

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS
TO PEACE BUILDING IN CONFLICT AFFECTED AREAS IN MINDANAO
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ABSTRACT

International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs) have been playing a significant role in building peace across the globe, including Mindanao in the southern part of the Philippines. However, the contributions of INGOs to peace-building have been largely unattended. Hence, this research is conducted. To gather data, the study used focus group discussion with 45 respondents from the 10 INGOs operating within Cotabato City and Maguindanao, both being components of the region. A validated self-made interview guide questionnaire was used. The majority of the respondents (75%) revealed that the programs and services of the INGOs related to Islamic values and peace-building in the Bangsamoro are dominated by community Values Transformation Training (VTT) and peace-building seminars, grassroots-based conflict resolution, and quick-impact livelihood projects. The programs and services that showed significant contributions to Islamic values and peace-building are sustained Islamic capacity building, socio-economic and spiritual recovery, and community resiliency in mitigating conflict. The challenges that lie ahead are the limited financial resources, issues with political dynamics in the communities, and unstable skilled staff of the INGOs. The researcher recommends the need for the accreditation of INGOs in the different local government units (LGUs) of the region with regard to policy legislation and maintaining utmost neutrality during the implementation of the programs and services.

Keywords: *programs, contributions, Islamic values, peace-building, INGOs.*

ABSTRAK

Organisasi Non-Pemerintah Internasional (INGOs) telah memainkan peran penting dalam membangun perdamaian di seluruh dunia, termasuk Mindanao di bagian selatan Filipina. Namun, kontribusi LSM internasional untuk pembangunan perdamaian sebagian besar tidak diperhatikan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini dilakukan. Untuk mengumpulkan data, studi ini menggunakan diskusi kelompok terarah dengan 45 responden dari 10 LSM internasional yang beroperasi di Kota Cotabato dan Maguindanao, keduanya merupakan bagian dari wilayah tersebut. Kuesioner panduan wawancara buatan sendiri yang telah divalidasi digunakan. Mayoritas responden (75%) mengungkapkan bahwa program dan layanan LSM terkait dengan nilai-nilai Islam dan pembangunan perdamaian di Bangsamoro

didominasi oleh Pelatihan Transformasi Nilai (VTT) komunitas dan seminar pembangunan perdamaian, resolusi konflik berbasis akar rumput, dan proyek penghidupan berdampak cepat. Program dan layanan yang menunjukkan kontribusi signifikan terhadap nilai-nilai Islam dan pembangunan perdamaian adalah pembangunan kapasitas Islam yang berkelanjutan, pemulihan sosial ekonomi dan spiritual, dan ketahanan masyarakat dalam mitigasi konflik. Tantangan yang ada di depan adalah keterbatasan sumber daya keuangan, masalah dinamika politik di masyarakat, dan staf terampil LSM internasional yang tidak stabil. Peneliti merekomendasikan perlunya akreditasi LSM internasional di berbagai unit pemerintah daerah (LGU) di daerah sehubungan dengan legislasi kebijakan dan menjaga netralitas sepenuhnya selama pelaksanaan program dan layanan.

Kata kunci: program, kontribusi, nilai-nilai Islam, pembangunan perdamaian, INGOs.

INTRODUCTION

International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs) have significant role and doing prominent contribution towards peace-building across the globe. Mainly engaged in inter-faith dialogue, mediation, conflict management and transformation (United Nation Institute of Peace, 2017) and have become increasingly influential in world affairs and peace-building process. Peace building distinguishes it from peacekeeping, and makes it an appropriate strategy in dealing with low intensity conflict (Boyce, Koros & Hodgson, 2017). In doing so, INGOs in the Philippines shall ensure sustainability of the gains from their efforts. Their interventions are geared through delivering divine and peace-building activities needed to support mechanisms for socio-economic recovery program (Rood, 2015; Venus-Maslang, 2015). There is a growing recognition that peace-building can play in fostering social cohesion and fueling inclusive development and stability of peaceful societies (McCandles & Rogan, 2017). The World Development Report examined the links between conflict, security and development and found that societies are vulnerable to conflict and insecurity when local institutions are unable to provide equitable access to justice and economic opportunities (WDR, 2011). Consequently, Islamic values and peace-building are an important element of social services and it provides important mechanisms in the delivery of social services and economic opportunities.

