



**MINDANAO PEACEBUILDING INSTITUTE**

**2014 ANNUAL  
PEACEBUILDING  
TRAINING REPORT**

*May 12-30, 2014*

*The Ritz Hotel at Garden Oases, Porras St., Bo. Obrero Avenue, Davao City*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

**Davao City, Philippines.** Once more, the bustling city of Davao witnessed the gathering of 118 participants, 22 facilitators and 14 secretariat volunteers and staff from 25 countries, from all walks of life who came together to attend and participate in the once-a-year training of the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc. (MPI).

The **15<sup>th</sup> Annual Peacebuilding Training** held from May 12-30, 2014, proved to be an intensive training that explored major themes and cutting-edge debates on conflict transformation, peace education, and interfaith dialogue, among others. Various members of international and local non-government organizations, civil society, interfaith institutions, academe, government agencies, students and volunteers participated so that they would not only develop their skills and acquire new knowledge, but also build bridges of friendship and solidarity, all of which works towards the goal of peace.

To keep abreast of the changing landscape and address current and pressing issues on peace and conflict, three new courses were introduced in 2014. The new courses focused on conflict sensitive economic governance, resource-based conflict and designing effective peace interventions in fragile and unpredictable situations. The institute also organized a public forum that contributed to the training's in-depth learning environment. The forum was both a celebration and commemoration: a celebration of MPI's 15 years as a training institute and a commemoration of local and international peacebuilders and their contributions toward building a just peace for all.

This year, MPI again stayed true to its commitment to create a safe space where all peacebuilders, regardless of gender, faith, ethnicity, culture, and political background, could gather together to learn and understand basic concepts of peace and ways to resolve conflict and share and articulate one's own truths and opinions, questions and aspirations freely and without fear. MPI facilitated an empowering process to transform lives, renew commitments and invigorate individuals to continue their journey to building peace yet again.

The successful conclusion of the MPI 2014 Annual Peacebuilding Training was a collective effort of everyone: from the international and local facilitators, who have continuously dedicated themselves to creating a climate of respect and trust among the participants and providing dynamic and enriching courses; to the participants, who generously shared their stories, experiences and vibrant energy, willingly taking part in every activity; to the secretariat, who silently but diligently took their role to heart with much enthusiasm and passion. These are the people to whom MPI owes its gratitude for the successful outcome of the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Peacebuilding Training.

## II. MPI 2014: INSIDE THE ANNUAL TRAINING

### A. Courses and Facilitators

The array of courses offered during the 2014 Annual Peacebuilding Training involved a rigorous process of deliberation and decision-making within MPI. Each course's design, content and process were methodically prepared, with each component thoroughly discussed with the facilitators to ensure that these courses will satisfy the participant's need for substantive concepts and principles as well as necessary practical skills.

This year's annual peacebuilding training consisted of 13 courses classified into three categories: Foundation, Thematic and Field-Based. Four Foundation courses were offered in Week 1, five Thematic courses in Week 2, and two Field-Based Courses and two Thematic Courses in Week 3.

#### New Courses

Out of the 13 courses offered in the 2014 training curriculum, three of these were new (two classroom-based and one field-based course), which were as follows:

1. *From Understanding to Action: Theories and Tools for Designing Effective Peace and Development Interventions in Fragile and Unpredictable Situations*
2. *Conflict Sensitive Economic Governance: Peace-Enabling Approaches in Complex and Fragile Contexts; and*
3. *Resource-Based Conflict: Indigenous People's Perspectives and Approaches*

In developing new courses, MPI adheres to the principles of *applicability, relevance, necessity and social impact*. The institute also endeavors to keep abreast with emerging trends in the peacebuilding field by being cognizant of contemporary theories and concepts, including prominent issues on peace and justice, particularly in the Asia-Pacific Region. This, in turn, informs the regular updating and assessment of each course and plays a part in determining the course offerings for each year. In addition, the evaluation results of each course are taken into consideration.

#### MPI Facilitators



Facilitators in Week 1 with Christine Vertucci (left), MPI's Director.

For 15 years, MPI has continued to engage facilitators of high caliber and outstanding qualifications to teach its courses. MPI selects them based on complementing traits, skills, experiences and knowledge. Among the facilitators are some who have been with MPI since the first training in 2000, while others are MPI alumni and network partners, all well-experienced and adept in their field of expertise.

Joining this roster of distinguished personages were four highly-qualified mentors recruited by MPI for the new courses. **Joan McGregor** from South Africa is currently working as a Peace and Conflict Advisor for Responding to Conflict (RTC), an organization in the UK. **Elvira Ang Sinco** is a member of the Board of Trustees of MPI and the Coordinator of the Civil Peace Service for Bread for the World in the Philippines. **Francisco Lara, Jr.** or Pancho, as he is commonly known among his peers and **Nikki Philline de la Rosa** are both affiliated with International Alert, a London-based international organization known for its work in violent conflicts.

