eight key social dynamics on Mindanao, some of which serve to increase the levels of violence and instability and others that help to decrease them, also provide insight into potential points of entry for constructive engagement. From a systems perspective, one of the most sustainable and high impact ways to increase the overall health of a system (e.g. reduce levels of violence and instability in Mindanao) is to identify changes that have already been made in the system and bring those changes to bear addressing problems or amplifying the impact of success stories. This is the idea of "connecting more of the system to itself." For example, one asset in the system, successful training programs that build on a strong Mindanaoan entrepreneurial spirit (see Loop 6), might be connected to another part of the system that suffers from a lack of jobs due to little external investment (see Loop 5) by using training in entrepreneurial skills to increase local investment and create jobs.

Another asset in the system that can serve as an entry point are areas where positive change is already happening or is about to happen. These are assets because it is easier, and more cost efficient, to strengthen a change that is already happening (or about to happen) than it is to force a desired change in an area where that change will be resisted. In other words, it is easier to push open a door that is already ajar than it is to knock down a door that is firmly locked. For example,

anti-corruption programs are often difficult to implement because there are complex and deep-seated drivers of corruption that are not easily changed. On the other hand, there are areas in Mindanao, where community groups are disaffected with being left out of the peace process and want to help, through a more bottoms-up process, to create more accountable and transparent local politics and greater economic development.

Social dynamics, like the eight Mindanaoan dynamics identified above, will either work to amplify the impacts of USG programs or will work to undermine them. The key is to find the entry points into these social systems (e.g. assets and areas of positive change) that will leverage, not counteract, USG engagement. The ICAF analysis identified six such entry points (see Appendix 9):

1. Reformist leaders
2. Entrepreneurship
3. Disaffected communities/Community desire for more involvement
4. Bottom-up approaches to improving communities and improved local governance (as opposed to corrupt attempts at top-down governance)
5. Cultural value of relationships
6. Cultural willingness to sacrifice

Reformist leaders. An interviewee lamented that there are many conferences and programs designed to improve the situation on Mindanao, but she said, "we always come back to square one." Her diagnosis is that these conferences and aid programs engage the politicians, but that the "leaders who want peace are not empowered." In fact, many traditional or informal leaders are actually disempowered by a corrupt political system (see the Patron-Client Loops above) and an emphasis on working with politicians and focusing on elections. The traditional leaders who want to work for peace and development are undermined by elected leaders, because some politicians resist any potential threats to their position. Another interviewee said, "We don't need more voter education," suggesting instead a focus on how to take advantage of the intertwining of traditional leaders, politicians, and elders.

These potential leaders are "reformist" in the sense that they are willing to work to reform or change the way things are. They are leaders that do not want to engage in vote buying or "winner take all" politics that often turn violent or corrupt. For example, one indigenous person ran for a Barangay Council but did not join a political party or engage in vote buying. He did not finish in the top seven (who were elected to the council), but finished 11th out of 20. His performance in the election convinced him to run again. When asked why he ran a campaign that was so outside the norm, he said "change only happens if you go into the system and walk the walk."

In the discussion of Nested Mitigators and Mindanao Systems, there are examples of many reformist leaders who reached out across lines of conflict, such as Christian-Muslim conflict or conflict between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. A university professor from Zamboanga said, "There are harmonious relationships between Christians and Muslims. My brother is a Muslim and was elected in a [majority] Catholic city."

For people outside a community, it may be difficult to identify these reformist leaders, but based on the Focus Group participants, these leaders, even informal ones, are well know to the communities in which they live. They are people that other members of the community see as having legitimacy and influence, not necessarily the right titles. There are also likely to be potential leaders among the business community, especially ones that have used their business to improve inter-group relations. The critical need is to identify these leaders through consultation in communities. A professor from Davao City said, "People follow leaders whom they can trust, can deliver on their promises, and are known to the people."

Entrepreneurship. As mentioned above, many on Mindanao spoke of a Mindanaoan spirit of entrepreneurship, perseverance, and creativity that could be further nurtured through business training and access to resources. In answering a question about whether she was optimistic about the future, a woman said the spirit of Mindanaoans encouraged her because, "we smile in the face of adversity."   Many cited examples of the private sector to thrive even in difficult times. A businessperson from CDO said that her city recently went from being the seventh best tourist destination in the Philippines to being the fifth best. Another talked about how they were able to cut the time it took to get goods from a rural community outside CDO to market from 1.5 days to 20 minutes.

There are areas where the private sector is moving the local economy forward and these examples could be built on, especially through connecting businesses and communities that are thriving or progressing with their counterparts in areas where economic development is slower. One of the keys that was identified over and over was to expand the training in entrepreneurial skills for youth, small business, and farmers. Basic skills in management, marketing, transportation, technology, and finance, as well as access to capital, were cited as worthwhile investments that have paid off in areas where it has been tried.   Schools and universities, the National Youth Commission, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), business, and agricultural organizations were mentioned as potential partners in advancing skills training.

Community desire for more involvement and *bottom-up approaches to improving communities*. Business leaders, community activists, educators, local NGO workers, and religious leaders all voiced disappointment with not being included in the formal peace process in Mindanao, as well as a desire to contribute more to improving their communities. People feel left out and deprived by a process that allows corrupt politicians to siphon off funds that were supposed to be used for development. As one religious leader in Zamboanga said, "the problem isn't that there is not enough money for development in Mindanao, but it's that money is not used well." People want to see a process that is less top-down, less driven by Manila, and less controlled by politicians.

For example, a community activist shared an experience of successful Barangay development planning where they "cut out the middle man," meaning the government bureaucracy. He said that they formed a development planning council that was composed of equal numbers of politicians (Barangay Council members) and representatives from households in the community. The council

has the power to oversee and fund projects. The project was a success because it achieved both economic and political development. Another person advanced a similar idea. He suggested forming panels from specific areas that were composed of appropriate leaders from IP, Muslim, and Christian communities and providing them with funds and training so they could implement projects. These and other suggestions involve a process that is more decentralized, bottoms-up, and community based. They also stress the need for NGOs, local leaders, community groups, and/or religious organizations to work with local governments, even though in many cases LGUs are seen as part of the problem. The logic behind this is that to be sustainable, governmental and non-governmental actors need to learn to work well together.

Cultural value of relationships and *a willingness to sacrifice*.   The ICAF team heard repeatedly that personal relationships were the key to getting anything done (even survival) in Mindanao and that people took pride in their ability to make sacrifices for the common good, especially families willing to sacrifice to provide an education and a better future for their children. However, there was also a feeling that these cultural values were an under-utilized resource when it came to settling disputes (e.g. forging relationships between victims and offenders in order to settle *ridos*) and addressing social problems (e.g. forming networks among key people around managing a problem).

How might interveners take advantage of that? Working through networks of relationships, leveraging those relationships and giving people the opportunity to step forward, whether as a reformist leader or as member of a community development council, or experienced business people mentoring farmers or young entrepreneurs as a way to start or expand their businesses.

CONCLUSION

The application of the ICAF provides a structured learning opportunity for the Mission Manila and other USG agencies to listen and engage with local community members and develop a shared understanding of the root causes of conflict as well as the indigenous resilience that may mitigate or prevent conflict. For many from Embassy Manila, participating on the ICAF team afforded travel to various cities in Mindanao previously not visited. Additionally, all ICAF team members expressed enthusiasm and satisfaction with being able to meet and listen to various groups of people from diverse sectors including business, agricultural, health, government, security, education, civil society, and the arts. The ICAF created a safe space for local people to share their ideas and opinions with the USG on challenges facing their communities and the strengths and cultural norms that support peaceful dispute resolution and conflict prevention. The ICAF also gave team members a unique opportunity to listen to people's opinions and ideas without discussing a specific project, agenda, or topic. Many focus group participants expressed gratitude to ICAF team members for their willingness to meet with and listen to local people's concerns and sources of pride.

