

2019 Annual Peacebuilding Training Report

Positive Engagements in Peacebuilding

Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute



May 13 to 31, 2019
Mergrande Ocean Resort
Davao City, Philippines




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Director's Message

The 20th Annual Peacebuilding Training of the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute again created the sacred space for 107 peacebuilders from around the world to learn, question, and challenge cutting-edge peacebuilding concepts and approaches; and to explore and appreciate with openness and gentleness differences in culture, traditions, beliefs and worldviews. Through these dynamic processes, these peacebuilders, with the facilitators, volunteers and staff, came to new realizations about themselves, their work, and their societies that contribute to the transformation of our world into a place of justice and peace. As they return to their home communities, these peace advocates, now fortified with new perspectives and understanding, continue their positive engagements in peacebuilding in richer and more authentic ways.



MPI fulfilled its mandate to build the capacities of individuals and their institutions for the creation of just and peaceful communities throughout Asia-Pacific and the world. It strengthened its critical mass of peacebuilders by extending its reach to another part of the world—the Middle East—by receiving participants from Syria, the first time in its 20-year history. Another milestone was achieved at the 20th Annual Peacebuilding Training: 30 nations were represented, the most diverse composition of trainees and facilitators so far.

In our world today, where lies and distortions of truth, divisiveness, bigotry, and demonization of “the other” are proclaimed by those in positions of power and poison the hearts and minds of so many, it is of utmost importance that we, who call ourselves peacebuilders, build bridges of understanding and friendship, seek our commonalities, work untiringly to reverse this situation, and wholeheartedly embrace our common humanity. Through these sincere and committed ac-

tions will fear and insecurity disappear to be replaced by trust, dignity and respect.

MPI is a beacon of light and joy; a Peace Home as one of the MPI 2019 participants described MPI. It is here at the 20th Annual Peacebuilding Training and at the past trainings where peacebuilders from around the globe experience openness and the expansion of their horizons. They come to understand each other's struggles; they go home inspired and with a deeper sense of being an integral part of a global network working for justice and peace.

To all the participants, facilitators, volunteers, partners and staff, MPI extends its deepest gratitude and heartfelt thanks for making this year's Annual Peacebuilding Training a resounding success!

Christine Vertucci
Director



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Introduction

The Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc. (MPI) for almost two decades has been providing a safe space for learning, unlearning and re-learning; and opportunities for future collaborations and engagements. The Annual Peacebuilding Training is a place where participants can build strong relationships, appreciate diversity, and nurture personal and professional growth. This was again in evidence when MPI conducted its 20th Annual Peacebuilding Training from May 13 to 31, 2019, at Mergrande Ocean Resort, Davao City, Philippines.

This year's Annual Peacebuilding Training was the most diverse in terms of countries represented. Participants, facilitators and secretariat members came from 30 countries from Asia-Pacific, Africa, Central America, Europe, the Middle East and North America. One hundred seven participants, 21 facilitators, and 16 secretariat volunteers and staff participated in this most auspicious event.

MPI is very grateful to the facilitators and secretariat volunteers, as well as to the Mergrande staff and management for their unwavering commitment, support, and solidarity every Annual Peacebuilding Training. You have been the core players in making the training run as smoothly as possible. Most of all, we thank our participants for their active involvement, without whom this training would not have been a reality. Thank you for your continuous interest in exploring ways and learning how to become effective peacebuilders in your own community.

“MPI shows that they are really into this kind of work after 20 years. The professionalism, technical skills, resources and program is properly done or well-coordinated.”



A QUICK LOOK AT 2019 STATS

Participants: 107



National: 49
Male: 56

International: 58
Female: 51



Christians: 68
Buddhists: 2
Agnostic: 1

Muslims: 26
Hindu: 1
Other: 9

Facilitators: 21

National: 9
International: 12



2019 Secretariat Team: 16



9 Volunteers
7 MPI Staff

Organizations Represented: 61



Academe: 13
GOs: 2
NGOs: 12

Faith-Based: 1
INGOs: 27
Religious Insts: 6

MPI 2019 Courses and Facilitators

Since the beginning, MPI has developed courses that respond to the changes in peacebuilding approaches in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The classrooms provide a safe space for a respectful discourse among the facilitators and the participants coming from diverse backgrounds and cultures. MPI courses are elicitive in nature, engaging the participants in more innovative and participatory approaches to learning. The courses offered at MPI are classified into three categories: Foundation, Thematic and Field-Based.

Thirteen courses were offered during MPI's 2019 Annual Peacebuilding Training. The courses were selected based on their applicability and relevance to, necessity for, and social impact on peacebuilding work. In developing new courses, MPI takes into consideration the recommendations and suggestions from the alumni and MPI's staff and Board of Trustees. All of the courses were taught by at least two facilitators, with the exception of two courses that had one facilitator and the assistance of resource persons.

Over the years, MPI has formed a group of seasoned international and national facilitators in various areas of peacebuilding and conflict transformation at both the academic and practical levels. At the same time, MPI makes an effort to seek new facilitators as a way to expand its resource pool and keep it dynamic by bringing in those on the cutting-edge of peacebuilding practices. This includes MPI alumni, who have practiced in the field and then return to MPI to serve as facilitators in a mutually beneficial process that actualizes MPI's commitment to multiply its resources and sustain its work. This year, there were 21 distinguished and high-caliber facilitators, 12 of whom were international facilitators from Asia-Pacific, Africa, and North America and nine from the Philippines. Out of the 21 facilitators, six of them were new, two of whom were alumni of previous Annual Peacebuilding Training Programs.