In response to peace-building, various programs are being implemented by different INGOs in the conflict affected areas in Mindanao. The INGOs are one of the major players in the efforts to achieve peace in the conflict-affected areas in the Philippines. The peace-building and social services are inseparable in delivering the programs of INGOs. Since the all-

out war in Mindanao in the 2000s, the INGOs have been committed to delivering social services to assist the government in doing their mandate.

The prevailing studies and reports show that there is a scarcity of contemporary researches that focus on the contributions of INGOs to the promotion of Islamic values in peace-building in Mindanao. To fill this gap, this study was conducted. Specifically, this study aimed to assess the contribution of INGOs to Islamic values and peace-building in Mindanao and determine the challenges in the implementation of the programs. A recommendation framework has been drawn to further improve the delivery of programs of the INGOs in conflict affected areas in Mindanao.

METHODOLOGY

Using qualitative research method of thematic analysis, the study was conducted in Cotabato City and Maguindanao in 2019 to 2022. The areas are parts of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, officially designated as the BARMM and is an administrative region in the Philippines grouped under the Mindanao Island. BARMM covers 5 provinces which are namely Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. The regional center is the City of Cotabato. It is bordered, clockwise from the Northeast, by Northern Mindanao, SOCCSKSARGEN, the Moro Gulf, Celebes Sea, and the Sulu Sea (Figure1).

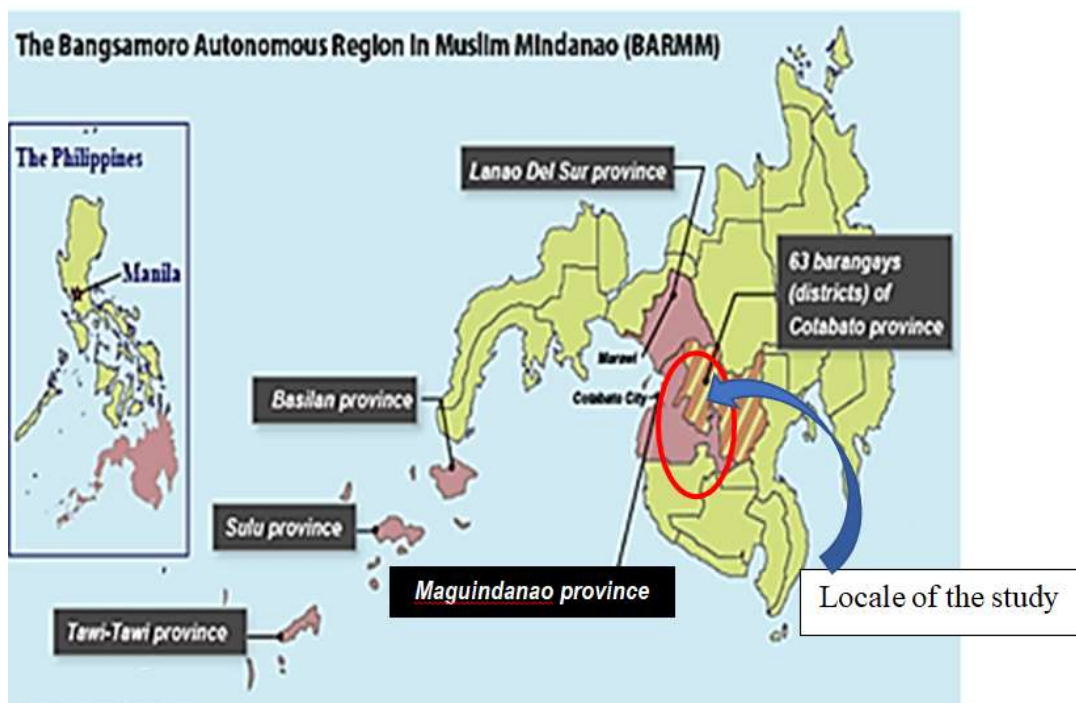


Figure 1. Map of the BARMM with Cotabato City and Maguindanao.

