CITIZEN SECURITY – THE ROLE OF NGOS AND BROADER CIVIL SOCIETY IN CEASEFIRE MONITORING: LESSONS FROM MINDANAO

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Abstract

This article examines the role of NGOs and broader civil society in laying the ground for sustainable peace and development by maintaining and promoting early security and stability through the monitoring of ceasefire agreements. Central activities include preventing protagonists from engaging in violence, monitoring the peace process, documenting violations and promoting dialogue. The article draws lessons from an analysis of the 'Bantay Ceasefire' (Ceasefire Watch), a closely networked grassroots movement of NGO and other civil society actors which was formed to establish community security through monitoring a ceasefire agreement between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Mindanao, the second largest island of the Philippines. The article adds to the growing literature on the strategic role of NGOs and wider civil society in enabling citizen security as the missing link at the nexus of peace, security and development.

Introduction

Security-related concerns have become critical issues for multilateral, bilateral, NGO and other civil society actors within the overall peacebuilding and development agenda (Tschirgi 2003). Without security there can be no development, and without development there can be little hope for sustainable peace (Collier *et al* 2003). While NGOs and other civil society actors have long promoted social justice and equity by working to alleviate poverty, mobilising communities and advocating for the protection of human rights, they have increasingly become involved at the nexus of peacebuilding and development by facilitating democratic governance, political pluralism and the diffusion of state power and public accountability through the promotion of popular participation in community decision making and conflict resolution.[1]

Scholars writing about 'security' have traditionally focused on concerns including: peacekeeping, disarmament, demobilisation and the reintegration of former combatants; small-arms control, de-mining, and the conversion of military assets to civilian use; the restructuring of security institutions (including police, military and intelligence services); civilian-military and citizen-police relations; and the governance of security sector expenditure as a part of overall public expenditure. However, the definition of security has been enlarged to embrace 'human security', which encompasses a range of threats beyond the conventional military defence of national borders (Human Security Commission 2003). These new threats include such transnational public issues as environmental hazards, pandemic diseases, financial crises, international crime, terrorism, and public safety (Chen *et al* 2004).

These conceptual and operational shifts have encouraged a rethinking and repositioning among development actors regarding the inextricable linkage between security, peace and development. The creation of new partnerships and synergies between the grassroots peacebuilding activities of a variety of civil society actors and the traditionally top-down peacemaking and development activities of governments responds not only to the aftermath of conflict, but also increasingly to areas of preventive action. These new partnerships bring into play an expanded vision of security and its centrality to poverty alleviation and socio-economic development. No longer do development actors simply provide basic services to the poor; they also strive for empowerment through good governance in the form of inclusive democratic participation, a functioning rule of law and public security. These are now deemed to be essential preconditions to enable the development process to be undertaken and for peace to be sustained (Colletta *et al* 1999, 2000).

The dynamic interaction between civil society stakeholders and political elite decision makers is an essential part of establishing security, building peace and implementing development. Through the vertical linkage of grassroots stakeholders to national peace panel negotiators, a broadly based constituency for peace can both shape the peacebuilding process and enhance ownership, enabling the subsequent implementation of the peace agreement. Facilitating peace and stability by empowering the conflict-affected citizens themselves to participate actively in the ceasefire monitoring process is a powerful testimony to the potential role of civil society and NGOs in promoting citizen security as an enabling condition for sustainable peace and development.

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This paper examines the experience of the Bantay Ceasefire, a grassroots movement for peace in Mindanao, in building a constituency for peace and shaping the government's response to the needs and aspirations of those affected by conflict. The paper draws several key lessons about the interaction between NGOs, other civil society actors (particularly the conflict-affected themselves) and government in partnering for peace and development. The research for this article involved a review of the literature, in-depth interviews with key informants and focus group discussions with community members, programme staff and others stakeholders during field visits to Mindanao in 2005 and 2006.[2]

The Mindanao Conflict

The roots of the Mindanao conflict lay in growing economic inequality and relative deprivation, the control of natural resources – in this case the land itself – and the quest for an independent state based on Moro identity. The struggle for Moro identity and political independence dates back to the Spanish and American colonial regimes. Since Philippine independence in 1945, the continued settling of landless persons from Luzon and the Visayas in Mindanao has exacerbated the issue of property rights, or 'ancestral domain', and led to the increasing marginalisation of the Moro peoples. In 1970 the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Nur Misuari and Abulkhyr Alonto was established. Hashim Salamat was elected head of the Provincial Committee of Cotabato and later chairperson for Foreign Affairs for the MNLF. The Front brought together the key Moro ethnic groups, the Tasug from the Sulu Sultanate areas and the Maguindanao and Marinao from the Maguindanao and Lanao Sultanates. The MNLF armed resistance culminated in President Ferdinand Marcos' declaration of martial law in 1972, citing the rebellion in Muslim Mindanao as a justification.

