

The mapping of peace constituency actors in the Philippines

By Joeven Reyes

The Philippines has a long history of protracted conflict with a number of armed groups. The two conflicts that are best known are the ones with the communist movement, led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), which started in the 1970s, and the other focused largely in the Bangsamoro region of Mindanao, stemming from the struggle for autonomy and self-determination among the Moro people of the region.

The four-decade-long armed conflict between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front of the Philippines (CPP-NPA-NDFP) took root on December 26th 1968, when the CPP was re-established with the avowed objectives of seizing political power through a protracted people's war, setting up a people's democratic state, and building a socialist society. The CPP established the NPA as its military arm in March 1969 and the NDFP in 1973 as a broad alliance of mass organisations claiming to fight for national freedom and democracy.

Under martial law from 1972 to 1986 the GPH pursued a policy of suppression, pacification and cooptation to deal with this armed challenge. It was only after President Ferdinand Marcos was deposed in 1986 and Corazon Aquino became president that the incoming government initiated peace negotiations with the NDFP with the aim of achieving reconciliation, establishing a just and lasting peace, and ending martial law.

The peace process in the Philippines became a major concern after the fall of the Marcos regime. After the "People Power Revolution" (1983-86) the opening of democratic spaces created the conditions for building a national consensus on socioeconomic and political reforms that would address the root causes of the armed conflict, among which were gross human rights violations, social injustice and poverty.

In line with the peaceful spirit of the People Power Revolution, the government of President Corazon Aquino started formal peace talks with the NDFP in 1986. Senator Jose W. Diokno, Teofisto Guingona and Ramon Mitra were named

as the government negotiators, while the CPP and NPA designated the NDFP to represent them in the negotiations, with Satur Ocampo, Antonio Zumel and Carolina Malay comprising the NDFP negotiating panel. The negotiations were held in Manila. Both parties signed a 60-day ceasefire agreement and agreed on an agenda of "Food & Freedom, Jobs & Justice". However, while the negotiating panels were still discussing the mechanics and implementation of the national ceasefire and had not started talks on the substantive agenda, the peace negotiations collapsed after military and police forces fired on a peaceful protest demonstration of farmers and their supporters at Mendiola in front of Malacañang Palace on January 22nd 1987. This incident, which would later be dubbed the "Mendiola Massacre", prevented further peace talks during the rest of President Cory Aquino's term.

When Fidel Ramos was elected president in 1992 one of his first official acts was to call for peace negotiations with all armed groups opposing the government, i.e. the CPP-NPA-NDFP, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabayan-Soldiers of the Filipino People-Young Officers Union. President Ramos created the National Unification Commission, which undertook nationwide consultations at the municipal, provincial, regional and national levels in an effort to identify the root causes of the armed conflicts and build a consensus on how to address and eradicate these causes and attain a just and lasting peace. A year later, on September 15th 1993, Ramos issued Executive Order 125 creating the "Three Principles and Six Paths to Peace" (see Coronel Ferrer, 2002). It was during the Ramos administration that the Government Peace Panel signed major agreements with the NDFP such as the Hague Joint Declaration, which set the framework and agenda of the peace talks; the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), which ensured safe passage and provided guarantees for the safety of people involved in the peace negotiations; and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), which was the first major agreement to cover issues on the substantive agenda of the negotiations.

During the administration of President Estrada the GPH-NDFP peace talks stalled because after signing CARHRIHL, the president unilaterally suspended the formal talks and the JASIG in February 1999. On May 31st 1999 the NDFP terminated the talks, accusing the government of violating the principle of national sovereignty cited in the Hague Joint Declaration through its ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement. The GPH terminated the JASIG again on July 1st 1999 and it did not resume throughout Estrada's presidency (OPAPP, 2011).

During the administration of President Gloria Arroyo, attempts were made to revive the formal peace talks and reaffirm her government's commitment to peace by adopting the "Six Paths to Peace" through Executive Order 3. But the formal peace talks did not progress further. The peace negotiations were brought to a standstill yet again because of the issues surrounding the "terrorist listing" of NDFP leader José Ma. Sison, the continuing arrest of JASIG-protected consultants, and the failure of the Joint Monitoring Committee as a mechanism for the implementation of CARHRIHL.

After six years of impasse in the peace talks (2004-10), President Benigno Aquino revived the formal talks in February 2011. Both parties initially reaffirmed their commitment to past agreements and agreed on a timetable for the talks. The NDFP also sent to the Aquino administration the Proposal on a Truce and Alliance, which was later called the "special track", to help fast-track the negotiations. However, because of unresolved NDFP issues regarding the release of JASIG-protected consultants, and the GPH's insistent call for a ceasefire and its reservations on the validity of previously signed agreements, the peace talks failed to progress and have remained stalled in spite of the many attempts by both parties to revive them through the various exploratory meetings and discussions they have engaged in.

Background to the research

The Philippine peace movement was born in the late 1980s from an attempt to find a negotiated settlement to the armed conflicts affecting the country, particularly the GPH-NDFP conflict. It continues to monitor the peace process. It has simultaneously broadened to include longer-term initiatives such as the building of a culture of peace that goes beyond the confines and dynamics of the current internal conflicts (Coronel Ferrer, 2005). Civil society peace groups play important roles such as advocating alternatives to current thinking on a range of issues, pushing for a sustained peace process, and providing support services related to the peace process and its peacebuilding agenda.

The peace movement in Mindanao continued to flourish by playing a crucial role in the GPH-MNLF and GPH-MILF peace processes. Civil society organisations (CSOs) in Mindanao have played an important role, e.g. in the Bantay

Ceasefire. Regarding the GPH-NDFP peace process, the number of CSOs supporting it is said to have declined. Apparently this is because a large number of Filipinos see that hostilities are continuing, and question the sincerity of both parties, especially in terms of their compliance with the agreements that have been signed and their failure to come up with a negotiated political solution to the root causes of the armed conflict.

It has also been observed that the GPH-NDFP peace negotiations have limited engagement with civil society and at the community level, resulting in a gap between the peace negotiations and the concerns of CSOs and of communities affected by the armed conflict. Although the talks began three decades ago, few tangible agreements or milestones have resulted in the last 25 years. More engagement and awareness are needed to build a ground-ed constituency of support for the peace process. Increased engagement by CSOs in efforts to generate awareness of and support for the GPH-NDFP peace talks is critical to achieving progress in the peace process.

The intention of the mapping process discussed below is to identify possible key leaders and organisations in an attempt to ascertain how they perceive the ongoing peace negotiation between the GPH and NDFP, and to identify key issues in the conflict-affected areas that can influence the GPH-NDFP peace process. The research also seeks to ascertain what these leaders/organisations recommend should be done to sustain the peace negotiations and maintain their own interest in and willingness to commit to reviving, revitalising and sustaining a national peace movement that is supportive of the GPH-NDFP peace process. These leaders/organisations represent various social sectors, as well as organisations that cut across these sectors. In particular, the research mapping focused on farmers, workers, fisherfolk, the urban poor, the church, business, the media, women, youth, indigenous people, human rights- and peace-related issues, non-aligned organisations, the security sector, academia/educators, and local government units.