The method of data gathering used is focus group discussions through purposive sampling technique. Focus group discussions were administered with forty-five (45) program implementers as participants coming from the ten (10) NGOs involved in peace-building activities from 2019 to 2022. The purposive sampling is based on the prior knowledge or judgment of the researcher regarding the INGOs. The researcher relied on his own judgment when choosing members of the INGOs selected for that purpose. Thematic analysis was used in interpreting the responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Programs and Services Implemented by the INGO in Conflict Affected Areas in Mindanao

3.1.1. Values Transformation Training (VTT) and Peace-building Seminars

Of the programs and services by the INGOs, VTT and peace- building seminars are the most implemented. The responses substantiating this claim are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Programs and services implemented through peace-building seminars (n = 45).

Significant Statement in the Local Dialect	Translation in English
Statement 1: 71% of the implementers of the programs and services revealed that:	
<i>“Ang values transformation training at seminar on culture of peace ay nakatulong sa community upang maintindihan nila ang ugat ng hindi pagkakaintindihan sa kanilang lugar. Bukod pa doon ay nakahanda sila sa anomang darating na problema sa kanilang lugar. Isa samakalahok nanaka attend ng series of seminars namin ay na-aware sila sa mga tips naitinutros sa kanilang katulad ng pagpapangatili ng mga magagandang salita, sapamamagitan noon ay naiiwasan ang mga conflicts.”</i>	The values transformation training and culture of peace seminar helped the community to understand the root of the misunderstanding in their areas. In addition to that, they are ready for any problem that may arise in their area. One of the participants who attended our series of

seminars was aware of the tips taught to them, such as maintaining good words, thereby avoiding conflicts (FGD1, P12, Cotabato City).

Statement 2: 62% of the implementers of the programs and services expressed that:

“Malakingtulong ang workshop saamingnapagsilbihanupang sila ay maging handasaanumang hindikanais-naisnapang yayarisan lugarnila, bukod pa dito ay nagkaroon sila ng pagkakaisa upang harapin ang mgasuliranin nanakakaapektosakomunidad. Nakatulong din ito sa pagpapangatili ng katahimikan at kaayusan. Dahil doon, iyon ang naging dahilan ng oportunidad magingsaloob at salabas ng barangay.”

The workshop is a great help to those we have served so that they can be prepared for any undesirable event in their area. In addition, they have united to deal with problems affecting the community. It also helped in maintaining peace and order. Because of that, opportunities were open for both inside and outside the barangay (FGD2, P8, Maguindanao).

The International Non-Government Organizations have implemented seminars addressing the needs of the communities. These seminars provide them preparations for community involvement whenever partners are

engaged in projects. These enable the people's participation and a significant preparation in engaging for more opportunities in project partnership.

In addition, peace-building seminars enable the people to become resilient to the occurrence of man-made calamities. This fact conforms with the claim of an earlier study that building community awareness introduces and strengthens citizens to their local heritage, and the community can develop its identity (Aoki, Grinter, Hurst, Szymanski, Thornton&Woodruff, 2002). Similarly, several studies emphasized that value-formation and peace-building activities served as an institutionalized practice through helping war-torn societies and that a state of affairs for peace-building as a best-practice methodology is widely accepted among practitioners (Duffield, 2010; Jabri, 2013; Richmond, Pogodda&Ramovic, 2016).

Other multi and bilateral actors in rendering values transformation and peace-building activities have to stop armed conflicts, engage in effective peace negotiations, sign peace treaties, commit to reconciliation efforts, build state institutions capable of engaging in good stable governance, and thus achieve peace (Mac Ginty and Sanghera, 2012; Debiel, Held & Schneckener, 2016; Chandler, 2017). Moreover, successful peace-building seminars as an overarching project solved war and violence (Forde, Kappler&Björkdahl, 2021).

The results suggest that conducting peace-related seminars helps identify the root causes of the problems in the community. Specifically, trainings and seminars develop the community towards realization of culture of peace. They pave ways by which the citizens deeply understand the historical context of the conflict in Mindanao and discover the issues affecting the people. Through these seminars, the stakeholders could immediately come up with an action in combating social problems to contribute to the realization of a lasting solution to conflict.

3.1.2. *Grassroots-based Conflict Resolution*

The programs and services implemented by the INGOs on grassroots-based conflict resolution are shown in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Programs and services implemented through grassroots-based conflict resolution (n = 45).