An impending oil embargo by Arab members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1973 eventually led Marcos to seek a mediated peace through the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), chaired by Libya. This resulted in the signing of the Tripoli Agreement in 1976, providing for an autonomous arrangement for the 13 provinces in Mindanao and the neighbouring islands of Palawan and the Sulu archipelago under the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), claimed by the MNLF as being under its control. However, the agreement quickly collapsed as many significant issues were left out and the terms were not fully implemented. At the very time the Tripoli Agreement was promulgated, divisions were emerging in the MNLF. Differing on political and ideological issues, in March 1984 Hashim Salamat (a strict Islamist) broke with Misuari (a nationalist) and set up the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). To complicate matters, the MILF split along ethnic lines, with Hashim Salamat leading the Maguindanaons and Dimas Pundatu leading an MNLF reform group of Maranao.

In 1986, following the 'People Power Movement' which displaced the Marcos regime, the Cory Aquino administration initiated talks with Nur Misuari and the MNLF in Sulu, drawing the anger of the MILF leadership. The talks paved the way for the so-called 'Full Peace Agreement' between the MNLF and the Ramos administration, successor to Aquino, in 1996.[3] However, the agreement was anything but full given the absence of the MILF.

The Ramos government effectively built on the changing priorities of NGO and broader civil society actors emerging from the 'People Power Movement' by encouraging greater civil society participation in promoting peace and security through the establishment of the National Unification Commission (NUC). A number of civil society peace advocates encouraged Ramos to situate his national amnesty programme in a more comprehensive framework for peace and security, encouraging a national dialogue or popular consultation on strategies for peace. Some 24 sectors of society were invited to participate with representatives of local and central government, the judiciary, police and AFP in public consultations on peace and security led by NGOs and other civil society organisations.

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The Ramos government not only negotiated a ceasefire, but through the NUC also launched a broadly based consultation on the peace process with various segments of the society. However, with the transition to the Estrada government in 1998, support for civil society involvement weakened. At the same time, the ceasefire began to unravel. From 1998 to 2001 the Estrada government's strategy toward the MILF shifted from a 'carrot' to a 'stick' approach, with government forces launching an 'all-out war' and attacking the Buliok complex in central Mindanao, the stronghold of Hashim Salamat and the MILF armed wing. The determination of the strategy was evident in the leading role played by the military despite the fact that the 1987 Constitution granted the civilian-led police supremacy in keeping peace and order.

In February 2001, Gloria Arroyo took over as president following the ouster of Estrada amid charges of corruption and incompetence. Arroyo promptly shifted the government's policy to one of 'all-out peace' under Executive Order Number Three. The order provided 'the framework for the implementation, coordination, monitoring and integration of all government initiatives and the participation of civil society in the pursuit of a just and lasting peace' in Mindanao (Gaspar *et al* 2002). The Order gave the Office of the Presidential

Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) a mandate to pursue a comprehensive peace process. Specifically, it was charged with building on the work begun by the NUC and engaging in participatory consultation as a basis for talks with all armed groups (Ferrer 2002). The reversal of the Estrada policy of 'all-out war' to Arroyo's policy of 'all-out peace' provided a new opening for NGOs and a variey of other civil society actors, including religious leaders, to become more fully engaged in the official peace and security process.

The Role of NGOs and Broader Civil Society in Enabling Peacebuilding and Development through Ceasefire Monitoring

The evolution of civil society participation in peacebuilding in Mindanao

The Philippines is known for its active civil society, particularly mobilised by NGOs working in the areas of social development and environmental protection. A specific concern with the role of civil society in peacebuilding – especially the emphasis on promoting citizen security– is, however, a relatively recent phenomenon. Although the media and various religious orders, such as the Oblate Fathers of Notre Dame, became pioneering peace and reconciliation advocates in the Mindanao conflict in the 1970s, these voices were quickly silenced when the Marcos regime imposed martial law in 1972. While in some ways martial law posed a setback for civil society, it helped re-orient NGOs and other actors toward a concern for human rights abuses and defending the property rights and dignity of the marginalised, war-affected Moros and Lumads (Gaspar *et al* 2002).