Scope and limitations

1. The research started with the baseline data available from Sulong CARHRIHL member organisations and individuals, as well as some organisations that are members of the Citizens Alliance for Just Peace (CAJP). However, this did not prevent the Sulong CARHRIHL Network (SCN), which conducted the research, from exploring other organisations in conflict-affected areas.
2. The research also mapped out and listed CSOs, key local government officials, media and business organisations in conflict-affected areas, specifically in the regions of Cordillera, Central Luzon, Southern Luzon and Bicol in Luzon; Samar-Leyte Island, Central Visayas and Panay Island in Visayas; and Davao Region, CARAGA and North-Central Mindanao in Mindanao, to cover

45 provinces. The list of peace stakeholders can be found in the appendix.

3. Key national-based organisations, media, businesses and key national government officials who are based in the National Capital Region (NCR) were also targeted in the research mapping.
4. The mapping focused only on 45 conflict-affected provinces of the country's 81 provinces (see point 2, above).
5. Six researchers conducted the research over a period of three months.

Objectives

The research mapping was conducted to obtain a better understanding of the following aspects:

- current and prospective social actors that could play a key role in building a peace constituency;
- issues that should be prioritised in terms of advocacy and possibly research focus, and on which social actors would be better positioned to engage;
- strategies to bring these actors together and form a unified peace movement;
- recommendations for the international community to support such a peace constituency in the most efficient and effective way; and
- the various sectors in Philippine society that have increasing potential to engage positively in the peace process.

Process/methodology

The research mapping methodology involved data gathering and the collection of available listings of local organisations through databases and other lists. Based on the listings available, an initial selection and prioritisation process was conducted based on the peace-related mandates and stake in local issues in the province of the organisations in question.

A questionnaire was also developed and completed during field visits to the various offices of the selected organisations through interviews with key leaders of the targeted organisations. The following questions appeared in the survey:

1. What can you say about the GPH-NDFP peace process/negotiation?
2. What are the issues and concerns of your organisation or as an individual which you think need to be addressed or prioritised in the GPH-NDFP peace process?

3. What concrete interventions and advocacies are you undertaking pertaining to your issues and concerns regarding the GPH-NDFP peace process?
4. In your own initiatives, how are you able to support the GPH-NDFP peace process?
5. Are you willing to play an active role in the constituency-building efforts to fast-track the GPH-NDFP peace talks?
6. What do you think is the formula to sustain the process of constituency-building for peace?
7. Are you willing to be part of a Philippine Peace Movement/Coalition in support of the GPH-NDFP peace process?
8. Do you think the international community can play a vital role in support of the GPH-NDFP peace process? What is this role?

The collated results of the listings of the organisations and the survey have been compiled into a statistical and narrative analysis. The discussion that follows will provide recommendations and reflections based on the results of the survey.

Criteria for selecting respondents

Respondents were selected based on the list of CAJP partner organisations/individuals and long-standing SCN partners. Random sampling was used to select three to five respondents per conflict-affected province. From the CAJP and SCN list, it was assumed that the partner organisations/individuals in question possess the following attributes:

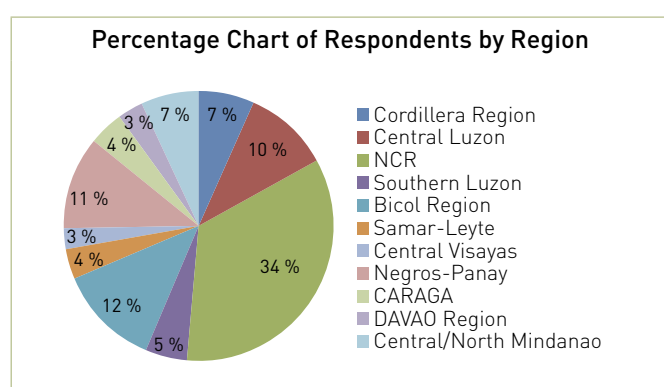
1. The individual/organisation has a clear mandate to undertake peace advocacy and believes in such advocacy.
2. The individual/organisation is willing to support the peace initiative/constituency efforts.
3. The individual/organisation has a track record of undertaking or being involved in peacebuilding work.
4. The individual/organisation is willing to be involved in the constituency efforts to support the fast-tracking of the peace talks.
5. The individual/organisation is willing to assist in any peacebuilding activity regarding the peace talks.
6. The individual/organisation is willing to become a member of the proposed unified peace front.

Table 1: Areas/provinces covered

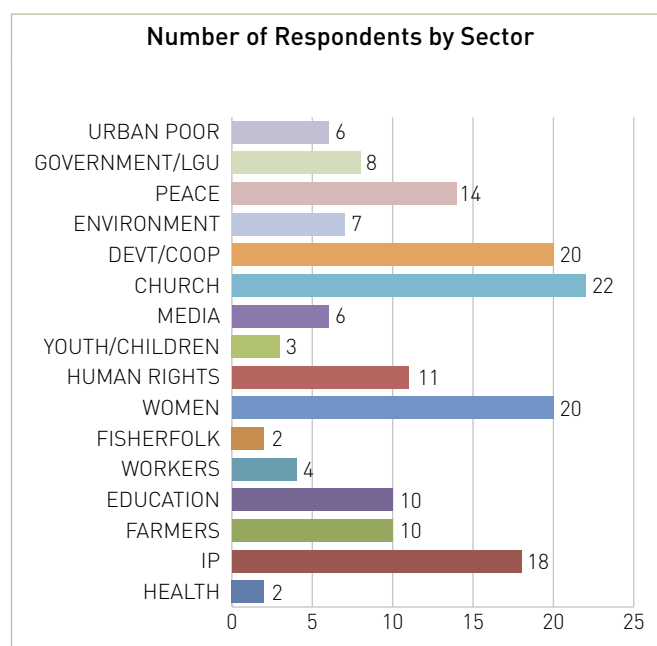
Region	Province	Region	Province
Cordillera	Abra	Samar/Leyte	North Samar
	Kalinga		East Samar
	Ifugao		West Samar
	Benguet		North Leyte
	Mt. Province		South Leyte
Central Luzon	Bulacan	Panay	Aklan
	Zambales		Iloilo
	Aurora	Negros	Oriental
	Nueva Ecija		Occidental
South Luzon	Rizal	Central Visayas	Cebu
	Quezon		Bohol
	Mindoro Oriental	Davao	Davao Oriental
	Mindoro Occidental		Davao del Sur
Bicol	Camarines Norte	CARAGA	Davao Norte
	Camarines Sur		Davao Occidental
	Albay		Davao City
	Sorsogon		Compostella Valley
	Masbate		Surigao Sur
	Catanduanes		Surigao Norte
National Capital Region			Agusan Sur
			Agusan Norte
		Central/North Mindanao	Bukidnon
			Cagayan de Oro
			Saranggani
			North Cotabato
			South Cotabato

Results of the research

Profile of respondents



Of the 163 respondents, 56 (or 34%) are from the NCR, represented mostly by national organisations, while 20 (or 12%) are from the Bicol Region, followed by 18 (or 11%) from Negros-Panay Island.