Significant Statement in the Local Dialect	Translation in English
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Statement 1: 60 % of the implementers of the programs and services expressed that:

“Ang proseso ng kapayapaan ng Mindanao ay isang malinaunang pag-aaral ng kaso ng kahalagahan ng mgadiskartesailalim ng bottom-up sa peacebuilding. Ito ay isang magandang panahon upang galugarin nang lubusang ang pamamaraangito ng pagpapayapasailalim, nahinihimok lalong ng mgamahinang komunidad mismo.”

The Mindanao peace process is a clear case study of the importance of bottom-up approaches to peace-building. This is a good time to explore comprehensively this bottom-up peace-building approach, which is being driven primarily by the vulnerable communities themselves (FGD1, P3, Cotabato City).

Statement 2: 73% of the program implementers shared that:

“Ang isa samagang gawa ng NGO sa community ay nakabuo ng grupong asila ay inatasan sa pagpapanatili ng peace salugar. Sa katunayan, nakakatulong sila nang pag-sugpo ng mga sumusuwat sa batas.”

One of the achievements of the NGOs in the community was to form a group that they were tasked with maintaining peace in the area. In fact, they helped deter those law-breakers (FGD3, P6, Maguindanao).

Grassroots-based conflict resolution that is implemented by the INGOs in Bangsamoro is a unique community-based approach towards peace-building. Accordingly, the process involves the formation of core

groups among selected sectors in the community who are in-charge on the peace and order, volunteering social services, and responses to disaster mitigation.

In conflict resolution in the southern Philippines, grassroots-based, bottom-up processes and initiatives are generated. This study finds that grass-root conflict resolution implemented by the INGOs is very much evident. This finding has important implication to peace-building. Similarly, a recent study establishes that grassroots-based conflict resolution is increasingly recognized as a way of transforming values and achieving peace-building, more inclusive and sustainable peace (Alvarado & Caparini, 2021).

3.1.3. Quick Impact Livelihood Projects

The quick impact livelihood projects that are implemented by the INGOs are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Programs and services through quick impact livelihood projects (n = 45).

Significant Statement in the Local Dialect	Translation in English
Statement 1: 62% of the program implementers opined that:	
<i>“Ang iba pang nagawa ng INGO ay ang pag implement ng quick impact livelihood projects, isa nadito ang pagtuturo ng mgagawaing mapagkakitaan katulad ng backyard gardening. Ang naturang kaalaman ay nakapagbigay ng dagdag kaalaman para nakabuhayansamgatao kahit nasa evacuation”.</i>	Another thing that the INGO has carried out is the implementation of quick impact livelihood projects, one of which is the teaching of income-generating activities such as backyard gardening. Such knowledge has provided additional more tips for livelihood to people even in evacuation site

	(FGD12, P5, Cotabato City).
Statement 2: 64% of the program implementers explained:	
<i>“Ang INGOs ay namimigay din ng kaunting kapital samangan angailang pamilyanabiktima ng kaguluhan upang magamit sa negosyo ng gusto nila. Pero, bagonilanatang gao ay dumaan munasila sapagsasanay kung paanopatakbuhin ang Negosyo. Kahit maliit lang ang financial grant ay malaking tulong narinsapagpapatayo ng bagong negosyo.”</i>	The INGOs also provide small amount of capital (PHP10,000.00) to needy families who are victims of the conflict to be used in the business they want. But, before they started, they went through trainings on how to run the business. Even a small financial grant is quite beneficial in building a new business (FGD1, P4, Maguindanao).

One of the important components of the services delivered by INGOs to the community is the quick impact training on livelihood. Displaced communities availed projects on short-term livelihood in the form of trainings and provisions of small capital to start their new business. Animal raising and backyard gardening are also introduced for sustainability. Similar findings are reported by a study conducted in Bangladesh whereby the chances for improving the ultra-poor is through the strategy for promoting livelihoods in the countryside (Volpenhein, Kim, Kim, Hussein, Biswas, Byun & Kang, 2018). It is also outlined in the UNHCR's mandate, which includes helping refugees find long-term solutions through voluntary repatriation, local integration, or relocation and providing international protection to refugees in cooperation with other actors.