Conducting an ICAF also includes active analysis grounded in the words used by focus group participants and heard by ICAF team members. The team took approximately a day and half to

analyze the data collected from the numerous focus groups held across five cities in Mindanao using the ICAF methodology. This effort fostered a sense of ownership among ICAF team members and, ideally, will influence and impact how they approach their tasks and responsibilities as they move forward. The ICAF generates a shared understanding of the factors creating stability and instability in a specific region or country and also broadens participants thinking to stretch beyond their specific sectoral focus.

The experience gained by Embassy staff participating in the ICAF application will inform their work as they undertake their daily tasks. Comments from Philippines-based ICAF participants included:

- "The ICAF's holistic approach provided me essential insight into the converging perspectives of the varied groups confronted by conflict in Mindanao."
- "This experience brought to life what I've been reading and studying about Mindanao; it gave me a better insight into what matters most to the people who live there."
- "It was surprising to hear that many Muslims in Mindanao still want to be part of the state."

Another more obvious benefit to Post is the set of findings and conclusions achieved as a result of the data collection and analysis by ICAF team members from DC and Post. The results of the Mindanao ICAF confirmed much of what many on the Embassy staff already knew, providing a basis for refining many of those thoughts and the diplomatic or programmatic efforts that follow from them. The ICAF analysis results also revealed some new findings as well as new ways of understanding information already at hand. For example, that the conflict on Mindanao manifests along religious lines but is not really about religious beliefs or differences was known previously. The ICAF analysis not only confirmed this for those conducting the focus group sessions and group analysis but also made more apparent the below-the-surface intricacies linking religion, conflict, and people's need for recognition in Mindanao. Additionally, the findings in the nested drivers and mitigating factors section as well as the systems mapping section, identify potential points of entry for addressing or modifying approaches to these issues.

The ICAF analysis also highlights the importance of recognizing and finding ways to utilize or support cultural norms that help people in Mindanao persist, such as the almost innate sense of entrepreneurship encountered in nearly every focus group session. Other such norms evidenced by varied groups of people included the belief that personal relationships are important and malleable but durable and an evident willingness to sacrifice, particularly for the benefit of one's children. Gaining a deeper understanding of these social processes may make visible potential points of entry for supporting or otherwise strengthening them. Also, there are already changes underway in the social system that is Mindanao that are oriented toward benefitting a common good.   For example, there are reformist leaders throughout the various regions in Mindanao, who are harnessing the power of community groups and the private sector by starting up businesses and creating jobs, running for barangay captain on the basis of dedication to serving others, and using art and other forms of expression to celebrate Mindanao and its variety of cultures. Discovering ways to link these resiliencies and positive changes to each other or to other parts of the social system in

Mindanao may provide Post with a very strong strategy for participating in the Mindanao social system's efforts at improving its health.

Appendix 1: Description of ICAF Process

Principles of the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework

Take context as the starting point. It is essential for international actors to understand the specific context in each country, and develop a shared view of the strategic response required.

- Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations, OECD, 2007.

<u>Introduction and Overview</u>

Addressing the causes and consequences of weak and failed states has become an urgent priority for the U.S. Government (USG). Conflict both contributes to and results from state fragility. To effectively prevent or resolve violent conflict, the USG needs tools and approaches that enable coordination of U.S. diplomatic, development and military efforts in support of local institutions and actors seeking to resolve their disputes peacefully.

A first step toward a more effective and coordinated response to help states prevent, mitigate and recover from violent conflict is the development of shared understanding among USG agencies about the sources of violent conflict or civil strife. Achieving this shared understanding of the dynamics of a particular crisis requires both a joint interagency process for conducting the assessment and a common conceptual framework to guide the collection and analysis of information. The Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) is a tool that enables an interagency team to assess conflict situations systematically and collaboratively and supports USG interagency planning for conflict prevention, mitigation, and stabilization. This document contains the key principles of and summarizes the ICAF.

<u>Purpose</u>

The purpose of the ICAF is to develop a commonly held understanding across relevant USG Departments and Agencies of the dynamics driving and mitigating violent conflict within a country that informs US policy and planning decisions. [5] It may also include steps to establish a strategic baseline against which USG engagement can be evaluated. It is a process and a tool available for use by any USG agency to supplement interagency planning.

These *Principles of Interagency Conflict Assessment* outline the key concepts, processes, and products essential to the conduct of an interagency assessment. Supplementary documents will be developed to provide a fuller treatment of the analytical framework, appropriate tools and data collection methods, and composition and functioning of an Interagency Conflict Assessment Team (ICAT).

ICAF draws on existing methodologies for assessing conflict currently in use by various USG agencies as well as international and non-governmental organizations. ICAF is not intended to duplicate existing independent analytical processes, such as those conducted within the intelligence community. Rather, it builds upon those and other analytical efforts to provide a common framework through which USG agencies can leverage and share the knowledge from their own assessments to establish a common interagency perspective.

The ICAF is distinct from early warning and other forecasting tools that identify countries at risk of instability or collapse and describe conditions that lead to outbreaks of instability or violent conflict. The ICAF builds upon this forecasting by assisting an interagency team to understand why such conditions may exist and how to best engage to

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[5] Agencies will be used in this document in place of Departments and Agencies.

transform them. To do so, ICAF draws on social science expertise to lay out a process by which an interagency team will identify societal and situational dynamics that are shown to increase or decrease the likelihood of violent conflict. In addition, ICAF provides a shared, strategic snapshot of the conflict against which future progress can be measured.

When to Use the ICAF

An ICAF should be part of the first step in any interagency planning process to inform the establishment of USG goals, design or reshaping of activities, implementation or revision of programs, or re/allocation of resources. The interagency planning process within which an ICAF is performed determines who initiates and participates in an ICAF, time and place for conducting an ICAF, type of product needed and how the product will be used, and the level of classification required.

Whenever the ICAF is used, all of its analytical steps should be completed; however, the nature and scope of the information collected and assessed may be constrained by time, security classification or access to the field.

The ICAF is a flexible, scalable interagency tool suitable for use in:

- Steady-state engagement and conflict prevention planning
- USG Reconstruction and Stabilization Contingency Planning (Contingency Planning)
- USG Reconstruction and Stabilization Crisis Response Planning (CRP).

Steady-State Engagement / Conflict Prevention Planning: May include, but is not limited to: Embassy preparation for National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Section 1207 funding; request by an Embassy or Combatant Command for interagency assistance in understanding and planning for leveraging US interests in fragile or at-risk countries; development of Department of Defense (DoD) Theater Security Cooperation Plans; development of Country Assistance Strategies or Mission Strategic Plans; designing interagency prevention efforts for countries listed on State Failure Watchlists and Early Warning Systems. In a steady-state or conflict prevention effort, there normally will be sufficient time and a sufficiently permissive environment to allow a full-scale assessment such as a several day Washington, DC-based tabletop and several weeks of an in-country verification assessment.

Contingency Planning: Is defined in "Triggering Mechanisms for 'Whole-of-Government' Planning for Reconstruction, Stabilization and Conflict Transformation" and the "Principles of the USG Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation." As Contingency planning is based on a hypothetical future, the ICAF provides relevant background concerning existing dynamics that could trigger, exacerbate or mitigate violent conflict. The ICAF should be a robust element of Contingency planning by providing critical information for the Situation Analysis. A several-day-long Washington, DC-based tabletop and/or an in-country verification assessment might prove useful when conducting an ICAF as part of this planning process.

Crisis Response Planning: Is defined in "Triggering Mechanisms for 'Whole-of-Government' Planning for Reconstruction, Stabilization and Conflict Transformation" and the "Principles of the USG Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation." The ICAF provides critical information for the initial step of whole-of-government planning, the Situation Analysis. The ICAF may be updated as more information and better access become available to inform Policy Formulation, Strategy Development and Interagency Implementation Planning steps of the Framework. When used for crisis response, the ICAF might be a Washington, DC-based tabletop assessment that could be accomplished in as little as one and one-half days or, with longer lead-times to the crisis, could take place over several weeks with conversations back and forth between Washington and any USG field presence.