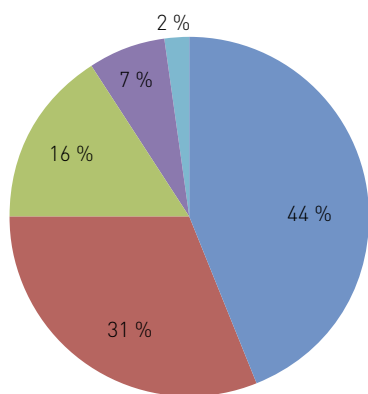


Notes: LGU = local government unit.

Among the 163 respondents, 22 (or 13%) belong to church/religious groups, 20 (or 12%) are from the women’s sector and development cooperatives, 18 (or 11%) from the indigenous peoples (IPs) and 14 (or 8%) come from organisations working for peace.

Perceptions of the GPH-NDFP peace process/negotiation

What can you say about the GPH-NDFP Peace Talks?



- The peace negotiation must be resumed. Both parties should respect and adhere to the signed agreements and settle issues of mistrust so that the violence and loss of lives will be prevented and the root causes of internal conflict in the Philippines and the legitimate demands of the people on the ground will be addressed.
- The GPH-NDFP peace process/negotiation had been stalled for a long time. Both parties have violated the signed agreements and victimised the civilian population, especially the IPs. The longer the talks are stalled, the longer violations and threats to the safety and security of the conflict-affected civilian population will continue.
- The GPH-NDFP peace negotiation takes place at a very high level and is weak in terms of support from the people. It is detached from the people and is not experienced on the ground: people are not aware of what is happening and are not consulted on the basic issues involved.
- The GPH-NDFP peace process/negotiation needs more representation from IPs.
- Peace advocates and workers who go into the communities are concerned for their safety because there has been red tagging of peace advocates/workers.

Despite all the setbacks and the drawn-out peace process, the great majority of respondents still believe that the GPH-NDFP peace negotiation is a bridge towards a progressive society. It is, they emphasised, very necessary, and perhaps the only way to attain a just and lasting peace for the country.

However, all respondents experienced a great sense of frustration and reservation. For most of them this process has been dragging on for a very long time with very few concrete results, as compared to the Moro peace process, with one such process (with the MNLF) already implemented and the other (with the MILF) moving towards completion (although not without setbacks). Most respondents believe that insincerity plagues the GPH-NDFP peace process, with both parties setting preconditions to the peace talks, and favouring their personal and parties' interests rather than focusing on the substantive agenda of the peace process. Respondents repeatedly stated that

confidence-building measures should be put in place to sustain the process.

The high-level nature of the peace negotiations also puts a strain on the people's perception of the process. The people see a large gap between high-level talks taking place in Norway and the violations occurring on the ground in the Philippines, as well as the information being relayed to the general public. Also, local community leaders and community members are not being consulted regarding and involved in the negotiations, further adding to the gap referred to above. And respondents observe that both parties have continually violated previously signed agreements, threatening the safety of not only the people in conflict-affected communities, but also the peace workers and peace advocates who are helping and supporting them. They call for both parties to respond to the lack of information – and most especially the violence occurring on the ground – by telling the truth about what is actually going on.

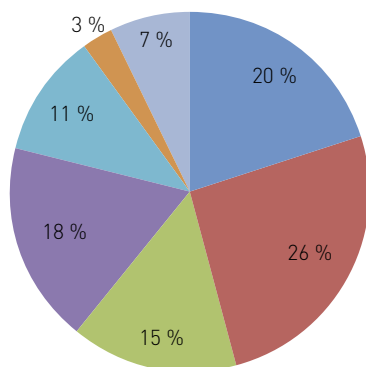
Despite these negative perceptions of the peace process, some organisations offered solutions that could help alleviate the negativity. According to them, it is imperative for both the GPH and NDFFP to respect and implement all the previously signed agreements as a sign of their sincerity and integrity. They also see this as a way to move forward and both resume the peace negotiations and sustain the peace process. Both parties should strengthen their political will and commitment and make the peace negotiations their priority. One organisation in the NCR said that the CPP-NPA-NDFFP Peace Panels, national leadership and territorial leadership should adopt a unified position. In the last few years some partners on the ground have reported that the views of NPA leaders in their areas differ from those of the official statements issued by the NDFFP leadership. While the NDFFP Peace Panel takes part in the peace negotiations, local NPA commanders continue their offensives and declarations of all-out war on the Aquino administration. This causes confusion among civil society supporters and makes them doubt whether the CPP-NPA-NDFFP leadership takes unanimous and consultative decisions. The GPH, on the other hand, should pursue the peace talks and reconstitute its Peace Panel with skilled people who are committed to a transformative peace.

Some respondents pointed out the need for CSOs to collaborate in advancing the peace process and mainstream the rights and inclusion of IPs, Christians and Muslims, as well as focusing on gender equality. The IP respondents added that IPs in conflict-affected areas should also be represented in the negotiations so that their voices can be heard.

And while respondents recognise both the ills affecting the peace process and the progress – albeit very slow – that has been made, most are hopeful that both the GPH and NDFFP will demonstrate good faith towards each other and towards the peace negotiations.

The issues and concerns of communities and at the national level that need to be addressed and prioritised by the GPH-NDFP peace process

What are the issues and concerns of your organization or as individual which you think need to be addressed and prioritized in the peace process?



- Both sides must renounce violence, the negotiations must resume and the fighting/armed conflict must be stopped immediately in order to reduce violence, and both sides must support the creation and sustainability of peace zones and the development of a broad peace constituency. The militarisation of communities must stop, project sites must be free from both parties' armed operations, and the security of peace advocates and workers who work in conflict-affected communities must be guaranteed.
- The lack of access to basic government-supplied social services must be addressed; and socioeconomic reforms should be prioritised, like land reform, wages, workers' rights, social housing, and protection against so-called development aggression, such as mining, logging and real estate projects, including protection against environmental degradation. Communities must be supported and provided with livelihood opportunities; the issue of poverty should be addressed, especially in rural areas; and employment opportunities should be provided to people through the development of local industries.
- IPs must be allowed to use their ancestral domains freely, internally displaced IP communities should be focused on, and IPs' rights should be recognised and respected.
- There is a need to prioritise the active implementation of CARHRIHL through the operationalisation of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) and for the parties to respect human rights (HR) and international humanitarian law (IHL). Both parties must prioritise their compliance with previously signed agreements and must demonstrate sincerity and honesty in order to resolve the bottlenecks in the negotiations.
- The people's awareness of the issues of the peace process should be improved; there should be multisectoral participation in the peace process; the democratic space for CSO engagement should be broadened; and the political participation, inclusion and involvement of Tri-People should be increased.
- Both parties should advocate gender equality and respect women's right, and consultations should be held with women peacebuilders so that women's issues and concerns during times of war and conflict are addressed; there should be women's representation at all levels of decision-making; and capacity-building training should be provided for women peacebuilders, especially those at the grassroots level, so that they are empowered to give voice to their experiences, concerns, and the ways in which they contribute to civil society, local government and the media.
- The major issue is HR violations. Just compensation for victims of HR violations and abuses should be paid.