Putting the fast-impact livelihood initiatives into action created a partnership with other development actors to better meet the impacted

communities' needs. This is similar to how the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been progressively considering other conflict-affected groups, such as the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). UNHCR places its repatriation and reintegration efforts in post-conflict settings within a broader context of the transition from conflict to peace. To prevent the need for returnees to rely on humanitarian aid and ensure their prompt and lasting reintegration, it helped strengthen the reformation of values, promotes peace and closes the gap between relief and development. The UNHCR first coined the term Quick Impact Project (QiP) in 1991 to refer to small-scale, low-cost projects intended to aid in the reintegration of returnees and displaced people in Nicaragua.

3.2. Contributions of Non-Government Organizations to the Peace-building

3.2.1. Sustainable Islamic Capacity Building

The responses of the program implementers on the impact of the INGOs to Islamic values and peace building are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Responses of the program implementers on contribution of the INGOs to Islamic values and peace building on sustainable capacity building (n = 45).

Significant Statement in the Local Dialect	Translation in English
Statement 1: Narration of 84% of the program implementers:	
<i>“Mahalaga ang pangmatagalangprogramangpangkayapaanlalo nap ag may kasalingprogama ng pagpapalalakas ng aming values upangmatulungan ang mgataonmamuhay ng tahimik at magsibalikansakani-kanilangtahanan. Ito rin ay nagigingdahilanupangmakapag-isipsilanangparaan ng mapagkukunan ng kabuhayandahilwalanangkaguluhan”.</i>	A long-term peace program specially teaching in strengthening values is essential to help people live in peace and return to their homes. This also causes them to be able to think of a source of livelihood because there is no more chaos in the area (FGD2, P2, Cotabato City).
Statement 2: Responses of 73% of program implementers:	Activities related to peace in the area are able to empower the

<i>“Ang mgagawaing may kinalamansakapayapaansalugar ay nakakapagbigay ng kakayahansakomunidadupangmapanatili ang peace and order nahindilamangsa isa kundi multi-faceted. Magpapatuloyitosapamamagitan ng pagigingbahagi ng kanilangkultura at pamamaraan ng pamumuhaysakabila ng kanilangmapaitnakaranasannila, ito ay nagiginggabaysakanilang transformation to become a productive citizen of the community.”</i>	community to maintain peace and order that is not only one but multi-faceted. This continues by being a part of their culture and way of life despite their bitter experience, it becomes a guide in their transformation to become a productive citizen of the country (FGD2, P8, Maguindanao)
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Sustainable Islamic capacity building is very important to create a strong and impact activity for the people in the Bangsamoro region. This is a long-term process of encouraging people to talk, repairing relationships, and reforming institutions. For positive change to last, everyone affected by a destructive conflict has to be involved in the process of building peace. The community is capacitated to prepare for the needs of the time, especially in the changing environment. This fact underlies that the peace-building activities of the INGOs contribute to the sustainable capacity building in Cotabato City and Maguindanao.

Capacity building is believed to be important in Islamic values and peace-building. Many development programs of INGOs resulted to transform Islamic values and peace-building (Review of Research Policy and System, 2014). Accordingly, community peace-building programs and services strengthen the “ability of people and the community to fulfill appropriate functions effectively, efficiently, spiritually and sustainably.” As a result of its value and significant contributions to community life, notably in Maguindanao’s conflict-affected areas, this study confirms that values transformation training and peace-building services greatly contributed to the sustainable Islamic capacity building that needs to be accelerated prospectively in various initiatives.

3.2.2. Socio-economic and Spiritual Recovery

The responses of the program implementers on contribution of the INGOs to Islamic values and peace building on socio-economic and spiritual recovery are shown in the following Table 5.