Roles & Responsibilities

The process within which an ICAF is used determines which agencies and individuals should serve on the team and in what capacities they should serve. For example, an established Country Team may use the ICAF to inform Country Assistance Strategy development; US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) or a Regional Bureau may co-lead an interagency team to assist in developing a NDAA Section 1207 request; or State Office of Political/Military Affairs or DoD may lead a team to bring an interagency perspective to its theater security cooperation planning. In whole-of-government crisis response under the Interagency Management System for Reconstruction and Stabilization (IMS), an ICAF normally will be part of the strategic planning process led by the Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group (CRSG) Secretariat. The ICAF might also be used with a key bilateral partner as part of collaborative planning. The agency/individual responsible for managing the overall planning process is responsible for proposing the ICAF and requesting necessary agency participation.

As a principle, participants in an ICAF assessment should include the broadest possible representation of USG agencies with expertise and/or interest in a given situation. An ideal interagency field team would represent diverse skill sets and bring together the collective knowledge of USG agencies. Participants would at a minimum include relevant: regional bureaus, sectoral experts, intelligence analysts, and social science or conflict specialists. When used as part of the planning processes outlined in the "Principles of the USG Planning Framework," the team will include members of the strategic planning team. This team could be expanded as needed to include local stakeholders and international partner representatives.

Members of the interagency team are responsible for providing all relevant information retained by his/her agency, including past assessments and related analyses, to the team for inclusion in the analysis. These representatives should also be able to reach back to their agencies to seek further information to fill critical information gaps identified through the ICAF process.

The Elements of the ICAF

ICAF can be used by the full range of USG agencies at any planning level. Conducting an ICAF might be an iterative process with initial results built upon as the USG engagement expands. For example, an ICAF done in Washington at the start of a crisis might be enhanced later by a more in-depth examination in-country. The level of detail into which the ICAF goes will depend upon the conflict and type of USG engagement.

The two major components of the ICAF are the Conflict Diagnosis and the Segue into Planning.

Task 1: Conflict Diagnosis

The following graphic depicts the conceptual framework for diagnosing a conflict.

CONTEXT

Societal Patterns

Identity

Institutional Performance

Key Actors' Motivations and Means

Windows of Vulnerability
Windows of Opportunity

Core Grievances
Social and Institutional Resilience

Drivers of Conflict
Mitigating Factors

Opportunities for Increasing Conflict
Opportunities for Decreasing Conflict
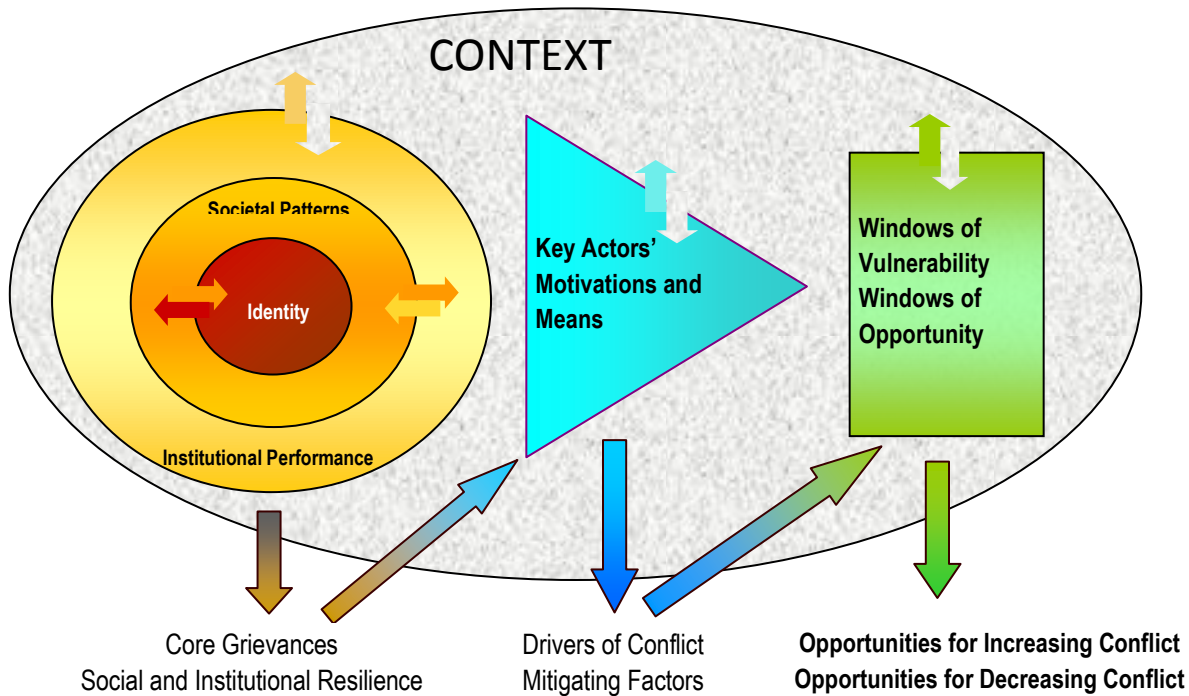
From this process, the interagency team will deliver a product that describes the: 1) Context; 2) Core Grievances and Social / Institutional Resilience; 3) Drivers / Mitigators of Conflict; and 4) Opportunities for Increasing / Decreasing Conflict.

1. Context

The team should evaluate and outline key contextual issues of the conflict environment. Context does not cause conflict but describes often long-standing conditions resistant to change. Context may create pre-conditions for conflict by reinforcing fault lines between communities or contribute to pressures making violence appear as a more attractive means for advancing one's interests. Context can shape perceptions of identity groups and be used by key actors to manipulate and mobilize constituencies. Context includes, for example: environmental conditions, poverty, recent history of conflict, youth bulge, or conflict-ridden region.

2. Core Grievances and Sources of Social/Institutional Resilience

The team should understand, agree upon, and communicate the concepts of Core Grievance and Sources of Social/Institutional Resilience as defined here and describe them within the specific situation being assessed.

Core Grievance: The perception, by various groups in a society, that their needs for physical security, livelihood, interests or values are threatened by one or more other groups and/or social institutions.

Sources of Social/Institutional Resilience: The perception, by various groups in a society, that social relationships, structures or processes are in place and able to provide dispute resolution and meet basic needs through non-violent means.

3. Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors

The team should understand and outline Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating factors as defined here and enumerate those identified within the specific situation being assessed.

Drivers of Conflict: The dynamic situation resulting from Key Actors' mobilization of social groups around Core Grievances. *Core Grievances* can be understood as the potential energy of conflict; Key Actors translate that potential energy into *Drivers of Conflict* which are the active energy moving conflict.

Mitigating Factors: The dynamic situation resulting from Key Actors' mobilization of social groups around Sources of Social/Institutional Resilience. Mitigating Factors can be understood as the kinetic energy produced when key actors mobilize the potential energy of Social and Institutional Resilience.

4. Windows of Vulnerability and Windows of Opportunity

The team should specify Opportunities for Increasing and Decreasing Conflict as defined here and describe those expected in the near-term and where possible, in the longer-term.

Windows of Vulnerability are moments when events threaten to rapidly and fundamentally change the balance of political or economic power. Elections, devolution of power and legislative changes are examples of possible windows of vulnerability. Key Actors may seize on these moments to magnify the *Drivers of Conflict*.

Windows of Opportunity are moments when over-arching identities become more important than sub-group identities, for example, when natural disaster impacts multiple groups and requires a unified response. These occasions may present openings for USG efforts to provide additional support for a conflict's *Mitigating Factors*.

Task 1 Steps

In order to determine the preceding elements of the conflict dynamic, the Interagency Conflict Assessment Team (ICAT) should follow a series of analytical steps.