In the 1990s the Ramos government continued to facilitate the work of civil society in the promotion of peace and security through the NUC. The commission addressed a number of structural, social and economic issues underlying the conflict. They included unclear property rights and exclusionary economic policies evident in high poverty rates and large disparities in access to basic services (particularly education and health) for the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao in relation to the rest of the Philippines. However, there were many complaints with such a civil society-led process, not least of which was that some government officials felt marginalised. Others criticised the NUC process as being repetitive, dismissing the whole exercise as a mere recounting of grievances and demands brought up in earlier forums (Ferrer 2002). In 1993 the NUC and the resulting framework for peace were absorbed by the new OPAPP.

In late 1996, faith-based efforts at peacebuilding, led by the Bishops-Ulama Forum (BUF), called for the establishment of a 'culture of peace' through the promotion of mutual understanding and reconciliation among the various armed factions. In 1999 the Forum organised a Mindanao Peace Week which brought together a broad coalition of civil society actors to hold public marches, symposia and media events. In 2000 the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and the Kusog Mindanaw (Mindanao Force) – a diverse umbrella organisation– were among the first to encourage Arroyos shift to 'all-out peace'.

Executive Order Number Three set the policy framework for the integration of government and civil society initiatives, legitimising and actively supporting NGO and broader civil society engagement in the peace process (Cagoco-Guiam 1999). A number of Mindanao-based NGOs supported and built on the early inter-faith initiatives, with some expanding their peace advocacy and service-oriented work to conducting fact-finding missions and reporting on human rights violations. For example, the Mindanao Commission on Women was formed to document the situation of women in Mindanao and encourage women's

active participation in the peace process. As the peace movement began to form among these NGOs, the number of Mindanao-based NGOs and other community associations increased; many were comprised of members from a variety of religious and ethnic groups directly representing the Moro peoples. Other more development-oriented NGOs, such as Tabang Mindanaw, Community and Family Services International (CFSI), Salaam-Mindanao, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Habitat for Humanity worked closely with the Department of Social Welfare and Development and local governments to provide relief in evacuation centres, social-psychological support to trauma victims, early rehabilitation (e.g. housing and social infrastructure) and livelihood projects in communities of return. Many international and regional NGOs, such as Oxfam-GB, the Toscadar, Accion, Christian Aid and Reconciliation Resources provided funds and technical assistance to local NGOs and civil society groups. CRS has been particularly active in supporting peace advocacy capacity building by conducting annual workshops through the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute.

Despite the many ways in which NGOs and other civil society actors contributed to peacebuilding in Mindanao, they were still not successful in halting the war. Though laudable, their efforts often appeared reactive and uncoordinated; ideological and organisational divisions prevailed. Without a consolidated civil society effort, the grassroots could not be effectively mobilised for actively resolving the conflict (Gaspar *et al* 2002; Rood 2003).

In sum, policies and strategies focusing on peace and security advocacy through a top-down strengthening of state authority under the OPAPP and negotiations between the government and the MILF, although necessary, were not sufficient to achieve an enduring peace. To be successful in peacemaking, the government needed to connect the top-down strategy with a bottom-up initiative, shifting attention to building a civil society constituency for peace and security from below. However, there were clear limits to the NGO peace advocacy role and the provision of humanitarian relief and early rehabilitation. In addition to reactive, service-providing activities, NGOs needed to work more with other civil society actors to take action aimed at promoting citizen security and directly reducing the level of violence. The shift to building a broadly based grassroots constituency for peace operating in a transformative mode began to take shape with the Bantay Ceasefire leading the way. Bantay Ceasefire aimed at enabling security through efforts to enforce a ceasefire and bringing the concrete structural issues of agrarian reform and property rights and the redistribution of wealth and power to the forefront of the peace process (Gutierrez & Borras 2004). Following this lead, additional NGOs turned their attention toward the conflict-affected communities themselves in a strategic shift to forge a stronger link with community-based civil society actors and to refocus on citizen security as a foundation for sustainable peace.

