



# A HOMEGROWN APPROACH TO ACCOMPANIMENT IN THE FACE OF VIOLENCE

IFI's Lumad Accompaniment Program  
in Mindanao

A CPCS Learning Paper

2017

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*The hillside where the Tindoga community, the target of the pilot Lumad Accompaniment Program, resides.*

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*Bae Jocelyn Ventura Agdahan and some children of the community.*

# **Introduction: Accompaniment giving respite from violence**

A child's cry broke the dawn. For this small community of a few hundred Lumad indigenous people pitched on the side of a hill, the night was noted for its passing without intruders or flying bullets. As some children set off for school and adults set about their chores in preparation for the upcoming annual traditional harvesting celebration<sup>1</sup>, a group of young people began their daily walk along the parameters of the community. Their fluorescent pink vests stood out in the parting mist of the hill. The vests identified them as belonging to the Lumad Accompaniment Program. The respite from harassment and violence is credited to the presence of these accompaniers.

The Lumad Accompaniment Program is a component of the Mindanao Lumad Ministry initiated by the Mindanao Bishops Conference of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente in November 2015. The Ministry was launched in April 2016 with a march led by bishops and Lumad leaders in Cagayan de Oro city, then adopted as a programme of the whole church by the Supreme Council of Bishops in early May and by the Executive Commission in June. A pilot of the Lumad Accompaniment Program was implemented at the end of June.

The remarkable speed of implementation and early success of the Lumad Accompaniment Program and the role of the programme within the broader framework of ministry towards Lumad peoples make the programme an interesting subject of study in community security<sup>2</sup>. That the Lumad Accompaniment Program is a homegrown,

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<sup>1</sup> Harvesting and planting are major events in the indigenous calendar. For this community, the date of this year's celebration was 2 September 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Community security, when narrowly defined, focuses on ensuring that communities and their members (as a group and individually) are 'free from fear' and when more broadly defined, includes action on social issues to ensure 'freedom from want', according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Community security was one of seven dimensions of human security highlighted in the UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report, identified with the specific purpose of addressing protection against the breakdown of communities that provide a reassuring sense of identity and a shared value system. The protection of ethnic minorities and indigenous groups was a central focus of the report. Community security, along with social cohesion, became a key goal of the UNDP's Strategic Plan for 2008-2013. (United Nations Development Programme (2009)).

domestic and civilian intervention presents further points of interest in the contemplation of the relative impact between insiders and outsiders in peacebuilding<sup>3</sup>.

This paper describes the history of the Lumad Accompaniment Program, analyses the key features of the programme and discusses some significant challenges for the programme in the context of the Lumad community where the pilot accompaniment programme was conducted. This paper covers events up to early October 2016.

The information set out in this paper in relation to the Lumad community where the pilot was conducted is drawn largely from structured and informal interviews of leaders of the community, participants in the programme as well as church leaders involved in establishing and sponsoring the programme. It is inherent in the nature of research into a community of indigenous peoples who are marginalised that some information obtained is not capable of being verified objectively. However, this limitation should not diminish the reality and validity of the community's experience of harassment and violence or its members' hope for security. As Lumad peoples are the focus of the Lumad Accompaniment Program and the Mindanao Lumad Ministry, this paper refers from time to time to issues associated with indigenous peoples and ethnicity but does not purport to be a comprehensive study of the conditions of indigenous peoples (Lumad or otherwise) in the Philippines.

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<sup>3</sup> This paper adopts the descriptions of insiders and outsiders set out in Anderson, M.B. and Olson, L. (2003, p. 36), specifically that “[i]nsiders are widely seen as those vulnerable to the conflict, because they are from the area and living there, or people who in some other way must experience the conflict and live with its consequences personally” and “[o]utside[rs] are widely seen as individuals or agencies who choose to become involved in a conflict [and who though] may feel a great sense of engagement and attachment...have little to lose personally”.

## Glossary

Term	Definition
Ancestral domain	at law, <sup>4</sup> areas generally belonging to indigenous peoples comprising lands, inland waters, coastal areas, and natural resources in them, held under a claim of ownership, occupied or possessed by indigenous peoples, by themselves or through their ancestors, communally or individually since time immemorial, continuously (with specified exceptions <sup>5</sup> ), and which are necessary to ensure their economic, social and cultural welfare <sup>6</sup> ; however and significantly, the term embodies a concept central to the social structure and cultural identity of indigenous peoples; the socio-cultural meaning of the term as invoked by indigenous peoples is embedded in notions of identity, property, continuity and politics – for example, areas are regarded not as personal property but as resource to be shared and managed by the tribal community and connect past, present and future generations of the community as well as people with their physical environment <sup>7</sup>
Cebuano	the most commonly used language on Mindanao Island; speakers of the language more typically refer to it as Bisaya

<sup>4</sup> The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 Section 3 paragraph a. (<http://www.gov.ph/1997/10/29/republic-act-no-8371/>).

