

# Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute's 2022 Annual Peacebuilding Training

*Emerging Realities:  
How Do We Respond as Peacebuilders?*

**Annual Peacebuilding Training Report**



**October 10 – 21, 2022  
Mergrande Ocean Resort  
Bago Aplaya, Talomo District  
Davao City, Philippines**

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## WHAT'S INSIDE?

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<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Course and Facilitator Overview   2022 .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Introduction to Conflict Transformation .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Introduction to Peacebuilding Theory and Practice .....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Understanding Grassroots Environmental Peace .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Conflict-Sensitive Journalism and Content Creation: Theories and Practice .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Dealing with Trauma in Times of Crisis .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Theory and Practice of Peace Advocacy .....</i>	<i>12</i>
<b>MPI 2022 Participants.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>MPI 2022 by the Numbers .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Activities Beyond the Classroom.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Opening Ceremonies .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Open Sessions – Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and Sierra Leone .....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Alumni Nights.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Closing Ceremonies .....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Special Highlight: Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with JPIC - Timor-Leste .....</i>	<i>21</i>
<b>Feedback from the Participants .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>24</b>

## Introduction

After two years of online-only courses, the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc., returned to face-to-face training with the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Peacebuilding Training from October 10 to 21, 2022, at Mergrande Ocean Resort, Bago Aplaya, Davao City. With the theme of “Emerging Realities: How Do We Respond as Peacebuilders?,” everyone involved was filled with excitement at the prospect of being able to have more personal and intimate interactions with one another.

As this was the first Annual Peacebuilding Training since 2019, MPI decided to scale down the training to only two weeks instead of the usual three, with only three courses per week rather than four or five. Week 1 featured Foundation courses and Week 2 consisted of Thematic courses.

MPI initially was thinking that there would only be participants from the Philippines, but fortunately there were participants from places such as Lebanon, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Timor-Leste. At the training, there was a total of 95 participants with 63 in Week 1 and 49 in Week 2. All nine staff members of MPI and three secretariat volunteers were ready, willing, and able to respond to the needs of the participants and assist the 10 facilitators and one resource person. MPI was also grateful for the logistical support from and hospitality of the Mergrande administration and staff.

“*Aside from the learning we gained, [what I liked most was] the friendship that we built and the ... dialogue with other participants [and] learning from their culture and stories.*”



## A QUICK LOOK AT 2022 STATS

Participants: 95



National: 79  
Male: 48

International: 16  
Female: 45

Non-Binary: 2



Christians: 48  
Unaffiliated: 2

Muslims: 38  
Other: 7

Facilitators: 10

National: 6  
International: 4



2022 Secretariat Team: 12



3 Volunteers  
9 MPI Staff

Organizations Represented: 47



Academe: 7  
Faith-Based: 4  
INGOs: 4  
NGOs: 17  
Youth: 1

Community-Based: 1  
GOs: 9  
IGOs: 1  
Religious Insts: 3

## **Course and Facilitator Overview | 2022**

The isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of face-to-face training as a way to fully immerse oneself in new concepts and theories. From the six courses that were offered throughout the training proper, two of them were being conducted for the first time. These courses were chosen to reflect the needs of peacebuilders coming out of the pandemic and to address the growing needs of peacebuilding practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region and the world. For this year, MPI elected to not conduct a field-based course due to the continued concerns related to the pandemic.

The facilitators ranged from familiar faces to new facilitators that came on board despite the challenges of the pandemic and complications of travel. This combination of veterans and new and international and Philippine facilitators meant different perspectives were brought to each course. Of the 10 facilitators and one resource person, seven were from the Philippines, one from Australia, one from Canada, and two from India.

Among our newest facilitators, Vanessa “Ned” Bible from Australia was the main facilitator for two courses, Understanding Grassroots Environmental Peace (UGEP) and Theory and Practice of Peace Advocacy (PA). The former course was first taught during the Virtual Peacebuilding Training in the early part of 2022. It was fine-tuned and developed to be appropriate for face-to-face interaction. The latter was the first peace advocacy course offered since 2010.