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The Bantay Ceasefire: the need to build a grassroots constituency for peace and security

After NGOs shifted their strategic priorities to the community level, homegrown grassroots citizen security and peacebuilding efforts blossomed in several communities. This occurred through the dual strategy of establishing 'spaces for peace' – also called 'peace zones' or

'sanctuaries for peace' – and organising a constituency for community security among the war-affected themselves to monitor the ceasefire.

The first part of this dual strategy saw the coming together of diverse community members – often from opposing factions – in 'peace task forces' and 'peace councils' to discuss their shared concerns for security and to forge a 'declaration of peace' at the community level.[4] Declarations included community efforts to map and mediate communal disputes, assess needs, set priorities for rehabilitation, undertake indigenous healing processes, build local capacity, and nip harmful rumours in the bud. But a key shift in their activities was to provide for an informal community-level civil society monitoring of the combatants separate from that of both the government and MILF (Abadiano interview 2004).[5] The initial efforts at citizen peacebuilding were especially noteworthy for their early success in building 'bridging social capital' or horizontal relations of trust and confidence, across ethnic and religious groups in conflict-affected areas.

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The second half of the dual strategy was the Bantay Ceasefire or Ceasefire Watch. The Bantay Ceasefire was a mass campaign involving Christians, Muslims, and Lumads, a consortium of NGOs and broader civil society actors, and a grassroots mechanism for monitoring and reporting ceasefire violations. It was at once a project and a movement (Aronodo interview 2004). The Bantay Ceasefire was founded in October 2001 out of a desire to hold the conflict parties accountable to the war-affected communities by creating an independent, grassroots, civil society monitoring of the ceasefire between the AFP and the MILF. (Bantay Ceasefire Report 2003). Its organisational predecessor was the Independent Fact-Finding Committee (IFFC), an investigative body formed by three civil society organisations: Notre Dame University Peace Education Centre, the Maguindanao Professional Employees' Association, and Cotabato City Media Multipurpose Cooperative. The Mindanao Peoples Caucus (MPC), a Mindanao-based NGO, was also among the first non-governmental bodies to initiate the monitoring of ceasefire violations.

The Bantay Ceasefire was inspired and technically supported by the Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), a Mindanao-based international NGO which realised that the many diverse non-governmental efforts at relief, rehabilitation and peacebuilding needed to be improved (Alim interview 2004). At the core of the Bantay Ceasefire peacebuilding approach was a shift to a transformative (rather than responsive) mode of action, as well as a network-based organisational approach to peacebuilding.

The strategic integration of the Bantay Ceasefire horizontal peacebuilding 'network' with the government's vertical peace and development 'platform'

Arroyo's strategy of 'all-out peace' meant NGOs were invited back into the peace process, which led to the emergence of the Bantay Ceasefire. The Bantay Ceasefire, however, unlike the IFFC and its successor organs, was not formally connected to the parties to the conflict as an official monitoring or fact-finding body. It also had a broader base of support among the war-affected communities. Strategically, the Bantay Ceasefire was more independent than the IFFC, and more purposively dependent on the citizens of the war-affected communities themselves for monitoring the ceasefire. Without a mandate from either the government or the MILF, the Bantay Ceasefire could remain more independent and

impartial in its work. While receiving support from the MPC, the CBCS and other peace forums and NGOs, and technical assistance from the IID, most of the actual peace monitors have come from the grassroots war-affected civil society themselves. Some of these monitors are returning evacuees and others are even former combatants who have become peace advocates (Bantay Ceasefire Report 2003).

The formal ceasefire monitoring structure included an International Monitoring Team (IMT) with military personnel from Malaysia, Indonesia, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Brunei (all OIC members), and Japan. The IMT is principally tasked to observe and monitor the implementation of all agreements on the cessation of hostilities, as well as the second Tripoli Agreement on Peace signed between the government and the MILF on 22 June 2001. However, the many flaws in this official monitoring structure – including the lack of influence and independence of the IMT and the Local Monitoring Teams (LMTs) – combined with the fact that the war-affected communities had no say over the conduct or duration of the war being thrust upon them, necessitated other monitoring mechanisms, such as the civil society effort espoused in the Bantay Ceasefire initiative.