Week 1: May 13 – 17, 2019 | FOUNDATION COURSES

From Understanding to Action: Designing Conflict Sensitive Interventions (FUA)

Phyusin Ngwethaw (Myanmar) and Joan McGregor (South Africa/United Kingdom)

Fundamentals of Peacebuilding (FPB)

Paulo Baleinakorodawa (Fiji) and Gabrielle Aziza Sagaral (Philippines)

Introduction to Conflict Transformation (ICT)

Wendy Kroeker (Canada) and Michael Frank A. Alar (Philippines)

Mainstreaming Peace Education in Communities and Schools (MaPEC)

Orson Sargado (Philippines) and Kathy Matsui (Japan)

Week 2: May 20 – 24, 2019 | THEMATIC COURSES

Arts Approaches to Community-Based Peacebuilding (AACP)

Babu Ayindo (Kenya) and Kyoko Okumoto (Japan)

Be the Change: Designing Transformative Justpeace through the Power of Nonviolence (ANV)

Jonathan Rudy (USA) | Resource Person: Asimah Naga (Philippines)

Conflict Resolution Skills: Mediation and Dialogue (CRS)

Paulo Baleinakorodawa (Fiji) and Wendy Kroeker (Canada)

Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation for Peacebuilding Practitioners (MEPP)

Mark M. Rogers (USA) and Myla Leguro (Philippines)

Understanding Culture and Identity as a Resource for Peacebuilding (UCIRP)

Joan McGregor (South Africa/United Kingdom) | Resource Person: Marites T. Gonzalo (Philippines)

**Bottom-Up Transformation: Experiences and Practices of Grassroots Peacebuilding in Mindanao (BT)
(Classroom and Field-Based Course)**

James Baay (Philippines), Ma. Concepcion Nobleza (Philippines) and MPI Partners

Dealing with Trauma in Times of Conflict (DTTC)

Gladston Xavier (India) and Florina Xavier (India)

**Indigenous Peoples' Culture-Based Conflict Resolution Practices: Its Potential Contribution to Mainstream
Peacebuilding in the Philippines (IPCB) (Field-Based Course)**

Joey Ganio Evangelista, MJ (Philippines), Marites T. Gonzalo (Philippines) and Primo Mique Fagel, Jr., MJ (Philippines)

Interreligious Peacebuilding: Approaches for Cooperation, Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (IRPB)

Shamsia Ramadhan (Kenya) and Myla Leguro (Philippines)



New Courses Offered at MPI 2019

Indigenous Peoples' Culture-Based Conflict Resolution Practices: Its Potential Contribution to Mainstream Peacebuilding in the Philippines (IPCB) (Field-Based Course)

Coming from four countries, six participants were immersed in the Tagakolu community for a full three days to experience life with the indigenous Tagakolu people as well as to learn about their conflict resolution practices in Malita, Davao Occidental. The participants spent time at the Malita Tagakaulo Mission (MATAMIS) station of the Diocese of Digos for an orientation prior to the immersion and for debriefing afterwards. They had to walk up slippery mountain paths to reach their hosts in the hinterlands of the province. There they met and interacted with the Elders, families and children, asking questions and learning about indigenous ways to resolve conflict.

“... peacebuilding should be rooted in the people; it is not something we/or anyone could bring in or forcibly enforce.”

What did participants gain from IPCB?

- After having personal interactions and conversations with the Tagakolu Elders, leaders and community members, the participants were able to recognize practices related to conflict resolution from an indigenous perspective.
- They were able to understand how the Tagakolu's culture and traditions (i.e. dance, music, cultural circle) played a role in community-based peacebuilding.
- They had a greater appreciation for an indigenous perspective on peace.

Who were the facilitators?

Three staff from MATAMIS jointly facilitated this field-based course with the aid of the organization's team members. **Ganio Evangelista, MJ** is an Ilocano priest from Baguio City. He has been working at MATAMIS since 2011. His fellow Missionaries of Jesus priest, **Primo Mique Fagel, Jr., MJ**, has been working at MATAMIS since 2015. He is also an Ilocano from La Union Province in Luzon and was involved in the ministry of interreligious dialogue. **Marites “Matet” T. Gonzalo** is a

Tagakolu anthropologist from Malita. She is the Coordinator of the two community-based Indigenous Peoples' schools of MATAMIS and a Tagakolu youth program (Ubun na Kettal). In addition, Matet is a member of the MPI Board of Trustees.



Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation for Peacebuilding Practitioners (MEPP)

“ Making M&E fun, even though you were grappling with the subject, resulted in deepening our understanding of the subject. ”

Seventeen participants from 10 countries explored the practicalities of how to design and implement monitoring and evaluation programs in their areas or organizations.

What did participants gain from MEPP?

- The participants in this course learned about theories of change, indicators, monitoring, evaluation design, and tools for reflective practices.
- By the end of the course, they were able to enhance their evaluative thinking.
- The participants developed skills in utilization-focused evaluation and working with qualitative data through different approaches.



Who were the facilitators?

Mark M. Rogers has worked for over 12 years helping other peacebuilding practitioners use program evaluation to improve their practices. He has served on conflict analysis teams and taught peacebuilding evaluation at the peacebuilding institutes at American University and Eastern Mennonite University in the USA. This was Mark's first time facilitating a course at MPI, but not his first time to work with **Myla Leguro** as both have worked together in the M&E field for a number of years. Myla is the Peacebuilding Technical Advisor of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Philippines. She is the President of the MPI Board of Trustees and one of the key persons in the establishment of MPI.

Foundation Courses

Foundation courses lay out the fundamental parameters, approaches and processes of peacebuilding. For MPI 2019, four foundation courses were offered in Week 1.



From Understanding to Action: Designing Conflict Sensitive Interventions (FUA)

Sixteen participants from six countries came together to learn the different tools for and approaches to designing conflict sensitive interventions in multi-sectoral communities.

What did participants gain from FUA?

“I find it very useful for conducting interventions, especially in the conflict-affected communities in our areas through applying the Mapping stages and ABC triangle.”

- The participants acquired knowledge of the current frameworks and approaches of context conflict analysis at different community and societal levels.
- By the end of the course, they were able to design and formulate concrete steps from analysis to relevant action towards effective change to transform the conflict and work towards sustainable peace.
- Developing their understanding of the concept of Do No Harm, the participants recognized the importance of conflict sensitive approaches.

Who were the facilitators?

Phyusin Ngwethaw and **Joan McGregor** teamed up for this course for the fourth time. Phyusin, an MPI alumna, is the Director of an NGO in Myanmar where she facilitates designing, planning, monitoring and evaluation of her organization’s development and humanitarian assistance projects. Joan is a freelance conflict transformation practitioner with more than 40 years of experience working in the field of conflict transformation. She was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in 2017 by the University of Birmingham in recognition of her contribution to conflict transformation internationally.