As a way to give voice to the respondents of the research, they were asked to identify the major issues that should be dealt with in the peace negotiations and express their calls to both the GPH and NDFP negotiators and decision-makers. While they all agree that the root causes of the conflict should be addressed and resolved in the peace negotiations, they believe that the GPH and NDFP should first address the violence happening on the ground and its effect on the people. According to an organisation in the Cordillera, the first step is to renounce violence and stop militarisation and armed operations in communities, especially in ancestral domains. They stressed that civilians must be protected and the non-recruitment of minors must be strictly enforced. They reiterated the need to implement practical ways to immediately respond to HR and IHL violations, such as setting up rapid reaction teams, providing immediate assistance to victims, ensuring the protection of witnesses, protecting human rights defenders and ensuring the security of peace advocates. The current mechanism that should take charge of monitoring HR and IHL violations is the JMC, but it has unfortunately not reconvened in the last few years. Many civil society leaders feel that the JMC lacks efficiency and effectiveness in monitoring and dealing with HR and IHL cases. The branding or tagging of individuals as members or allies of either party should be stopped, and instead the JMC should deal with just compensation for victims of HR abuses and violations. Both parties should also focus on internally displaced communities, mostly IPs and civilians, who are caught up in the conflict.

A strong concern of IP respondents was for both parties to be culturally sensitive and for them to acknowledge IPs' indigenous knowledge systems and practices; their right to self-governance; the requirements of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act; and the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

Other pressing issues that respondents referred to included socioeconomic reforms, access to basic social services, poverty alleviation, land issues, wealth redistribution, agrarian reform, gender equality, political reforms, peace and order, corruption, industrialisation, logging, and mining, among others. Both parties must be pressured to acknowledge these issues, continue the negotiations and sign agreements based on the substantive agenda set by the Hague Joint Declaration.

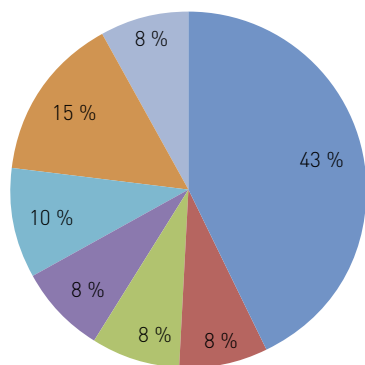
Above all, respondents emphasised that in order for their issues to be discussed and eventually resolved, the GPH and NDFP should go back to the negotiating table. All respondents highlighted the importance of both parties' consulting and involving the mass base in their decision-making. They also mentioned the significance of affirming and complying with previously signed agreements such as CARHRIHL and the Hague Joint Declaration, the immediate operationalisation of the JMC, and the resolving of JASIG-related issues, which has been a contentious issue be-

tween the two parties and a major bottleneck in the peace negotiations.

Moreover, they see a need to initiate trust-building measures during the process among the Peace Panels, GPH and NDFP personnel, the communities involved, and, indeed, Philippine society as a whole in order to prepare Filipinos for a healing and restorative justice process, which can be achieved through enhancing people’s awareness by providing information about the peace negotiations using media outlets and the power of social media.

Local organisations’ concrete interventions and advocacies pertaining to issues and concerns in the context of the GPH-NDFP peace process

What are your concrete interventions and advocacies pertaining to your to issues and concerns in the context of GPH-NDF Peace talks?



Respondents listed the following broad groupings of interventions:

- Establishing and strengthening the PEACE movement through capacity-building, networking and alliance-/coalition-building; conducting awareness-raising education, campaigns and other forms of advocacy work on peace; holding dialogues with stakeholders and the GPH, e.g. about the possibility of establishing peace zones; mainstreaming peace in programmes and projects; and empowering communities through legal education and pre-legal assistance.
- Promoting gender-responsive governance to ensure rural women’s rights; conducting research among and consultations with women affected by armed conflict to gather their perspectives on the GPH-NDFP peace process; supporting women’s initiatives on conflict prevention, conflict resolution and community dialogues; and monitoring the peace talks.
- Organising group interventions to ask both parties to work for the immediate resumption of peace negotiations and the ending of the armed conflict in order to reduce violence.
- Advocating the inclusion of IPs in the peace talks; conducting awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes especially among the Lumads (IPs in Mindanao); and providing relief to and rehabilitating IP communities victimised by armed conflicts.
- Holding campaigns on local issues in Aurora, Negros Oriental, etc.
- Advocating and supporting poverty reduction and the creation of jobs through livelihood projects, promoting awareness of the need for environmental protection, and running community-based livelihood programmes.
- Engaging with the security sector and conducting dialogue with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Drawing from their organisations’ wide-ranging experiences and peaceful, non-violent practices, the respondents described their own interventions to further peace advocacy regarding the GPH-NDFP negotiations. And while some organisations do not primarily focus on peace and/or the GPH-NDFP peace context, some focus their programmes and activities on related issues, such as agrarian reform, IPs’ rights, workers’ rights, poverty, and the lack of basic social services. The issues they focus on impact on the armed conflict both directly and indirectly.

Most forms of intervention by local organisations include local peace strategies, and group actions such as organising, capacity-building, awareness-raising, dialogue, networking, education, advocacy, campaigns, legal education, and para-legal assistance.

Specific interventions address economic needs and sustainability, such as issues of land grabs and land acquisition, land reforms, security of land tenure for informal settlers, post-disaster reconstruction, and livelihood projects.

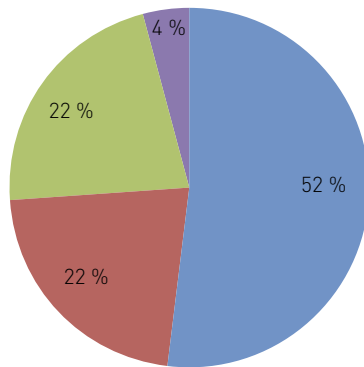
Other engagements include establishing peace zones, lobbying for the inclusion of IPs in the peace talks, petitioning the GPH and NDFP, lobbying Congress and the Senate, issuing statements and letters, and releasing the manifestoes/declarations of IPs’ leaders on particular issues.