Below is the complete list of courses and facilitators for 2014:

Course Title	Facilitators
<b>Week 1 May 12-16, 2014</b>	
1. <i>Introduction to Conflict Transformation-ICT</i>	Wendy Kroeker (Canada) and Michael Frank A. Alar (Philippines)
2. <i>Peace Education: Concepts and Approaches-PECA</i>	Ofelia Durante (Philippines) and Essex Giguiento (Philippines)
3. <i>Fundamentals of Peacebuilding-FPB</i>	Paulo Baleinakorodawa (Fiji) and Maria Ida L. Giguiento (Philippines)
4. <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) and Elvira C. Ang Sinco (Philippines)
<b>Week 2 May 19-23, 2014</b>	
1. <i>Arts Approaches to Community-Based Peacebuilding-AACP</i>	Babu Ayindo (Kenya) and Kyoko Okumoto (Japan)
2. <i>Asian Faces of Justice: Restoring Harmony and Accountability in Asian Communities-AFJ</i>	Jeremy Simons (Philippines/USA) and Myla Leguro (Philippines)
3. <i>Conflict Resolution Skills: Mediation, Negotiation and Dialogue-CRS</i>	Paulo Baleinakorodawa (Fiji) and Michael Frank A. Alar (Philippines)
4. <i>Religion: Dialogue, Theories and Practice for Peacebuilding-REL</i>	Jonathan Rudy (USA), Maria Ida L. Giguiento (Philippines) and Norodin D. Salam (Philippines)
5. <i>Strengthening Peace Education Training Skills-SPE</i>	Wendy Kroeker (Canada) and Miriam L. Suacito (Philippines)
<b>Week 3 May 26-30, 2014</b>	
1. <i>Trauma Healing and Reconciliation in Divided Communities-TH</i>	Al Fuertes (USA/Philippines) and Miriam L. Suacito (Philippines)
2. <i>Conflict Sensitive Economic Governance: Peace-Enabling Approaches in Complex and Fragile Contexts-CSEG</i>	Francisco Lara, Jr. (Philippines) and Nikki de la Rosa (Philippines)
3. <i>Bottom-Up Transformation: Experiences and Practices of Grassroots Peacebuilding in Mindanao-BT</i>	Myla Leguro (Philippines), James Baay (Philippines) and MPI Partners
4. <i>Resource-Based Conflict: Indigenous People's Perspectives and Approaches-RBC</i>	MPI and Partners

## Classroom-Based Courses



*Participants of PECA making final adjustment to their costumes for their role-play exercise.*

field trips and creative outputs that “elicit” responses and bring the participants into the learning process.

This allows for an in-depth and reflective learning as facilitators are freed from the limiting notion of being the sole source of knowledge and enables a learning environment where participants learn from each other and from their own experiences and perspectives. Such processes allow each class to establish a sacred and safe place characterized by trust, honesty and respect, where the participants’ voices are heard and recognized.

Each course is facilitated by at least two trainers, each with varying degree of skills and experience but nevertheless an expert in the field of peacebuilding, in a complementary process of facilitation. The contents included in the course, methods and processes employed were designed by the facilitators but were also responsive to the needs of the participants. These qualities were reflected in the 13 courses offered at the 2014 Annual Training. Below are just some highlights from MPI’s 2014 Annual Peacebuilding Training.

In Week 1, the facilitators for the courses of *Introduction to Conflict Transformation* and *Fundamentals of Peacebuilding* collaborated to develop a class simulation-exercise. The exercise revolved around two indigenous tribes in conflict over equal access to resources, freedom of self-expression and attempts to come to a peaceful resolution. Participants were given different roles and tasks in the simulation, which they portrayed with remarkable



*Simulation Exercise: the signing of the peace agreement.*

realism. It was an intense and grounded portrayal of the realities of life that are taking place in many parts of the world. The members of the two classes were able to have a taste of what it would be like to be in a conflict-ridden situation: vulnerable, angry and afraid. They were able to put into practice the different theories, concepts and principles of peacebuilding and conflict transformation that they have learned in class into the simulation, honing their personal skills in the process.

*From Understanding to Action: Theories and Tools for Designing Effective Peace and Development Interventions in Fragile and Unpredictable Situations* class made use of various analytical tools in understanding the conflicts in the context of the participants' own communities through workshops and group exercises. This allowed them to articulate possible interventions that could be employed by individuals or organizations to resolve/de-escalate conflict in their own local settings.

One participant from the class of *Peace Education: Concepts and Approaches* led a Yoga session. He demonstrated the meditative and transformative aspects of this exercise and how it can be used as a tool in peace education and in developing a culture of peace. This showed that learning is a mutual and dynamic process where facilitators and participants are both teachers and learners and all have the responsibility to contribute and be fully engaged in the process.



Wendy, acting as host in a mock talk-show "Speaking Peace" with guest, Miriam Ferrer.