<sup>5</sup> The exceptions are interruptions by war, force majeure and displacement by force, deceit, stealth or as a consequence of government projects or any other voluntary dealings entered into by government and private individuals/corporations.

<sup>6</sup> Ancestral domain is specified at law to include ancestral lands, forests, pasture, residential, agricultural, and other lands individually owned whether alienable and disposable or otherwise, hunting grounds, burial grounds, worship areas, bodies of water, mineral and other natural resources, and lands which may no longer be exclusively occupied by indigenous peoples but from which they traditionally had access to for their subsistence and traditional activities, particularly the home ranges of indigenous peoples who are still nomadic and/or shifting cultivators.

<sup>7</sup> Erasga, Dennis S. (2008, pp. 35-36).

Certificate of ancestral domain title	title formally recognising the rights of possession of indigenous peoples over their ancestral domains in respect of identified and delineated territory, as determined by the National Commission of Indigenous People <sup>8</sup>
Duyog Ani 2016	the name given to the annual harvest celebration of the Tindog community in September 2016; the name is Cebuano for accompaniment harvest
Indigenous peoples	at law <sup>9</sup> , groups of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organised community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilised such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonisation, non-indigenous religions and cultures, became historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos, including peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, at the time of conquest or colonisation, or at the time of inroads of non-indigenous religions and cultures, or the establishment of present state boundaries, who retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, but who may have been displaced from their traditional domains or who may have resettled outside their ancestral domains; also known as indigenous cultural communities

<sup>8</sup> The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 Sections 3 paragraph c, 11 and 52 paragraphs k and j.

<sup>9</sup> The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 Section 3 paragraph h.

Lumad	the term commonly used to refer to indigenous peoples on Mindanao Island situated in the southern part of the Philippines; it is short form for <i>katawhang lumad</i> which means, in Cebuano, people born from the earth <sup>10</sup> ; the term was adopted by the Lumad Mindanao Peoples Federation founding assembly in 1986; generally, the Lumads' religious beliefs are distinct from those of Muslims and Christians but some individuals from Lumad communities identify themselves as Muslims or Christians
Ministry	the Mindanao Lumad Ministry, an undertaking of the Mindanao Bishops Conference

## Who's who

Term	Definition
Bae	Jocelyn Ventura Agdahan, who as bae a labi, is a leader of the Tindoga community
Bishop Ablon	Bishop Antonio Nercua Ablon, chairman of the Mindanao Bishops Conference Social Concern Committee
Bishop Juliada	Bishop Rudy Juliada, president of the Mindanao Bishops Conference
Datu	Ensubang Santiano "Andong" Agdahan, Jr., who, as datu, is the chief of the Tindoga community and chosen in accordance with customary law or practice; Ensubang is a name conferred on him by the community and means, in the community's tribal language, the breaking of dawn

<sup>10</sup> Paredes, Oona Thommes (1997, p. 272).

Father Ablon	Father Christopher Nercua Ablon, an officer in the secretariat of the Mindanao Bishops Conference and the Accompaniment Director of the Lumad Accompaniment Program and the Mindanao coordinator of the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (constituted by Christian churches to support the ongoing peace talks between the national government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines)
guards	armed men stationed in various posts along the perimeter of the area occupied by the Tindoga community
IFI or Iglesia Filipina Independiente	a nationwide Christian church founded in the Philippines; the name means Independent Church of the Philippines; its highest governing body is the General Assembly which comprises the Supreme Council of Bishops, the Council of Priests and the National Lay Council; the Supreme Council of Bishops is made up of serving and retired bishops and is responsible for defining the doctrines of the church, adopting and prescribing official liturgical rites and giving pastoral and moral guidance; the Executive Commission acts on behalf of the General Assembly when the assembly is not in session ( <a href="http://www.ifi.ph">www.ifi.ph</a> )
Mindanao Bishops Conference	the body comprising all 13 bishops of the 13 IFI dioceses on Mindanao Island
National Commission on Indigenous Peoples	the primary government agency responsible for formulation and implementation of policies, plans and programmes to promote and protect the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples and for recognition of their ancestral domains as well as rights thereto <sup>11</sup> ( <a href="http://www.ncip.gov.ph">www.ncip.gov.ph</a> )
Tindoga	the Tribal Indigenous Oppressed Group Association, a community group established to press for ancestral domain rights; the term <i>tindog</i> , in Cebuano, means to rise up

<sup>11</sup> The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 Sections 3 paragraph k and Chapter VIII.