Some organisations have specific agendas on gender-responsive governance, research on women and peace-building in the Philippines, environmental protection, mainstreaming peace in projects regarding the protection of women and children, and increasing capacity.

Other organisations engage with the AFP Human Rights Office, and some have existing memorandums of agreement with the Philippine Army and local government units. Others address the rights of the displaced and actively respond to CARHRIHL violations. There are also initiatives covering research and documentation, conflict mapping and profiling, information dissemination on CARHRIHL, the popularisation of a bottom-up peace process, and the relief and rehabilitation of IP communities.

Local initiatives that support the GPH-NDFP peace process

In your initiatives, how can you support the GPH-NDFP Peace Process?



Respondents stated that they could support the peace process by:

- Organising support forums throughout the province in which they operated; promoting awareness of the GPH-NDFP peace process; educating communities about the peace process; conducting forums in schools; educating their members on the peace process and seeking their support; conducting community consultations and dialogues; and implementing community engagements such as learning sessions.
- Promoting CARHRIHL in the *barrios*; researching and understanding the agreements signed by the conflicting parties; promoting/campaigning for peace and social justice; joining the advocacy campaign for the resumption of the peace talks; and monitoring the armed conflict so as to provide humanitarian aid to conflict-affected people.
- Playing an active role in the constituency-building effort to fast-track the GPH-NDFP peace talks; lobbying both parties regarding women's perspectives and the agenda of IPs; and responding to the impact of the armed conflict.
- Being actively involved in ecumenical peace movements and citizen's alliances; tapping the network that facilitates the establishment of core groups/individuals who can unite in leading this advocacy process; and bringing together the leaders of the five major Philippine church federations.

Based on respondents' answers, some of the important initiatives that could support the peace process are discussed below. Some of these initiatives are already under way, while others are valuable suggestions for further consideration.

Suggested initiatives to support the GPH-NDFP peace process include conducting forums, promoting awareness, educating communities, disseminating information, distributing materials, capacity-building, initiating pro-peace campaigns, constituency-building, providing conflict transformation training, providing peace education, and holding consultations and dialogues.

Campaigns can include promoting the resumption of the peace talks, promoting the implementation of CARHRIHL, encouraging local peace talks, and lobbying women peace advocates and highlighting their achievements.

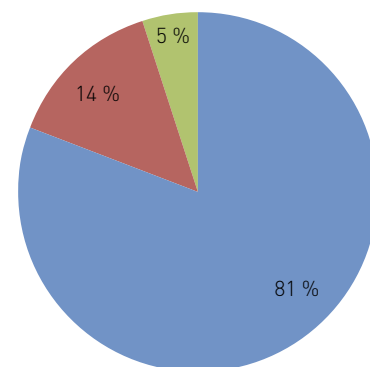
Other initiatives include responding to the impact of armed conflict and other human-made disasters, monitoring people who are internally displaced by armed conflict, and providing humanitarian aid to those affected by armed conflict. In line with this, there is an effort to promote non-violence and advocate for the use of peaceful and legal means to resolve conflict.

The media can also be a tool for peacebuilding through such processes as mediation, facilitation and even active participation in the peace process. Personal social media such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs can also be used to spread awareness.

In addition, there should be a focus on developing the spirituality and morality of key leaders and individuals involved in the process. There is also a need to acknowledge the role of the church, HR organisations, and the basic sectors in promoting and advancing the peace negotiations between the GPH and NDFP.

The willingness of individuals and organisations to play an active role in constituency-building efforts to fast-track the GPH-NDFP peace talks

Are you willing to play an active role in the constituency building efforts to fast track the GPH-NDFP Peace Talks?



- Yes, I am/we are willing to play an active role in constituency-building to fast-track the peace talks.
- I/we decline to play an active role, but am/are willing to help and support the resumption of the peace talks.
- This is not part of our mandate and we would need a board resolution to become involved in peace advocacy.

Since the majority of respondents were connected to the SCN, most agreed to play an active role in constituency-building efforts for the GPH-NDFP peace talks. In fact, most said that building a peace constituency is at the forefront of their mandates as organisations. Some organisations stressed the importance of building a larger network of peace constituents, not only as a means to fast-track the peace process, but also as an essential component of balanced peace negotiations. Other organisations – especially those in Central and Northern Mindanao – see their participation in and support for the peace

process as a way to protect them and their communities, especially IPs, from the violence caused by the conflict; to seek justice and redress for the violations committed against them; and to attract development projects to their communities.

While most respondents readily pledged their support and participation, some expressed their hesitation and concerns, saying that they would only be willing to become involved if the two principal parties – the GPH and CPP-NPA-NDFP – show solid commitment to the continuation and progress of the peace process. The timing and currently prevailing issues, such as the presidential elections and the Bangsamoro Basic Law, also featured as points of concern for some organisations.

One respondent said that it would take more than just constituency-building to fast-track the talks. He mentioned a combination of bringing in more (quantity) and key (quality) people to help in the peace process. Providing bridging and mutually beneficial solutions to the bottleneck issues that are currently stalling the talks would also be highly beneficial. The parties should also be continuously bombarded with creative and compelling ideas. Some organisations see the potential inherent in the youth and recommend the large-scale organising of students in schools and universities, and out-of-school-youth in urban communities.

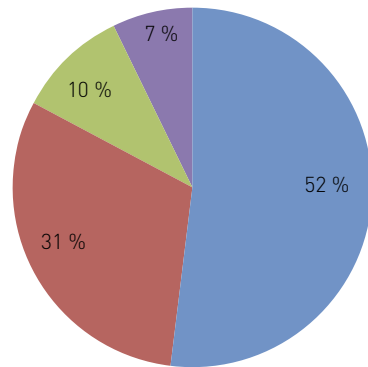
However, some respondents, while willing to support the cause of peace, are limited by the mandates and capacities of the organisations to which they belong.

A formula to sustain constituency-building for peace

All the respondents agreed that there is no single and perfect formula to sustain an active peace constituency. Drawing on their own extensive experience of organising action on key issues and recognising that building an effective peace constituency will involve complex interactions among multiple key actors/stakeholders and different layers of the playing field, they highlighted the need for awareness and connectivity. Awareness should be increased:

- among the actors involved, starting with those in communities and at the grassroots (who are most vulnerable) about their rights and how the peace process can help alleviate their plight;
- among concerned civil society, whose members should be aware of how their diversified capabilities complement the capacities of others so as to better implement and support advocacy for peace;
- among the general public, who are not fully aware of the struggles that the victims of the armed conflict are facing, in order to shatter the public's apathetic attitudes and transform ordinary citizens into peace advocates; and
- among decision-makers in the peace arena, who should be made aware of the realities on the ground on which they should base their decisions.

What do you think is the formula to sustain the constituency building for peace?