Resource speakers were also invited to provide valuable input on certain issues and topics, adding to the meaningful learning experiences of the participants. The *Conflict Resolution Skills: Mediation, Negotiation and Dialogue* class invited **Professor Miriam Coronel-Ferrer**, the first woman to chair the Government of the Philippines' (GPH) Peace Panel in the ongoing peace negotiations with the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front), to participate in a mock talk-show. The event was organized in coordination with the *Asian Faces of Justice, Religion, and Strengthening Peace Education Training Skills*

classes. Ms. Ferrer shared the difficulties, challenges and successes she encountered as the GPH Peace Panel Chair and being a "woman-negotiator" at the negotiating table. It was a rare and wonderful experience for the participants to have an informal but deep and serious exchange with Miriam on the issues of conflict and peace, justice, negotiations and gender.

Moreover, classes were not merely limited to the confines of the classroom. Some facilitators conducted field trips to provide participants with first-hand experiences and learn directly from local partners and known experts in the Philippines. The *Religion: Dialogue, Theories and Practice for Peacebuilding* class visited the Davao City Islamic Center and witnessed how our Muslim brothers and sisters practice their religion. Imams of this center also provided input on Islam.

The *Arts Approaches to Community-Based Peacebuilding* class met with **Kublai Millan**, a renowned Mindanao artist noted for his giant sculptures and rich, vivid paintings—artwork that celebrates the vibrant culture of Mindanao and its people—to learn from a master. For several hours, the group was immersed



Kyoko, with her AACP class working on a painting in Kublai's studio.

in Kublai's world of colors, paints, and brushes through a mini-workshop. The artist showed the group how the canvas can be a powerful instrument for peace, and for that brief moment, gave them a glimpse of the many possibilities of the role art can play in peacebuilding.

Facilitators also made use of modern technology to connect and converse with international resource speakers from across the globe and throw light on important discourse on peace and justice. The *Asian Faces of Justice: Restoring Harmony and Accountability in Asian Communities* class invited **Carl Stauffer**, an Assistant Professor of Development and Justice Studies, Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, USA, and an expert on restorative and transitional justice, to share with the class through Skype. Carl talked about the latest debates, bottlenecks and advantages of implementing a restorative justice system while sitting at his desk in the USA and delivering his talk to eager students in the Philippines.

*Trauma Healing and Reconciliation in Divided Communities* course dealt with the nature and dynamics of trauma and the promise of healing and reconciliation. Both facilitators and participants exerted much effort in creating a safe space for everyone to be able to share their own experiences of conflict and trauma and how this has affected them.



*CSEG class participants in deep discussion during a group exercise.*

One of the latest additions to the Annual Training, the *Conflict Sensitive Economic Governance: Peace-Enabling Approaches in Complex and Fragile Contexts* course, was developed to give peacebuilders a deeper understanding on how political and community-level conflicts are shaped by businesses, and to enhance the skills of participants in conflict-sensitive economic governance. The course proved to be highly intensive with rigorous academic exercises

that were offset with learning games such as peace monopoly.

### *Field-Based Courses*

The field-based courses provide learning opportunities for participants through immersion in local communities, where peacebuilding practices and initiatives are being implemented, challenged and refined. These courses make use of the various initiatives present in Mindanao and help participants see peacebuilding in action. Two field-based courses were offered in Week 3.

The *Bottom-Up Transformation: Experiences and Practices of Grassroots Peacebuilding in Mindanao* was both a classroom and field-based course, combining theoretical concepts with practical experience. The course was facilitated in partnership 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 Tulunan Community Development Center (TCDC) in North Cotabato.



Before going to the field, participants were provided with an overview of strategic peacebuilding approaches, theories of change and practices of grassroots peacebuilding in Mindanao. For the next three days, participants were given the chance to interact with the communities where they explored various indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms being practiced by the communities and witnessed how they engage in interreligious dialogue and peace education. The participants also learned about the ways these people are able to sustain their communities as zones of peace.



*Participants of the RBC class in a "welcome" ritual during their visit to the Higaunon community.*

The *Resource-Based Conflict: Indigenous People's Perspectives and Approaches* class brought 10 international participants to the heart of the Higaunon tribal communities, one of 18 major indigenous groups in Mindanao, in the mountainous region of Opol, Misamis Oriental. The course specifically focused on the nature and causes of resource-based conflicts, particularly relating to the mining industry, in the context of Indigenous People communities in Northern Mindanao. Over the span of five days, the participants were able to interact directly with tribal chieftains and key local community leaders

as well as concerned government agencies in exploring how conflict transformation and peacebuilding tools were incorporated into traditional conflict resolution approaches and processes.

In this learning environment, the participants came to understand the challenges and difficulties a peacebuilder encounters as well as possible approaches that can be employed when working with tribal communities facing the threats of resource-based conflict. This course was facilitated by MPI and its partner in the area, Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits, Inc. (EcoWEB).

In the evaluation, everyone expressed their appreciation for the field-based courses as it facilitated the bridging of what was learned in the classroom to the bigger picture of "actual" peacebuilding in the communities.