## **Background: A collective response to violence**

The Mindanao Lumad Ministry, from which the accompaniment programme stems, was initiated by the IFI Mindanao Bishops Conference at a consultation meeting on the Lumad situation in November 2015 in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur province in Mindanao. The bishops convened to discuss and formulate a collective response to “ongoing and worsening human rights violations perpetuated by structural violence” against Lumad peoples.

### **Physical violence**

Killing of Lumad people in shootings and stabbings by paramilitary groups, which also resulted in whole communities being on the run, made national and international news throughout the summer of 2015.<sup>12</sup> Members of the IFI church in Mindanao felt the need for collective action over and above continuing to address individual situations in the dioceses separately. The felt need for action was spurred not just by news of the deaths and displacements but also by persistent accounts of harassment and humiliation directed at Lumad peoples, said Bishop Rudy Juliada, the president of the IFI Mindanao Bishops Conference.

### **Structural violence**

In common with other indigenous peoples, Lumads are among the most marginalised groups in the Philippines. The conditions of many indigenous peoples remain dire despite steps taken several decades ago to recognise the special history and presence of indigenous people through inclusion in the country’s constitution and targeted

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<sup>12</sup> Pagaduan-Araullo, Carol (2015). Spear, Lisa (2015). Go, Vincent (2015). The United Nations Special Rapporteurs on the rights of indigenous peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, and on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, called on the Philippines Government to launch a full and independent investigation into the killings of three indigenous human rights defenders in Surigao del Sur, Mindanao. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2015)).

legislation and creation of government bureaucracy to address their needs.<sup>13</sup> In the 1990s, even as the national poverty rate declined, the incidence of poverty among indigenous peoples stagnated in some areas and worsened in others.<sup>14</sup> Ten years on, indigenous peoples were still “subject to historical discrimination and marginalization from political processes and economic benefit... [and] faced exclusion, loss of ancestral lands, displacement, pressures to and destruction of traditional ways of life and practices, loss of identity and culture... [and in some cases,] armed conflict”.<sup>15</sup>

Even in the published results of the 2015 national census, no official data is given on the size of the indigenous population in the country.<sup>16</sup> Many estimates exist;<sup>17</sup> their numbers vary but they can be said to agree that indigenous peoples account for more than 10% of the national total population. The majority of the country’s indigenous peoples reside on Mindanao Island.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The National Commission for Indigenous Peoples has been criticised for certifying more community consents for mining than ancestral domain title. (De Vera, David E. (2007).)

<sup>14</sup> Asian Development Bank (2002 p. 21).

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Development Programme (2013).

<sup>16</sup> A national census was carried out in and around August 2015. The results, released on 19 May 2016, do not include any information specific to indigenous peoples.

<sup>17</sup> The United Nations Development Programme gives an estimated indigenous population at 14–17 million (United Nations Development Programme (2013).) The International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs estimates the indigenous population in the Philippines at between 10% and 20% of the national population, based on a projected national population of 102.9 million. A 2012 study quoted an unofficial survey conducted by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples which estimated the population of indigenous peoples in the Philippines to be between 12–15 million (or 10–15 per cent of the national total) but said the actual population may be higher (Cariño, Jacqueline K. (2012, p. 3).

<sup>18</sup> Cariño, Jacqueline K. (2012, p. 3).

## **Analysis of the Lumad Accompaniment Program**

This section analyses the Lumad Accompaniment Program by first discussing the concept of accompaniment and the scope of accompaniment as envisaged by the Ministry and then examining the preconditions to implementation (including the process of choosing the Tindoga community as the site for the pilot). The analysis also identifies certain key characteristics of the programme and discusses them in turn – namely, protective presence and its constituents, the delicate balance between solidarity and identity, and application of the ‘do no harm’ principle. This section also includes an assessment of the effectiveness of the pilot in delivering security.

