



2015 ANNUAL PEACEBUILDING TRAINING REPORT

Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc.

May 18 – June 5, 2015

Mergrande Ocean Resort

Talomo District, Bago Aplaya, Davao City, Philippines

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I. INTRODUCTION

Davao City, Philippines. Over and over again, the **Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute** has stayed true to its commitment to keeping the spirit of peace and justice alive in the heart of each and every peacebuilder entering its hallway of learning, creating the space in which peacebuilders are able to hone their knowledge and skills and learn new tools and theories to use on the persistent path they tread towards peace. The Institute has continued to create the safe space for personal transformation where peacebuilders from all walks of life are free to share and tell their stories; meet to discuss and understand how peace is built and conflicts resolved; reflect, challenge old thinking and develop novel ideas of doing peacebuilding without the fear of ridicule or judgment. The participants, facilitators, secretariat and volunteers nurture an atmosphere that empowers and acknowledges diversity as well as the creativity of the individual.

The **2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training** held on May 18 to June 5, 2015, was yet again, another successful achievement for MPI as an Institute—a testimony to its goal of “individuals, institutions and organizations empowered as catalysts for peace and social transformation.”

In its 16th year as a training institute, MPI has welcomed over 1,900 alumni coming from different parts of the globe. The 116 participants of the 2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training hailing from 21 different countries are the most recent addition to this vast network of peacebuilders. They represented different sectors of society—international and local non-government organizations, civil society, interfaith institutions, academe, government agencies, and students—converging on a three-week long journey of learning and practice, reflection and friendship. This year’s training also brought together 22 outstanding and dynamic facilitators and 16 secretariat volunteers and staff, not to mention the number of experts and resource speakers who added their own richness to the training.

MPI offered 13 unique courses that tackled contemporary issues and crucial discourses on peace and conflict. Of these, three new courses were offered in 2015. These courses focused on the benefits and limitations of active nonviolence, community-based restorative justice and interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding.

Augmenting the in-depth learning environment espoused by MPI were the special activities and workshops organized during the training. A public forum highlighted the role of civil society in the peace process, *CSOs in the Peace Process: Stories of Overcoming Challenges and Moving Forward*. Two sessions were conducted on *Mindanao: The Indigenous and Migrant Story*, which gave participants an overview of the history and struggle of the tri-people of Mindanao, the Indigenous Peoples, the Muslims, and the migrants from the north. Several workshops were held on *Dance, Movement and Peacebuilding*, which explored the integration and connection of these three themes.

At the heart of the annual training were the people who made all this happen. It was not the effort of one but the effort of all that made the MPI 2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training an unforgettable experience and a tremendous success. From the international and national facilitators, whose commitment and dedication only grow stronger with the years, who put so much effort into giving dynamic and enriching courses and cultivating a climate of respect and

trust within the training; to the dear participants, whose courage in sharing their stories and experiences and hearing those of others, while also showing such earnestness in their learning and maintaining positive energy all throughout the training, were truly noteworthy; and to the secretariat, who conscientiously did their tasks with many smiles and much warmth, MPI is deeply grateful. The awe-inspiring achievement of the 16th Annual Peacebuilding Training was a product of everyone's hope, dedication and hard work.

II. MPI 2015: INSIDE THE ANNUAL TRAINING

A. Courses and Facilitators



MPI Facilitators being introduced during the Opening Ceremony in Week 2.

Each year, MPI undergoes a very intentional and systematic process of deliberation and selection of courses to be offered for the Annual Peacebuilding Training. The content, design and methodology of the courses are continually updated, revised or modified to address the needs of participants in terms of knowledge and essential practical skills, while also

taking into account the emerging landscape of the different areas of peacebuilding, all in close coordination with the respective facilitators.

For MPI 2015, 13 courses were offered over the span of three weeks. Four Foundation Courses were concurrently conducted in Week 1, one Field-Based Course and three Thematic Courses in Week 2, and another Field-Based Course and four Thematic Courses in Week 3.

New Courses Offered

In the development of new courses, as well as in reviewing and updating the existing training program, MPI holds fast to the principles of *applicability, relevance, necessity and social impact*. The Institute keeps informed of and familiarizes itself with the latest theories and concepts on peacebuilding, including the local and regional context, and current issues in Asia-Pacific and the rest of the world. It also values highly the ideas and recommendations put forth by its alumni and training participants that are generated through evaluations and surveys, which in turn are considered in the selection of courses each year.

Of the 13 courses offered during this year's training, three were new additions to the MPI training curriculum:

1. *A Force More Powerful: Theory and Practice of Nonviolence – Level II*
2. *Community-Based Restorative Justice; and*
3. *Interreligious Dialogue and Peacebuilding: Frameworks and Applications*

MPI 2015 Facilitators

Essential to the training's diverse and intense learning environment is MPI's highly esteemed, highly qualified pool of international and national facilitators. This team of experts has been chosen based on complementing traits, skills, experiences, and knowledge that would best deliver the courses and achieve the objectives of the annual training.

Joining this team of distinguished facilitators were three inspiring and capable individuals engaged by MPI to facilitate its new courses. One of these is among the early mentors of MPI when the Institute began in 2000. Returning after nine years of absence to rejoin MPI was **Mohammed Abu-Nimer**. Mohammed, who was originally from Palestine but is now residing in the USA, is a Full Professor at the School of International Service in International Peace and Conflict Resolution at American University in Washington, DC. In addition, he is currently serving as the Senior Advisor at the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) in Vienna, Austria. The two new faces were **Anas Alabbadi** from Jordan, who is a colleague of Mohammed and the Programmes Officer of KAICIID; and **Krizanti Cruzado**, who is an Alumna of MPI and currently serves as the Economic-Ecological Transformation Consultant and Peace and Reconciliation (PAR) Community Development and Extension Education Strategic Advisor at Peacebuilders Community, a peacebuilding organization in Davao City, Philippines.