The other new facilitators for MPI were Datu Beds Kali, Junior Media Adviser for Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH – Civil Peace Service (GIZ-CPS) Philippines, and Communications Professor Daniel Fritz V. Silvallana from the Davao del Norte State College. They offered the course Conflict-Sensitive Journalism and Content Creation: Theories and Practice for the first time.



## Introduction to Conflict Transformation

This course presented an introduction to the field of conflict transformation with a focus on the theoretical understandings of conflict and conflict transformation, as well as the development and application of frameworks for this field. The COVID-19 pandemic of the past two years has created social divisions polarizing communities and revealed structural injustices. Consequently, the key areas of attention were to build an understanding of the role of conflict in peacebuilding, to enhance the application of conflict transformation skills to the analysis of conflict, and to explore the challenges and practices of intervening in conflict dynamics. Special attention was given to the analysis of root causes of conflicts working on skills of adaptation and resilience. Opportunities were given to reflect on strategies for one's home and work context. The course was experiential in nature and allowed for conflict resolution skill practice and enhancement of conflict transformation understandings through discussion and group work. Teaching methodologies encompassed large and small group discussions, role plays, interactive exercises, and case analyses.



The facilitators, Michael Frank A. Alar and Wendy Kroeker have worked on this course together since 2012. Mike, who is an independent consultant on conflict transformation, dialogues, and peace processes, currently consults for the World Bank Philippines, particularly in support of the Mindanao Peace Process as part of its Fragility, Conflict, and Violence team. Wendy is the Director of the Canadian School of Peacebuilding and Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

### Feedback from the participants:

*“Introduction to Conflict Transformation is a very helpful mechanism in strengthening the advocacy of youth advocates. I suggest having another section for youth advocates of peace. This is actually a good starter or foundation for them. Not all peace advocates know this introductory course.”*

*“The course equipped me with new frameworks to use in the course of my work. These provided new knowledge and opened new entry points that I otherwise wouldn’t have realized. ”*

*“It helped me to understand and broaden my view on peacebuilding in a comprehensive way. I see that peacebuilding is not only about solving problems or stopping violence.”*



## Introduction to Peacebuilding Theory and Practice

This course provided an overview of the peacebuilding field and introduced the participants to the theories, practices, and basic skills needed to engage in peacebuilding work. As a foundation course, participants interacted with theories of peace, conflict, and violence and applied these to real-life situations and experiences in order to draw lessons useful for peacebuilders working in situations of conflict and violence. The course also introduced the complex challenges of contemporary peacebuilding and encouraged the creative development of strategic peacebuilding approaches that seek to transform conflicts and violence in various contexts and cultural settings into positive social relations and structures.

Long-time MPI facilitators Maria Ida “Deng” Giguiento and Miriam “Deddette” Suacito taught this course together. Deng is a grassroots peacebuilder from the Philippines, who was one of two recipients of the 2015 Tanenbaum Peacemaker in Action Award for her work with in the conflict transformation paradigm in Mindanao and post-independent Timor-Leste. Deddette is the Director of Nagdilaab Foundation based in Isabela City, Basilan, Philippines, and was one of the 1,000 women collectively nominated for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize.

**Feedback from the participants:**

*“It helps me to understand the nature and approach of peacebuilding, and contextualize and interpret it in the nature of my work.”*



*“The information provided in the course was very helpful as it gave me a good grounding/introduction to peacebuilding, and helped me to make sense of things that I know of in a way but couldn’t particularly articulate.”*

*“I will apply what I have learned in the course in my work by understanding the different conflicts that may arise in my everyday work when I am talking/coordinating with various units and people.”*

## Understanding Grassroots Environmental Peace

This course took the view that Environmental Peacebuilding should have, at its core, the concept of “caring for country,” meaning looking after nature, our habitat, and the habitat of other species with whom we share this planet. There are often conflicts over the extraction of natural resources (mining, logging, fishing, harvesting), water and land rights, and pollution of land, water, and air. To be responsible stewards, we must make every effort to look after our planet and biosphere for all human inhabitants, other species, and future generations. In examining links between peacebuilding and the environment, participants gained an understanding of the way in which human and environmental issues are intertwined—caring for nature is caring for humanity. Understanding this is essential to effective environmental peacebuilding. Learning was done through discussion and workshops, and involved interaction in large and small groups, role plays, active learning exercises, and analyses of case studies.