Fundamentals of Peacebuilding (FPB)

“... it has prepared me for Peacebuilding Programs which my province is embarking on this year.”

A total of 19 individuals coming from seven countries explored the basic concepts, theories and approaches of peacebuilding through participatory learning.



What did participants gain from FPB?

- Participants in FPB gained an understanding of the concept of peacebuilding and its multi-disciplinary and multi-level aspects.
- They were able to develop a strategic framework for peacebuilding.
- In the end, the participants had greater knowledge about the theories, analyses and practice of peacebuilding at different levels: interpersonal, communal, and societal, as well as the dilemmas and challenges of the field.

Who were the facilitators?

Paulo Baleinakorodawa is the Director and Founder of Transcend Oceania in Fiji. He began facilitating at MPI in 2008. In 2019, he co-facilitated FPB with **Gabrielle “Gabs” Aziza Sagaral**. An alumna of MPI, Gabs is currently working as a project officer with Forum Civil Peace Service (forumZFD). She leads the development and implementation of an initiative on engaging higher education institutions in integrating fundamental concepts of peace and conflict in the political science curricula. Gabs started as a volunteer and then as a program officer with MPI.

Introduction to Conflict Transformation (ICT)

This class was tied with the interreligious peacebuilding course in Week 3 for the largest number of participants in MPI 2019, with 23 individuals represented by 11 countries. Together, they learned about conflict transformation and its practical tools and methodologies.

What did participants gain from ICT?

- By the end of the course, the participants had a comprehensive understanding of the field of conflict transformation.
- They came out of ICT with enhanced skills in conflict transformation.
- Participants were able to determine different conflict intervention options.

Who were the facilitators?

Wendy Kroeker and **Michael “Mike” Frank A. Alar** have been co-facilitating this course since 2012. They are considered the “dynamic duo” of the MPI facilitators. Wendy is a faculty member at Canadian Mennonite University and Director of the Canadian School of Peacebuilding in Winnipeg, Canada. Mike, an MPI alumnus, is a consultant on peace process support and conflict transformation.



“... it gave me great insight into conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The approaches and tools were very useful.”

Mainstreaming Peace Education in Communities and Schools (MaPEC)

“Peace Education is totally new to me. Though I understand the need in our context, I did not know what it was and how to plan for it. This course has given me the keys to start planning a peace education program in my organization.”

From eight countries, 13 participants explored various strategies in mainstreaming peace education through interactive and engaging activities.

What did participants gain from MaPEC?

- Through this course, participants had a greater appreciation of the importance of peace education as mandated by the UNESCO Programme of Peace.
- They came away able to articulate various themes and pedagogical strategies through a peace education framework.
- By the end of the course, participants initiated integrative peace education plans for their organizations or schools.

Who were the facilitators?

This was the fourth year that **Orson Sargado** and **Kathy Matsui** co-facilitated MaPEC. Orson is the Head of Office of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Philippines and serves as a member of MPI's Board of Trustees. Kathy is a Professor at the Department of Global Citizenship Studies at Seisen University in Tokyo, Japan. She also facilitates at the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI), a sister institute of MPI, that is located in Seoul, South Korea.



Thematic Courses

Through the thematic courses offered in Weeks 2 and 3, participants are able to expand and deepen the knowledge and skills gained in Week 1. These courses explore particular strategic areas and focused applications of peacebuilding approaches and offer opportunities for skills development and practice. A total of seven thematic courses were offered during this year's annual training, five of which were offered in Week 2 and two in Week 3.



Arts Approaches to Community-Based Peacebuilding (AAP)

A group of 12 participants represented by six countries explored the creativity and resourcefulness of arts in promoting peace in communities.

What did participants gain from AAP?

- Participants left this course with newly acquired arts-based approaches to peacebuilding.
- They developed a greater appreciation for how the arts can be a tool for social transformation through interactions with local artists in the city.
- By the end of AAP, the participants were prepared to develop their own arts-based project that could be applied in their own contexts.



Who were the facilitators?

Babu Ayindo and **Kyoko Okumoto** have developed and co-facilitated this course for eight years now. Babu is a consultant in the design and facilitation of conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Kyoko is a Professor of Peace Studies, Conflict Transformation and English Literature at Osaka Jogakuin University in Japan. She is also the Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI).

“The exercises really helped unlock a creativity block I experienced. The methodology and concepts were very relevant. [I]t is wonderful to know and experience it first-hand because it allowed us to be prepared.”

Be the Change: Designing Transformative Justpeace through the Power of Nonviolence (ANV)

Nine participants from five countries jointly learned how to create nonviolent change within their societies.

What did participants gain from ANV?

- Participants in ANV had a greater awareness of the theories and strategies of active nonviolence by the end of their five days together.
- They came away with a greater appreciation for the need for personal transformation as a starting point for putting any nonviolent approaches into action.
- The participants were able to begin designing active nonviolence strategies according to their respective contexts.

Who were the facilitators?

Jonathan “Jon” Rudy is known for providing program support in strategic peacebuilding, training, and advocacy for nonviolent change. He has been with MPI since 2002. Jon is the Peacemaker-in-Residence at Elizabethtown College in the USA. He has worked with communities around the world seeking to transform conflict and bring about social change for more than 30 years. **Asimah Naga**, an MPI alumna, served as the Resource Person/Class Assistant for this course and assisted Jon in some of the activities. She is a teacher in Lanao del Sur Province in Mindanao and was a participant in the Youth Political Leadership Training in 2016 organized by MPI and International Alert Philippines.



“It’s a very useful course, the need of the hour.”

Conflict Resolution Skills: Mediation and Dialogue (CRS)

“The course is culturally sensitive; has personalized learner support; and uses participatory methods.”

In this class, a diverse group of 18 individuals from nine countries practiced the skills in mediation and dialogue through simulation activities. This included large and small group discussion, role plays, interactive exercises and case analyses.

What did participants gain from CRS?

- By the end of the CRS course, participants had a greater grasp of the theories and practice of different conflict resolution methods.
- Each participant had developed her/his ability to facilitate and build relationships in inter-group conflicts.
- Participants enhanced their abilities to receive and give feedback from/to others that can be sustained across their peacebuilding practice.