Below is the complete list of the MPI 2015 courses and facilitators:

Table 1. List of MPI 2015 Courses and Facilitators.	
Course Title	Facilitators
Week 1 May 18-22, 2015	
1. <i>From Understanding to Action: Theories and Tools for Designing Effective Peace and Development Interventions in Fragile and Unpredictable Situations (FUA)</i>	Joan McGregor (South Africa/United Kingdom) and Elvira C. Ang Sinco (Philippines)
2. <i>Fundamentals of Peacebuilding (FPB)</i>	Paulo Baleinakorodawa (Fiji) and Maria Ida L. Giguiento (Philippines)
3. <i>Introduction to Conflict Transformation (ICT)</i>	Wendy Kroeker (Canada) and Michael Frank A. Alar (Philippines)
4. <i>Peace Education: Concepts and Approaches (PECA)</i>	Ofelia L. Durante (Philippines) and Essex Giguiento (Philippines)
Week 2 May 25-29, 2015	
1. <i>A Force More Powerful: Theory and Practice of Nonviolence – Level II (FMP II)</i>	Jonathan Rudy (USA) and Krizanti Cruzado (Philippines)
2. <i>Arts Approaches to Community-Based Peacebuilding (AACP)</i>	Babu Ayindo (Kenya) and Kyoko Okumoto (Japan)
3. <i>Bottom-Up Transformation: Experiences and Practices of Grassroots Peacebuilding in Mindanao (BT) (Classroom and Field-Based Course)</i>	Myla Leguro (Philippines) and Orson Sargado (Philippines)
4. <i>Conflict Resolution Skills: Negotiation and Mediation (CRS)</i>	Paulo Baleinakorodawa (Fiji) and Wendy Kroeker (Canada)

Week 3 June 1-5, 2015	
1. <i>Community-Based Restorative Justice (CBRJ)</i>	Jeremy Simons (USA/Philippines) and Myla Leguro (Philippines)
2. <i>Conflict Sensitive Economic Governance: Peace-Enabling Approaches in Complex and Fragile Contexts (CSEG)</i>	Francisco Lara, Jr. (Philippines) and Nikki Philline de la Rosa (Philippines)
3. <i>Interreligious Dialogue and Peacebuilding: Frameworks and Applications (IDPB)</i>	Mohammed Abu-Nimer (Palestine/USA), Maria Ida L. Giguiento (Philippines) and Anas Alabbadi (Jordan)
4. <i>Resource-Based Conflict: Indigenous People's Perspectives and Approaches (RBC) (Field-Based Course)</i>	Cariño Rey V. Antequisa (Philippines) and MPI Partners
5. <i>Trauma Healing and Reconciliation in Divided Communities (TH)</i>	Al Fuertes (USA/Philippines) and Miriam L. Suacito (Philippines)

The Classroom-Based Courses



A group of participants from the FUA class doing a group presentation.

and interactive activities, such as role-plays, journal writing, class simulations, and field trips that would best involve participants in the process.

A trait that characterizes all the courses offered by the Institute is its “elicitive” and participatory approach to teaching, one that has been painstakingly cultivated by the respective facilitators in each of their classes. MPI encourages this methodology where participants not only learn from their teachers, but also from their fellow participants and from their own experiences and perspectives. This, in turn, supports an atmosphere of solidarity within the class that allows the participants to explore, share, affirm, question and voice out beliefs, opinions, ideas without the limitation that the fear of judgment can impose. To achieve this, facilitators do not limit themselves to lectures and PowerPoint presentations but go beyond the traditional means of teaching, utilizing a wide array of techniques

Each of the 11 classroom-based courses was taught by at least two trainers, carried out in a complementary process of facilitation. The overall make-up of the courses, from design and methodologies to content, were all developed by the facilitators, always taking into consideration the needs of the participants. Below are some of the highlights from MPI’s 2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training.

The *From Understanding to Action: Theories and Tools for Designing Effective Peace and Development Interventions in Fragile and Unpredictable Situations* class explored the different analytical tools that would facilitate easy and better understanding of conflicts within the context and personal experiences of participants. Participants were able to design and formulate possible interventions that could be employed to resolve/de-escalate conflict in their own local settings.

Once again, the facilitators for the courses of *Introduction to Conflict Transformation* and *Fundamentals of Peacebuilding* jointly coordinated and organized a class simulation-exercise. The simulation centers on two indigenous tribes: the Motsham and Centrix, living in and near the imaginary town of Bobaar. It was a narrative all too familiar to the participants experiencing similar situations in many parts of the world. It is a conflict that revolves around the tribes' right to equal access to land and other natural resources, but entails the demand for freedom of expression and respect for human rights. At the same time, there is an earnest desire on the part of both groups to arrive at a peaceful resolution, though the processes are often hampered by violence and infighting.



A peaceful resolution reached between the Motsham tribe and Centrix tribe.

The exercise involved intense role-playing as participants internalized and got deeper into the characters assigned to them. They were challenged to make use of the skills and tools they learned in class, including the different theories, concepts and principles of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. As shared by one of the facilitators of FPB, it was the first time in his experience that participants reached a negotiated settlement—the signing of a peace agreement—without the intervention of the facilitators, which showed the extent of the learning of the participants and the real potential of each one to change the world for the better.

Participants from the *Peace Education: Concepts and Approaches* class engaged in songwriting, arts-based activities, group work and other dynamic exercises that best incorporated peacebuilding and the culture of peace frameworks into education.



Chairman Iqbal (middle) sharing some pointers on being a negotiator to the MPI 2015 participants.

Facilitators can invite resource speakers into their respective classes, which add more color and substance to the classes and provide valuable insights on a range of issues and topics about peace and justice. In Week 2, the facilitators of *Conflict Resolution Skills* class invited **Mr. Mohagher Iqbal**, the Chief Negotiator of the peace panel of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the ongoing peace talks with the Government of the Philippines (GPH), to participate in a mock talk show. The MILF with the GPH recently completed the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) that would inform the implementation of a new Bangsamoro entity in Mindanao. At the time of the annual training, the peace negotiations were at a critical juncture since there was strong opposition to the BBL due to the Mamasapano incident where government soldiers, members of the MILF and Bangsamoro Freedom Fighters and civilians were killed in a tragic incident in January of 2015. Mr. Iqbal generously shared his opinions and views about the current situation and offered insightful pointers on being an

effective negotiator. Most importantly, he emphasized to all those present to always have hope despite daunting hardships, stating “*peace is the only way.*”

The discussion with Mr. Iqbal included the participants of two other classes: *A Force More Powerful: Theory and Practice of Nonviolence – Level II* and *Arts Approaches to Community-Based Peacebuilding*. The “talk show” was truly significant and highly interesting for Filipino peacebuilders but also held rich value for international participants who wished to learn from the Philippine experience.