- A possible multifaceted formula is to sustain constituency-building through confidence-building measures such as conciliation and the renunciation of violence; to organise conferences, seminars, training programmes and awareness campaigns on the GPH-NDFP peace process; and to hold regular dialogues among various stakeholders, especially the basic sectors and constituents in the countryside, including the church, academia and the private sector, in order to ensure continuous support for the peace process. There is a need to build the capacity of those who directly participate in the peace process on the procedures and techniques of peace work and on the substantive issues, i.e. to build the capacities of those who will participate in the peace process.
- A possible formula is that of implementing broad community-based initiatives with well-developed national and international networks and sufficient institutional and financial support; recognising community-based engagements for peace; applying the principle that peacebuilding starts with empowering and capacitating the poorest of the poor; redefining the people's connection to the issue of peace; and training communities on civilian protection and how to organise for peace.
- A possible formula is that of continually providing updates on the peace process and other related activities; stressing the importance of awareness of the process and peace education; and holding massive information/education drives involving ongoing discussions, communication, and the mobilisation of peace advocates.
- The best formula is to TRUST one another; to SIT DOWN and TALK and LISTEN, and UNDERSTAND every detail of every issue; and to remember that we are all brothers and sisters. We must show to the world that we, the FILIPINO PEOPLE, live in a peace-loving country and condemn any form of violence.

Actions for peace should be more interconnected – from broad community-based initiatives to well-developed national activities and, if applicable, international inputs – in order to create a national collective action grounded on grassroots discussions and realities. These factors (i.e. awareness and connectivity) could be advanced through consistent dialogues, meetings and discussions in forums, conferences, seminars, etc., where updates on the progress (or, in the case of the peace process in question, the lack thereof) of the GPH-NDFP peace talks and the issues of the peace process in general are discussed and

analysed. Some organisations even suggested that Sulong CARHRIHL should initiate these activities, given the depth of the organisation’s involvement in and comprehension of the peace process.

Respondents also see a need for capacity-building among peace actors as an essential formula to sustain the peace movement. Strengthening inherent capacities and building on diverse capabilities would empower peace actors to actively and meaningfully participate in the peace process. Many respondents pointed out that women, educators, religious people and church members, people with disabilities, and IPs all have great potential to be active players in the peace constituency, if only their innate capabilities can be further enhanced and their roles in society can be used to advance peace (e.g. they point out that women are natural peacemakers and IPs are naturally peace-loving people, while (peace) educators can influence school curriculums and students in general, and churches and their wide membership can advocate for peace, etc.).

Sincerity and commitment on the part of the principal parties (the GPH and NDFP) would also contribute to the sustainability of the peace constituency. If both parties demonstrate their unwavering commitment to the peace process by adhering to past agreements like CARHRIHL, ensuring the protection of civilians during armed conflict, resuming the peace talks, and starting negotiations on socioeconomic reforms in order to introduce the necessary reforms to address the poor socioeconomic conditions of the majority of Filipinos (e.g. lack of accessibility to basic social services, widespread poverty, etc.). One organisation from the NCR simplified the formula that was needed in the following way:

Economic empowerment (poverty alleviation) + active participation in good governance + equitable ideological space = peace.

When seeking inspiration from other peace process contexts and approaches, the majority of respondents agreed that the experience of the Mindanao peace constituency as a positive influence on the GPH-MILF peace process, although not without flaws, could be helpful, but simultaneously asserted that the differences in context between the two peace processes constitute a major factor. IP partners in Central Luzon added that the peace zone established in their community could also serve as a model for possible similar approaches. Their local government, together with CSOs and other local organisations, declared their area a peace zone in which armed actions by any armed group are unacceptable.

And together with these suggested formulas/methods for sustaining the peace constituency, one organisation added an important reminder: peace advocates should always seek out creative, new, and innovative approaches to capture the imagination and interests of the various

generational groups in the movement and those we are trying to draw into it.

Committing to the Philippine Peace Movement/ Coalition in support of the GPH-NDFP peace process



- Yes, I am/we are willing to be a part of the peace movement.
- Our efforts are mostly local and regional and we would not be able to participate in national efforts, but will support the peace movement.
- It is not our mandate to advocate for this cause and we would need our board to decide on this kind of advocacy.

Most respondents mentioned their involvement with the CAJP, an alliance of four major peace networks in the country (the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP), Pilgrims for Peace, Sulong CARHRIHL and Waging Peace Philippines) that is calling for the immediate resumption of the peace talks. They see the CAJP as the unifying peace movement they could all rally behind in support of the peace process.

And while the great majority agreed to be a part of the peace movement, a few said that they would need to know more about the coalition/alliance/movement before they join. They would need to clearly understand what the movement is offering and whether it broadly conforms with their own organisations’ mandates. Some also raised concerns over the fact that the scope of their organisations was very local/provincial/regional, which means that they might not be able to participate in national actions.

According to these organisations, peace is everyone’s responsibility, and so they see their potential joining of the peace movement as doing their duty to the country. They also believe that a collective effort would achieve more effective results. The more people there are who call for the protection of the HR of civilians and seek justice and redress for HR and IHL violation victims, the more those in power will heed them.

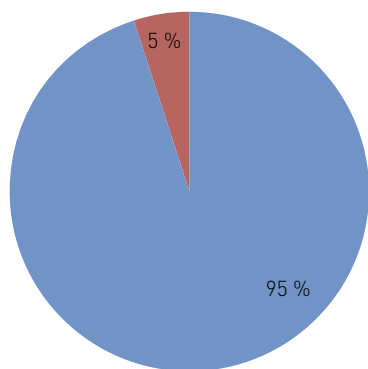
The IPs who were surveyed said that their reason for involving themselves with a broader peace movement is because they think that it is the only way in which their

voices will be heard. They urgently want to be heard because it is in their ancestral lands, in the midst of their communities, that armed encounters often take place, leaving in their wake destroyed properties and – much worse – loss of lives among families.

A religious organisation said that it sees its commitment to the peace process as stemming from the Christian concept that Jesus Christ is regarded as the “Prince of Peace” and He therefore calls on Christians to be peacebuilders. And so, as devoted followers of Christ and as devoted believers of their faith, they are compelled by the mandate of the gospels and the principles they contain to actively support the peace process between the GPH and NDFP.

Can the international community play a vital role in support of the GPH-NDFP peace process?

Do you think the “International Community” can play a vital role in support of the GPH-NDFP Peace Process? What are these roles?



- The international community can play an important role in supporting the GPH-NDFP peace process.
- I/we do not agree that the international community should be involved in the peace process, because all Filipinos should decide the fate of the peace process.

The Royal Norwegian Government is currently the only international actor involved in the peace process and is playing a relatively large role as the facilitator of the peace talks. Its role has been defined and limited by both the GPH and NDFP.