Who were the facilitators?

Paulo Baleinakorodawa, co-facilitator for FPB, and **Wendy Kroecker**, co-facilitator for ICT, came together to collaboratively facilitate this course. They have been teaching this course since 2015. Both facilitators have extensive peacebuilding experience on the ground and in the classroom.

Dealing with Trauma in Times of Conflict (DTTC)

This course had the second highest number of participants with 22 individuals representing seven countries. They gathered in safe spaces around the venue to explore the different processes involved in healing trauma.

What did participants gain from DTTC?

- Because of this course, participants had an understanding of trauma and were able to recognize the causes and reactions to trauma from multiple perspectives.
- They came out of DTTC with tools and techniques to deal with stress and trauma.
- The participants had a deeper appreciation for healing and reconciliation processes.



Who were the facilitators?

Since 2016, this course has been co-facilitated by this charming couple, **Gladston “Ashok” Xavier** and **Florina Xavier**. Ashok is the Head of the Social Work Department of Loyola College in Chennai, India. Florina works as the Return and Reintegration Officer at Act for Peace in Sri Lanka. Both have been engaged in substantive work in providing training and workshops on trauma awareness and recovery, psychosocial support, and arts-based approaches to peacebuilding.

“ [Ashok and Florina] both helped me to understand trauma. Also, I was able to discover my own trauma and learn how to deal with it. ”

Interreligious Peacebuilding: Approaches for Cooperation, Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (IRPB)

“I got a lot of insights about how to work in Interreligious Peacebuilding; how to understand the context, the people and their relationship; how to analyze and take it into action.”

For MPI 2019, the IRPB course was tied with the Introduction to Conflict Transformation course for the largest number of participants. It was composed of 23 individuals from 11 countries. These individuals deepened their understanding of how interreligious dialogue is a potential entry point for resolving conflict.

What did participants gain from IRPB?

- Upon completion of IRPB, the participants had a better understanding of the role of religion in promoting peace and its role in conflict and violence.
- They were able to appreciate the different approaches toward engaging religious actors and institutions to support peace.
- The participants recognized the different tools, theories and approaches of interreligious peacebuilding, and how to apply these tools in various contexts.

Who were the facilitators?

Shamsia Ramadhan works for Catholic Relief Services (CRS) based in Kenya as a Program Manager with a focus on multi-country interreligious peacebuilding projects. She has been involved in peacebuilding since 2002. **Myla Leguro** has worked for CRS since 1991 on peace and development projects in Mindanao. Myla also recently served as Program Director of a CRS global program on Advancing Interreligious Peacebuilding.



Understanding Culture and Identity as a Resource for Peacebuilding (UCIRP)

“It was beneficial in the sense that the methodology will help me in grassroots work; linking identity, culture, self-understanding to the methodologies in rebuilding communities.”

This class that was comprised of 13 individuals from eight countries discovered how culture and identity play an important role in the field of peacebuilding.

What did participants gain from UCIRP?

- After their week together, the participants in UCIRP had a better sense of their own identity and culture as part of their learning journey.



- They developed a deeper understanding of how one's culture and identity can become tools for building peace.
- They left the course with improved skills in cross-cultural communication, enhancing their ability to work in multi-cultural societies.

Who were the facilitators?

Joan McGregor, who co-facilitated FUA, taught this course for the fourth time. Joan's expertise covers participatory approaches, including conflict sensitivity tools and methodologies, lesson learning, counseling, conflict analysis, mediation and negotiation. She was joined by **Marites “Matet” T. Gonzalo** as a Resource Person for this course.

Field-Based Courses

MPI recognizes the importance of providing opportunities for participants to learn outside the classroom and experience the different peacebuilding initiatives of grassroots peacebuilders in Mindanao. This is why MPI continues to offer field-based courses. For MPI 2019, two field-based courses were offered in partnership with local organizations that have been working with communities in Mindanao: *Indigenous Peoples' Culture-Based Conflict Resolution Practices: Its Potential Contribution to Mainstream Peacebuilding in the Philippines*, highlighted above under “New Courses Offered at MPI 2019,” and *Bottom-Up Transformation: Experiences and Practices of Grassroots Peacebuilding in Mindanao*.



Bottom-Up Transformation: Experiences and Practices of Grassroots Peacebuilding in Mindanao (BT)

“All the strategies, discussions and experiences that we underwent during the classes and in the field were all memorable and the best. This will serve as another learning experience in my life, which will lead me to advocate and promote peacebuilding in my own area and in other areas.”

A tight-knit group of eight individuals representing five countries explored the experiences and practices of grassroots peacebuilding in Central Mindanao through combined classroom and field-based learning.

What did participants gain from BT?

- After their time in the field and in the classroom, participants in this course were able to appreciate the best practices of grassroots peacebuilding.
- The opportunity to engage with key leaders and local people gave the participants a better grasp of peacebuilding initiatives in Central Mindanao.
- The participants developed re-entry plans reflecting their learnings from the course for concrete initiatives/projects in their respective communities/organizations.

Who were the facilitators?

This course was jointly facilitated by **James Baay** and **Ma. Concepcion “Chin” Nobleza** from the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Peacebuilding Team Philippines. Both facilitators are alumni of MPI and have extensive grassroots peacebuilding experience in Mindanao. James is engaged in the development and implementation of CRS’ peace training platform. Chin heads the Agriculture and Livelihoods project of CRS.



MPI 2019 Secretariat

MPI strengthens its Education and Training direction by providing avenues for young professionals, development workers and fresh graduates with limited funds to further develop their skills and learn new peacebuilding theories and concepts. Each year, MPI enlists volunteers, who are potential peacebuilders and have a genuine desire to learn and participate in the training, to be members of the secretariat team as class assistants, class documenters, social/special events coordinators, photographers and videographers.

This year, the secretariat team's collective efforts, sleepless nights and teamwork made MPI's 2019 Annual Peacebuilding Training a success. They were a very valuable asset from the start to the end of the training.