Step 1: Establish Context

All ICAF steps begin with acknowledging the context within which the conflict arises. This is depicted in the graphic by placing each analytical task within a larger circle labeled "Context". The arrows going in and out of the concentric circles, the rectangle and the triangle remind the analyst that context affects and is affected by each of the other components.

Step 2: Understand Core Grievances and Sources of Social and Institutional Resilience

Interacting with Context in Step 1 are the concentric circles labeled "Identity Groups," "Societal Patterns" and "Institutional Performance." In Step 2, the ICAT:

a)   Describes Identity Groups who believe others threaten their identity, security or livelihood.

- **Identity Groups** are groups of people that identify with each other, often on the basis of characteristics used by outsiders to describe them (*e.g.*, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, political affiliation, age, gender, economic activity or socio-economic status); identity groups are inclined to conflict when they perceive that other groups' interests, needs and aspirations compete with and jeopardize their identity, security or other fundamental interests.

b)   Articulates how Societal Patterns reinforce perceived deprivation, blame and inter-group cleavages and/or how they promote comity and peaceful resolution of inter-group disputes.

- **Societal Patterns** associated with conflict reinforce group cleavages, for example: elitism, exclusion, corruption/rent-seeking, chronic state capacity deficits (*e.g.,* systematic economic stagnation, scarcity of necessary resources, ungoverned space), and unmet expectations (*e.g.*, lack of a peace dividend, land tenure

issues, disillusionment and alienation). Impacts of societal patterns often include negative economic consequences for disadvantaged groups.

c) Explains how poor or good Institutional Performance aggravates or contributes to the resolution of conflict.
- **Institutional Performance** considers formal (*e.g.,* governments, legal systems, religious organizations, public schools, security forces, banks and economic institutions) and informal (*e.g.,* traditional mechanisms for resolving disputes, family, clan/tribe, armed groups and patrimonialism) social structures to see whether they are performing poorly or well and whether they contribute to conflict and instability or manage or mitigate it. In assessing institutional performance it is important to distinguish between outcomes and perceptions. Institutional outcomes are results that can be measured objectively; perceptions are the evaluative judgments of those outcomes. Understanding how outcomes are perceived by various groups within a society, especially in terms of their perceived effectiveness and legitimacy, is an important component of conflict diagnosis.

The ICAF team completes Step 2 by listing **Core Grievances and Sources of Social and Institutional Resilience**.

Step 3: Identify Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors

In Step 3 of the analysis, the Interagency Team identifies Key Actors that are central to producing, perpetuating or profoundly changing the Societal Patterns or Institutional Performance identified in Step 2. The ICAT should identify whether Key Actors are motivated to mobilize constituencies toward inflaming or mitigating violent conflict and what means are at their disposal. To perform the analysis in Step 3, the ICAT:

a) Identifies Key Actors:
- WHO: People, organizations or groups who, because of their leadership abilities and/or power (*e.g.,* political position, moral authority, charisma, money, weapons)
    - Have an impact on Societal Patterns/ Institutional Performance
    - Are able to shape perceptions and actions and mobilize people around Core Grievances or Social and Institutional Resilience
    - Are able to provide the means (money, weapons, information) to support other key actors who are mobilizing people around Core Grievances or Social and Institutional Resilience
- WHERE: Look for Key Actors in:
    - Leadership positions in governing, social or professional organizations or networks (either within or external to a state or territory), including private business, religious organizations, government positions (including, police forces, judicial system, and military), informal and illicit power structures, media, and academic institutions
- WHAT & HOW: Understand Key Actors' Motivations and Means by describing
    - What motivates Key Actors to exert influence on each of the Political, Economic, Social and Security systems in a country or area.
    - How they exert influence (e.g. leadership capacity, moral authority, personal charisma, money, access to resources or weapons, networks or connections).

 Determines Key Actors':

- Objectives that promote violence or promote peaceful alternatives;
- Means and resources available to actors to accomplish those objectives, including:
    - Capacity for violence/intimidation
    - Financial resources (including taxes, "protection" fees, support from external actors or parties, etc.)
    - Valuable primary commodities (labor, information, forest products, minerals, high value crops, etc.)
    - Control of media outlets
    - Mass support

Using the information generated on Key Actors, the ICAT draft brief narrative statements describing "why" and "how" **Key Actors** mobilize constituencies around **Core Grievances** and, separately, around **sources of Social and Institutional Resilience**. Each statement relating to Core Grievances becomes an entry in the list of Drivers of Conflict and each relating to sources of Social and Institutional Resilience becomes an entry in the list of Mitigating Factors.

The ICAF Team completes Step 3 of the analysis by listing the **Drivers of Conflict** and, separately, the **Mitigating Factors** by the strength of their impact on the conflict.

Step 4: Describe Windows of Vulnerability and Windows of Opportunity

"Windows" are moments in time when events or occasions – contrasted with descriptions of Context – provoke negative or positive changes in the *status quo.* In Step 4 the ICAT:

a) Identifies potential situations that could contribute to an increase in violent conflict.
   • **Windows of Vulnerability** are potential situations that could trigger escalation of conflict (*e.g.,* by contributing to confirmation of the perceptions underlying Core Grievances), and often result from large-scale responses to: an increase of uncertainty during elections or following an assassination; an exclusion of parties from important events such as negotiations or elections; or attempts to marginalize disgruntled followers.
b) Identifies potential situations that might offer opportunities for mitigating violent conflict and promoting stability.
   • **Windows of Opportunity** describe the potential situations that could enable significant progress toward stable peace (*e.g.,* through conditions where Core Grievances can be reconciled and sources of Social and Institutional Resilience can be bolstered) such as those where overarching identities become important to disputing groups, where natural disasters impact multiple identity groups and externalities require a unified response or a key leader driving the conflict is killed.

The ICAF Team completes Step 4 by considering **Windows of Vulnerability** and **Windows of Opportunity** and prioritizing **Drivers and Mitigating Factors** identified in **Step 3**. The ICAT uses the list of prioritized Drivers and Mitigating Factors as the basis for its findings whether those findings are, for example: priorities for the whole-of-government Assistance Working Group setting parameters for a State Department Office of Foreign Assistance Country Assistance Strategy; recommendations to a Country Team preparing an application for NDAA Section 1207 funding; or recommendations to a whole-of-government CRP or Contingency planning team.

Task 2: Segue into Planning

When an ICAF is undertaken to support Crisis Response Planning or Contingency Planning, the findings of the conflict diagnosis feed into situation analysis and policy formulation steps of the planning process in the "Principles of the USG Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization and Conflict Transformation."

When an ICAF is undertaken to support interagency steady-state engagement or conflict prevention planning, after completing the Diagnosis, the ICAT begins Pre-planning activities. During the segue into these types of planning, the ICAT maps existing diplomatic and programmatic activities against the prioritized lists of Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors to identify gaps in current efforts as they relate to conflict dynamics, it is not intended as an evaluation of the overall impact or value of any program or initiative. The ICAT uses these findings as a basis for making recommendations to planners on potential entry points for USG activities.

Task 2 Steps for Steady-State Engagement and Conflict Prevention Planning

   • Specify current USG activities (listing USG agencies present in the country and the nature and scope of their efforts)
      o Identify the impact of these efforts on Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors

- o   Identify efforts that target similar outcomes and coordination mechanisms in place
- Specify current efforts of non-USG actors, including bilateral agencies, multi-lateral agencies, NGOs, the private sector and local entities
    - o   Identify the impact of the efforts on the Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors
    - o   Identify efforts that target similar outcomes (including USG efforts) and coordinating mechanisms in place
- Identify Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors not sufficiently addressed by existing efforts, *i.e.*, Gaps
- Specify challenges to addressing the Gaps
- Referring to Windows of Vulnerability, describe risks associated with failure to address the Gaps
- Referring to Windows of Opportunity, describe opportunities to address the Gaps

The ICAF Team draws on the information generated in Task 2 to determine potential entry points for USG efforts. The description of these entry points should explain how the dynamics outlined in the ICAF diagnosis may be susceptible to outside influence.