### *Documentation of New Courses*

MPI documents all new courses offered during the Annual Training in order to maintain its curriculum archives, serve as a road map for future improvement and enhancement, and provide a reference point for anyone interested in knowing how the Institute runs its courses and the methodologies used. For the MPI 2014 Annual Training, the following new courses were documented:

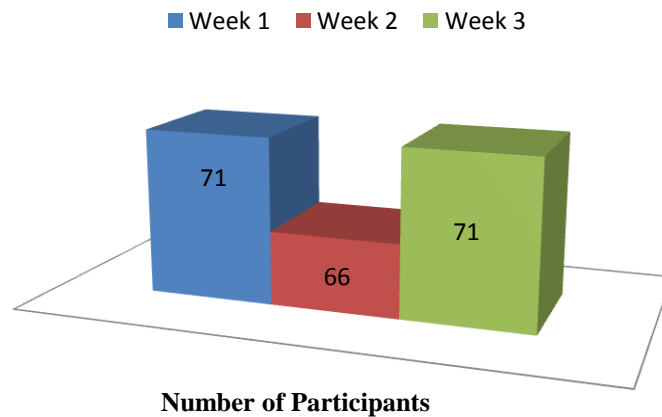
- ✓ *From Understanding to Action: Theories and Tools for Designing Effective Peace and Development Interventions in Fragile and Unpredictable Situations* offered in Week 1.
- ✓ *Conflict Sensitive Economic Governance: Peace-Enabling Approaches in Complex and Fragile Contexts* offered in Week 3.

- ✓ *Resource-Based Conflict: Indigenous People's Perspectives and Approaches* offered in Week 3.

MPI enlisted qualified volunteer documenters as part of the Secretariat Team to record the entire proceedings that covered the strategies, methods, activities and tools employed by the facilitators as well as the participants' sharing, discussions, stories, and insights that unfolded during the course. While the documentation of these courses is not for public consumption, it can be viewed at the MPI office in hardcopy form.

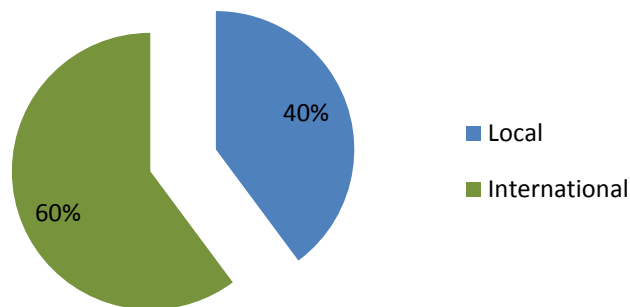
**B. Participants: Representation and Composition**

**Figure 1. Distribution of Participants Per Week**



The three-week Annual Peacebuilding Training saw the gathering of 118 participants in Davao City, Philippines. Of these, 71 attended Week 1, 66 in Week 2 and 71 in Week 3. Participants have the prerogative to participate for one week, two weeks or three weeks, depending on the courses that they desire to take. As shown in Figure 1 above, the majority of the participants or 60% enrolled in foundation courses in Week 1 and the thematic and field-based courses in Week 3.

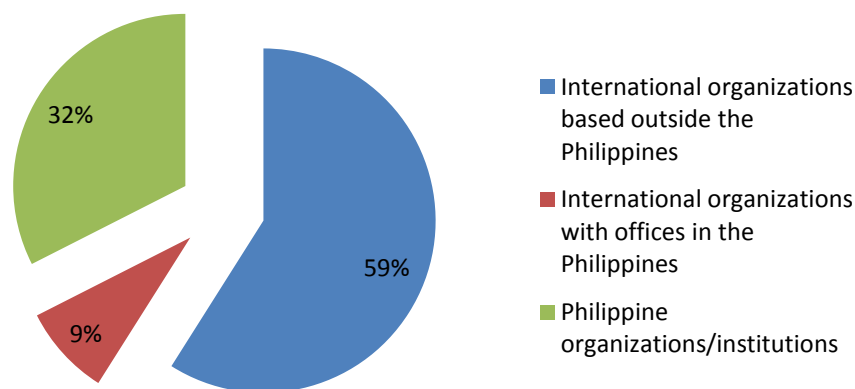
**Figure 2. Composition of Participants**



Similar to last year, more than half of the participants were international in this year’s training. As reflected in Figure 2 above, 60% or 71 from the 118 participants were international as opposed to only 40% or 47 Filipino participants. We believe the low number of local participation is due to the limited budget allotted for staff development in many Philippine organizations and the difficulty in raising funds from donors for training activities.

A large number of international delegations came from Southeast Asia and North America. Others came from Africa, Europe, Northeast Asia, the Pacific, and South America. Filipino participants came from many parts of the Philippines, the majority of whom were from the different urban areas in the country. In Mindanao this included the cities of Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Zamboanga, Cotabato, Iligan and Davao. Participants came from Manila, Quezon City and Paranaque in Luzon. There were 25 countries represented in MPI 2014.