Four Bantay Ceasefire missions were conducted in 2003. The first involved 60 mission members and 10 international observers in Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao and Lanao to investigate reported ceasefire violations and assess the provincial-level LMTs. This mission reported repeated breaches of the ceasefire by the AFP operating against suspected 'terrorists' and criminal groups. It also called attention to the ineffectiveness of the LMTs, recommending third party monitoring. The second mission comprised grassroots members assessing the communities in Pikit, Cotabato, Pagalungan and Maguindanao where the fighting had resumed and internal displacement had been severe. The team found that housing for returning evacuees had been placed close to military camps, resulting in a security risk to the evacuees. The team called for food, livelihood and social infrastructure rehabilitation and recommended a repositioning of the AFP camps to encourage evacuees to return to their communities of origin. The third mission centred on the Lanao area where reported human rights violations took place. The fourth mission, conducted in December, investigated the two main obstacles to the resumption of the peace talks: the alleged links between the MILF and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the MILF's demand that the AFP pull out from the Buliok area (former headquarters of the MILF) as a precondition for the resumption of the talks.

The Bantay Ceasefire missions progressed from a focus on monitoring and reporting of ceasefire violations to assessing broader social and economic development needs and reporting alleged human rights violations. The critical development issues of property rights (ancestral domain and asset restitution for lands 'taken' from the Moro peoples) were highlighted in the Bantay Ceasefire field assessments. They are now central development issues in the ongoing peace talks. The missions have been able to enter MILF and AFP areas with full clearance and cooperation from top-ranking officers of the AFP and MILF field commanders. While it is still early to fully evaluate the impact of this NGO-civil society initiative at ceasefire monitoring and peacebuilding, some positive results are already evident.

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First, the Malaysian-led IMT, a credible third party official monitoring team, has been brought into the picture. This action, coupled with its role in hosting the negotiations, reaffirms the Malaysian government as a leading guarantor of the peace process. This

was something clearly missing from the failed Henri Dunot-led peace process in neighbouring Aceh (Huber 2004). Second, the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), comprising members of the government and the MILF, has been strengthened with the addition of higher-ranking officers such as the AFP vice-chief of staff, a lieutenant-general. Most importantly, two representatives from the war-affected communities have informally joined the provincial-level LMTs.

As a direct result of this grassroots initiative to involve civil society in the monitoring of the ceasefire, the war-affected communities have become more informed about the specifics of the peacemaking process and are now more empowered, as evidenced by the formation of Community Peace Councils. The war-affected communities have transformed from victims with needs to survivors with capacities; they are capitalising on their new-found identity and capacity as civil society peacemakers, extending the constituency for peace in Mindanao beyond the negotiators, NGOs and other formalised segments of the society to those most affected by the conflict. The Bantay Ceasefire has been praised by the government and the MILF for providing impartial analysis of different accusations, including whether the MILF has a camp harbouring Jemaah Islamiyah operatives (Rood 2003).

Since the early Bantay Ceasefire missions, a number of new developments have taken place. First, the network of convening NGOs has expanded, bringing together several community-based peacebuilding networks and NGOs into a larger network called the 'Peace Weavers'. The intention is to strengthen the solidarity and increase the coordination, sharing of information and joint action of NGOs and other civil society actors in building a broadly based constituency or movement for peace. Second, it has been agreed by the CCCH that home-based civil society representatives from war-affected communities be officially placed at the local monitoring team outposts in their communities. Supported with cellphone instant messaging technology, the grassroots civil society actors have become a community-empowered early warning system. Four such outposts have been identified at Pikit, Kudal, Sultan Kudarat, and the Islamic Centre in Buliok. Community volunteers have joined the official monitoring team. However, they will retain their independent reporting function for the Bantay Ceasefire conveners while sharing information with the official CCCH-IMT-LMT monitoring apparatus. Third, NGOs now have an accredited (peace panel) observer status at the formal peace negotiations in Malaysia. Fourth, as a follow-up to the Bantay Ceasefire movement, CBCS is now training citizen monitors in observing and reporting methods to upgrade their capacity (Abubakar interview 2006).