Participants of the IDPB class puzzling over one of their group activities.

The *Force More Powerful* class invited a representative of *Nonviolent Peaceforce*, an international peace corps that provides direct protective presence to vulnerable civilians and works to prevent violence in areas affected by armed conflict, to speak about its work in the Philippines. **Mr. Benhar Ayob** shared with the students the theories, philosophy and different methodologies of nonviolent movements as well as how they are being implemented on the ground in the Philippines.



Participants of the CSEG class being mentored by their facilitator.

The facilitators of *Interreligious Dialogue and Peacebuilding: Frameworks and Applications* class endeavored to provide participants with an appreciation of interreligious dialogue on the ground through its resource speakers. The class had the opportunity to interact with the *Bishops-Ulama Conference*, a religious institution in Mindanao composed of Catholic and Protestant bishops and Muslim *ulama* (Islamic religious scholars) known for their promotion of peace through the correct understanding of Islamic and Christian values, initiating dialogue assemblies, and implementing peace education programs for young Muslims and Christians, among others. An archbishop, a pastor and an imam conversed with course participants on issues concerning interreligious dialogue, religious freedom and religious peacebuilding, demonstrating to them that religious pluralism can exist through the solidarity of religious leaders.

As was done in 2014, the *Conflict Sensitive Economic Governance: Peace-Enabling Approaches in Complex and Fragile Contexts* course drew on the extensive resources of the facilitators from their organization—*International Alert* (IA)—throughout the duration of the course. They invited IA staff and network partners that gave fresh insights on different topics related to conflict sensitive economic governance. Participants were equipped not only with the required skills but also with a framework that would guide them in making economic decisions that take

into account the people and the conflicts at hand. It was an intense and rigorous class with significant academic underpinnings.

Another way of expanding the learning environment in the classes is through field trips arranged and organized by the facilitators. These trips allow participants to interact with known experts and local partners in the Philippines and provide them with first-hand experience.



A group of ACCP participants totally absorbed in their group activity (Lukasa workshop).

For half a day, the *Arts Approaches to Community-Based Peacebuilding* class did just this when they visited the Mindanao-renowned artist **Kublai Millan**. Kublai is known for his more than life-sized sculptures and colorful, intricate paintings that usually depict the diverse culture and people of Mindanao. The class returned to the training venue glowing with a sense of accomplishment and proudly displaying their painted canvasses that captured their experiences, dreams, and hopes for the future. They were not only able to learn how various art forms can serve as a medium to promote peace, but were also given a space to express themselves and tell their stories in ways words cannot.

The facilitators of the *Community-Based Restorative Justice* class took advantage of modern technology to connect participants with one of the leading experts on restorative and transitional justice systems. Through a Skype conference call, **Mr. Carl Stauffer**, an Assistant Professor of Development and Justice Studies, Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, USA, shed light on the restorative justice framework and on the application of hybrid, parallel indigenous justice systems.

The *Trauma Healing and Reconciliation in Divided Communities* course tapped into the stories and personal accounts of the class participants to stimulate discussion and better understanding of the nature and dynamics of trauma and the importance of the narrative, where healing and reconciliation come into play. Both facilitators and participants made sure that this was done in an atmosphere of trust, honesty and understanding—a safe space for everyone’s voice.

The Field-Based Courses

MPI recognizes the valuable lessons that can be gleaned from individuals and organizations that are actually implementing peacebuilding initiatives and putting into practice conflict transformation theories and concepts that participants learn in the classroom. It is for this reason that the Institute continues to offer its field-based courses, giving participants the opportunity to be immersed in the field and hear stories directly from grassroots peacebuilders and local communities. Two field-based courses were offered during MPI 2015, one in Week 2 and one in Week 3.

This year, the *Bottom-Up Transformation: Experiences and Practices of Grassroots Peacebuilding in Mindanao*, which was both a classroom and field-based course, once again partnered with three local organizations in Central Mindanao: Pasacaday Manobo Association (PAMAAS) in Magpet, North Cotabato; Integrated Mindanaoan Association of Natives (IMAN) in Datu Montawal, Maguindanao; and Tuluhan Community Development Center (TCDC) in North Cotabato. For three days, participants were able to engage with local leaders and government officials, indigenous groups and members of the community, listening to their testimonies and struggles in sustaining their peacebuilding efforts through community dialogues, participatory local governance, and direct stakeholder settlements.



A group picture of participants and facilitators of the BT class and the leaders of IMAN.

The course facilitated the interaction between the participants and the different grassroots peacebuilding efforts undertaken by each of the communities they visited. The participants examined what they learned in light of existing realities in the field as well as explored emerging strategies, and challenges in addressing violence, transforming conflict, and rebuilding communities from the perspective of grassroots peacebuilders.

In Week 3, participants of the *Resource-Based Conflict: Indigenous People's Perspectives and Approaches* class travelled to the mountainous region of Opol, Misamis Oriental. Within the rugged beauty of the Mindanao countryside, they witnessed how a Higaunon community faced resource-based conflicts brought about by mining and agri-business industries. To give better appreciation and understanding of the issues and challenges confronting the community, participants were hosted by local families for the three-day duration of the course. On-site lectures, presentations, and testimonies from local leaders, MPI staff and other non-government organizations augmented the learning process. As expressed by one participant of the course, “*Connecting with the community made the learning in the classroom more real.*”

Documentation of New Courses

For the MPI 2015 Annual Training, the following new courses were documented:

1. *A Force More Powerful: Theory and Practice of Nonviolence – Level II;*
2. *Community-Based Restorative Justice; and*
3. *Interreligious Dialogue and Peacebuilding: Frameworks and Applications*

The documentation of new courses is considered an important practice of MPI, not only for tracking and archiving purposes, but also as a valuable reference point for facilitators who wish to make revisions or improvements to the courses and for those interested in how courses at MPI are designed and implemented.