This course was facilitated by Vanessa “Ned” Bible, a former Lecturer in Peace Studies and History at the University of New England, Australia, and has been the Convener of People for Peace, an action group of Sustainable Living Armidale in Armidale, New South Wales. She is now based in the Northern Territory in Australia, working with indigenous peoples. Mary Ann Fuertes, former Director and member of the Board of Trustees of Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability, an NGO based in Davao City, Philippines, whose advocacy is in the protection of watersheds in South Central Mindanao, served as a resource person for this course.



## Feedback from the participants:

*“The course helped us see how communities were empowered, how they were sustained, and how they facilitate the issues and concerns in their locality.”*



*“This course particularly helps others and fosters an interest within people to study environmental concerns in society, which then empowers them to have more knowledge.”*

*“I am impressed by the way Dr. Ned steered the class; she is knowledgeable and intelligent. She can manage despite at times her inability to communicate because of the language barrier. She has indeed mastery of her subject. She knows her craft as a Ph.D. holder in Environmental Studies.”*

## Conflict-Sensitive Journalism and Content Creation: Theories and Practice

This five-day course was designed so that participants could gain a grounded understanding of the theories and practices of Conflict-Sensitive Journalism (CSJ) and the ways to integrate these principles into content creation and communications work and become more confident and skilled in accompanying their respective organizations and institutions in integrating conflict-sensitive journalism in their work and practices. The participants learned through a participatory process that included small groups, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, round-table and plenary discussions, case investigations, short presentations, and simulation.



This course was co-facilitated by Daniel Fritz V. Silvallana and Datu Beds “Veds” Kali. Fritz is a Lecturer in Communication and Conflict-Sensitive Journalism at the Department of Communication Studies, Davao del Norte State College in Panabo City, Philippines, and has co-authored The Conflict-Sensitive Journalism Teaching Guide: Philosophy and Practice in coordination with forumZFD Philippines. Veds is the Junior Media Adviser for GIZ – Civil Peace Service (CPS) Philippines and has co-lead the development and design of media projects and workable mechanisms together with CPS partner media organizations in Mindanao.

## Feedback from the participants:

*“The CSJ tools were all helpful. But what helped me a lot was the conflict triangle where we identify the visible and latent violence that occurs in a single event. It helped us to ‘zoom out’ or ‘step back’ from one angle or view of an incident to be able to see the bigger and wider events that influence or shape public opinion and discourse.”*

*“CSJ is something that everyone must be responsible for because nowadays it is very easy for people to comment on something that they really don’t have knowledge in. Actors Mapping also really helps understand and deepen [our understanding].”*

*“The tools and approaches I learned are very much applicable in my work. They opened opportunities for me to explore new styles/perspectives and techniques. I am confident that these tools and approaches will help me produce outputs that are conflict-sensitive and solve how to contribute to peacebuilding.”*



## Dealing with Trauma in Times of Crisis

This course was designed to enhance the basic awareness of trauma and highlight the importance of a trauma-informed approach to deal with current challenges. Using interactive methods of elicitation, role plays, situational analysis, case studies, and theater, the course enabled participants to gain a broad understanding of the concepts of trauma and allowed them to identify the causes and reactions to trauma. It also helped the participants understand the dynamics of trauma and its impact, and use a set of tools and techniques to support those in need.