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On the development side, the World Bank has undertaken a Joint Needs Assessment of conflict-affected areas in Mindanao and established a multi-donor trust fund to finance the reconstruction of Mindanao in the wake of the signing of a peace agreement. The Mindanao Trust Fund proposes a two-phase programme: capacity building in the first phase and direct rehabilitation of basic services, infrastructure and productivity (e.g. livelihoods) investment programming in the second phase. Capacity building programmes are under way, directed at strengthening the Bangsamoro Development Association (BDA), a development arm of the Bangsamoro peoples, local government units, NGOs and others. In addition to early capacity building efforts, concentrating on a mix of six conflict-affected communities, the CFSI and BDA are piloting a range of community-driven development activities (Juanday & Muncy interviews 2006).

The contributions of citizen security initiatives must be buttressed by government and international donor-supported capacity building and development activities aimed at empowering the Bangsamoro peoples to meet their needs and aspirations if they are to be successful in the long term. This bottom-up and top-down linkage is critical for the achievement of sustainable peace, human security and development in Mindanao.

The Bantay Ceasefire and Citizen Security: Lessons Learned

Through the process of consultation and mobilisation of civil society actors or the war-affected themselves, the Bantay Ceasefire demonstrated a great deal of creativity and flexibility. It continually drew lessons from experience, shifting strategies and transforming the very discourse on security as it worked to empower the conflict-affected communities and promote space for peace and development. In the process, the Bantay Ceasefire was itself transformed into a broadly based coalition and movement of NGOs and broader civil society associations called the 'Peace Weavers'. Several key lessons emerge from their work.

Claiming the space: The Bantay Ceasefire sought to capitalise on the creation and use of political space to improve security, stability and development for the conflict-affected communities, whether through the creation of special 'peace zones' and 'sanctuaries for peace' or through the provision of humanitarian relief and reconstruction. It strove to provide a model whereby citizen participation in security measures was closely connected to the sustainability of peace. Changing the very discourse of security from peacekeeping by independent military observers to promoting 'good governance' through citizen participation in ceasefire monitoring was a clear hook for permitting broader ownership of the peacebuilding and development processes by the conflict affected peoples. New established zones of peace enabled community development activities to be organised and launched, regenerating livelihoods and rebuilding community social capital.

Managing the spoilers: The Bantay Ceasefire lacked material incentives as inducements to readily manage spoilers, especially in the AFP. The pervasive role of hardline spoilers with economic as well as political interests was further complicated by the use of local militia (typically Luzon and Visayan settlers) to undertake their dirty work. The Bantay Ceasefire had to rely to a greater extent on moral force and persuasion. Moral persuasion may be a necessary but not a sufficient tool for achieving sustainable security. Its efforts often depended on personal contacts with the top leadership for support. In this regard, Arroyo represented a 'high' in terms of the degree of support from political leaders and Estrada a 'low' for NGOs and other civil society actors in Mindanao. Obtaining observer status at the peace negotiations should abet the role of civil society more broadly in holding spoilers on both sides of the conflict to greater account.

Mobilising political will: An overarching lesson of the Bantay Ceasefire case is the absolute centrality of political will for peace on all fronts (political and military). The Bantay Ceasefire operated under conditions involving a dedicated Islamic separatist movement and intermittent peace processes. Arroyo brought the support of General Ramos behind her in revitalising the Mindanao peace process. Unfortunately, Arroyo's credibility has recently been undermined by alleged electoral tampering, and the peace process has slowed down. While NGOs and other civil society actors can facilitate citizen security by enabling a ceasefire on humanitarian grounds, a greater political leap is required to take on the role of guarantor of the overall peacemaking process.

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Indeed, reaching beyond one's political capability may even inadvertently contribute to forestalling a homegrown security and peace process when it lacks the legitimacy and incentives to bring both warring sides to heel. Forming new partnerships between NGOs, civil society and government is therefore essential in order to increase political capacity for peace through broader networks of actors. The role of the Malaysian government as mediator and external 'guarantor' of the peace process with the necessary resources and credibility bodes well for ensuring the government's protection of the rights of Muslim minorities, an essential element in the peacebuilding process.