The MPI 2019 Secretariat Team was composed of nine volunteers and seven MPI staff who joined together to support and help run the training. Of the nine volunteers, seven were Filipinos from the cities of Cotabato, Davao, Marawi, Midsayap, Parañaque, Pualas and Zamboanga. One member of the team was an international volunteer from India. He was an intern from the Social Work Department of Loyola College in Chennai, India, and joined as a volunteer for the Annual Training. Another international volunteer who was from the USA worked with MPI's sister institute, the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI) in South Korea. He came a week earlier to learn about how MPI organizes a major training and assisted in the final preparations before taking a course in



Week 1. All the volunteers came from diverse educational backgrounds and were involved in varied and interesting fields that included research and journalism.



MPI organizes orientation and team-building sessions for the secretariat team prior to the start of the actual training. This is done to strengthen the camaraderie and teamwork, build trust, and help the secretariat to get to know one another. The sessions provide space for the team to know their tasks and responsibilities, clarify expectations and prepare their mind and body for the long and tiring days ahead.

Aside from the team-building sessions done with the secretariat team, during the training, MPI provides the space after the day's classes and activities for daily debriefings with all the volunteers. These debriefings allow the team to

discuss important issues, challenges they faced, and how they overcame them and then it prepares them for the next day's activities. During debriefing, the volunteers share how they are feeling and some of the positive things that happened on that day. MPI is truly blessed to have such dedicated and committed volunteers as part of the team as they are essential in dealing with the many challenges confronted during the three-week training.

MPI 2019 Participants

MPI's 2019 Annual Peacebuilding Training gathered 107 participants in Davao City, Philippines, over the three weeks. Participants who attended the training had the option to participate for one, two or three weeks, depending on the courses they wanted to take.

Most of the participants were sponsored by organizations well known to MPI, such as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (United Board), the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (MNURP), forumZFD, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Bread for the World (BftW), and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

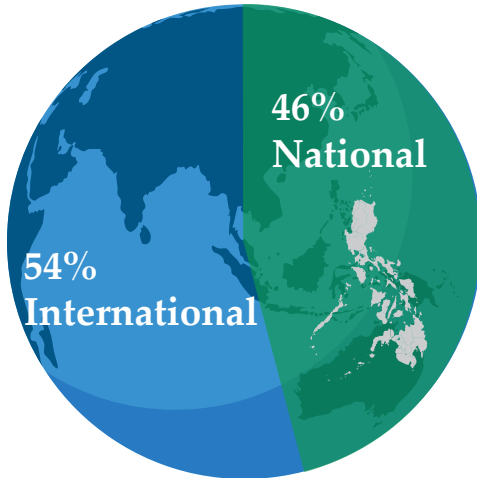
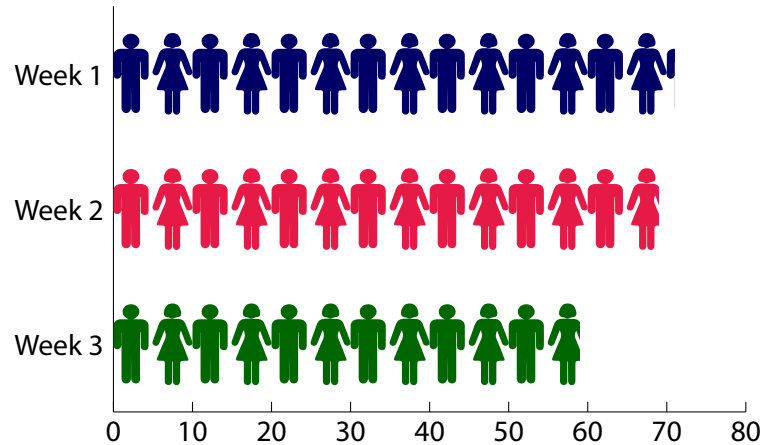
This year, it was the first time that MPI welcomed a peacebuilding network in the Middle East to Davao City. [Mobaderoon](#) supported five participants from their network to participate in the Annual Training. It is a civil institution based in Syria that works to provide consultation and various training services to civil society organizations in the Arab region.



MPI 2019: Numbers

Participants per Week

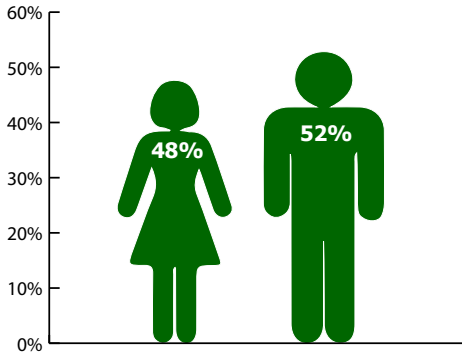
Of the total number of participants, 71 attended Week 1, 69 participated in Week 2, and 59 in Week 3. The majority of the participants enrolled in foundation courses in Week 1.



National vs. International

For this year, 54% of the total number of participants were international participants. The remaining 46% were national participants. The composition of the international and national participants was more balanced this year than compared to last year when 60% were nationals and only 40% were internationals.

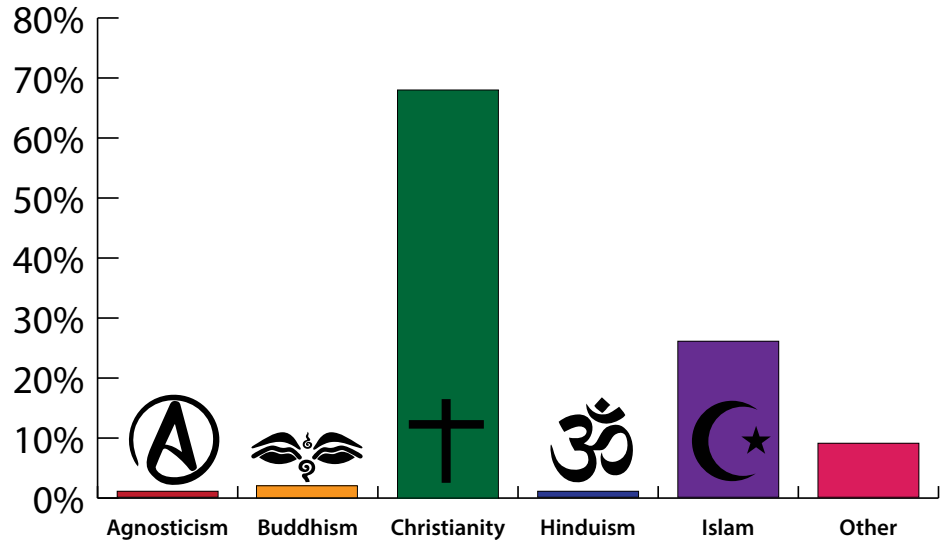
Gender Distribution of Participants



In terms of gender, male participants had a relatively higher representation with 52% of the total number of participants, compared to 48% for female participants.