To achieve this, the Institute recruits qualified volunteers as part of the secretariat team to serve as documenters for the new courses. The documenters are tasked to record the whole process including the strategies, methods, activities and tools employed by the facilitators as well as the participants' sharing, discussions, stories and insights that unfold during the courses. While the final output of the documentation is not available for public distribution, it can be viewed at the MPI Office in hardcopy form.

B. Secretariat

It has been a tradition for MPI to enlist volunteers interested in peacebuilding as members of the Annual Training Secretariat Team for the Annual Peacebuilding Training. They serve as class assistants, class documenters, social/special events coordinators, photographers and videographers. This is part of the Institute's overall education and training direction of equipping potential peacebuilders with training and organizational skills and exposing them to diverse nationalities, religions, cultures and perspectives on peacebuilding. This is also an avenue for young professionals, development workers and fresh undergraduates with limited funds to further develop their skills and learn new peacebuilding theories and concepts without having to pay the tuition fee.



The MPI 2015 Secretariat Team posed for a group picture.

As members of the secretariat, volunteers must be ready to work long hours and under pressure, be interested and receptive to work in a multicultural setting, and be responsible, kind co-workers. MPI also sees to it that volunteers recruited as part of the team have a genuine desire to learn and participate in the training as well as contribute to peace initiatives being done in their own communities afterwards.

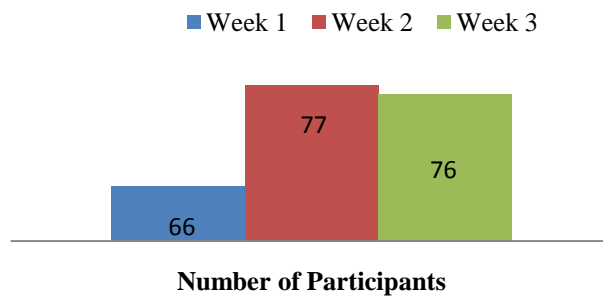
MPI also takes into account the recommendations made by MPI partners and network NGOs in the selection of volunteers as was the case this year. Composing the MPI 2015 Secretariat Team were 10 volunteers and six MPI staff who came together to support and help organize the training. Of the 10, six were Filipinos from the cities of Davao, Marawi and Cotabato. Four were international volunteers coming from Australia, Germany, Kenya, and the USA. They came from a variety of backgrounds, including healthcare, education, and international and local non-government organizations. One of the internationals, who is currently taking her doctorate studies, partnered with MPI to conduct several workshops on dance, movement and peacebuilding (details under *Open Session Activities*). She also served as the social events coordinator.

Before the training started, MPI organized an orientation and teambuilding session for a day and a half. This was done in an effort to foster a spirit of camaraderie and teamwork, build trust and support, and provide a space for members of the secretariat to know one another. The sessions were an opportunity for the team to acquire a working knowledge of their tasks and responsibilities, clarify expectations, and prepare them for the grueling days ahead.

During the training, the volunteers attended daily debriefings convened after the day’s classes. The debriefings allowed the team to discuss important issues of the day, challenges encountered and how they were overcome, and prepared volunteers for the next day’s activities. These meetings were a way for volunteers to de-stress and support one another so they could face another day of the training with renewed energy and commitment. MPI is truly grateful for each member’s dedication and hard work despite the many difficulties encountered during the training.

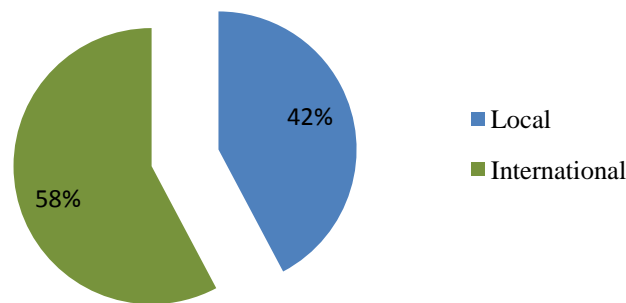
C. Participants: Numbers and Statistics

Figure 1. Distribution of Participants Per Week



116 participants gathered and met during the three-week long 2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training in Davao City, Philippines. Of these, 66 attended Week 1, 77 in Week 2 and 76 in Week 3. Participants have the option to either attend for just one week, two weeks or all three, depending on the courses that pique their interest. As can be seen from these statistics, more participants enrolled in the thematic and field-based courses in Week 2 and Week 3 than in the foundation courses in Week 1.

Figure 2. Composition of Participants

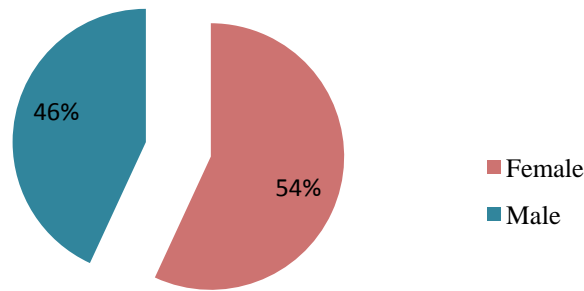


The recent trend in MPI’s Annual Peacebuilding Training is that the majority of the participants have been internationals. This trend continued in 2015 as seen in Figure 2. International participants were 16% higher than local (Filipino) participants. While MPI has yet to conduct a survey to understand why this is the case, a factor to consider is the difficulty of getting financial support from donors for training activities, and as such there is a limited budget for staff development in Philippine organizations.