The majority of respondents agreed that the international community can play an important role in supporting the GPH-NDFP peace process. The influence, expertise and resources of that community could be a major factor in the eventual completion of the peace process. However, limits should be placed on its involvement. There are three areas in which the participation of the international community is welcomed. The first is in the actual peace talks, where international entities can act as facilitators or mediators in the negotiations, and ensure that the parties adhere to international peace standards and previously agreed protocols/mechanisms/declarations. These entities could also act as observers that monitor the progress of the peace talks, and could be a source of technical expertise

for the negotiators and offer logistical and financial support to the peace negotiations. The second area is that of advocacy to provide awareness-raising regarding international decrees/treaties that are relevant to the peace process, and in seeking international solidarity. The third area is that of supporting civil society initiatives for peace by providing grants and funding projects, as well as providing capacity-building training for CSO peace actors.

The respondents maintained that these limitations are set so as not to place the actual negotiating and decision-making process for our country and our people in the hands of international actors who have their own agendas. They insisted that decisions should always be made by Filipinos for all Filipinos.

But some organisations insisted that there should be no international presence in the peace negotiations, in the belief that Filipinos should decide the fate of the peace process and foreign advocacy does not help.

Conclusion

Peace stakeholders’ perceptions of the GPH-NDFP peace process

The Philippines has a long history of armed conflicts caused by various factors, including poverty, lack of social justice, continuing HR violations and impunity, discrimination, and non-recognition of the right to self-determination. In spite of this long-standing situation of conflict, only a few CSOs focus directly on supporting peace and peace processes. This can be attributed to the fact that Filipinos’ major concerns, especially in rural areas, are focused more on day-to-day survival and family- and community-related issues than larger national issues. They cannot immediately associate or see the link between their present issues and concerns and the peace process. In addition, there is also a lack of information and knowledge about the peace processes taking place in the country, including the one between the GPH and NDFP. This was substantiated by the survey respondents when they noted gaps in the information disseminated by both parties and that news about the peace negotiations is only published if the parties make negative comments about each other in the media.

Also based on respondents’ responses, it can be said that there is not enough space for CSOs and communities affected by armed conflict to participate actively in the GPH-NDFP peace process. This is because important processes such as consultations and dialogues on the specific concerns and issues of the communities are lacking. A gap therefore exists between the formal peace negotiations and community engagement with them. The various CSOs and community members cannot easily see the link between their domestic or local issues and the peace process in the macro-context of the roots of the armed conflict that are being addressed in the peace negotiations.

Despite CSOs' and communities' lack of understanding and knowledge of the GPH-NDFP peace process, it is very important to note that a large proportion of respondents (44%) believe and hope that the roots of the armed conflict can only be addressed and resolved through the peace negotiations.

More than 30% of respondents also saw the need to immediately convene formal peace talks, because their absence means an increase in the threat to peace and security, especially for people in conflict-affected areas. To reaffirm the respondents' observations and experiences, in one of the forums conducted by the SCN in 2006, Atty. Rene Sarmiento (who is a former GPH Peace Panel member and now the SCN chairperson) said that a decrease in violent clashes between the GPH and NPA forces had been noticed when previous formal peace talks were under way. Furthermore, when comparing 2011 to 2015, based on the SCN's monitoring and documentation work, 2015 saw an increase in the number of violent attacks and HR and IHL violations allegedly committed by both GPH forces and the NPA. This is because currently no formal peace talks are under way and both the GPH and CPP-NPA have made hostile statements about each other. In 2015 the SCN documented nine incidents of internal displacement; 31 cases of extra-judicial killings; 33 violent attacks, including the use of landmines; and seven grave children's rights violations and other forms of HR violations.

Issues and concerns that need to be addressed

The main concern of people in conflict-affected areas is still socioeconomic reforms, which should also be the focus of the GPH-NDFP peace negotiations. Such reforms should address issues like agrarian reform; basic social services; just compensation for abuses; the protection of workers; rural development, including provisions for livelihoods and technological inputs; and the protection of and incentives for local businesses. In any discussion of socioeconomic reforms, it is also important to discuss the resource-based conflicts where communities in conflict-affected areas, especially in IPs' ancestral domain areas, are affected by large foreign investors involved in mining, logging and other so-called "development aggression" projects. In some of the cases the SCN documented in the past few years, community or tribal leaders were killed allegedly by the paramilitary groups Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit and Special Civilian Active Auxiliary (which were set up by the AFP to provide protection for investors in communities). These community/tribal leaders opposed the setting up of investment projects in their communities. In other cases community members were also harassed. According to some IP respondents, the government through the National Commission on Indigenous People allows investors to move into ancestral domains without observing the proper processes of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). In most cases FPIC agreements are made with fake IPs and not with the actual IPs in the ancestral domains where the projects will be implemented.

Among the various sectors targeted by the research, the IPs were the most vocal about their sentiments and want representation in the peace negotiations. This is because almost all IPs' ancestral domains are battlegrounds for the armed conflict between the GPH and CPP-NPA-NDFP. They are the first victims of the conflict and are targeted by both parties. Simultaneously, because of their knowledge of local conditions, they are also vulnerable to recruitment as guides or to prepare ambushes for opposing forces.

Peace stakeholders' role in and formula for the GPH-NDFP peace process

If we reflect on the responses that indicate how respondents' organisations have already contributed to peace advocacy, what they can contribute to the peace process in the future, and what they perceive as the formula to ensure the success of the GPH-NDFP peace process, the majority referred to the need for constituency-building, alliance work and the mainstreaming of peace programmes. The way to achieve these is through building the capacity of peace actors through training programmes, seminars and forums. Constituency-building can also be achieved through the organising of communities for peace.

Peace stakeholders would like to see a constituency-building initiative that recognises community-based initiatives that are being supported by national and international groups. There is a need to redefine the connection between the concrete issues and concerns of people in communities, on the one hand, and the substantive issues that are being discussed and resolved in the peace negotiations, on the other.

In situations where there are no formal peace talks, CARHRIHL should guarantee the right of civilians not to be caught up in the armed conflict. Respondents demanded that a civilian protection mechanism be established as part of the implementation of CARHRIHL. The SCN has been proposing a witness and victims protection programme to the JMC to ensure that cases of CARHRIHL violations will be resolved and justice be given to victims.

More than 80% of respondents are willing to be part of initiatives to support the GPH-NDFP peace process and are willing to mainstream peace programmes in their work and advocacy. Of these respondents, the majority were new contacts and were not part of already identified peace organisations. This is an opportunity to maximise their enthusiasm for and trust in the peace process as the only way to resolve the root causes of the armed conflict afflicting the Philippines. Most respondents are willing to play an active role in peacebuilding and to become part of a coalition to support the peace process. The organisations that were targeted in the research are potential peace constituents that can be included if we want to create a solid and strong basis for the peace negotiations between the GPH and NDFP.