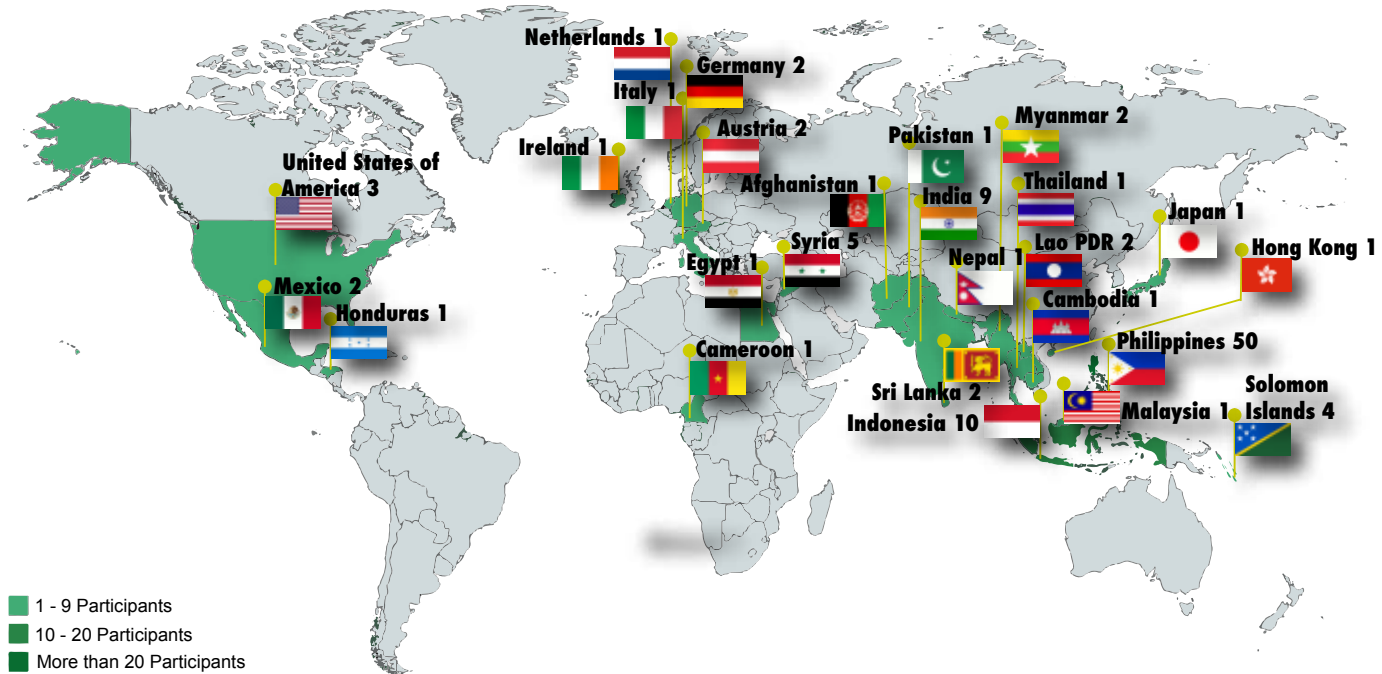
Participants by Religion

Participants in MPI's 2019 Annual Peacebuilding Training came from diverse religious backgrounds. The majority were Christians at 64%, followed by Muslims at 24%. Other religions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, were also represented. Several participants did not indicate any religious affiliation.



Participants by Country

A large number of countries was represented at this year's Annual Peacebuilding Training, with 26 countries in total. The majority of the participants came from Southeast Asia. Others came from Africa, Central America, East Asia, Europe, North America, the Pacific, South Asia and West Asia. If the nationalities of the facilitators are added to this number, 30 countries in all were represented at MPI 2019. This is the most diverse geographic representation in MPI's history.



Facilitators

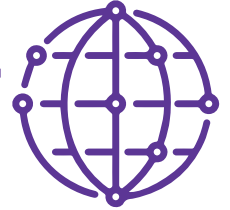
Facilitators came from:

- Canada – 1
- Fiji – 1
- Japan – 2
- India – 2
- Kenya – 2
- Myanmar – 1
- Philippines – 9
- South Africa/United Kingdom – 1
- USA - 2

Organizations by Sector

Similar to last year, the international non-government organization sector topped the list with 27 organizations classified as INGOs. Other sectors represented by the participants included the academe, NGOs, government, and religious and faith-based institutions.

INGOs – 27



Academe – 13



NGOs – 12



Religious Institutions – 6



Government Organizations – 2



Faith-based – 1



MPI 2019 Learning Engagements Outside the Classroom

The Annual Peacebuilding Training also provides opportunities for participants, facilitators, and the secretariat to learn new ideas, viewpoints and celebrate diversity outside the classroom activities.

Opening Ceremonies

It has been MPI's tradition to open each week of the Annual Peacebuilding Training with live music and dancing, full of pageantry and a rainbow of colors with Davao-based cultural groups. This year, *Kabilin Mindanaw*, a high-energy performing arts group from Cabantian National High School, once again captivated the audience with their well-choreographed, dynamic and creative performances, using traditional songs and dances, representing the rich culture and beauty of the Philippines, especially Mindanao.



One of the MPI traditions during the opening ceremony is the *Parade of Nations*, where participants, wearing their native costumes and carrying their country flags, are escorted down the center aisle by members of *Kabilin Mindanaw* to the main stage where everyone gathers together as MPI's mini-United Nations! This is a symbol of the diversity and cultural richness that will be shared, explored, and appreciated by all the participants, facilitators and secretariat team during the coming week.