The majority of Filipino participants were from different cities and provinces of Mindanao, with one coming as far as Jolo, Sulu. The rest were from Metro Manila in Luzon and Dumaguete City

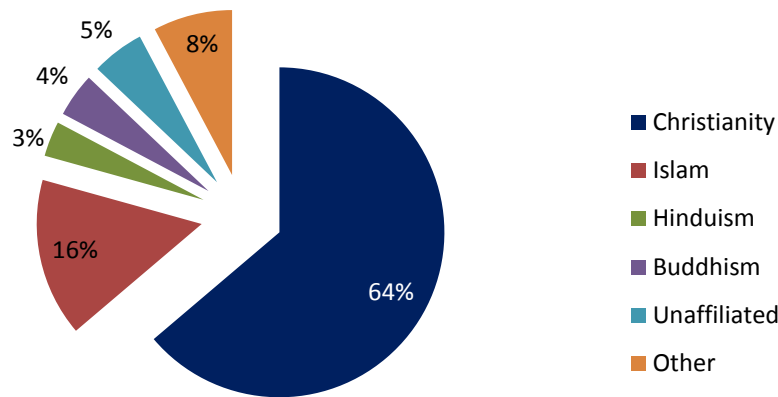
in the Visayas. The larger contingents of international participants were from Southeast Asia, South Asia, and North America while others came from Africa, Europe, and the Pacific.

Figure 3. Gender Distribution of Participants



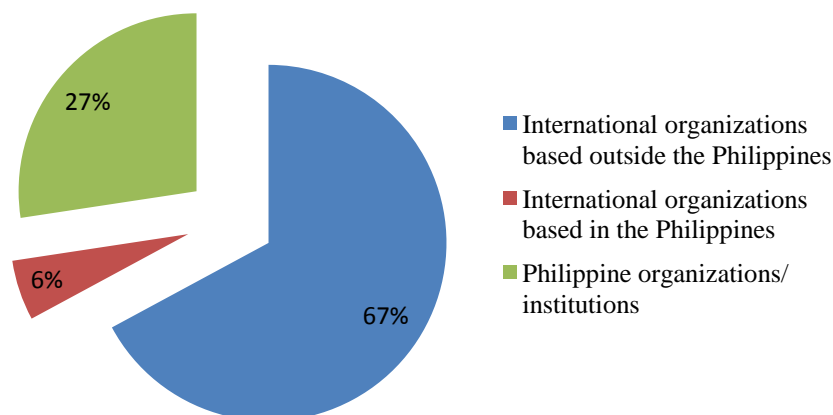
This year, the number of female participants was comparatively higher than that of male participants. Females were 66 or 54% while the males were at 50 or 46%. This statistic is relatively the same as last year.

Figure 4. Religious Affiliation of Participants



The majority of MPI 2015 participants were Christians as indicated in the figure above. This was followed by Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus. The remaining 13% were either unaffiliated or chose not to declare any religious affiliation.

Figure 5. Type of Organization Represented



In terms of organizational background, more than two thirds of the participants work for organizations based outside the Philippines. This figure is relatively higher than last year’s 59%. This is primarily due to the relationships MPI has developed with international organizations that have been sending participants to the annual training.

First among these are organizations with which MPI has had participants since the beginning of the Annual Peacebuilding Training, such as *Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)* that continues to send a significant number of participants. More recently, *Bread for the World* has looked to MPI as the preferred organization for their peacebuilders, particularly those from countries in Africa. The latest development has been partnerships with organizations that support higher learning through non-formal education such as *Supporting Islamic Leadership in Indonesia (SILE)*, and in 2015, the *United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia*.

While not drawing as many participants as the partnerships mentioned above, the marketing strategy of the Institute has a global reach. This includes the MPI website, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter and placing advertisements about the training through the *Peace and Collaborative Development Network (PCDN)*—an online network of individuals and organizations engaged in peacebuilding and collaborative development with over 32,000 members—and *idealist*, a website for volunteers and others seeking job opportunities, trainings and other activities.

Lastly, MPI is proud of its vast network of international alumni, who, through their own effort, have helped spread the word about the Institute’s training program and have recommended it to their colleagues.

27% of participants work for local organizations and institutions. It is worth mentioning that the majority of these Philippine organizations and institutions are considered part of MPI’s network. Most have been sending their staff to attend the training for a number of years. The remaining 6% were individuals working with international organizations based in the Philippines.

A total of 73 various local and international organizations, institutions and agencies were represented during the training. Of these, 49 were international institutions and/or organizations based outside of the country as enumerated below:

Table 2. Names of International Organizations listed per region.
<p>AFRICA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS) – Liberia 2. National Adult Education Association of Liberia 3. New African Research and Development Agency (NARDA) - Liberia 4. Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) – Cameroon 5. Service d'Appui au Développement Régional Intégré (SADRI) – DR Congo 6. Young Women's Christian Association of the Democratic Republic of Congo (YWCA-DRC)
<p>ASIA & THE PACIFIC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alauddin State Islamic University (UIN Alauddin Makassar) – Indonesia 2. Brethren in Christ Church – India 3. Centre For Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) – Cambodia 4. Department of Religious Affairs, Lao Front for National Construction – Lao PDR 5. Eastern Theological College – India 6. Freelance Consultancy – Lao PDR

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. GITJ Jepara (Javanese Mennonite Church) – Indonesia 8. GITJ Margorejo (Javanese Mennonite Church) – Indonesia 9. Institut DIAN/Interfidei (Institute for Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia) 10. Institute for Peace, Conflict and Social Studies-UNTIL – Timor-Leste 11. Institute for Peace and Democracy (IPD) – Indonesia 12. Kachin Baptist Convention Myanmar 13. LPLAG – Indonesia 14. Madras Christian College – India 15. Mennonite Central Committee – Bangladesh 16. Mennonite Central Committee – India 17. Mennonite Central Committee – Lao PDR 18. Mennonite Central Committee – Vietnam 19. Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace – Government of the Solomon Islands 20. National Governance and Public Administration Reform Programme – Lao PDR 21. Norwegian Church Aid – Pakistan 22. Peace Studies Center, Myanmar Institute of Theology 23. PRO RURAL – India 24. Sansthaat Bikas Sanjal – Nepal 25. Social Development Initiative (SDI) – Myanmar 26. Soegijapranata Catholic University – Indonesia 27. Sunan Ampel Islamic State University – Indonesia 28. Taangh Wasaib Organization – Pakistan 29. Tomorrow's Foundation – India 30. UIN Alauddin Makassar – Indonesia 31. UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya – Indonesia 32. Union Christian College – India 33. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) – Afghanistan 34. Village Focus International Organization – Lao PDR 35. West Bengal Voluntary Health Association – India 36. World Renew – Bangladesh
<p>EUROPE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finnish Red Cross – Finland
<p>NORTH AMERICA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. George Mason University – USA 2. General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church – USA 3. University of Notre Dame – USA 4. Process Work Institute of Portland – USA 5. George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs – USA 6. Canadian Mennonite University – Canada