Gladston “Ashok” Xavier and Florina Xavier were the co-facilitators of this course. Ashok is an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work at Loyola College in Chennai, India, where he also served as the Dean of Academic Studies and the Associate Director of the Outreach Program. Florina is the Regional Return and Reintegration Adviser of Act for Peace in Chennai, India, where she is directly engaged with Sri Lankan refugees. Both of them have been engaged for many years with people’s movements, initiatives, and vulnerable people-led institutions, using their leadership skills to empower others.

**Feedback from the participants:**

*“The method of delivery was very helpful. It allowed participants to maximize participation and engagement not just in the activities but also with each other.”*

*“The Dealing with Trauma class makes me realize that it is really important to take care of our inner self before we can help anyone else. This course helps me also to discover ways to cope and to break free. In times of crisis, to be calm and always positive is the most important thing to do first.”*

*“I will be able to recognize trauma in myself and in others and heal, and also help others recognize their trauma and to help them heal and recover.”*



## Theory and Practice of Peace Advocacy

This course introduced participants to the theory and practice of peace advocacy. Whether participants' backgrounds are in social justice, environmental advocacy, natural resources, working with youth, community development, or any other peace-related field, this course became applicable to those who wished to further build their advocacy skills. It focused on some of the most important aspects of peace advocacy, including the theory of social and environmental justice, stakeholder negotiation, nonviolent communication, conflict transformation, and leadership. The course was designed to help individuals to identify and develop their own unique advocacy skill set, tailored towards their own existing or future professional field. By the final session, participants developed their own 'peacebuilding toolkit.'

This course was facilitated by Vanessa "Ned" Bible, whose background is described above. Her co-facilitator, Gabrielle "Gabs" Aziza Sagara, is currently a Project Manager with Forum Civil Peace Service (Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e.V. or forumZFD), an international non-governmental organization working on nonviolent conflict transformation in several countries, including the Philippines.

### Feedback from the participants:

*"The topic on nonviolent communication and stakeholder negotiation expanded my knowledge when it comes to peace advocacy."*

*"My personal peacebuilding toolkit developed from this course will be very helpful to remind me of my commitment. The greatest lesson I got from the course is about being authentic and I will strive to apply that at all times."*

*"It is very relevant because the principles and framework do not require technical knowledge. Basically, the programs we have and what we are doing in our organization are already connected to peace advocacy. We also learned new strategies and approaches in the course which we will consider for better results (e.g., NVC)."*



## **MPI 2022 Participants**

Due to COVID-19-related restrictions and the time frame to prepare for the annual training, MPI was originally expecting to only have participants from the Philippines. Fortunately, MPI was able to accommodate participants from places like Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and even Lebanon where one participant of Turkish-German descent was working. This was, despite the difficulties international participants experienced in transit, primarily related to the requirements for vaccinations and securing the Philippine health pass. Sadly, some participants that had been confirmed to attend were not able to travel to the Philippines because of these kinds of international travel complications.

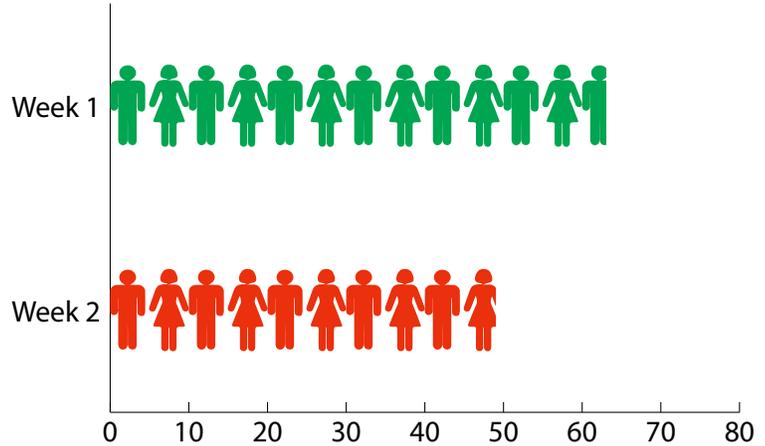
All of those who attended MPI's 2022 Annual Peacebuilding Training were supported by their own organization or a sponsoring organization. The major sponsors for this year's Annual Peacebuilding Training included the following:

- Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World)
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
- Dreikönigsaktion Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar (DKA Austria) and Misereor (German Catholic Bishops' Organization for Development Cooperation) through the Grassroots Peacebuilding Mentors Training Program
- Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e.V. (forumZFD)
- Justiça, Paz e Integridade da Criação de Timor-Leste (JPIC-Timor Leste)
- Mennonite Central Committee
- Mensen met een Missie
- Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU)
- United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia
- United Nations Development Programme – Papua New Guinea

## MPI 2022 by the Numbers

### Participants per Week

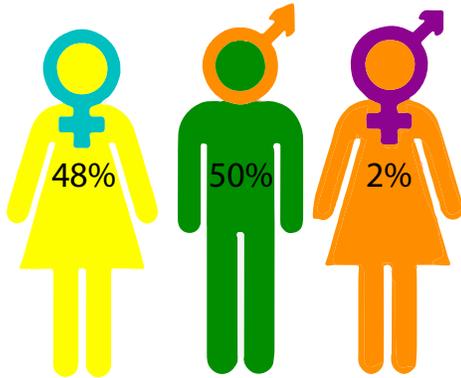
Of the total number of participants, 63 attended Week 1 and 49 participated in Week 2.



### National vs. International

For this year, 83% of the total number of participants were from the Philippines. The remaining 17% were international participants. This was due primarily to continued concerns related to COVID-19 and the difficulty of international travel in 2022.

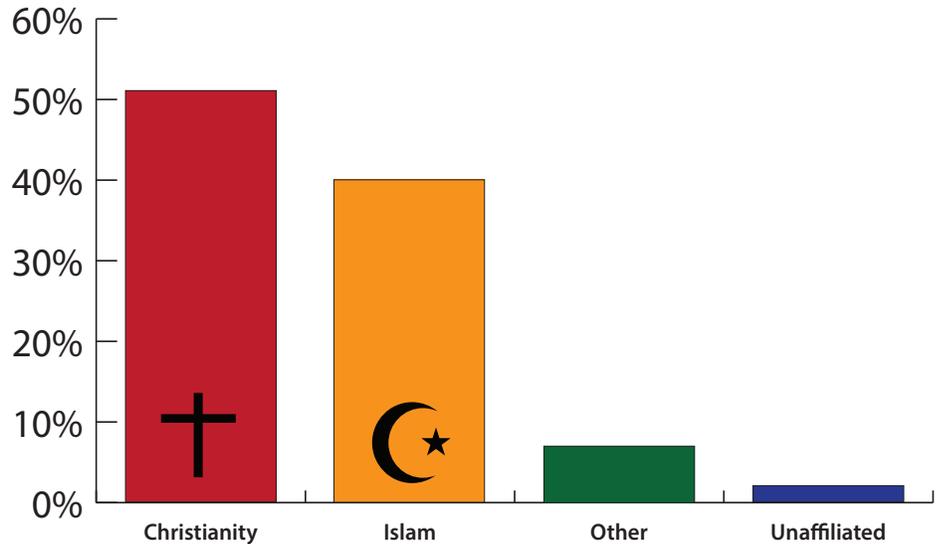
## Gender Distribution of Participants



In terms of gender, 50% of the participants were male, 48% were female and 2% were non-binary.

## Participants by Religion

Participants in MPI's 2022 Annual Peacebuilding Training came from fewer religious backgrounds than in previous trainings primarily due to the limited number of international participants. The majority were Christians at 51%, followed by Muslims at 40%. Other religions made up 7% and 2% were unaffiliated.



## Organizations by Sector

In 2022, the largest number of sending organizations were Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Other sectors represented by the participants included Governmental Organizations (GOs), Academe, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), Faith-Based and Religious Institutions, Intergovernmental Organizations, Community-Based, and Youth.