Appendix 2: Mindanao ICAF Findings and Conclusions

Contextual Factors

There are a number of background factors that shape the current situation in Mindanao. These factors may be subject to change in the long term, but their importance in the short term is that they set the pre-conditions for conflict escalation or de-escalation. The contextual issues identified fall into three basic categories: Cultural/Historical, Economic, and Political/Social.

Cultural/Historical

Rido. Although specific cases of Rido are often directly connected violence, the concept of Rido is a persistent cultural construct that has existed for centuries. The concept of Rido permeates many of the dynamics that lead to violence and peace in Mindanao.

Ancestral domain. Again, there are specific instances of disputes over Ancestral Domain, or a claim that a particular group has true title to particular lands, leading to conflict and an unresolved claim to ancestral domain may constitute a core grievance for a particular group. However, as a general concept, Ancestral Domain and competing claims to it shape how conflicts have been and will be managed in Mindanao.

Role of history. History, especially religious history, plays an important role in people's construction of identity. This also gives rise to the influence of religious leaders over people and communities.

Role of Datus. Families, family leaders (Datus), and inter-clan relations central figures in Mindanao. Although particular Datus may play a role as a driver or mitigator of conflict, the centrality of families and their traditional leaders is a mainstay of Mindanao society.

Economic

Poverty, joblessness. While levels of poverty and joblessness can shift in the short to medium term, the historical level of poverty and joblessness on Mindanao are likely to persist for some time and will contribute to conflict, instability or stability over the coming years.

Interconnectness of trade/economy with Malaysia and Indonesia. As noted below, the level of shipping and trade flows, both formal and informal, between Mindanao, Malaysia, Indonesia, and even China play a vibrant role in the stability and instability on Mindanao.

Drug Trade. The existence of the drug trade and a broader "illegal economy" is also deeply rooted in Mindanao and its relationships with neighboring countries in the region. It has and will continue to shape economic conditions in Mindanao, as well as affect attempts to improve governance.

Natural Resources. Mindanao contains known metallic (e.g. gold, zinc, and copper) and non-metallic mineral resources plus rich agricultural land. As important, there is speculation about what other resources, yet unexploited, exist in Mindanao. These known and unknown assets have and will provide incentive to control land in Mindanao.

Political/Social

Immigration/migration within the region. Similar to the impact of regional trade, there are flows of people across the political borders in the region that are likely to persist and which contribute to stability and instability in the region.

Complexity of the violence/insurgency in Mindanao (religious, political, criminal, cultural). While the existence of violence and insurgent groups in Mindanao *is not* a given, any efforts to grapple with this violence needs to recognize how complex are the drivers of that violence. For example, a group could be motivated by or identified with a religious agenda (e.g. protection of Muslims in Mindanao) but over the years that group may have developed ties with criminal activity (e.g. as a source of finance), those participating in the group may come from a particular clan (cultural dimension), and have ties to a particular political party (or parties). The existence of these multiple and overlapping characteristics make dealing with such groups more complex.

History of corruption, ineffective governance. Again, while improving governance may be a critical part of managing the conflict and increasing stability in Mindanao, these efforts take place against a backdrop of ineffective and corrupt governance. As a result, the lack of trust in government that this history has produced means that any new governmental structures, even good ones, will need to overcome a persistent distrust of government and the need to rebuild respect for the rule of law.

International Actors. A range of international actors, both regional and global, will continue to play important roles in shaping the future of Mindanao. This is true in the economic and political spheres as well as in terms of international aid flows.

Mindanao Core Grievances, Social and Institutional Resiliencies, Drivers of Conflict, and Mitigating Factors

Core Grievances

1. Many people in Mindanao lament the lack of cultural recognition and respect, and the presence of discrimination
2. Mindanaoans have little trust that government officials have their best interests at heart. [true at all levels – local to "imperial Manila"]
3. Mindanaoans experience inequitable access to government services and unequal application of laws
4. Mindanaoans feel excluded from the official peace process by leaders and the GRP
5. Perpetual cycle: no peace – no investment – no jobs – no peace
6. Many Mindanaoans have trouble meeting basic needs [elaborate on basic needs]
7. Some Mindanaoans feel endangered by the impact of abject poverty of others around them
8. IPs want ancestral domain and customary law respected [does this combine with (a)?]
9. [? Many Mindanaoans feel exploited or used by armed groups and organize thugs/crime?] e.g. IPs and NPA, land conflicts and force evictions, political intimidation, etc…

Social and Institutional Resiliencies

1. Personal and family relationships are highly valued and durable, i.e. bayanihan (helping each other)
2. Filipinos evidence the will to survive and persevere, and exhibit an apparent intrinsic entrepreneurship
3. IPs, Muslims, and Christians, co-exist harmoniously when they respect each other's cultures
4. People's spirituality and faith provides them a source of hope, unity, and the ability to organize (is this attributable only/mainly to their spirituality?)
5. People respect, value, and desire education and knowledge; families make sacrifices to educate their children
6. Some cultural values and norms promote peaceful dispute resolution
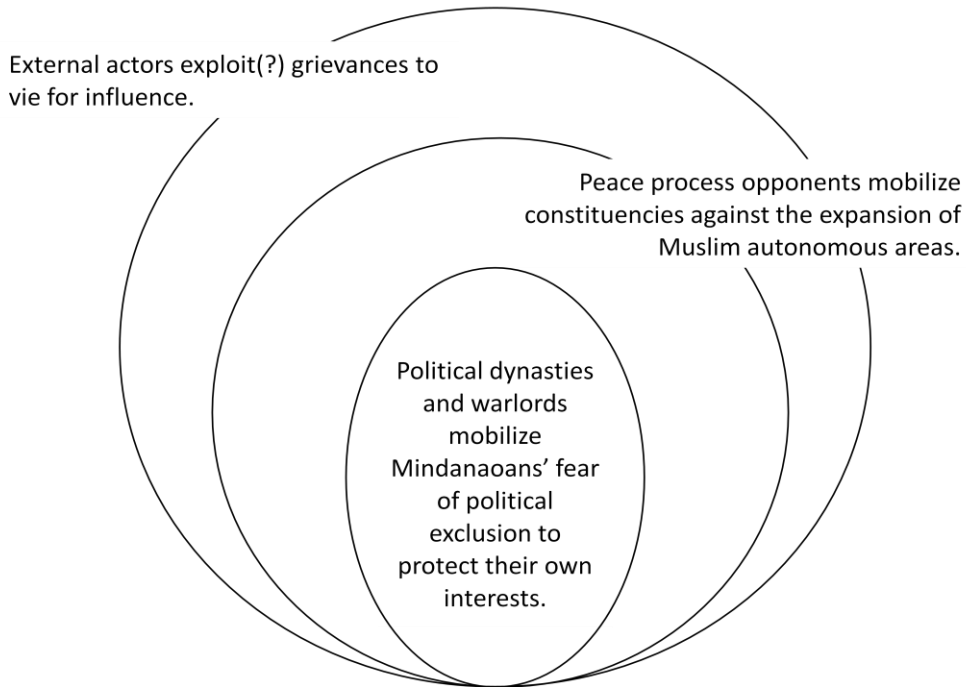
Drivers of Conflict