Of the 73, four were international organizations with offices in the country and 20 were local organizations. These are listed in the table below:

<p>Table 3. Names of Local Organizations in the Philippines as classified per sector.</p> <p>Academic Institutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde – Metro Manila 2. Notre Dame of Jolo College – Jolo, Sulu 3. Our Lady of Peace High School – Lanao del Sur 4. Silliman University – Dumaguete City 5. University of the Philippines, Department of Sociology – Metro Manila

Government Organizations:

1. Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) – Butuan City
2. Local Government (LGU) of Columbio – Sultan Kudarat
3. Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) – Metro Manila

Non-Government Organizations:

1. Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc. – Cagayan de Oro City
2. Civil Society Organization Forum for Peace Inc. – Iligan City
3. *forumZFD** – Davao City
4. iEmergence, Inc. Philippines – Davao City
5. Institute for Peace and Development in Mindanao (IPDM), Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) – Iligan City
6. Inter-Cultural Organizations' Network for Solidarity and Peace, Inc. (ICON-SP) – Kidapawan City
7. Kapamagogopa, Inc. – Iligan City
8. *Kindernothilfe E.V.** – Metro Manila
9. Mindanao Peoples Peace Movement (MPPM) – Cotabato City
10. Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc. (MPI) – Davao City
11. Pailig Development Foundation, Inc. – Iligan City
12. Peace Advocates Zamboanga – Zamboanga City
13. Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court – Metro Manila
14. *The Asia Foundation** – Metro Manila
15. United Youth of the Philippines-Women – Cotabato City

Faith-Based Organization:

1. *Jesuit Refugee Service-Philippines** – Iligan City

**International Organizations based in the Philippines*

III. THE ANNUAL TRAINING: A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY

A. Opening and Closing Ceremonies



The various indigenous tribes in Mindanao featured in a dance performance by Kaliwat.

the opening and closing ceremonies of the annual training was the *Kaliwat Performing Artists Collective* with their exuberant songs and music, cultural dances, and colorful attire. Kaliwat's powerful interpretation of the rich indigenous culture and beauty of Mindanao and their original plays and performances that stem from their deep connection with the people of the region make their appearance an anticipated event in the training. Their cultural performances are widely

Diversity—this is one of the words that participants often note in the evaluation forms describing their overall MPI experience—an extraordinary opportunity to be in a setting that teems with diversity. This has always been a mainstay of each MPI experience—the openness to acknowledge and accept what is different; and the recognition that, that which makes us unique is something worth celebrating.

Leading this celebration of diversity during

acclaimed here and abroad. MPI has been quite fortunate to have established and sustained a relationship with this noteworthy cultural troupe, for over a decade now.

The opening ceremonies are never complete without what Kaliwat has called the *Parade of Nations*, where participants accompanied by Kaliwat members are welcomed into the activity hall of MPI. This longstanding tradition of MPI is its way of acknowledging those who are present including the country they represent. The Parade of Nations also signifies the start of the training for that week, where participants are called into the sacred space of trust, respect and openness.



The Parade of Nation: Kaliwat members with a participant from Nepal.

Each of the opening ceremonies boasted one amazing Inspirational Speaker who provided added drive and zest to the participants as they embarked on an intensive week-long journey of learning. The messages that the speakers shared during the three opening ceremonies were clearly a reflection of their personal convictions, with their words and statements undoubtedly resonating in the hearts of those who were present.



Sri, giving his inspirational message to the 2015 participants.

Sri Mayasandra, a member of MPI’s Board of Trustees and MCC’s Peace Coordinator for Asia, opened Week 1 with a wonderful and most fitting message that defines MPI and the spirit and the values it represents. Sri made clear the vision that MPI has for the annual training: *“a culture in which people respect each other, where everyone may speak freely, where no individual is held responsible or blamed for what a group or a nation may have done, and where stereotypes and assumptions are named and questioned.”* Sri gave words to MPI’s most cherished hope that MPI would be the *“beginning of many years ahead of growth and celebration of lifelong friendships.”*

In Week 2, **Kyoko Okumoto**, a dynamic MPI facilitator and the Chairperson of the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute’s (NARPI) Steering Committee, pushed the participants to step out of their comfort zone and not shy away from challenges as a person and as a peacebuilder. As persons working for social transformation, peacebuilders will always be put in a situation that makes one feel uncomfortable, limited, and scared; a state that one needs to recognize and overcome. She also shared one of the most essential traits a peacebuilder must have—trust. To quote Kyoko, *“trust builds relationships and it is in the relationship where inspiration is born and nurtured, and functions as new energy.”*

The words of **Al Fuertes**, one of MPI’s core facilitators and a professor at George Mason University in the USA, moved the participants to seriously consider the definition of being peacebuilders and what this entails. Al’s profound statements were reflective of this year’s theme, *Peacebuilders Lighting the Way Towards Justice and Reconciliation* and clearly

pointed out that the work of a peacebuilder is not a walk in the park. In ending his message, Al reflected on the logo of the 2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training. He likened peacebuilders to the candle in the image, and for a candle to be able to continue giving off light, it must be willing to melt itself. This symbolizes, Al said, that *“the work of a peacebuilder also involves sacrifices.”*



Participants of the RBC class during their class presentation.

summed up in the short phrase of one participant who said in her testimonial, *“MPI brings out the best in us.”*

Although each closing ceremony was clouded with tears of goodbye, it was also an event marked by friendship and togetherness. Music, rituals, songs, plays and dances celebrated shared memories and the promises made by new found friends. Participants, facilitators and secretariat alike offered prayers of goodwill and safe travels for those who would not be returning for the following week and blessings of hope and courage as they continue to be the light in their respective communities.