**NGOs – 17** 

**Governmental Organizations – 9** 

**Academe – 7** 

**INGOs – 4** 

**Faith-Based – 4** 

**Religious Institutions – 3** 

**Intergovernmental Organizations - 1**



**Community-Based - 1** 

**Youth – 1** 

## Activities Beyond the Classroom

### Opening Ceremonies

The opening ceremonies were held on the morning of October 10 and October 17 and began with interfaith prayers led by selected participants. The program featured the introduction of all the countries and delegations that were represented for that week. Both ceremonies were hosted by MPI's Grassroots Peacebuilding Mentors Training Program Officer Nur Hussain Maba and Research, Documentation, and Learning Assistant Anna Loren Gingco. MPI Director Christine Vertucci welcomed all those in attendance in both ceremonies.

The highlight of the opening ceremonies were the guest speakers from different peacebuilding backgrounds invited by MPI to give the inspirational messages. These were based upon their experiences and reflected the theme of this year's annual training, "Emerging Realities: How Do We Respond as Peacebuilders?"

For Week 1, the inspirational speaker was Ms. Myla Leguro. Currently, Myla is the Technical Advisor II for Catholic Relief Services here in the Philippines. She is now serving as the President of the Board of Trustees of MPI and is a member of MPI's distinguished roster of facilitators. Over the years, Myla has facilitated many MPI courses on interreligious peacebuilding, peace advocacy and others.



*Within MPI's learning community, we hope that we are able to acknowledge our fears, open ourselves for learning, take the risks to grow, and exercise our capacity for meaningful actions that support peace.*



*Myla Leguro*



For Week 2, Ms. Lyndee Prieto, former Program Coordinator for the Initiatives for International Dialogue in the Philippines, graced the ceremony with her energetic inspirational speech. She has been part of several important coalitions and initiatives for peace in Mindanao, such as the Mindanao Peaceweavers, the broadest convergence of peace advocates in Mindanao and the Mindanao Peoples' Caucus.

During the opening ceremonies, Christine Vertucci introduced the facilitators and their class assistants for the week ahead. MPI's Peacebuilding Training Program Officer Kristelle "Telly" Rizado closed each program with announcements about logistical matters and gave the final welcome as the participants started their first day of class.

*“ ... once we bring our own resilience story, while we analyze the scars of war and conflict, we have to equally celebrate and honor our strengths in the face of crisis, tribulation, and adversity in the wars that we have now because we, individually and collectively, are resilient. ”*

*Lyndee Prieto*

## Open Sessions – Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and Sierra Leone

As an institute, MPI has often sought to create opportunities for collaboration among the participants. Because of the diverse nature of the participants, MPI holds open sessions where certain individuals or groups can present the work that they are doing in their respective communities or discuss other topics of interest.



For the two-week training, there were three open sessions that focused on the work done by the participants from Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and Sierra Leone. Each session included a presentation, followed by an open forum that often gave way to lively conversation.

The participants from Timor-Leste, who were from the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste and Baucau Teachers College, spoke about the peace process that occurred during the early 2000s, after the end of the Indonesian occupation in 1999 and the establishment of the sovereign state of Timor-Leste in May 2002. Their talk focused on the processes that were used, the roles of different local and international groups, and the role of reconciliation and forgiveness that continues to this day.

The participants from Papua New Guinea spoke about the programs that they spearheaded, particularly in the inland communities in their country. They were all sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the initiative of a MPI alumnus who is employed with UNDP.



Lastly, Sierra Leone participants spoke about the issues with which they are dealing, such as land-grabbing and the role of media and communication in peace processes. This was highlighted by a performance from Mohamed “Medlyrics” Bangura, who, in addition to working with Culture Radio in Sierra Leone, is also a rapper and musician.



## Alumni Nights

The Research, Documentation, and Learning Team conducted the Alumni Night during each week of the training as a way to orient the participants in their newly minted status as MPI Alumni. They presented different networking activities and plans that MPI has for the future. The main focus of this session was to encourage the participants who would soon officially be alumni to participate in various alumni activities, such as writing for the MPI newsletter, developing learning communities, getting involved in MPI research projects, and volunteering in future trainings.