**Figure 3. Type of Organization Represented**



Given that 60% of the participants were internationals, it is not surprising that the majority of the participants or 59% work for organizations that are based outside the Philippines. This is consistent with the figure of last year’s 58%. One major factor for this high percentage is the marketing strategy employed by the institute. For a number of years, MPI has been advertising 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. In addition, MPI has a growing 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.

Only 32% constituted participants working in local organizations and institutions. The remaining 9% were individuals working with international organizations with offices in the Philippines.

There was a total of 62 different local and international organizations and institutions represented during the training. International institutions and/or organizations based outside of the country constituted 43 of the 62 total that are listed below:

## **INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **AFRICA**

1. AJP Cedes – Cameroon
1. Culture Radio – Sierra Leone
2. Freetong Players International – Sierra Leone
3. Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)
4. Universite Libre Des Pays Des Grands Lacs (UPLGL) – DR Congo

### **ASIA & THE PACIFIC**

1. Bougainville Women’s Federation – Papua New Guinea
2. Cambodia Family Support
3. Catholic Archdiocese of Mt. Hagen – Papua New Guinea
4. Christian Study Centre – Pakistan
5. Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua – Indonesia
6. Gilgal Mission Trust – India
7. GITJ Synode – Indonesia
8. Hiroshima University – Japan
9. HuMa – Indonesia
10. International Assistance Mission (IAM) – Afghanistan
11. MCC Bangladesh
12. MCC India
13. MCC Indonesia
14. MCC Laos
15. MCC Myanmar
16. MCC Nepal
17. MCC Northeast Asia – China
18. Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India (MCSFI)
19. Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development – Nepal
20. National Planning Commission Secretariat – Nepal
21. Pantajali Bioresearch Institute – India
22. Peace in China
23. Social Development Initiative (SDI) – Myanmar
24. Society for Nature, Education and Health – India
25. Solidarita Mama-mama Pasar Asli Papua (SolPaP) – Indonesia
26. Solomon Islands Government Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (MNURP)
27. The NGO Forum in Cambodia
28. Tokai Language Inc. – Japan
29. UNDP Nepal
30. World Renew – Bangladesh

### **EUROPE**

1. Brot für die Welt-Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (BftW) – Germany
2. Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Centre for Science and Peace Studies – Germany
3. Terre des Hommes – Germany
4. University Frankfurt – Germany

### **NORTH AMERICA**

1. Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church - USA
2. Environment Canada

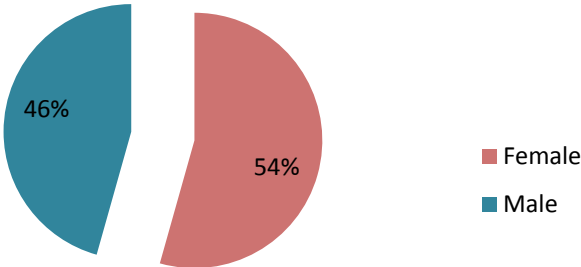
- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. George Mason University – USA</li> <li>4. University of Notre Dame, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies – USA</li> </ol> |
|---|

Of the 62, five were international organizations with offices in the country and 14 were local organizations. These are enumerated in the table below:

<p><b>Academic Institutions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. De La Salle University, College of Saint Benilde – Metro Manila</li> <li>2. Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, Institute for Peace and Development in Mindanao</li> <li>3. Southern Christian College – Cotabato Province</li> </ol>
<p><b>Government Organizations:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Armed Forces of the Philippines Peace Process Office – Metro Manila</li> <li>2. Local Government Unit of Akbar Municipality, Mayor’s Office – Basilan Province</li> <li>3. Local Government Unit of Paglat Municipality, Municipal’s Planning and Development Office – Maguindanao Province</li> <li>4. Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process – Metro Manila</li> </ol>
<p><b>Non-Government Organizations:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. AHFI-Radyo Gandingan – Cotabato City</li> <li>2. Balay Mindanaw – Cagayan de Oro City</li> <li>3. <i>Catholic Relief Services*</i> – Davao City</li> <li>4. <i>Civil Peace Service-Bread for the World*</i> – Cotabato Province</li> <li>5. <i>forumZFD*</i> – Davao City</li> <li>6. Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID) – Davao City</li> <li>7. Kadtuntaya Foundation Inc. (KFI) – Cotabato City</li> <li>8. <i>Kindernothilfe E.V.*</i> – Metro Manila</li> <li>9. Peace Advocates Zamboanga – Zamboanga City</li> <li>10. Succeed Global – Davao City</li> <li>11. <i>UNICEF Philippines*</i> – Davao City</li> </ol>
<p><b>Faith-Based Organization:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual – Davao City</li> </ol>