B. Cultural Night Celebrations

Every Wednesday of each week, MPI arranged for participants to be able to relax and break free from the rigors of the classroom through its Cultural Night Celebrations. Here, participants were exposed to other cultures as their co-participants proudly shared their home country’s poems, songs, folklore, traditional dresses and dances. Through the Cultural Night, MPI aims to cultivate understanding and develop appreciation for the diversity that exists among the participants.

In Week 1, participants and secretariat lit up the night with music, dances, songs and laughter. Videos of places, their traditions and other attractions were shown during this cultural evening, which was aptly themed *“Snapshots of Culture.”* The program began with a video presentation about Laos that ended with the Lao group teaching everyone a traditional Lao dance. There were videos presented about the



Indonesian participants teaching a traditional Indonesian dance to the audience.

beautiful country of Nepal and the historic Zamboanga City in the Philippines. A participant from Cameroon gave two amazing acting performances telling of poverty, injustice, and oppression in the country. Participants sang songs from Nepal, Pakistan and India. The evening concluded with those present dancing to an African beat with a participant from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) leading the audience.

Rhythm and Beats of the World was the theme of the second cultural night and indeed, the night was full of songs and dances performed by enthusiastic and excited participants from Bangladesh, DRC, India, Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan and the USA. There were collaborative performances from different countries, the most noteworthy being participants from Pakistan and India pairing up and dissolving political boundaries. A group of students from the USA lulled the audience with their beautiful voices and original songs. Indeed, it was a night made up of songs and music that were so deep and powerful that spoke of love, hope, the power to change and overcome, and the most wonderful message of all, peace.

The third and last cultural night was an evening of games and country trivia. Of course, the program would not have been complete without the singing and dancing performances from the freehearted and talented participants. One participant from India regaled the audience with a mime show on the prevention and control of malaria. Another participant from Vietnam brought his flute and played beautiful traditional music. Just like each cultural night, the evening was brought to a close with much music and dancing. Truly, these cultural evenings showed how friendships among participants had blossomed and the spirit of solidarity permeated the hearts of all.

C. *Weekend Outings*



Staff and participants taking a jump shot photo during the outing at Eden Resort.

During the 2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training, MPI arranged for participants to be able to see the sights and attractions of Davao City through weekend outings. For two weekends, participants were able to enjoy, relax and visit some of the most popular destinations in the city. The first weekend, participants toured around Eden Nature Park—a mountain resort and ecological sanctuary—exploring its butterfly and aviary centers, and walking on trails lined with wonderful smelling pine trees. The group was taken on an island trip during the second weekend where

they enjoyed swimming in the crystal clear waters off of Samal Island. For some, it was their first time at sea and floating in a vast expanse of water. Indeed, it was a refreshing and exciting experience for the participants to see and enjoy the wonders of Davao.

IV. THE ANNUAL TRAINING: SPECIAL EVENTS

A. MPI 2015 Public Forum

During the training, it has been a custom of MPI to organize a public forum. This forum is part of MPI's Special Events Program that is anchored within the Annual Training. It aims to provide a space where important issues that are not only relevant to Mindanao, but also to the rest of the world, are examined together by the annual training participants and others from the Philippines who are invited to attend the forum.



Resource speakers of the public forum ready for a serious Q & A session.

Bearing the theme *CSOs in the Peace Process: Stories of Overcoming Challenges and Moving Forward*, this year's public forum was organized in partnership with **Al Qalam Institute for Islamic Identities and Dialogue**. Al Qalam is a resource center of the Ateneo de Davao University. It is an Institute for understanding Islam, the Muslims and peoples of Mindanao that are culturally linked to other Southeast Asian communities, and mandated to carry out research, organize interfaith and intra-faith

dialogue, and undertake peacebuilding and Islamic knowledge production, preservation and research. The public forum focused on the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in helping shape peace processes and in moving these processes forward. It highlighted the responses as well as concrete steps taken by CSOs when confronted with unexpected events that threaten the very foundation of the peace process and the peace of a nation. Well-known resource speakers as well as selected MPI 2015 participants were invited to present their thoughts on this matter.

Providing a regional and international perspective on this discourse was **Kristian Herbolzheimer**, the current Director of the Colombia and Philippines Programmes at Conciliation Resource, a London-based international NGO supporting people at the heart of conflicts who are striving to find solutions. Kristian brought with him significant peacebuilding experience since he has worked for several years observing and analyzing peace processes in Colombia, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, the Basque region, and the Philippines, including the current peace talks of the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. In his talk, Kristian provided the participants a clear picture of the realities of the peace processes that are currently taking place not only in the Philippines but also in the rest of the region. He shared that peacebuilders must be ready to challenge simplistic approaches to peace, for there is not one way but myriad pathways to peace and one is as important as the other. Most importantly, Kristian stated that ordinary people still and always will have the power to make changes and initiate transformations.

Carmen Lauzon-Gatmaytan presented the Philippine perspective on the role of the country’s CSOs in supporting the peace process. Memen, as she is fondly known in development circles, is a member of the Steering Committee of the Women Engaged in Action on UNSCR¹ 1325 (WE Act 1325) that worked with government in the development of the Philippine National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and a long-time development worker with various local and international peace networks. Talking about her experiences with local CSOs in different capacities, Memen articulated the underlying principles sustaining civil society organizations—consistent engagement with and constant accompaniment of networks and the grassroots, and perseverance. She shared that, regardless of differing advocacies, mandates and visions, CSOs stand united in their pursuit for peace, in their support of the peace process, and in their aim for a long-lasting peace in all communities and in the rest of the country.