## Closing Ceremonies



As the weeks begin with a celebratory mood, the closing ceremonies for each week were equally festive and energetic. Each class was tasked with giving a creative presentation that highlighted just how much they learned. These presentations included songs, skits, and even dance numbers. In between the class presentations were testimonials given by their classmates and cultural numbers from those who wanted to present a dance or song from their country or region. The closing ceremonies were also an opportunity for MPI's Director, Christine Vertucci, to give the certificates of appreciation and tokens to the facilitators and class assistants. It was during the final closing ceremony that MPI expressed its thanks to the Mergrande staff, with representatives present to accept MPI's expressions of gratitude.

## Special Highlight: Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with JPIC - Timor-Leste

As one of the highlights of the overall training, the Justiça, Paz e Integridade da Criação de Timor-Leste (JPIC-Timor-Leste) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc., during the Closing Ceremony of Week 1. Fr. Julio Crispim Ximenes Belo, JPIC-Timor-Leste Executive President spoke to the importance of the collaboration between MPI and JPIC in strengthening the peacebuilding efforts in Timor-Leste. Fr. Belo and the others from the JPIC then invited MPI Director Christine Vertucci and selected staff and facilitators to join them onstage as they offered the representatives from MPI scarves from Timor-Leste symbolizing their binding relationship.



## **Feedback from the Participants**

MPI has always sought to provide a holistic, meaningful experience for all the participants involved. Over the two-week training, MPI was able to gain feedback from the participants about the things that they enjoyed and found interesting, as well as any aspects of the training that they found lacking. This is part of MPI's MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, assessment, and learning) mechanism in order to sustain the participants' expectations.

- The inclusivity. No one is being left behind. I love the course, the facilitators, and staff who are very approachable. I really love the Mergrande staff also; they are so accommodating and approachable. Kudos! I enjoyed my stay here in MPI/Mergrande.
- The interactivity and overall flow of the learning experiences, and the flexibility of the time, especially when we, the Muslims, were given enough time to do our [Friday] prayer.
- The MPI team is great! They are all professionals and easy to approach. Their decades-long experience in training and capacity-building is clearly evident.
- What I liked most about the training was the methodology. The facilitators employed interactive tools that allowed for an exchange of ideas between and among the participants.
- It would be good to know better what the other colleagues are doing and what kind of tools that they are using. It would be good if we have more time to share and find out what each of us can learn from each other.
- All of the participants were participative, fun, attentive, and sharing experiences about peace and their personal life; culture of sharing.
- I like the diversity. I also like the experiences and the processes/activities involved/used to bring experiences together!

## **Conclusion**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Peacebuilding Training, despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, ended up being a successful face-to-face activity for the Institute. For a two-week training, the Institute was able to attract 95 participants from six countries to come together and share their lived experiences. It was a return to form for the Institute and will help us build momentum for the training in May 2023.

Although this was a scaled-back training, with fewer scheduled activities and a shortened time frame, the energy and enthusiasm of the participants were not hampered in the slightest. The interactions between the participants inside and outside of the classroom were a testament to that; the classes and the open sessions had participants in lively discussion with one another. Even the occasional misunderstandings provided teachable moments for facilitators to work through conflicts in real time.

As MPI continues to seek to serve communities that work towards peaceful outcomes in Asia-Pacific and around the world, the MPI 2022 Annual Peacebuilding Training helped us bridge the transition back to in-person training. Now, we are looking forward to and are already preparing for the MPI 2023 Annual Peacebuilding Training with its full complement of courses, facilitators and activities, again bringing peacebuilders together to learn, deepen their commitment to justice and peace, and create more clusters of interconnected peacebuilders for social transformation.



## Acknowledgments

*MPI would like to thank and acknowledge the following institutions and partner organizations for their support and contributions to the successful completion of the MPI 2022 Annual Peacebuilding Training.*

**Brot**  
für die Welt





**Mindanao  
Peacebuilding  
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Incorporated  
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