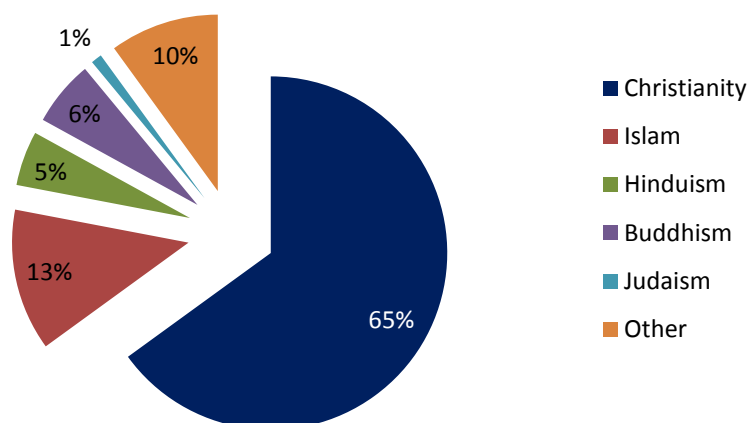
*\*International Organizations with offices in the Philippines*

**Figure 4. Gender Distribution of Participants**



In terms of gender, female participants were relatively higher than that of male participants. The former comprised 54% or 62 persons with the latter representing 46% or 56 persons as illustrated in Figure 4 above.

**Figure 5. Religious Affiliation of Participants**



The MPI 2014 participants came from diverse religious backgrounds, the majority of whom were Christians followed by Muslims. Other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism were also represented. Several participants declined to state any religious affiliation.

### ***C. Secretariat***

MPI provides opportunities for young professionals, development workers and fresh undergraduates who are interested in the field of peacebuilding to apply as volunteer members of the Annual Training Secretariat Team where they serve as class assistants, class documenters, social/special events coordinators, photographers and videographers. This is in line with 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.



*A photo-shoot of the MPI 2014 secretariat.*

To be part of the secretariat, volunteers must possess a genuine desire to participate in and contribute to peace initiatives in their own communities after the training. They also must be willing to work long hours and under pressure, have an openness to work in a multi-cultural setting and be team players.

The MPI 2014 Secretariat Team was composed of MPI staff and volunteers recruited from different parts of the country and abroad. The majority of the volunteers were Filipinos coming from Marawi City, Cotabato City and even as far as Metro Manila and Sulu. Completing the team were two international volunteers: a United Methodist Church intern

from the Democratic Republic of Congo who has been assigned to MPI and a recent graduate of Canadian Mennonite University from Winnipeg, Canada.

In an effort to foster a spirit of teamwork and camaraderie, build trust and support, and provide a space to know each member of the secretariat, MPI conducted a one-day teambuilding activity prior to the training proper. The activity enabled the team to gauge one another's strengths and weaknesses, allowing each member to know where one could complement the other. The volunteers also participated in daily debriefings convened after the day's classes. The debriefings tackled pressing issues of the day, problems encountered and how they were managed, and prepared the volunteers for the next day's activities. It was during these times that the volunteers "recharged their batteries" and reenergized one another to face the next day of the training with enthusiasm and gusto.

In the evaluations, both facilitators and participants expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for the vibrant energy of the secretariat and the readiness of the members to be of assistance at all times. In the words of one of the facilitators: "*You (the Secretariat Team) hold the MPI community together every year.*" MPI is truly grateful for each member's dedication and commitment despite the many difficulties encountered during the training.

### III. THE ANNUAL TRAINING: A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY

#### A. Opening and Closing Ceremonies

Part of the overall MPI experience is being in a remarkable situation where one is able to experience diversity; diversity in every sense of the word. One is exposed to a mix of nationalities, religions, beliefs, and cultures. The institute deepens this experience by engaging cultural performers who demonstrate the rich culture and beauty of Mindanao through their elaborate songs, dances and costumes.



*The Kaliwat Performing Artists Collective performing "singkil," a traditional Maranao dance.*

This year, the Kaliwat Performing Artists Collective once again graced the opening and closing ceremonies of the Annual Training. Kaliwat is known for its original plays and performances that draw inspiration from the stories and cultural traditions of the people of Mindanao. They have performed both locally and abroad and have received numerous awards for their

performances. For nine years, Kaliwat has tirelessly rendered its beautiful and artistic performances to the awestruck eyes of the training participants.

One of the most awaited parts in the opening ceremonies is the *Parade of Nations*, so called because the performers usher into the activity hall those present by country. It is MPI's way of acknowledging the participants, facilitators, secretariat and guests, and the countries they represent. The parade also symbolically marks the start of the training for that week, where each participant is brought into the safe confines of trust, respect and openness.



MPI "Parade of Nations"

Inspirational speakers were invited for each opening ceremony to motivate and energize the participants as they start their week-long journey of intensive learning and sharing. Three capable, committed peacebuilders shared their inspirational message during each of the three opening ceremonies.