Making capacity, legitimacy and credibility count: Capacity, legitimacy and credibility emerge as key success variables among global research findings on the effectiveness of a variety of civil society organisations in peacebuilding (Hanson 2003). On the one hand, the Bantay Ceasefire proved to be an effective mechanism for building a broadly based civil society constituency which in turn legitimised its efforts to play an effective role in enhancing local security. NGO credibility, particularly in the Bantay Ceasefire case, is marked by the ability to integrate the peacebuilding process both horizontally and vertically. This is manifested in the following:

- The capacity to build broadly based ownership through strengthening the bridging social capital (horizontal cross-cutting ties) among the war-affected communities;

- The legitimacy established through maintaining the organisational integrity of many diverse entities; and

- The credibility to build vertical relations between the state and communities among the various layers of formal and informal and state and citizen institutions and processes. This requires a demonstration of social efficacy or organisational, strategic planning and communication capacity among NGOs and citizens working together to promote human security and peace.

Repositioning, realignment and innovation: The repositioning and realignment of relationships between international and local NGOs and grassroots civil society from direct implementation to capacity building and financing are critical to leverage resources and scale up peacebuilding and development efforts. The training, advisory and financing roles of international NGOs, combined with the local knowledge and reach of local NGOs and other grassroots actors to mobilise and support citizens, were clearly a hallmark of the Bantay Ceasefire's success. Innovation has also abounded with the use of widespread communications technology among poorer elements of civil society to spread information. For example, cellphone instant messaging has been introduced as a rapid and convenient way for civil society monitors to report ceasefire violations. Information centres are being piloted by the Bantay Ceasefire network (led by MPC and IID) with Oxfam-GB funding as an institutionalised extension of the Bantay Ceasefire monitoring campaigns. The centres serve as reporting and diffusion points for the CCCH, the communities and the media. The information emphasis has taken a page from the 'shame-and-blame' approach of Transparency International by publicising MILF and AFP ceasefire violations over the radio and in the print media. The information centres also share in the successful formation of 'spaces for peace' and 'peace sanctuaries' declared by communities, giving a broader voice to civil society peacebuilding activities (Acmad & Layson interviews 2004).

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Shifting strategy from a project-based platform to a network-oriented movement: The Bantay Ceasefire has strategically evolved from a series of one-off ceasefire monitoring campaigns to a broadly based citizen security movement. Unlike a project which requires beneficiaries, a movement builds coalitions and needs constituencies. It promotes the kind of local ownership that will be required in any longer-term sustainable peacebuilding and development process. To effectively contribute to enduring peace, NGOs would be wise to note the Bantay Ceasefire movement's approach in promoting continual institutional learning. It has resulted in the strategic shift from a conventional platform- or project-based peacebuilding approach to building a network of broadly based pressure groups for citizen action through early concrete peacebuilding activities such as ceasefire monitoring.

Focusing on processing the peace: As noted by a number of Peace Weavers interviewed in the field, the important thing is not the 'peace process' as negotiated by elites on both sides of the conflict, but the 'processing of the peace' by those who bear the brunt of the violence and have most at stake in preserving the peace: the conflict-affected communities themselves (Layson 2003). The understanding and education of civil society about the underlying causes, conflict dynamics and peace negotiations are central to their 'processing the peace'. This means that civil society engagement in directly monitoring the peace as well as education for an informed civil society (one that understands the detailed protocols emerging out of negotiations, particularly the cessation of hostilities agreement) are essential ingredients in any NGO-civil society strategy of building a constituency for peace through citizen security. The vertical peace process has also to be integrated horizontally on the ground through trust-building activities that alter the mindsets of those most impacted by the violence.

Future Challenges: From Building a Peace Constituency to Ensuring Sustainable Peace

The Bantay Ceasefire has added value to the peace process by building a broadly based constituency for sustainable peace through the enhancement of citizens' capacity and ownership of their human security. It has encouraged the peace negotiators to link security to development in a broader peacebuilding framework by also focusing on concrete human and structural societal problems, starting with citizen security and including such concerns as ancestral domain, cultural identity, demilitarisation and economic and political inclusion in the decision making that impact upon community survival and progress.

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The key challenges ahead include strengthening the civil society constituency for enabling early security and peace among the Christian settlers as well as managing militant spoilers within the AFP and the MILF. It will also require special care not to undermine the newly empowered civil society monitors with overlays of external actors seeking to assist in the peacebuilding effort.