MPI invites inspirational speakers for each opening ceremony to inspire and encourage the participants as they begin their in-depth learning and continue their peacebuilding journey in this new setting with new friends and fellow travelers. Three members of MPI's pool of distinguished facilitators offered words of encouragement and inspiration during each of the three opening ceremonies.

In Week 1, **Orson Sargado**, MPI's Board of Trustees treasurer, as well as an MPI alumnus and former volunteer, shared 10 key lessons he learned during his extensive peacebuilding work in Mindanao.

“Let us not build walls, but bridges, to connect and bring peoples and communities together, in dialogue and solidarity.”

Orson Sargado



In Week 2, **Marites T. Gonzalo**, MPI's Board of Trustees Vice-President, recalled her story of the struggles and challenges she faced as an Indigenous Person (*Lumad*) while she was growing up. She shared how at one point in her life, she lost her self-confidence and her faith in being a *Lumad*, and then what made her return to her community to learn and re-learn her cultural practices and values and be proud of her identity as a *Lumad*.

“Peace begins with oneself; it's a way of life, it's a spirituality ... We need to make our culture stronger because culture will bring us peace; culture is the soul of our community and a basic identity of a country.”

Marites T. Gonzalo

In Week 3, Shamsia Ramadhan shared the unique story of geese in migration and how it relates to peacebuilding.

“By working together as a team, we have a higher potential to make a difference and together we shall be ahead of those who organize to do harm.”

Shamsia Ramadhan



Open Sessions

MPI provides opportunities for further learning by encouraging participants, facilitators and members of MPI's secretariat to organize sessions on issues or topics about which they are passionate. These are evening presentations called Open Sessions. This informal space is provided for anyone who wishes to learn about another culture, history, current situation or other issues from their peer practitioners.



Gustav Ebai, a member of the Council of Protestant Churches of Cameroon (CEPCA), gave a presentation during the first week of the training entitled: *Interreligious Initiatives in the Cameroon Crisis*. Gustav described the conflict and crisis in the Anglo-phone region of Cameroon and shared about the different international efforts and interreligious initiatives undertaken by CEPCA. Gustav passionately talked about the challenges in their endeavors and how difficult it was not to lose hope in the face of ongoing violence.

During the same week, **Sebastian Lasinger**, who works with Culture Radio 104.5 FM in Freetown, Sierra Leone as a seconded professional of Bread for the World in its Civil Peace Service Program, organized a film showing on land rights and land grabbing in Sierra Leone. This documentary video produced by Culture Radio 104.5 FM in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) showed the value of land for the people of Sierra Leone and how their rights were not protected by the law as foreign companies started to enter their country.

During Week 2, the participants and secretariat witnessed Syria through the eyes of the Syrians. The purpose of this Open Session entitled: *Syria: Our Culture, Our Situation and Our Work* was to enlighten the individuals and show that Syria is not just a place of war and violence, but it is steeped in history, culture

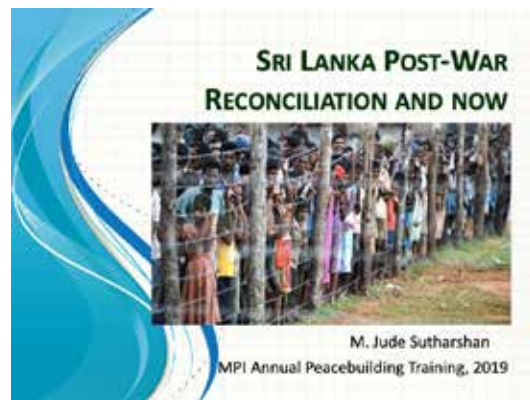


and beauty. The presenters of this session were: **Jana Alloush**, **MHD Anas Younes**, **Hani Menzaljy**, **Mustafa Ghashim** and **Hadil Abbas**.



MPI invited **Guamel Alim**, the Executive Director of Kadtuntaya Foundation, Inc. (KFI) and Chairperson of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), to give a presentation on the *Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM): Opportunities and Challenges* in Week 2. Guamel gave basic statistics about Mindanao, briefly explained the historical roots of conflict and violence on the island, and presented a timeline of the Bangsamoro peace process that spanned 44 years. Then Guamel highlighted the political and normalization tract of this new entity, BARMM, and articulated the challenges faced by those moving the process forward, including ways to sustain peace under the transition to the BARMM.

During the third week, **Rev. Jude Mahendren Sutharshan**, the Principal of Christian Theological Seminary in Chunnakam, Sri Lanka, gave a presentation on *Reconciliation and the Current Situation in Sri Lanka*. He talked about post-conflict Sri Lanka and the repercussions of the bombing that occurred on Easter Sunday of this year. Rev. Jude explained the background of the conflict, the major actors engaged, and the initiatives taken by organizations to bring about reconciliation.



Alumni Nights

Every Wednesday of each week, MPI organized an activity called Alumni Night to let all the participants know what it means to be an MPI alumnus/a, and to encourage them to stay connected with MPI after the training and support MPI in various ways. MPI staff shared updates from the alumni, described alumni gatherings organized in and outside of the Philippines, and recounted stories published on MPI's website about alumni's work in their respective fields and countries. Participants were introduced to MPI's website and social media platforms, and encouraged to register so that they could have full access to the annual training course materials and other peacebuilding resources that MPI regularly posts on its website.

Balut Night and Karaoke Night

Two light and enjoyable evening sessions were organized by the secretariat upon the requests of the participants so they could really experience what it is like to be Filipino.

Balut Night was organized because some participants wanted to taste the very famous *balut* egg. *Balut* is a cooked egg with a duck embryo (14 – 16 days old) eaten with salt or spicy vinegar. One has to acquire a taste for this very special food and some of the participants liked it, although many did not. Yet, everyone enjoyed the time together, laughing, eating and counting the number of *balut* some of the very daring participants ate!

During another evening, the secretariat provided space for the participants who wanted to showcase their talents in singing during the Karaoke Night. Though few participants joined this entertaining and relaxing evening activity, those who did were delighted and sang to their hearts content!