Table 5. Responses of the program implementers on contribution of the INGOs to Islamic values and peace building on socio-economic recovery (n = 45)

Significant Statement in the Local Dialect	Translation in English
Statement 1: Narration of 84% of the program implementers:	
<i>“Nakita ko sa evacuation area sa Maguindanao noong nag intervened kami sakanila, I observed namaramisakanila ang may kanya kanyangmaliliitna hanap buhay doon. Nakita ko din nahindi pa rinnilainiiwan ang pagsasambayang. Kahit pansamantala lang silasa evacuation area ay malakas pa rin ang kanilangpaghahanda. Sa tingin ko, iyonungmganaiturosakanila kung paanomaghanda at mamuhaysakabila ng kaguluhansakanilanglugar. So, mahalagatalaga ang may alamnassinasabing socio-economic recovery kasi kahit anjan na ang conflict, alam pa rin ang gagawin para hindimapabayaan ang pamilyanila.”</i>	I saw in the evacuation area in Maguindanao when we intervened with them, I observed that many of them have their own small livelihoods there. I also observed the regular performing of praying. Even though they are temporarily housed in the evacuation area, their preparations are still strong. I think those are the teachings to them on how to prepare and live despite the chaos in their area. So, it is really important for those who know about the so-called socio-economic recovery because even though the conflict is there, they still know what to do so that their families are not neglected. This shows the degree of resiliency of the people in the area (FGD1, P5, Cotabato City).

The socio-economic and spiritual recovery is the heart of community rehabilitation, economic elements and priorities in the service delivery. Relative to the displacement of the people during conflict, business activities and divine interventions of the families in the Maguindanao evacuation areas are still observed. This is because the people were already trained on the economic strategies and spiritualresiliencies before the conflict arose in their community. This is similar to the United Nations Development Plan (UNDP) in describing the visibility of economic recovery when there is a decrease in unemployment, an increase in consumer spending and income rising, an increase in the gross domestic product (GDP), and improved business activity.

This finding is related to the analysis of the OECD (2012) over the last ten years of socio-economic recovery after the implementation of VTT and peace-building activities in the prone conflict communities. It shows that their contribution to solving societal challenges is now tightly intertwined

with their historical mission of supporting innovation. Small-scale business models and partnerships play a key role in setting the environment in which the implementer of the organization and institutions operate, and that determines in part the ability to deliver on the twin imperatives of strengthening economic competitiveness in response to societal needs. The economic elements are an important pillar of peace-building. One cannot act fully without an economic base for his family, community, and government. The post-conflict scenario brings individuals and families into a changing environment from peace to displacement, where they must rebuild their communities and discover new resources.

3.2.3. Community Resiliency on Mitigating Conflict

The responses of the program implementers on contribution of the INGOs to Islamic values and peace building in mitigating conflict are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Responses of the program implementers on contribution of the INGOs to Islamic values and peace building on community resiliency on mitigating man-made disaster (n = 45)

Significant Statement in the Local Dialect	Translation in English
Statement 1: Responses of 82% of program implementers:	
<i>“Sa panahon ng kagipitan, hindilamang man-made calamity angmayroonsa community kung hindi mas matindi ang natural calamity. Sa pagkaroon ng pamumuhaynamalayosamgasakuna ay isang element ng peacebuilding. Kaya naturuan ang mgatao kung paanomakaiwassamasamangpangyayaridulot ng kalamidad. Sa kaguluan naman, sila ay naturuan din ng tamangparaan ng paglikastungosaligtasnalugar. Contingency plan ay nabuosapamamagitan ng kanilang active participation noongkina-conduct ang disaster preparedness.”</i>	In times of crisis, not only man-made calamities but natural calamities also exist in the community and is even more severe. Having a life away from disasters is an element of peacebuilding. So, people were taught how to avoid bad events caused by calamities. During chaos, they were also taught the right way to escape to a safe place. Contingency plans are formed through their active participation during the conduct of disaster preparedness (FGD1, P7, Cotabato City).

This impact of peace-building in the community facilitates and prepares a community resiliency where people can respond to environmental problems. The role of INGOs in demanding accountability on climate action is indispensable. Adequate training in disaster mitigation and mechanism helps protect people when conflict occurs in their community. For many years, various organizations have responded to the emerging needs of displaced persons. It is a fact found by this study that peace-building activities in disaster preparations have greatly contributed to confronting conflict situations in their community.

Similar findings are concluded by a recent study that disaster education is a practical, useful, and affordable risk management technique (Promot, 2019). Vulnerable people need to be educated about disasters using various techniques, and in order for one to improve his ability to defend himself and others (Egbew, 2015). Extensive educational programs must be planned and designed to prepare people for disasters.