In Week 1, **Wendy Kroeker**, one of MPI's core facilitators, shook the entire room with her impassioned message, each word of which resonated to the very core of those present. Her words carried everyone through the rigorous weeks of theories and concepts, discussions and workshops, and still echo even after the training: "... *What does it mean to desire to be a peacebuilder? Simply being here for the training will not change you or the world. You must know why you are here. You must cultivate a hope and a belief that it's true, you can be part of the change in this world.*"

**Mike Alar**, another dynamic MPI facilitator, MPI alumnus and once a member of the Secretariat Team, shared his secret on how he sustained his energy and motivation to continue working for peace at the opening ceremony of Week 2. What was striking in his message was his emphasis on the important role each one plays, no matter how small or trivial it may seem, towards the struggle for peace; a fact which is quite easy to overlook, but one that should never be forgotten.

In Week 3, participants heard the words of a fellow participant and MPI alumna. **Maria Esperanza Liamco** or "*Pitts*," as she prefers to be called, shared her journey from being a simple IT personnel dealing with a world of programming and systems analyses to becoming a peacebuilder and peace advocate involved in the drafting of the peace agreement between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. She shared how attending the training at MPI "*fanned the flame of peace-works in her*" and opened her mind to a much broader perspective on peace.



Several participants of the CRS class during their closing presentation.

The closing ceremony held each evening of the last day of the week formally ended the week-long training. Included in every



closing program were class presentations and testimonials given by the participants. The class presentations artistically and creatively presented the lessons learned in the courses while the testimonials allowed identified participants to share their insights during the training and their continued commitment to work for peace. To quote one of the participants in relation to her MPI 2014 experience, it was “*life changing.*”

Each closing ceremony was a celebration of friendship and solidarity, characterized with music, rituals, songs, plays and dances. It was also the time for saying goodbye and offering prayers of goodwill to those who would not be returning for the following week, sending them off with a collective blessing of peace to continue their journey in their respective communities.

### ***B. Cultural Night Celebrations***

The Cultural Night that MPI organizes every week during the three-week training is another avenue where different cultures are celebrated, shared and affirmed. It is a time when participants can relax and unwind after the mind calisthenics of the formal class sessions as they are entertained by their fellow participants’ home country’s poems, songs, folklores, traditional dresses and dances. More importantly, the Cultural Night aims to cultivate understanding and develops appreciation for the diversity that exists among the participants.



*An intricate dance performance by a Myanmar participant during the Week 2 Cultural Night Celebration.*

“*A Taste of Asia*” was the theme of the cultural evening in Week 1, so named because all the presenters were from different countries of Asia. The program opened with a Cultural Fashion Show presented by female participants from China, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines wearing beautiful traditional attire of their home country. It was followed by a presentation of the different delicacies of Mindanao, particularly the “*durian*” fruit famous in Davao City, where everyone’s taste buds were tantalized by strange and wonderful flavors. The evening was brought to a close with the calming effect of a Yoga session led by one Indian participant.

For Week 2, male participants from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and the Philippines modeled their country’s traditional attire to the applause and delight of everyone present. A participant from Myanmar enthralled the group with a beautiful dance from her country. Another from Indonesia ended the evening with a short video from his home province, detailing the intricate process of making *batik*, a technique of cloth dyeing.

The third and last cultural celebration was aptly called “*The World in One Night*” because of the coming together of representatives from 12 countries in a night of fun and fellowship. Tongue-twisters from Germany, country trivia from all over the world, games, singing, and

dancing filled the evening air. Several members of the secretariat also demonstrated their amazing talent in singing. At the end of the program, everyone danced to the sound of the “Cha Cha Slide.” Indeed, it was a great way to end the night as a wonderful feeling of friendship and solidarity pervaded the hearts of all.

### ***C. Weekend Outings***



*Participants and secretariat members enjoying a stroll in Eden*

To give the participants the opportunity to explore and see the beauty of Davao City, MPI organized two weekend outings. At the end of the first week, a group of participants was taken to Eden Nature Park, one of the most popular destinations in Davao City for relaxation and eco-tourism. Participants strolled trails dotted with pine trees and explored the park’s aviary and butterfly garden. On the second weekend, participants walked the white sand of

Samal Island, swam in its crystal clear waters, and enjoyed all sort of rides and fun-filled activities. All in all everyone had a chance to relax and enjoy the company of each other surrounded by the natural wonders of Davao.

## **IV. THE ANNUAL TRAINING: SPECIAL EVENT**

A Public Forum entitled “15 Years and Beyond – Building Just Peace for All: Commemorating Peacebuilders Around the Globe” was held on May 17, 2014, as part of the Institute’s Special Events Program. The forum was a way of celebrating MPI’s 15 years of peace training and paying tribute to peacebuilders not only in Mindanao but also throughout the world, particularly commemorating the memory of Nelson Mandela and the ideals he represented.

**Myla Leguro**, a member of MPI’s Board of Trustees, an MPI facilitator and one of the few involved in the birthing of the institute, eloquently recounted the history of MPI, from its humble beginnings to what it has become today: a resource for all peacebuilders around the world. Myla concluded by articulating the many possibilities that are before MPI as it matures as a training institute and challenged it to creatively actualize these dreams with courage and resolve.