Three participants from the Annual Training were invited to share with the audience their insights from the presentations provided by the two keynote speakers along with a reflection on their peacebuilding work. Sharing about the peace and reconciliation work of the Government of the Solomon Islands was **Reuben Laiti Lilo**. **Elsa Joaquina Araujo Pinto** from Timor-Leste briefly described the challenges as well as lessons learned as Timorese continued moving forward from a painful, war-torn past to a more hopeful and peaceful future. Lastly, **Lancedell Jehu Mathews** from Liberia gave a very deep and inspiring reflection, saying that *“CSOs must be risk takers. Admittedly, risk taking can be dangerous; risk taking can be disastrous, but the fear of doing nothing is the greatest fear of all; for we cannot really explore new horizons on peace standing on the shores, in our comfort zones, stuck in the seat of times. The finest courage is the courage to continue despite failings or the risk of failings. And it is this courage that CSOs everywhere should cultivate and use. For many a times, many false steps are made by standing still.”*

After the various presentations, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions to the keynote speakers and respondents. **Joseph Germin L. Umadhay, Jr.**, Al Qalam’s Program Manager, closed the event by skillfully summarizing the ideas of the presenters as well as providing some wonderful insights of his own. It was truly a remarkable venue where mutual learning and sharing took place.

B. Open Session Activities

An addition to the regularly scheduled programs of MPI’s 2015 training were evening presentations where participants organized sessions or led workshops on issues that interested them and about which they were passionate. This was a less formal avenue created for everyone to gather, learn and share together as a community of peace workers and as an MPI family.

One of the secretariat volunteers, **Sharon Bulaclac**, who is a professor of History at Mindanao State University in Marawi City, served as a resource speaker for two evening sessions about



A night of conversation: Sharon sharing the history and struggle of Mindanao.

¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

Mindanao, in a talk entitled *Mindanao: The Indigenous and Migrant Story*. Sharon traced the history of Mindanao from the pre-Spanish colonial era to the present, including information on the peace processes being undertaken in the country, providing participants a glimpse of the causes of war and conflict that have engulfed this island for centuries.



Erica (wearing a black dress) teaching a dance move together with some of the participants during the dance workshop.

Erica Rose Jeffrey, another secretariat volunteer and a doctorate student from Queensland University of Technology in Australia, led a series of workshops that explored the connection between dance, movement and peacebuilding. Erica believes that dance and movement can serve as another tool for peacebuilding that can answer the call for creative approaches to peace. During the workshops, participants' notion about dance was challenged as they were confronted with unconventional actions and movements that surprisingly made them more aware of their body. There was an atmosphere of freedom as everyone was allowed to express themselves through their body without the fear of being judged or

ridiculed. In the discussion that followed, many participants spoke about how they can use dance and movement in their work for peace.

MPI facilitator, **Paulo Baleinakorodawa**, organized an evening session to commemorate the *International Women's Day of Peace and Disarmament*, which was a day to celebrate women's leadership and participation in peace processes around the world. Through a video presentation, Paulo showed the various initiatives and activities led by women leaders in different countries to combat corruption, demand for gender equality, fight against human rights abuses and change inhumane social structures in their respective countries.

Additionally, one participant organized a session about the work his organization is doing in Cameroon. **Julius Nzang Njume** shared the value of radio programs in raising awareness and education, encouraging discussions of relevant and sensitive issues and in promoting creativity among the younger generations on how to spread the message of peace and tolerance in the form of radio plays and dramas. Indeed, even in this day and age, radio programs still play an important role in communication, particularly in remote and far-flung areas, as one person who participated in this discussion shared.

V. MPI 2015: ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

At the end of each week, participants were given an opportunity to provide critical feedback and evaluate the overall 2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training as well as the individual courses they attended. Facilitators also completed separate evaluations. The outcome of the training

evaluation was a positive boost to those who were involved in making it happen. Of the 114 respondents, **75 or 66%** rated their overall training experience as **excellent**, while **30 or 26%** provided a **good** rating.

For 2015, MPI revised the evaluation form to get feedback from returning alumni. Several alumni came this year, and they were all positive in their responses, saying that MPI improved their skills and provided them with important tools that resulted in their being more confident in their work. Staff from sending organizations also shared how their colleagues who were MPI alumni inspired them to become better peace workers and persons, which motivated them to join the training this year.

Indeed, the majority of the participants found valuable and meaningful lessons from their MPI experience not only in terms of skills, theories and peacebuilding approaches, but also in providing them the opportunity to create new networks with different individuals, organizations and institutions. Most important of all was how MPI renewed and refueled their drained batteries so they could once again take up the work of peacebuilding and continue being the light in their respective communities.

VI. CONCLUSION

16 years, and the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute still stands as a beacon for learning, a wellspring of peace processes and initiatives, and a meeting place of the mind, heart and spirit for individuals who are willing to be pushed to the edge, be challenged by opportunity and be immersed in a diverse learning environment. Far more than just a training institute, MPI is a community of peacebuilders made up of people from all walks of life and coming from various corners of the world, each of whom carries a different perspective, belief system and way of life. They are individuals who practice different religions and who courageously come together in the spirit of trust and solidarity to learn, share, grow and become inspired.

MPI continues to provide those who come into its space with a structured environment for learning new skills and exploring new theories and principles that may sometimes come in conflict with their own beliefs. The Institute offers processes that transform these beliefs into new thoughts and ideas for change. Through the commendable efforts of everyone involved, MPI has remained a safe place where persons have the chance to listen to and tell their stories, a melting pot of ideas and perspectives handled with utmost respect and understanding, a place where beliefs and cultures intermingle and sometimes even clash, but where all are viewed in the light of acceptance and openness.

Each and every one who has been part of the MPI 2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training goes home richer not only with all the things they learned but also by all the friendships gained. They go home ready to grow even further in their role as peacebuilders, peace advocates or as parents, sisters, brothers and friends, bringing with them the light that will pave the way towards just and peaceful communities wherever they may be.



For more photos and videos of the **MPI 2015 Annual Peacebuilding Training**, please visit our website: www.mpiasia.net and like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/mpiasia



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