### **Concept of accompaniment**

The Mindanao Lumad Ministry comprises five components (or forms of intervention).<sup>19</sup> Accompaniment is the first to be implemented; it is given priority for being the one fresh element among what would otherwise be reinforcement of ongoing activities of the church, according to Bishop Juliada.

Accompaniment is specified at the outset to encompass “protection of Lumad communities by IFI churches, support to Lumad mobilisations, campaigns and relevant actions”. The protection element is said to be inspired by the personal experience of Father Christopher Ablon – first, in 2011, of deployment for three months as an accompanier on the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel;<sup>20</sup> and second, in 2014, of providing support through presence at a Lumad community’s picketing outside the municipal hall and at the picketers’ meetings with the mayor and other government officials.

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<sup>19</sup> The five components/forms of interventions are: 1. advocacy – Lumad right to self determination and ancestral domain; 2. education; 3. policy influencing; 4. solidarity and long term accompaniment; 5. identifying, connecting and resourcing legal and paralegal support. The official explanation of these interventions is set out in the Appendix.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.eappi.org/en>.

The concept of accompaniment has protective presence at its core. Protection is directed at preventing or reducing violence and is carried out through the presence of individuals who are outsiders. The presence, contrary to what the word suggests, is active rather than passive. Protective presence is delivered, in practice, through a range of activities such as stationing people in the community, monitoring, reporting of incidents, a show of solidarity with the community and advocacy through dissemination of eyewitness accounts and raising awareness. Accompaniment, is one of the more progressive ways of delivering community security as it entails the physical presence of accompaniers alongside members of the community in their daily activities.

The Lumad Accompaniment Program stretches the concept of accompaniment. Accompaniment, at least in its initial phase, represents an opportunity for immersion learning – a means to acquire a better understanding of Lumad culture and needs through living in the communities and sharing the experience of the people, according to both Bishop Juliada and Bishop Ablon. Accompaniment, as conceived under the Ministry, also includes protective presence in the community itself as well as support for Lumads’ mobilisations, campaigns and relevant actions outside the community. Accompaniment, according to an IFI official statement, means “to walk with the Lumad in their journey towards self-determination and ancestral domain”. The programme is for the long term and is not intended to end with the cessation of violence or threat of violence. For these reasons, the accompaniers are called ‘accompaniers-at-large’.

## Pre-conditions to implementation

The Tindoga community has been chosen as the site for the pilot of the Lumad Accompaniment Program for several reasons. The leaders of the community are already known to certain members of the IFI clergy and the community is known to be at risk. The community is not remote in geographical terms. The community, though at risk, is reasonably organised and unified. No less importantly, the community is relatively secure and its leaders welcome the intervention.

**Community at risk.** The community of 107 families comprising approximately 600 individuals occupy a hillside in Butong barangay,<sup>21</sup> Quezon municipality, Bukidnon province on Mindanao Island. They belong to the Manobo-Pulangihon tribe, a branch of the Manobo ethnic group indigenous to the island.

The community is identified as ‘Tindoga’ as the majority of members of the community are members of the Tribal Indigenous Oppressed Group Association. *Tindog*, in Cebuano, means to rise up. The association was formed in 2008 for the specific purpose of lobbying on behalf of a number of clans that had become dispossessed, for official recognition of their ancestral domain rights. The chief of the community, Datu Ensubang Santiano “Andong” Agdahan, Jr., is a founder of the association.

The community manages the area it occupies along the core tenets of ancestral domain. Each family has an allotment of land and is responsible for tilling and growing on the land; the crop is shared among those within the community who help with the harvesting.

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<sup>21</sup> A barangay is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines, equivalent to a barrio, village, district or ward.



*Rice and broth for feeding 6-7 adults*

The community carries on subsistence farming<sup>22</sup> but is barely self-sufficient. A tin tray of plain rice and a small bowl of broth serve to feed 6-7 adults. Cultivation of crop relies wholly on direct rainfall. The meagre farming suffers additionally from human intervention, with crops being destroyed by cattle let loose from fields adjacent to the area occupied by the community or forcibly taken by intruders. There is no electricity or tap water supply. Housing is typically a shanty comprising a wooden frame, corrugated metal or thatch roofing, walls of woven mats or sheets made from cast-off woven plastic sacks and mud floors.