1. NPA mobilizes disenfranchised IPs to fight the GRP for equal rights and recognition.
2. Lawless elements pay impoverished Mindanaoans to join criminal groups
3. External actors (Malaysia, Indonesia, [China?], OIC, UN, Australia, US, EU, Japan) address (?) grievances to vie for influence
4. Older and younger radical leaders motivate and exploit growing numbers of youth around anti-government/anti-American (around treatment of Muslims) nationalism
5. Politicians and fixers exploit growing numbers of youth around anti-government inefficiencies to reap personal reward
6. Some political leaders mobilize armed groups around loyalty and economic benefit to gain or maintain political power, or sometimes to interfere with development
7. Investors take advantage of the government's unequal enforcement of laws to exploit Mindanao's resources
8. Media portray a negative image of Mindanao which discourages investment and job creation
9. Peace process opponents mobilize constituents against the expansion of Muslim autonomous areas
10. To strengthen their negotiating positions, some political dynasties, warlords, and MILF/NLF, NPA, elements mobilize core constituencies [to do what?] who feel excluded from the official peace process
11. GRP's peace panel composition reinforces a feeling of discrimination and exclusion among Mindanaoans [runs contrary to a headline that says Aquino appoints the right people to the peace panel]
12. Vested interests in "no peace" (politicians, illegal marketers, investors, external actors, smugglers, etc.) mobilize armed elements to create instability and impede development
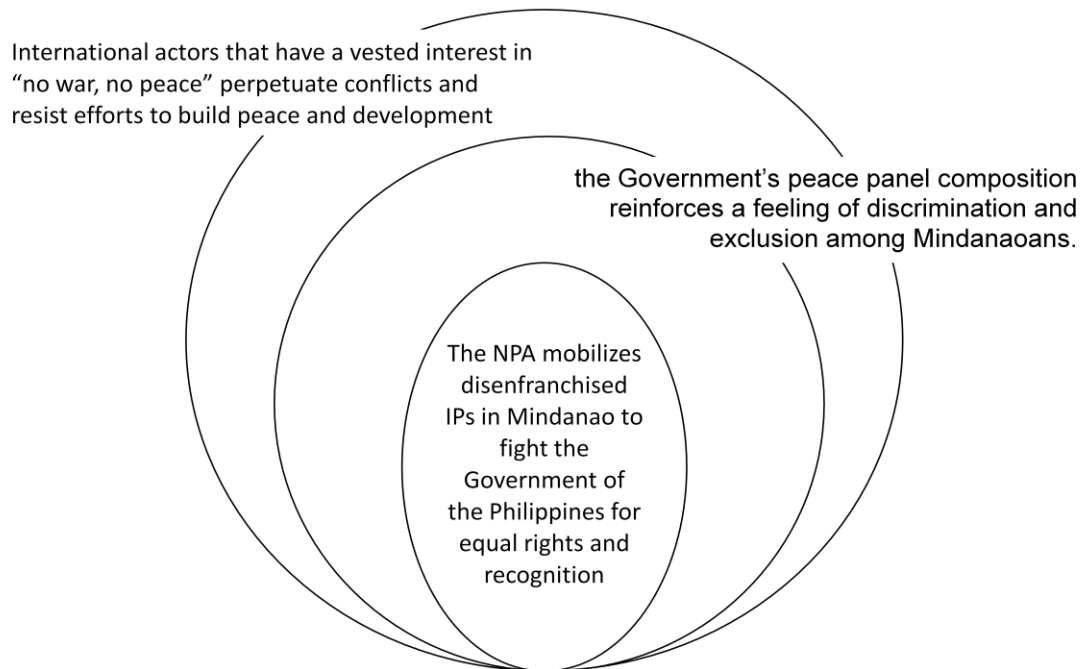
Mitigating Factors

1. NGOs facilitate access to government services and contribute to meeting people's basic needs
2. Foreign donors collaborate with local NGOs to provide basic educational opportunities to out-of-school youth
3. Religious leaders, community organizers, and educational institutions promote dialogue and shared values among Christians, Muslims, and IPs
4. Barangay Justice Advocates (BJAs) peacefully settle some land disputes by tapping into communities cultural norms and values
5. Some Muslim artists encourage dialogue on promoting peace through art and cultural events
6. Local governments, and the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of hostilities (CCCH) leaders resolve disputes and promote peaceful co-existence through the use of traditional dispute resolution
7. Some business leaders promote respect and cooperation among employees from different ethnic/cultural groups in pursuit of common business goals
8. Dole, Del Monte and others create corporate social responsibility programs that mobilize communities to work for poverty alleviation
9. Educators motivate students entrepreneurial spirit to create jobs
10. Some business leaders make efforts to hire and train Muslims, ex-combatants, and other marginalized individuals
11. AFP partners with some NGOs to encourage Local Governmental Units (LGUs) to enact good governance measures, such as accountability [and provide need governance (dispute resolution) in areas where there are no functioning LGUs]
12. Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP) implements disarmament programs for some MILF (guns for livelihood programs)
13. Commission on Elections (COMELEC) signed peace compacts with politicians and local elements of insurgent groups (MILF) banning arms near voting precincts
14. Aquino publically calls on elected officials to be transparent and accountable

Appendix 3: Nested Drivers of Conflict and Nested Mitigating Factors

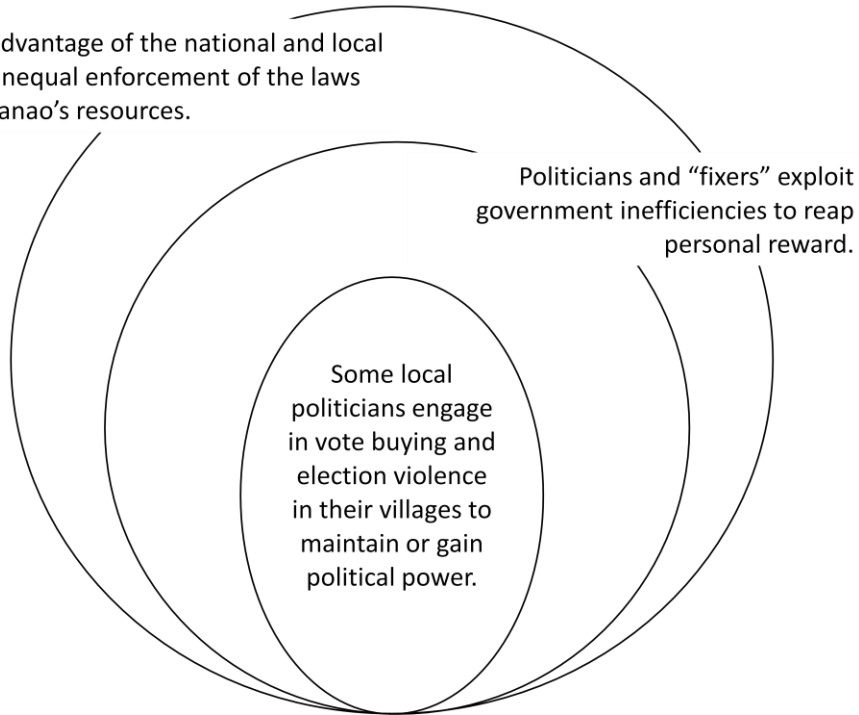## Nested Driver 1. Addressing grievances to vie for influence

External actors exploit(?) grievances to vie for influence.

Peace process opponents mobilize constituencies against the expansion of Muslim autonomous areas.

Political dynasties and warlords mobilize Mindanaoans' fear of political exclusion to protect their own interests.

Nested Driver 2. Increasing feelings of exclusion and marginalization

International actors that have a vested interest in "no war, no peace" perpetuate conflicts and resist efforts to build peace and development

the Government's peace panel composition reinforces a feeling of discrimination and exclusion among Mindanaoans.

