

Muslim Mindanao's Quest for Fair and Effective Public Administration as a Vehicle for Popular Democracy: An Attempt for Active Peacebuilding Research by Hiroshima University with the Prefectural Government

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I. Peacebuilding and local level democracy

The term 'Peacebuilding' became popular by *An Agenda for Peace* written by former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992 and *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operation (Brahimi Report)* in 2000. In the latter, peacebuilding is explained as 'activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war' and it 'includes ...reintegrating former combatants into civilian society, strengthening the rule of law..., improving respect for human rights through the monitoring, education and investigation of past and existing abuses, providing technical assistance for democratic development... and promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques.

In the case of peacebuilding after civil war, the assistance for democratic development is essential to prevent violence or exclusion which could be a source of another conflict. In this context, democratization of local level governance would be of extreme important because a local government is in the position to know the situation and needs of local people. With a legitimate, fair and effective local government, people can participate self-governance in their life.

Among the activities of assistance for democratic development, great deal of effort of international society has been put into technical assistances for legislation and monitoring of election. However, it is not enough if you stop then. It is never the less necessary to support persons who work for a new government. After a period in conflict, they may be not familiar with democratic way of governance. As an educational part, a university may contribute to peacebuilding in this field. That is what Hiroshima University is trying to. Let us show you our project in Mindanao with some background context below.

II. Training Programme for possible public officers in an autonomous government in Mindanao

(1) Background

Muslims in the Philippines' southernmost island, Mindanao, have been struggled for independence for more than 40 years. They fought for their ancestral rights over the territory through the fair and equitable treatment. Despite the fact that Muslim sultanates that ruled Mindanao region had kept independence during the Spanish period, the latter sold whole Philippines including Mindanao to the United States after their defeat in US-Spanish War. After military conquest through cruel operation, Americans imposed a military rule over Mindanao, during which they brought a lot of Christians to this Muslim dominant island to settle down and control it. In this process Muslims were denied their possession of land and became marginalized together with the minority indigenous peoples.

The marginalization process continued after Philippines' independence in 1946 and President Marcos even accelerated the Christian migration to Mindanao. A humiliating incident within the Philippine military in 1968 caused an organized Muslim movement which gave birth to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). After the agreement between MNLF and the Government of the Philippines (GOP) over peace, the former was split to form another organization, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). However, after a serious and lengthy military confrontation as well as some zigzags for negotiated settlement, MILF and GOP finally agreed upon Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) in 2012 and Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014. Based on FAB both sides jointly created Bangsamoro Transition Commission which was mandated to draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). BBL was supposed to be the foundation for the autonomous government in the Muslim Mindanao area which is now to be called as Bangsamoro or Historical Land of Muslims and the Bangsamoro Government with the Parliamentary Cabinet System and its own Chief Minister was scheduled to be established in 2016, though, due to the Congressional resistance, there is little or no scope for this schedule to be followed.