For the community, the primary concern is the uncertainty over its occupation rights. The community claims as ancestral domain the area that it currently occupies as well as some adjacent land that is believed to be controlled by a senior local politician. A certificate of ancestral domain titles covering the adjacent land has been issued

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<sup>22</sup> The community practises inter-cropping (ie growing different staple crops on the same ground) by rotating from year to year between mainly rice, corn and cassava.

for the benefit of the Tindoga community, according to Bae Jocelyn Ventura Agdahan; however, the community has not been able to gain access to the land. The adjacent land is cordoned off by fencing. The fence is noted to be advancing into the area occupied by the community. Thus, the community lives under a constant threat of encroachment and eviction.

In addition to the ongoing struggle for realisation of its ancestral domain rights, the community has to cope with breaches of and threats against personal security: gun shots from guards stationed at various points along the fence, killing, wounding and displacing members of the community; wrecking of their shanty houses and fields by intruders; orders issued by the guards not to walk certain paths or fetch water from streams that trickle through the area or to steer clear of areas near the fence; and the menace of the presence of armed men who are hostile and sometimes intoxicated.



*A Tindoga community member harvesting.*

Recent episodes of violence recounted by members of the community include:

Date	Event
April 2014	Shootings by guards at the community (including visiting nuns based near the community) and destruction of houses by them
October 2014	Shootings by guards at the community on two occasions (including at those farming and at women who were trying to negotiate with the guards)
March 2015	Shootings by guards at the community resulting in the death of Mabini 'Tat' Beato
June 2015	Shootings by guards at the community
July 2015	Shootings by guards at the community and looting and destruction by them of houses
June 2016	Shootings by guards
August 2016	Shooting heard in the community
September 2016	Shootings heard in the community
October 2016	Orders by guards directed at members of the community to clear out of the area

***Community relatively secure and organised.*** The question was asked why this community, among the many known to the church to be at risk, was chosen. An earlier approach by the church to a Lumad community forced to evacuate their abode in Surigao del Sur after killings by reportedly one or more paramilitary groups was turned down by the head of the community because he was not in a position to judge how safe it would be to return to their place of abode. “We do not [want to] let your blood be on our hands,” the head reportedly said. It was then that Father Ablon presented the idea of the pilot accompaniment to the Datu, the chief of the Tindoga community.

To ascertain security, an 'ocular' visit to the community was undertaken for better understanding the extent and nature of the breaches of and threats against security as well as the lay of the land. In addition to confirming that the community was relatively organised through their experience of forming Tindoga, obtaining recognition of the association and of lobbying for recognition of ancestral domain rights, it was learned that the community had already established for itself an early warning system and self-defence measures. According to the Bae, a leader of the community, some members of the community have taken on the role of marshal with responsibility for routinely watching the perimeters of the area occupied by the community and are instructed to be on heightened alert during festival periods and when visitors are present. She said women would take the lead in dealing with the intruders. "We would keep talking and [focus on] the ultimate aim of getting our ancestral domain," said the Bae. In the event of confrontation, women and children would form a front to stop entry. "Whatever the method, it would be non-violent," the Datu said, adding that he was concerned that taking up arms would cause casualty among the women and children.

Prior to the visit of the first batch of accompaniers, the Datu had, without informing the accompaniers, assigned to members of the community the task of looking out for the accompaniers and strengthened patrol of the area. The community took charge of security matters during the accompaniment, said Father Ablon.

*"Security was a top concern as the programme had to be viable,"* said Father Ablon.

It is interesting to note that these outsiders, whose ostensible function was to provide security to the insiders, were in turn recipients of protection by the community. However, it may also be that the presence of the outsiders gave impetus to the community to step up its own protective measures.



*A shanty house in the Tindoga community*

**Community receptive.** The Datu consulted the community prior to agreeing to receive the accompaniers. While the culture of Lumad peoples is to welcome visitors, some members of the community were concerned as they felt embarrassed about showing their poor living conditions to outsiders, said the Bae.

Support within the community for the intervention was motivated less by the promise of personal safety than that it represented an opportunity for outsiders to experience the everyday life of the community. It was judged to be a more effective way of connecting with the outside world than just members of the community telling their own stories, the Datu said. “[The visitors] could then see the situation of the community and that despite discrimination and harassment, the community could still be productive. This would also show that the community could be even more productive and self-sufficient if left in peace,” he said.

Another perceived benefit mentioned by the Datu was that the presence of the outsiders would be a challenge to government

officials in that the attention and assistance by ordinary citizens would show up the government's negligence and failure.