A large number of respondent also saw the value of the role of the international community, particularly its ability to encourage and pressure both parties to continue the peace talks. The international community can work hand in hand with local peace stakeholders in providing expertise, spaces for dialogues, and information on other countries' experiences that can provide alternative and creative ways of ensuring sustainable momentum in the Philippine peace process. However, it is also important to note the concerns that some respondents expressed regarding the role of the international community in the GPH-NDFP peace process – primarily that international actors should not dictate or directly interfere with the parties' decisions and that ultimately Filipinos should resolve their country's problems.

Recommendations

The field research directly identified the recommendations of key informants, while the SCN researchers identified others when conducting the interviews. These recommendations are discussed below.

Recommendations for the GPH and NDFP Peace Panels

1. The GPH and NDFP Peace Panels should focus on what is happening on the ground, especially in conflict-affected areas, because armed encounters and violence continue to occur and these cause CARHRIHL violations. Both parties should seriously consider how their armed encounters affect the lives of the people in affected communities. There is a need for the full implementation of CARHRIHL through the activation of the JMC to ensure the protection of both civilians, and private and public property. The parties should seriously consider setting up a civilian protection mechanism that can be part of the provisions of the supplemental guidelines of the JMC's operationalisation. In the absence of such a JMC mechanism, both parties should respect and adhere to peace advocates' initiatives to protect civilians.
2. Both parties are strongly recommended to respect and adhere to all the agreements that they have signed, especially CARHRIHL, JASIG and the Hague Joint Declaration, because the GPH and NDFP are bound by the principles, sincerity and commitment that make these agreements the essence of the peace talks. If either of the parties wishes to amend any of these agreements, this should be agreed upon by both parties in formal talks.
3. Both parties should recognise community peace initiatives and spaces for dialogue so that the Filipino people – especially those in conflict-affected areas – can express their concerns and provide recommendations to address their situation. The Peace Panels should also maximise the spaces for dialogue to inform the people of the situation and provide updates on the state of the peace negotiations.
4. Most armed encounters take place in IPs' ancestral lands, and it is these people who bear the brunt of the continuing armed conflict. The IPs strongly recommend that both parties listen to their voices; respect their rights, including that of self-governance; and acknowledge indigenous knowledge, systems and practices. They also demand representation in the peace process. Both parties should stop using ancestral lands as battlefields.
5. The GPH-NDFP peace process should also include healing and restorative justice as the foundation of a true and lasting peace. This concern is very important to individuals, families and communities who have lost loved ones or experienced trauma due to the conflict. It also serves the offenders by stopping the vicious cycle of violence.
6. Both parties should focus on achievable social and economic reforms while crafting a more comprehensive Comprehensive Agreement on Socioeconomic Reforms that will address the need for basic social services, agrarian reform, and national industrialisation, and will include independent and sovereign economic policies, as well as the implementation of the constitutional provision on the primacy of labour over capital and pertinent provisions on social justice.
7. Both parties should create confidence-building measures and mechanisms with clear parameters that will guarantee the sustained momentum of the peace talks. Both parties should also pursue confidence-building initiatives among the people to restore their trust in the peace process.
8. The GPH-NDFP Peace Panels should ensure that the peace process is gender responsive. This includes consultations with women as part of the peacebuilding process so that women's issues and concerns during times of war and peace are addressed and women's representation is included at all levels of decision-making.
9. While addressing the root causes of the armed conflict, both parties should take cognisance of the legitimate demands of the people on the ground.
10. The parties should conduct a joint in-depth analysis of the conflict, particularly its root causes and possible resolution. Each should attempt to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the other party as a way of building trust and confidence.
11. Both parties should make the process more inclusive (including of victims of the armed conflict) by recognising spaces for participatory dialogue (both national and international) to build links with and encourage more stakeholders to support the peace process.
12. Both parties should acknowledge the importance of continuous and open communication with the Filipino people, especially about the positive gains of the peace negotiations, so that the people will both see and feel that their needs and hopes are being considered in the peace process. This will ensure the people's sustainable support for the process.

Recommendations for peace advocates

1. There is lack of interest, knowledge and awareness among the people regarding the GPH-NDFP peace process – even among people in conflict-affected areas – which is one of the reasons why there has been less support for the peace process. A massive education and advocacy campaign regarding the GPH-NDFP peace negotiations is needed. This can be done in the following way:
 - A sound communication strategy should be developed to effectively disseminate information to the general public by maximising the use of public platforms such as websites, social media and other forms of engagement.
 - There is still a wide disconnect between peace advocates and the people in general regarding the peace process. Peace advocates alone cannot move this process forward; they have to engage communities in their campaign for the resumption of the peace talks.
2. A broad peace constituency, especially in rural communities and sectors, should be created. Capacity-building should be included to empower rural people to voice their experiences and concerns and actively participate in advocating for the revitalisation of the GPH-NDFP peace process.
3. Local government units – from the provincial down to the *barangay* level – should be involved, because they can play a vital role in strengthening and institutionalising structures for the people's participation in the peace process and also provide immediate response to victims of armed violence at the local level.
4. CSOs should contribute to the process of enriching the analysis of the root causes of the armed conflict by creating spaces for the sharing of expertise and experiences. A space should be created where key actors, basic sectors, and community representatives can participate and contribute to resolving the substantive issues of the armed conflict.
5. An in-depth study and research on the resource-based conflict should be undertaken, especially its effect on the lives of the IPs, because their ancestral lands are always at stake. Such research should include how resource-based conflict adds or links to the already existing conflict between the government and the CPP-NPA-NDFP and the root causes of the wider armed conflict.
6. A study should be conducted on the impact of the armed conflict between the GPH and the CPP-NPA-NDFP that focuses on the lives of those in communities affected by the conflict. The prime focus should be on the victims, IPs, women and children, since they are the most vulnerable sectors who are directly affected by the armed conflict. This can be done through workshops in which researchers simply listen to what people who have been affected by the conflict have to say. The research should also examine how victims perceive their transformation from being victims to becoming advocates for peace.
7. CARHRIHL's community-based monitoring and action response should be strengthened by including civilian protection mechanisms.
8. The security sector should also be targeted by advocacy, education and capacity-building initiatives, and the security forces should be encouraged to see that dialogue and the peace process are the only ways to resolve the armed conflict and not the military route.
9. The international community should also be targeted to gain support for the GPH-NDFP peace process, because this community can provide expertise, innovative frameworks and shared experiences, and put pressure on both parties. The international community's support can provide added value to and/or complement initiatives at the local level. If we look briefly at the experience of other peace processes, then it is noteworthy that international bodies like the United Nations and countries such as Cuba, Norway and Venezuela have played an important role in the peace process between the Colombian government and the FARC, while the International Monitoring Team and the International Contact Group provided vital support to the GPH-MILF peace process.

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* The author wishes to acknowledge Regina Mondez and Karina Limpiado as field researchers/writers, and Wilbert Mercado, Seth Villaruel and Ana Guarino as field researchers.



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