**Guimel Alim**, the Executive Director of Kadtuntaya Foundation, Inc., a local organization based in Cotabato City, raised the voices of the peacebuilders in Mindanao and their efforts to make the island a peaceful place. He addressed the myriad of contributions made by peacebuilders in Mindanao to realize the completion of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

As the Chairperson of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, the largest consortium of civil society organizations in Mindanao with over 168 members, Guiamel is more than familiar with the pains and gains involved in peacekeeping. He further cautioned that the signing of the peace agreement was just the beginning of a long and arduous journey to peace that requires the continuous vigilance and engagement of peacebuilders.

**Joan McGregor**, an MPI facilitator and an activist during the South African anti-apartheid movement, talked at length about Nelson “Madiba” Mandela and his efforts and struggles for the liberation of South Africa from the shackles of apartheid. She shared the qualities that made Mandela an effective and inspiring peacebuilder and a formidable foe of the apartheid system. During the infamous Rivonia Trial, Mandela used the system, which was set up to judge and punish him, as a platform for change. By doing so, Mandela taught us that we can speak back to power without losing our dignity and without fear. Joan emphasized that Madiba was first and foremost a human being who maintained his humanity amidst all the mistreatment and humiliations. In the end, what Mandela gave us was a commitment to create a future that could embrace all and where each person could make a decision that, even in the face of suffering and powerlessness, one can still be a resource for peace.

**Babu Ayindo**, a Kenyan educator in the arts and MPI 2014 facilitator, concluded the forum with a message that encouraged everyone to take risks and never be afraid to build bridges and connections because one will never know where or to what this will lead. He ended by sharing a quotation from Steve Biko, a South African who died in detention during the anti-apartheid movement, which Babu paraphrased into this statement: *“The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world a military and industrial look, but the great gifts still have to come from Mindanao, from the Philippines, from Africa (and from each one of us) in giving the world a more human face.”*

To add a special dimension to this celebration, MPI 2014 participants sang the South Africa National Anthem “*Nkosi Sikele*” filled with love and respect about Nelson “Madiba” Mandela that was adapted by the African participants for this occasion. Kaliwat rendered an outstanding performance depicting the struggle for freedom and justice in Mindanao for the Bangsamoro people.



*MPI 2014 participants singing a tribute song for Mandela.*

The forum was indeed a remarkable venue where mutual learning and sharing took place among the people of Mindanao and those from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and North America.

## V. MPI 2014: ANNUAL TRAINING ASSESSMENT

### A. Participants' Feedback

At the end of the three-week training, the participants and facilitators evaluated the Annual Peacebuilding Training in general and the courses they attended and facilitated in particular. The result of the overall institute evaluation was both inspiring and encouraging. Out of the 109 respondents, 82 or **75%** gave an overall rating of *excellent* to the **MPI 2014 Annual Peacebuilding Training** while **22%** or 25 respondents rated the training *good*.

The majority of the participants expressed that the courses were relevant to their line of work and that the skills and tools that they learned would greatly contribute to their efficacy in their job. One comment from one participant that was striking and humbling was the realization after the training that “... *it made me understand my work better, especially what it's really like to work for peace. It gave me courage. It made me realize that it's not easy to be a peacebuilder. It takes a lot of understanding and effort to truly become one.*”

Indeed, the evaluation of the training is another attestation that MPI is crucial for peacebuilders: providing skills and bridging diversity among peacebuilders. It has again facilitated an empowering process to transform lives, renew commitments and invigorate individuals to continue their journey to building peace.

## VI. CONCLUSION

So long as the world is fraught with conflicts and political instability and countries are marred with wars and violence, MPI will continue to offer education and training to peacebuilders and social change advocates that are working tirelessly towards peace and justice. At the heart of the Annual Training are the people who have come and acquired the tools and skills necessary for peacebuilding, and in the same manner, have established friendships, built allies, and renewed their commitment to persist in their visions of peace.

We go home firmer in the belief that peace is not one person's struggle, that what we do is not meaningless, that what we hoped for in each of our communities is possible and within our grasp. We go home overflowing with stories of survival and defeat, and rising up again, of meeting and overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges, of perseverance in the face of difficulties, of faith, and of hope. We go home having witnessed a diversity of peoples, histories, cultures, ideas, beliefs, and principles, affirmed and celebrated; and differences and divisions acknowledged and respected, never scorned or held in fear.

In the end, we learned more than we shared and learned things that we could do that we did not know we could do before. Returning from the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Peacebuilding Training, with our imaginations stretched, our hearts full, our minds opened and our spirits fortified, we continue building and transforming just and peaceful communities throughout the world.



For more photos and videos of the **MPI 2014 Annual Peacebuilding Training**,  
please visit our website: [www.mpiasia.net](http://www.mpiasia.net)  
and like us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/mpiasia](http://www.facebook.com/mpiasia)

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