## **Protective presence**

Protective presence operates on the basis that the presence must be felt, obviously, by the community but also noticeable and noticed by the people from whom protection is sought and a broader group of allies and potential allies. The Lumad Accompaniment Programme accomplishes these through the distinctive uniform of the accompaniers, notification of the planned presence to government authorities, monitoring of the community, daily and prompt reports via social media, and advocacy.

***Uniform.*** Accompaniers, during their stay at the community, wear a fluorescent pink vest printed with the words Lumad Accompaniment Program on the back. This particular colour is chosen because it does not blend with the natural surroundings of the community and therefore stands out and because it is also the colour of the robes of IFI bishops, said Father Ablon. The khaki vests worn by accompaniers in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel would not be appropriate, he said, because dark or earthy colours are favoured by armed groups in the Philippines and it is crucial that the Lumad accompaniers are not seen to be members of any armed group.

The accompaniers are clergy or lay members and do not carry weapons. Accompaniers are instructed to wear the vest, carry their identity paper and recording equipment at all times during their stay in the community. Accompaniers interviewed thought that the pink vest was an important protective tool and that guards of the adjacent property who fired at some visiting nuns might have mistaken the nuns for members of the community because the nuns were not in religious habit.

**Notice to government authorities.** Prior to the accompaniers entering the community, the Mindanao Bishops Conference sent a letter to the then mayor of Bukidnon informing him of the impending visit and stay, identifying the accompaniers individually and requesting safety and security for the individuals. The letter was copied to other authorities including the local political representative and the local police.

According to Father Ablon, the notice was carefully worded so it would not be regarded as a request for permission to enter the community. It was also expected that the substance of the notice would reach the ears of the senior local politician believed to be in control of the land adjacent to the area occupied by the community and which the community claims to be its ancestral domain.

**Monitoring and reporting.** During each day of their stay in the community, the accompaniers conduct walks from dawn through the community and along the parameters of the area occupied by the community, ensure that they are seen by the guards at the outposts, speak to members of the community, note the conditions of the community and post their observations at a set time (and when appropriate) on a dedicated Facebook page.<sup>23</sup>

Monitoring, recording and reporting go hand-in-hand. An observer is automatically also a witness, said Allan Khen Apus, an accompanier who participated in both the first and second rounds of residency in the community.

The accompaniers carry mobile telephones and a camera during their morning walk and use laptop computers for postings on social media and logging of their activities and observations. The use of such electronic equipment has proved difficult in a community without electricity supply.

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<sup>23</sup> Lumad Accompaniment Program. [https://www.facebook.com/Lumad-Accompaniment-Program-523729254481407/?hc\\_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf](https://www.facebook.com/Lumad-Accompaniment-Program-523729254481407/?hc_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf).

**Publicity.** Presence, when publicised, contribute to (a) better understanding of the conditions of the community on the part of the accompaniers through the process of writing about what they see and experience; (b) greater public attention, especially as the postings are made on Facebook, a powerful medium for spreading information quickly; (c) more speedy dissemination of news about the community; (d) generation and preservation of written and photographic records about the community; (e) deterrence of harassment and violence because the perpetrators know that their actions will be recorded and made public and (f) empowerment of the community by virtue of the knowledge that they are, through the conduit of the accompaniers, connected with the outside world and have the support of outsiders.

The connection with the outside world and the resulting publicity may also be significant to the accompaniers as it can lend comfort to them while they live in relative isolation, albeit only for very short periods thus far. Some of the accompaniers said they were at least initially scared by the prospect of accompaniment. One said fear kept him awake but that the reception by the community gave him courage – “I learned not to take advantage of their goodness”. Another accompanier said that trust in the knowledge of the community meant she was not scared and a third said he overcame his initial fear by drawing inspiration from the community’s resilience.

Given the importance of monitoring and publicity and the objective of understanding the conditions of the Lumads, more structured monitoring methods and more strategic communication in terms of contents, form, audience and anticipation response or reaction are expected to be developed for subsequent accompaniment programmes. Accompaniers, in their feedback, have requested training on using social media and on journalistic skills. It is also expected that publicity will in time be coupled with more targeted communication, for example, following up on the pre-visit notices

to government authorities and communicating the church's observations and recommendations.

**Advocacy.** It is the intention of the Ministry that companions will, after their placement in the community, become advocates for both the Tindoga community as well as the cause of Lumad peoples more generally.