3.3. Challenges in the Implementation of the Programs and Services

3.3.1. Limited Financial Resources

The following statements show the general view of the program implementers on challenges in the implementation of programs and services (Table 7).

Table 7. Responses of the implementers regarding challenge on limited financial resources in the implementation of programs and services (n = 45).

Significant Statement in the Local Dialect	Translation in English
Statement 1: as expressed by 80% of the INGO implementers: <i>“Tungkol naman sa implementation namganakikita naming problema, hindi naman sawala kasi always naman may budget. Pero hinditalaganagkakasya kasi sa increase numbers of unexpected beneficiaries sa community. Binibigay ang resources ayonsa number of the list, peropagdatingsa community ay biglangdumami ang mga beneficiaries. So, ang nagyayari ay lumalabasna limited talaga ang pondo ng mga services nabinibigaysa community.” Isa pa, dahil Islamic activities kino-control ang downloading lalonakapagito ay</i>	As for the implementation problems we see, it's not that there is nothing because there is always a budget. But it doesn't really fit because of the increase in number of unexpected beneficiaries in the community. The resources are given according to the number on the list, but when it comes to the community, the beneficiaries suddenly increase. So, what is happening is that the funds for the services provided to the community are really limited. Also, because of Islamic activities, the downloading of funds are controlled especially when it came from international funds (FGD1, P1, Cotabato City).

<i>nanggalingsaibangbansa and pondo.</i>	
Statement 2: as expressed by 67% of the INGO implementers:	
<i>“Nagkukulang din ang budget kasi may mga unexpected samgabiglaangpagtaas ng mgabilihin. Isa pa, iyong pandemic. Kasi, sa emergency assistance para sa pandemic napunta ang budget instead of sa implementation ng proposed budget”.</i>	The budget is also lacking because there are unexpected increases in prices. Another thing, that pandemic. Because, the budget went to the emergency assistance for the pandemic instead of the implementation of the proposed budget (FGD2, P1, Maguindanao).

The significance of financial elements in all undertakings is essential to delivering the expected services in their community. However, limited resources for the project implementation of NGOs in the Bangsamoro are due the following:

First, the excess of beneficiaries for both tangible and intangible services due to the tradition of voluntary invitation by every member in the community - like inviting son or daughter, and those with position in the community are having escorts. These situations become the causes of the shortage of funds allotted for the projects.

Second, the vast effect of the universal problem of the COVID-19 pandemic. This limits the activities because many INGOs have stopped project implementation. If there was a budget, the implementation was too strict. Due to the limitation of mass gathering by the order of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF), the implementation was also banned, and the giving of funds by the funders was also affected. The experience of several countries in response to COVID-19 showed that NGOs play a vital role to fulfill the needs of the population. While restrictive policies toward society significantly limited the activities of NGOs, given that the COVID-19 pandemic has not yet been controlled, there is an unprecedented need for all stakeholders to play their role in restraining this widespread disease (Sayarifard, Nazari, Rajabi, Ghadirian & Sajadi, 2022).

3.3.3. Political Dynamics

The general view of the program implementers on challenges in the implementation of programs and services is shown in the following Table 8.

Table 8 Responses of the implementers regarding challenge on political dynamics in the implementation of programs and services (n = 45).

Significant Statement in the Local Dialect	Translation in English
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Statement 1, as opined by 67% of the INGO implementers: <i>“Naging normal sabawat community ang magkaroon ng sinusuportahanglider. Ngunit, ito’y naging problemakapag ang dating lider ay napalitan sakanyang position. Bilangkinalabasan, nagkulang ang suporta ang bagonghinalalinalider. So yung, INGO nanaging partner ng nakaraang administration ay hindinagaanonabibigyan ng pansin.”</i>	It becomes normal for every community to support a leader. But, it becomes a problem when the former leader is replaced in his position. As a result, the newly elected leader lacks support. So the INGO that is a partner of the previous administration is no longer given much attention (P12, FGD2, Maguindanao)
Statement 2: sentiments of 67% of the INGO implementers: <i>“Mahirapipaghalo ang programang may kinalamansa religion sa local nagobyernodahilsapatakarangna ang estado ay ibasarelihiyon. Ang local napamahalaan ay hindi pa gaanohandasamga Islamic activities kaya minsannakakahadlangitosamga activities naming.”</i>	It is difficult to mix the program related to religion in the local government because of the policy that the state is different from religion. The local government is not yet ready for Islamic activities so sometimes it hinders our activities (FGD1, P9, Maguindanao).
Statement 3: as expressed by 56% of the INGO implementers: <i>“Sa totoo lang talaga, ang politika ay nag-iiralsamgalugarna kung saanmalakas ang labanan ng pagkakampihansamagkalabangtumatakbo ng position. Kaya ang nagyayaridyan ay nadadamay ang INGO at naiipit din kahitgaanonilapinapanatili ang walangpinapanigan.”</i>	To be honest, politics occurs in areas where there are active political parties and candidates for such position. The result is that the INGO feels bad and becomes trapped despite its best efforts to maintain non-partisan body (FGD2, P15, Maguindanao).