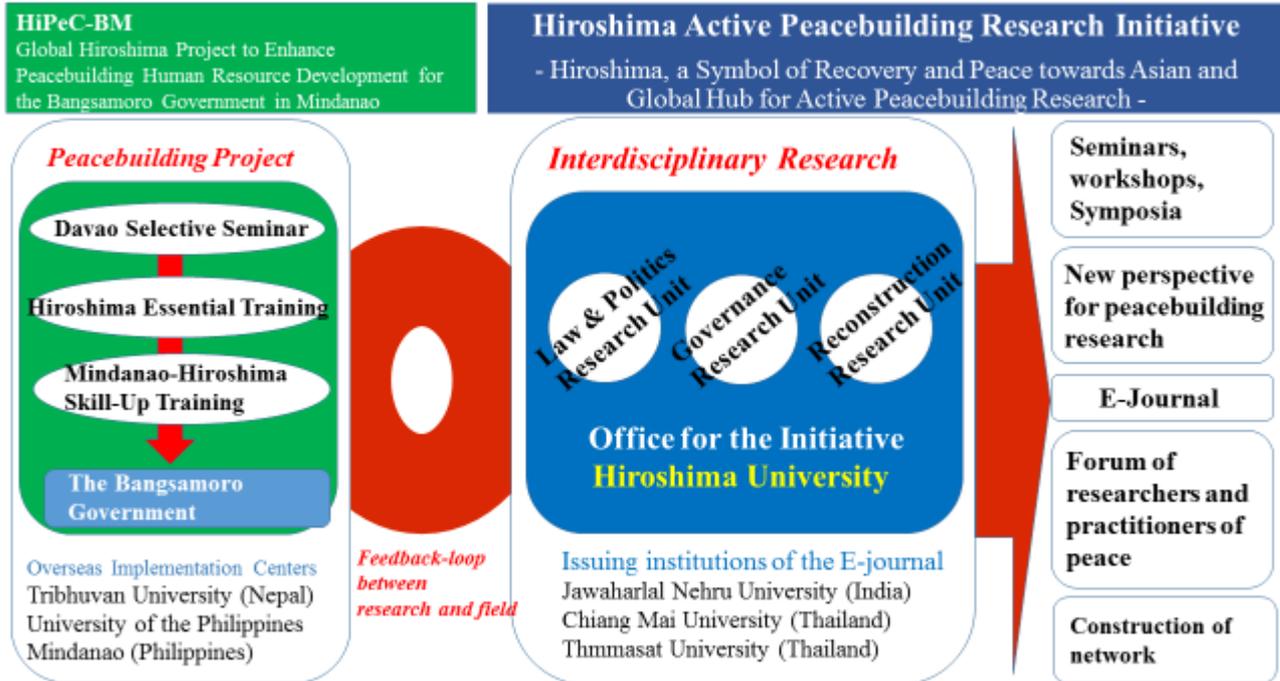
(2) Global Hiroshima Project to Enhance Peacebuilding Human Resource Development for the Bangsamoro Government in Mindanao

Hiroshima University together with Hiroshima Prefectural Government proposed a training project for the Bangsamoro youths to Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 2013 when FAB raised a high hope for peace and development in the Bangsamoro region. The basic idea of this training program was to support newly introduced democracy in this area. Because of the various forms of the vested interests existing in the Philippines such as patron-client relationship or private military forces possessed by local politicians, the country could not activate its democratic system for the interest of the people and this situation not only frustrates the people in general but also continues to be the source of discrimination and injustice to the Bangsamoro. With the autonomous government being created in their own region, Bangsamoro people have a legitimate reason for their

voices to be heard and for their needs to be met. However, it is also true that, due to the long years of struggle dominating their lives, there is a lack of the capacity within the Bangsamoro population to carry out the decisions, even though they are now to be democratically made. More than forty years of struggle for their freedom deprived them of their administrative capacity as they spent too much energy for fighting. But it is this administrative capacity of the Bangsamoro people that convert the democratically made decision into reality. If their democratically made decisions are not implemented and thus not realized, disappointment and frustration of the people may be even deeper, which may cause another cycle of military conflicts.



Democracy does not end with the open and fair elections, but rather it starts with them. An important issue of democracy from the point of peace is whether it is in a right step toward fulfilling the desires of the so far deprived people. For this part, capacity of the government is one of the most significant elements for democracy and Hiroshima University and prefectural Government are willing to play this part for contributing to democracy as a sustainable force.



III. Concluding Comment

The project in Mindanao is the activity which *Hiroshima Active Peacebuilding Research Initiative* is currently put effort into. *Hiroshima Active Peacebuilding Research Initiative* has a concept that Hiroshima, as a symbol of recovery and peace, will be an Asian and global hub for active peacebuilding. We hope that through the COLAP-6 we will be able to get to know people who are working for peace, human rights and democracy in Asia and get suggestion for our future works. In the aim of sharing of experience and knowledge of peacekeeping practitioners and researchers and making their network, we issue an e-journal 'Hiroshima Journal of Peace'. Anybody who has interest is most welcome to contact us. |

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