“They will become resource persons in fora, symposiums, seminars and all avenues for information, dissemination, education and advocacy. They shall maintain contact with the Mindanao Lumad Ministry office. They will be provided with timely Lumad updates. They shall be connected with the companions in the field and shall receive fresh real time reports so that their advocacy engagements will remain fresh and highly effective,” according to the Ministry.<sup>24</sup> Companions in both batches have given testimonials of their experience in church or on their own Facebook page, and are in the habit of forwarding news relating to the community and Lumad peoples through social media.

## **Solidarity and identity**

For the IFI leaders, the Lumad Accompaniment Program is an expression of the church's solidarity with Lumad peoples. Solidarity means having a common identity of feelings, purposes, responsibilities and interests. Bishop Ablon drew an analogy with relationships within the church and said the clergy should be indistinguishable from the congregation such that “the shepherd should smell the same as the flock”. In part in accordance with that principle, the companions are to immerse themselves in community life and are assigned to host families in the Lumad community, share meals with the host families and sleep in the houses of the host families.

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<sup>24</sup> Mindanao Lumad Ministry (2016, p. 7).

However, within accompaniment, there is tension between the principle of solidarity (which seeks to eliminate differences) and the strategic deployment of outsiders (which draws attention to differences). A critical element of the effectiveness of the accompaniers is that they are outsiders and can be clearly seen to be outsiders, rather than an extension of the community at risk.

The accompaniers, in their fluorescent pink vests, signal that they are neither members of the Lumad community nor combatants. In addition, the accompaniers have been instructed that in the event of confrontation between the community and intruders, they are to stand on the side of the community but at a distance, not to participate in the confrontation but to monitor and record the confrontation. “We would not link arms with members of the community. We would instead use our phones and take pictures,” said Christy Mae Quimno, one of the first accompaniers.

The balance between solidarity and separate identity is a delicate one; and the IFI leadership is sensitive to any sign of a shift in the balance. For example, when it was learned that the community was building a new shanty for the accompaniers, one member of the clergy asked whether there had been a failure to integrate with the community or reluctance or inability on the part of accompaniers to endure hardship. Separate accommodation was, in the end, deemed acceptable on grounds that it was an initiative of the community, would allow accompaniers more space to discuss their work, work late and minimise disruption of the community’s daily routines.

The delicate balance between solidarity and separate identity can also be sensed during harvesting. Accompaniers worked in the fields and assisted with harvesting chores. It is unclear if and to what extent such display of solidarity – an extension of presence to include participation – would encroach on the separate identity and reduce the protective effect of the accompaniers.

## Do no harm

In line with contemporary thinking in relation to interventions that good intentions alone are insufficient and must be coupled with a heightened sensitivity not to undertake anything that could exacerbate existing risks or damage of, or create new risk or damage for, the local community, the Mindanao Lumad Ministry has also adopted the 'do no harm' principle.

The 'do no harm' principle, in the context of the Lumad Accompaniment Program, means the church making it clear at the outset that there is no intention to proselytise. The emphasis of the message to the congregation is on learning: "We want to capacitate our people so they can respond," said Bishop Ablon, adding that it was a challenge for members of the church to stay open-minded, to uphold the objective of not converting Lumad people but to bring peace, abundance and security.

The Lumad Accompaniment Program, by virtue of its being a homegrown, domestic and local initiative, has clear advantages over a foreign intervention. The accompaniers are able to travel to the community with relative ease, even if the journey exceeds 10 hours for some. The accompaniers and members of the community can communicate in the same language. The accompaniers have direct conversations with members of the community and can understand not only the plain meaning of words but can better grasp nuances. The accompaniers, as they are from towns nearby, can adapt more easily to the climate, diet, other conditions and the customs of the community. The accompaniers, and more importantly, their sponsors, are better able to use their local connections to disseminate information they obtain, to call for help if necessary and with their knowledge of bureaucracy at the local, regional and national levels, to lobby for change.

However, this does not mean that a domestic intervention can avoid all the problems faced by a foreign intervention, such as bringing about unintended consequences, undermining local efforts and causing reprisal on the local community, often due to insufficient political information and analysis and lack of learning.<sup>25</sup> A domestic intervention can also encounter the same problems when the intervention involves working with an isolated community – ie a community about which not much is known, because there is an equal, if not higher, degree of temptation to make assumptions about the community and because those harassing the community may not be as inhibited to act against outsiders to the community who are nonetheless local people and regarded as having no special social or political status.