The issue on political dynamics in the community is one of the major challenges in the implementation of programs and services of the INGOs. The existing political landscape causes an adverse effect on the implementation of the program due to the local politicians who are fully preparing for their candidacy. Consequently, they are very strict with the entry of INGOs into their leadership. They ensure that all the implementers of the programs that enter their area are guaranteed to be on their side. Local politicians are very sensitive in terms of dealing with partner INGOs.

Politicians frequently have a significant impact on the realization of the projects, which means that different parties pursue their objectives and expectations, often not in the project's best interests. Politics or power struggles frequently produce tensions that are seen negatively. An earlier study stressed that political environment and social effects of plans that are hampered by political concerns in the community consequently hinder the progress of the projects in such community (Bovensiepen, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the 10 Non-Government Organizations operating in Cotabato City and Maguindanao with 5 programs, 3 programs and services were related to Islamic values and peace building. These include values transformation training and peace-building seminars, grassroots-based conflict resolution, and quick impact livelihood projects. The contribution of the INGOs to Islamic values and peace-building in the Bangsamoro region shows that VTT and culture of peace seminars helped the community strengthen Islamic values and understand the root of the misunderstanding in their areas and their readiness to face the problems that may arise.

The Mindanao peace process with spiritually sensitive is a clear case study of the importance of bottom-up approaches to peace-building. This enables the communities to get involved in the peace process through the formation of groups at their level. The quick impact livelihood project of the INGO enables the community to avail of the knowledge on income generating projects and business opportunities. The knowledge is carried on and applied even in evacuation centers.

The long-term peace program made possible for the people to return to their respective abode and continue their livelihood much with enlightened Islamic values obtained from the VTT during their evacuation time. It guides them to strengthen faith and maintain peace and order in their communities. It also made the people develop and strengthen their spiritual resiliency, thus, they were able to operate their own business and continue their economic activities even in the evacuation centers. Further, the people were oriented and taught strategies on how to address and mitigate man-made disasters in their communities.

The peace-building program is faced with the following challenges. In the implementation, although allocations are given to the communities, there are problems in the distribution phase. The official list of beneficiaries does not match with the actual number of people that appears during the implementation. Thus, the resources given do not really correspond to the number of expected beneficiaries in the community. So, what is happening is that the funds for the services provided to the community are really limited.

Another challenge is the present political dynamics. It is normal for every community to support a leader. But, it becomes a problem when the former leader will be replaced in his position. As a result, the newly elected leader does not really give utmost support and attention to the existing INGOs that partnered with the previous administration. Likewise, readiness of the local leaders is not so much in terms of Islamic activities.

The following are highly recommended to further improve the Non-Governmental Organizations that provide humanitarian services:

1. Strengthening the Accreditation of INGOs in the Local Government Unit

Strengthen the implementation of all programs through proper coordination and budgeting. It is also important for INGOs to provide coordinators in every community in serving. Likewise, the Local Government Unit can provide counterpart being the accredited partner.

2. Maintain Utmost Neutrality During the Implementation of the Projects

INGOs should focus on the implementation of the program and avoid political manipulation. Neutrality by not joining political activities. This is the easiest way to achieve and fully implement the programs and services in terms of social delivery to the target beneficiaries. INGOs should learn the mechanics of Islamic values integration in the community.

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