The NPA mobilizes disenfranchised IPs in Mindanao to fight the Government of the Philippines for equal rights and recognition
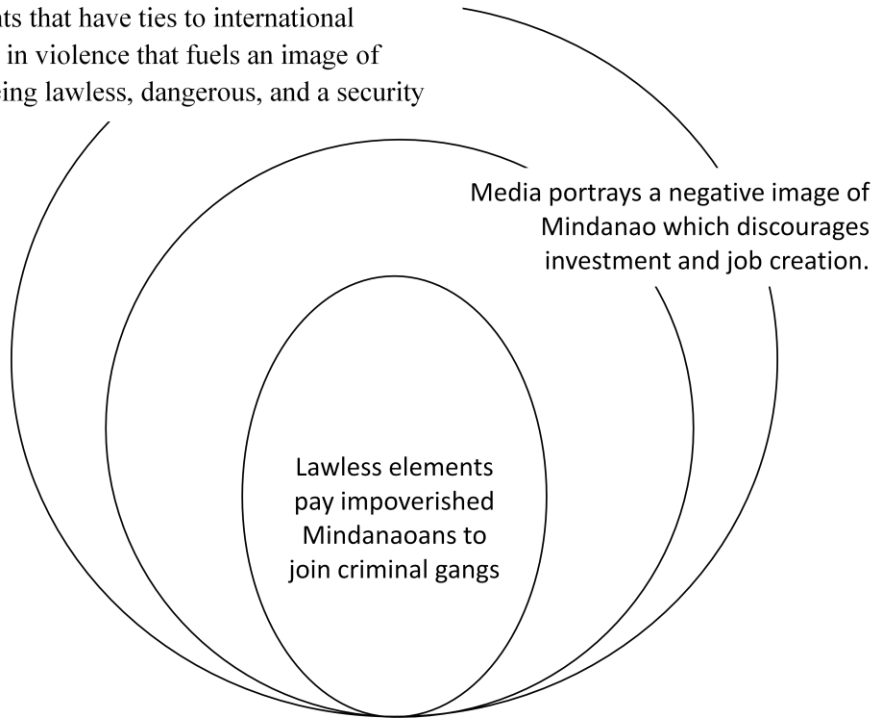
Nested Driver 3. Exploiting "governmental inefficiencies"

Investors take advantage of the national and local governments' unequal enforcement of the laws to exploit Mindanao's resources.

Politicians and "fixers" exploit government inefficiencies to reap personal reward.

Some local politicians engage in vote buying and election violence in their villages to maintain or gain political power.
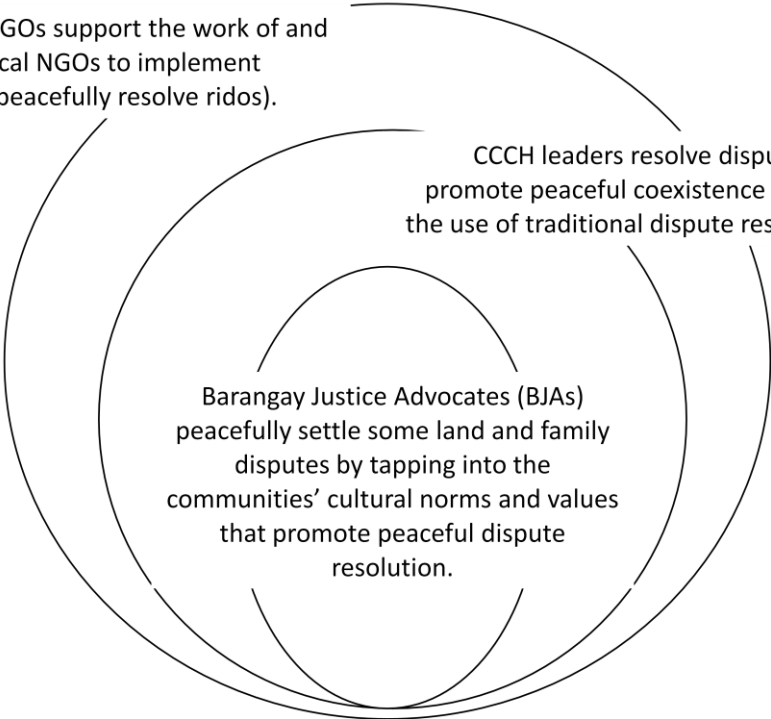
Nested Driver 4. Perpetuating a "lawless image" for Mindanao

Lawless elements that have ties to international terrorist engage in violence that fuels an image of Mindanao as being lawless, dangerous, and a security risk.

Media portrays a negative image of Mindanao which discourages investment and job creation.

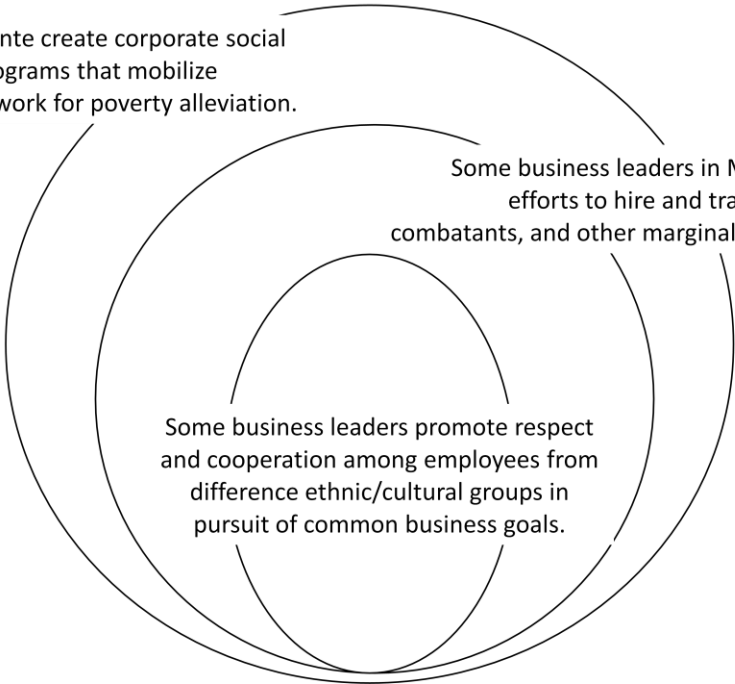Lawless elements pay impoverished Mindanaoans to join criminal gangs

Nested Mitigator 1. Using cultural norms to resolve disputes

International NGOs support the work of and partner with local NGOs to implement programs that peacefully resolve ridos).

CCCH leaders resolve disputes and promote peaceful coexistence through the use of traditional dispute resolution.

Barangay Justice Advocates (BJAs) peacefully settle some land and family disputes by tapping into the communities' cultural norms and values that promote peaceful dispute resolution.
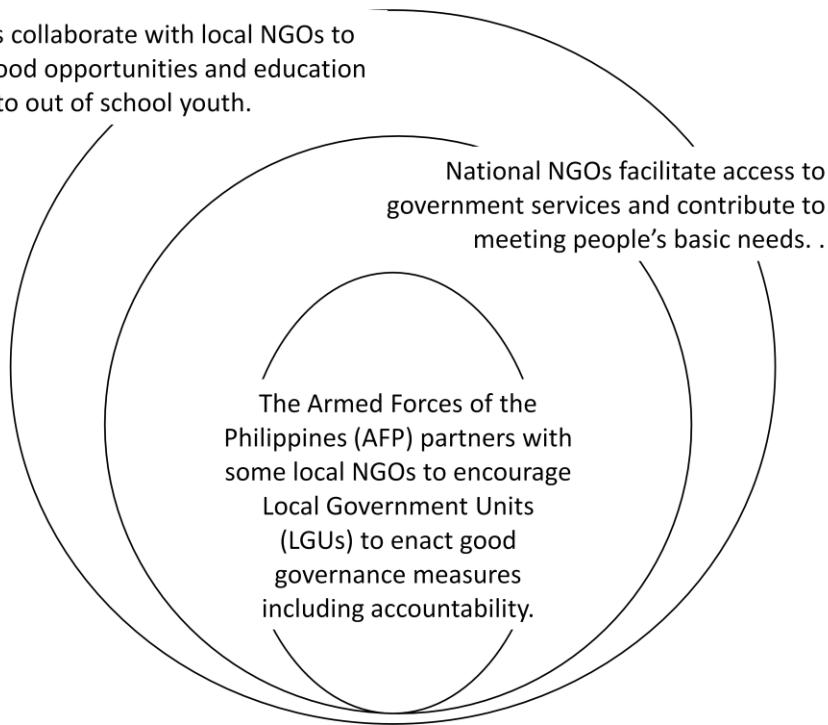
Nested Mitigator 2. Improving intergroup relations through the private sector

Dole and Del Monte create corporate social responsibility programs that mobilize communities to work for poverty alleviation.