As of 2018: 2133 alumni from 52 countries

Countries with more than 20 alumni:

Philippines	1,207	Sri Lanka	33
Indonesia	196	Solomon Islands	29
USA	158	Bangladesh	27
India	116	Pakistan	27
Timor-Leste	51	Cambodia	19
Myanmar	41	Lao PDR	20

Closing Ceremonies



Closing ceremonies conducted every Friday evening marked the end of each week of classes. The main feature of this event was the time for the class presentations of the participants. Each class creatively and resourcefully expressed what they learned and insights they acquired from their respective courses. Between class presentations, MPI gave space for selected participants to share testimonials about their experience, what left a lasting impression on them, and what they will bring back to their respective communities.

Various music, rituals, songs, plays and dances were performed by the participants, facilitators and secretariat to celebrate the friendship and solidarity made with one another. At the end of the ceremony, everyone bid farewell and expressed good wishes to those who would not be returning for the following week.

During the closing ceremonies, there were also opportunities for cultural presentations. This allowed participants to proudly share their country's songs, traditional dresses and dances. Through these opportunities, participants gained an understanding of and appreciation for the diversity of cultures at the training.



Weekend Outings

Participants not only experienced intensive learning, but also had an exciting time while they were in Mindanao as well. MPI arranged two weekend outings for participants to explore and see the beauty of Davao City.



During the first weekend, participants first visited the D' Bone Collector Museum, a natural history museum in Davao that displays preserved skeletons of various animals, particularly whales and dolphins. The goal of this museum is to educate people about the importance of saving the environment. The next stop was the Kadayawan Village at Magsaysay Park that displays the cultural houses of the Indigenous Peoples (*Lumad*) and *Moros* (people of Muslim heritage) in Davao City. This tribal village aims to develop an appreciation for the *Lumad* and *Moro's* history and their traditional architecture.

The second weekend outing was a time for relaxation and a fun escapade. The participants went to Samal Island where they were able to swim in the clear waters of the Davao Gulf, walk along the sandy beaches and be fascinated by the lovely corals that cover the sea bot-

tom. Everyone was glad to have this chance to relax with new friends and get to know one another, while enjoying the beautiful natural spots of Davao. This wonderful experience enabled those participants to forget about the demands of their intensive courses and have the time to recharge their minds and bodies for the final upcoming week of the training.

MPI 2019 Public Forum

The Public Forum is held every year during MPI's Annual Peacebuilding Training to provide a space for mutual learning and sharing among people from around the world. The Public Forum also gives an opportunity for those in the Davao City area to meet and interact with international participants and learn about their community engagements and efforts to bring about social change in contexts different and sometimes similar to that of Mindanao.

This year's Public Forum took the format of a creative talk-show entitled: ***“PEP Talk”: Positive Engagements in Peacebuilding Talk Show***. The forum was run by and with youth from the Philippines and around the globe. It explored the innovative ways youth are promoting peace in their communities.

MPI invited two of its young alumni, **Datu Beds Kali** (interviewer) and **Melbeth Aquino** (host), to facilitate the talk-show. The interviewees/guests of the PEP Talk were three peace youth champions: **Ditrich Rumboirusi** from Indonesia, **Sohaila Macadato** from the Philippines, and **MHD Anas Younes** from Syria. The three have rich backgrounds in peacebuilding involvements with youth.



During the interview, Beds asked them to tell their stories about how and why they became a peacebuilder: What were their motivations and why did they choose nonviolent ways of bringing about change? How do they reach out to youth

and engage them? What are the tools that they use and how effective are they? This was followed by a thought-provoking exchange of experiences, challenges and opportunities between and among the interviewees and the audience.



As a way of closing the PEP Talk, Melbeth provided highlights from the responses of the interviewees, including the different and creative ways one can bring about positive change in oneself, in the community and in society. She emphasized that one should look at the positive approaches everyone can take, even if one is living in a conflict-affected area and surrounded by negativity. She pointed out that providing safe spaces plays an important role in encouraging youth to make the family circle of peacebuilders bigger and to be part of making the world a better place.

Videos from MPI's 2019 Public Forum are available here: <https://mpiasia.net/multimedia/videos/117-annualtrainingvideos/annual-training-videos-2019/424-mpi-2019-public-forum.html>.

MPI 2019 Participants' Thoughts

From the total number of 94 participants who completed the overall institute feedback, 48% rated their overall training experience as excellent and 21% rated it very good. It was humbling to know how the training left such a positive impact on the lives of the participants.

“This is my first time with MPI and the Philippines. Through this training, I learned that we are all equal and have equal rights. So, together, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and such, we can promote harmonious peace and interfaith [dialogue]; we [can] resolve conflict with love, care and forgiveness.”

Overall, the participants liked the courses offered this year as well as the diversity of the participants and facilitators. Most of them expressed that what they appreciated most was the safe space that was provided for learning and sharing.

The participants commended and appreciated the team's effort and hard work based on the participants' excellent rating of 74%. Receiving this kind of appreciation and recognition is very rewarding and encouraging for the team. MPI continues to do its very best to accommodate the participants' needs and to nurture the spirit or value of being one as a family.

“[MPI felt like] a safe and secure place for sharing of thoughts and opinions. It is definitely our Peace home... Acceptance and respect among people from different countries and religious faith backgrounds is praiseworthy.”

The evaluation completed by the participants is a testament to the fact that MPI is one of the avenues for bringing about positive engagements in peacebuilding. MPI makes it possible for people from all walks of life to empower themselves to be effective peacebuilders and to make a change in the world. Feedback from the participants shows that MPI continues to be on the right path as it strives with its alumni, partners, and broader network to actualize its vision of creating just and peaceful communities in Asia-Pacific and beyond.

Conclusion

“We are all beautiful creatures of God and we should live with peace. Through our behavior and attitude, we can play a role of change maker in our country.”

Despite all the uncertainties and complexities in the world, we need to remind ourselves that we are all peacebuilders—peacebuilders who are passionate and committed to move forward towards promoting positive social change in our community, in our society, and in our world.

MPI continues to provide space for multi-cultural learning and sharing, building friendships and networks around the world, and enhancing capacities for self-development and self-transformation.

Let us all learn peace, envision peace, and work for peace together as a family in the peacebuilding world.



Acknowledgments

MPI would like to thank and acknowledge the following institutions and partner organizations for their support and contributions to the successful completion of the MPI 2019 Annual Peacebuilding Training.

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