With the advent of the broader Peace Weavers' network, disagreements may emerge among the NGO members on political issues. Key among these is the issue of an independent 'Moro nation' versus some form of regional autonomy within the broader Filipino state. Nevertheless, the group continues to meet due to its a common desire for

a cessation of hostilities, protection of human rights and the empowerment of citizens in the peace process – illustrating the shared desire for a demilitarised, peaceful Mindanao. Peace Weaver's forums, or periodic open meetings among representatives from the NGOs and other civil society groups forming the network, continue to share information and work, yet still retain individual organisational autonomy. The ceasefire is still holding firm and the peace talks between the government and the MILF are making substantial progress on such structural issues as ancestral domain. NGOs and broader civil society actors continue to focus on peace advocacy, constituency building and monitoring of the ceasefire. It is clear that the Bantay Ceasefire through the emergence of the Peace Weavers offers an important organisational shift from an uncoordinated, ad hoc movement for a more planned and better coordinated approach to human security and peacebuilding among NGOs, civil society and government alike.

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Endnotes

[1] David Korten (1990) distinguishes four generations of local NGO strategies, evolving from humanitarian relief and sustainable development to global advocacy and structural change. The first generation was welfare-oriented and focused on direct service delivery; the second concentrated on building the capacities of communities to meet their own needs; the third emphasised structural changes and sustainable development; and the fourth generation sought to build a global people's movement for self-development. A later 'fifth' generation encompasses the area of conflict management and peacebuilding (Diamond & Macdonald 1996; Von Turgeren 2003; Rupesinghe 2005).

[2] The field visits were supported by the International Peace Academy (IPA) as a part of its Development and Security research programme. The author especially thanks the Community and Family Services International (CFSI) for its generous assistance in facilitating the field interviews in Mindanao. Interviews were conducted:

- In August 2004, with Aronodo, M., director, Initiatives for International Dialogue; Acmad, J., Mindanao Peoples Caucus, Pikit; Alim, G., chairperson, Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, Cotabato; Abadiano, B., head of peacebuilding team, Tabang Mindanaw, Manila; Layson, Fr B., Pikit Parish; Santos, C., project coordinator, CFSI, Cotabato; Cantallopez, E., head of Peace Education Programme, Notre Dame University, Cotabato; Leguro, M., Catholic Relief Services, Davao.

- In February 2006, with Muncy, S., Community and Family Services International, Manila; Juanday, D., Bangsamoro Development Agency, Cotabato; Abubakar, A., Mindanao Peace Programme, Research and Education for Peace Centre, University Sains Malaysia.

[3] The 1996 'Full Peace Agreement' attempted to integrate development concerns expressed in economic and social grievances with efforts to sustain the peace, creating a Special Opportunity Zone for Peace and Development which included two programmes: one to integrate many former MNLF fighters into the AFP and police and another to integrate other demobilised combatants socially and economically into civilian life. The latter programme focused on livelihood promotion and community infrastructure rehabilitation. However, these programmes tended to be captured by local elites with very little real popular participation in decisions about priority development needs and the allocation of resources. The MILF splinter groups never fully participated in the demobilisation option. As the MILF held strong to the formation of a separatist Islamic state, the conflict continued between the splinter MILF group and the government in the Maguindanao and Lanao areas.

[4] One example of such peace declarations is the 'peace pact' forged between Muslims and Christian settlers in Sitio Dungguan-Sitio Inged Community. The five-page peace pact expresses the shared aspiration of Muslim and Christian community members to live in peace and resolve problems through non-violent means, e.g. peaceful dialogue and mutual respect for others' culture and faith. Among the key points of the agreement are: respect for local history and the wisdom of elders; prohibition against carrying unauthorised weapons; the institutionalisation of the peace dialogue through the establishment of a task force with inclusive membership of all stakeholders; banning of illegal fishing (a source of communal problems); and a common stand against criminality and lawlessness. It also calls for military on both sides to coordinate with village leadership and respect human rights in the community (Sanctuaries of Peace Update, Tabang Mindanaw Integrated Return and Rehabilitation Programme, Field Report 11, February 2002 ('Panday-Buhat Alang Sa kalinaw – Muslim-Christian Revives Local Peace Pact').

[5] Two examples of NGOs promoting this approach are the Tabang Mindanao, a Manila-based NGO working in Carmen and other conflict-affected communities of Mindanao, and the MPC, a tri-peoples civil society organisation with co-chairpersons from Christian, Moro and Lumad communities, which has promoted spaces for peace in several villages in the Pikit area. These communities had faced the most intense and sporadic fighting between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the MILF has taken place and were tired of being caught in the crossfire.

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