Some business leaders in Mindanao make efforts to hire and train Muslims, ex-combatants, and other marginalized individuals

Some business leaders promote respect and cooperation among employees from difference ethnic/cultural groups in pursuit of common business goals.
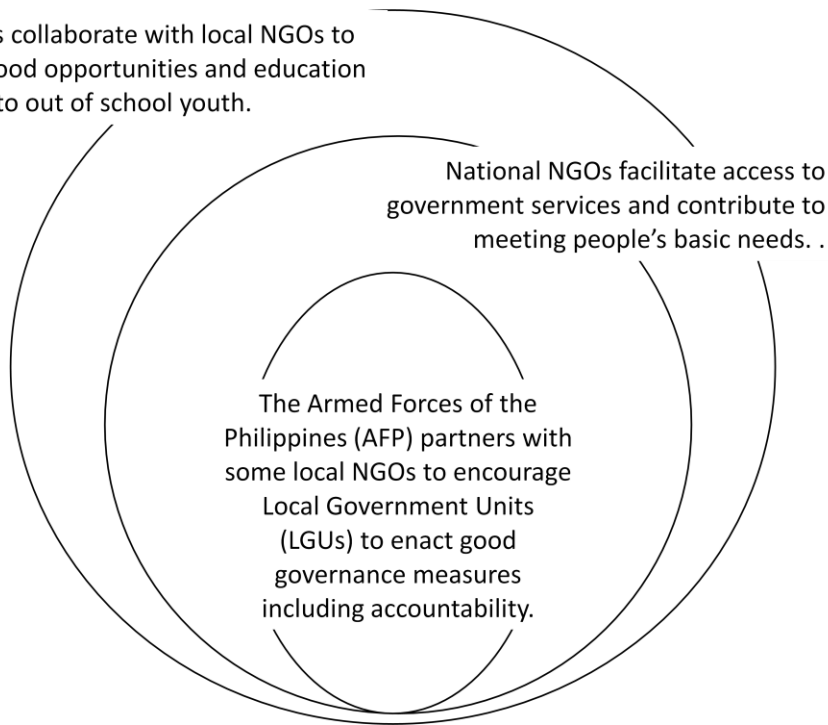
Nested Mitigator 3. Bridging or coping mechanisms

Foreign donors collaborate with local NGOs to provide livelihood opportunities and education opportunities to out of school youth.

National NGOs facilitate access to government services and contribute to meeting people's basic needs. .

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) partners with some local NGOs to encourage Local Government Units (LGUs) to enact good governance measures including accountability.

Appendix 4: Windows of Uncertainty

Present-6 months

- Drought/flooding
- AFP releases The National Strategic Security Plan
- New USG, UN, WB new strategic development plans
- AusAid conflict assessment

6 – 12 Months

- August 2011 – ARMM election for Governors and regional assembly
- 2011 review and bilateral discussions of the VFA
- June 2011 results of JSOTF-P (PACOM) assessment
- Tuna fishing constraints (reduction?)
- Supreme Court case on the IPA law and settlers
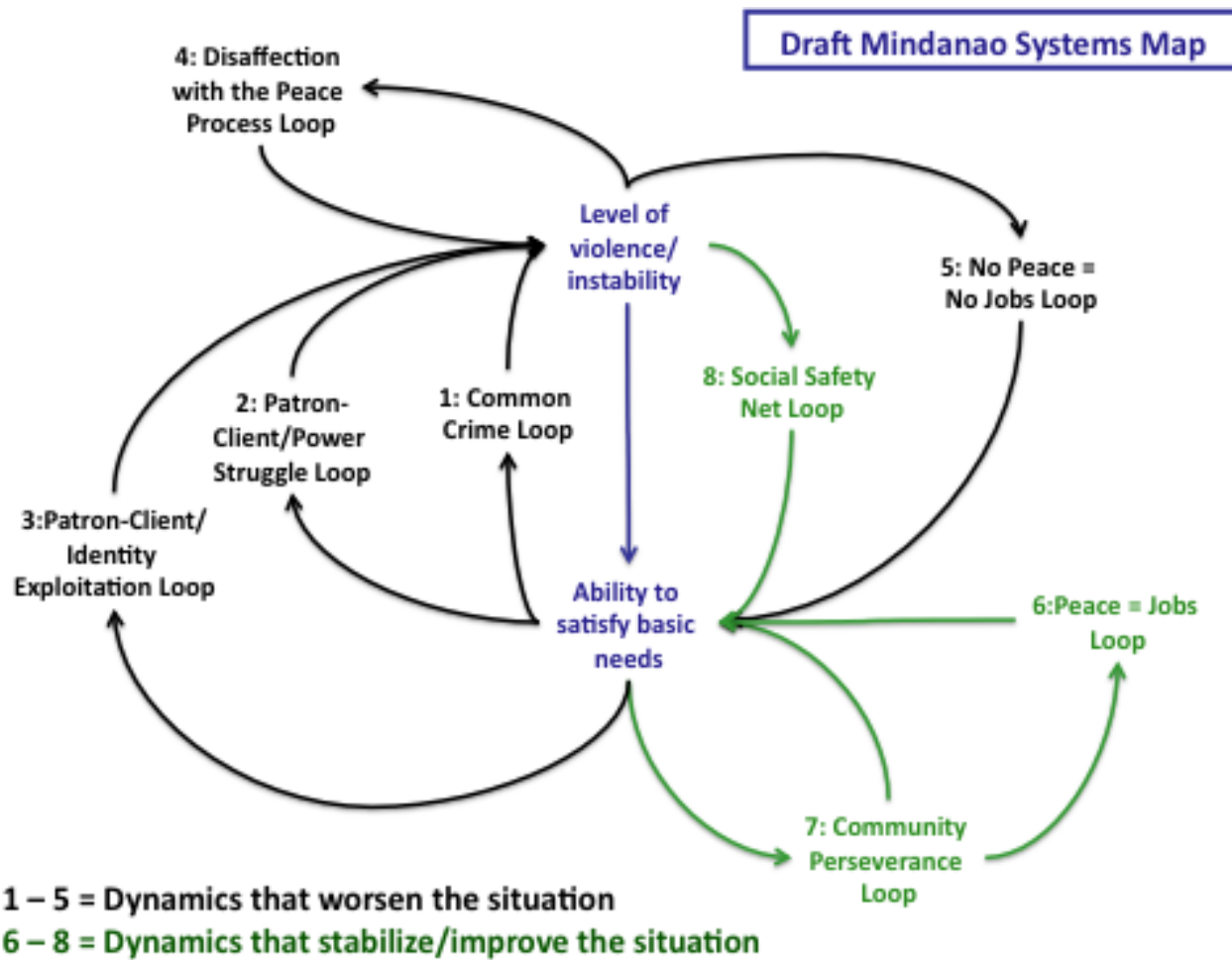
1 Year +

- 2012 US Presidential elections
- 2013 Philippine Congressional elections
- 2016 Philippine Presidential election
- Expiration of CSC
- Verdict of Maguidanao trial
- Results of Peace Agreement (3 years before end of Aquino's term?)
- Gloria Arroyo's legislation to split ARMM in two
- Proposal by ARMM congressman to abolish the ARMM – and postpone the 2011 ARMM election

**Jan-June drought

**July-Dec flooding

Appendix 5: Mindanao Systems Maps

Abbreviated Mindanao Systems Map

Mindanao Systems Map, Part 1

Mindanao Systems Map, Part 2

Mindanao Systems Map with Potential Points of Entry

Bold (Purple) Text = Possible Entry Point