## **Effectiveness**

For the duration of the stay of the first and the second batches of accompaniers, the community did not experience any harassment or violence by intruders. The day after the first batch of accompaniers left the community, indiscriminate firing was reported. Harassment also resumed shortly after the second batch of accompaniers left the community. These are regarded as evidence supporting the deterrent effect of protective presence and as a possible sign that both the presence and the departure of the accompaniers were noted.

That the accompaniers were able to deliver protective presence is the accepted narrative. Also, the Datu felt harassment would have likely escalated in the absence of the accompaniment programme. However, according to the Datu, the presence of the accompaniers has brought about security only “to an extent”. This is because the presence of armed guards around the area continues to pose a threat, he said. The respite offered by the accompaniers is temporary and fragile.

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<sup>25</sup> Mahony, Liam (2006, pp. 107-113). *Proactive Presence: Field strategies for civilian protection*. Geneva: The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. 2006.

The Datu would like the community to be able to protect itself and points out that for so long as the community is protected by outsiders, the people are not truly safe. This is recognised by the church. “When [the Tindoga people] are empowered, our presence may not be necessary anymore. When they are dependent, our presence is not helping at all,” says the church’s first report on the pilot of the Lumad Accompaniment Program. Bishop Ablon thought that reliance by the community on the Lumad Accompaniment Program would signal failure of the programme.

Accompaniment – in particular, the rendering of protective presence by outsiders— should therefore be, at best, an intermediate objective. For the community to be able to protect itself, capacity building is essential. The protective presence of outsiders can in itself contribute to capacity building in that it can help free the community from the distraction and burden of having to deal with harassment and violence and allow the community more time and resource to develop capacity.

For the community to be able to protect itself and attain sustained safety, the sort of capacity required and the manner of and means for building such capacity must be determined by the community. The Lumad Accompaniment Program, perhaps because it serves as a platform for immersion learning and perhaps because it is a homegrown, domestic and local initiative, may be more open to giving time and space for the community to articulate its needs and ideas and less eager to impose a pre-packaged programme of action.

## **Challenges: Moving from occasional presence to accompaniment-at-large**

After the first round of accompaniers completed their residency in the Tindoga community in June, a second batch of accompaniers (including participants in the first round) returned to the community during harvesting in late August and early September, as requested by the Datu. To mark and publicise the return of accompaniers, the harvesting celebration was named Duyog Ani 2016 (meaning accompaniment harvest, in Cebuano). The programme is not currently geared up to provide continuous presence. The new shanty built to house the accompaniers signals a desire on the part of the community for stepped up presence; and the Datu has said his preference is for a rotation of different participants rather than extended stay by the same participants because the former would generate awareness among a greater number of people about the community.

A dilemma is whether the Lumad Accompaniment Program should and could develop from being occasional and a response only at critical times of need into continuous presence in the community, at least during the early phases and into accompaniment-at-large in the longer run.

There are different facets to the consideration of that dilemma. The challenges – constraints relating to financial and human resources, structural violence, active learning and an uncharted walk – are discussed below.

## **Financial resources**

The issue of financing is both a practical concern and a matter of principle. As a practical concern, the community cannot afford to pay for the accompaniment and as a matter of principle, the accompaniment should not become an additional source of burden on the community.

The programme is financed by all 13 IFI dioceses in Mindanao, with each member of the clergy in the dioceses pledging a monthly donation of 100 peso (US\$2) through salary deduction. The cost of each accompanier, for a short stay of around a week, is estimated to be 1800-2000 peso (US\$36-40), according to Father Ablon. The amount covers the transportation, food, accompaniment vests and mobile telephone call credits of the accompaniers and does not take into account costs for training, other preparatory work or time spent during the accompaniment programme.

Financing on the basis of existing resources places constraints on the pace and the scale of the programme as well as the number and profile of accompaniers.

## **Human resources**

The programme relies on unpaid volunteers; and few individuals, whether members of the clergy or lay members, are available for periods measurable other than in weeks or for repeat service as accompaniers. The reliance on such volunteers operates also as a built-in bias for young and relatively inexperienced accompaniers.

The short stays, turnover rate and profile of the accompaniers can make it harder to develop trust and bonding at both a personal level and an institutional level, to acquire a more comprehensive, more in-depth and more acute understanding of the community's needs,

to develop responses to such needs that is appropriate, strategic and sustainable and to facilitate capacity building.

The need to train accompaniers, especially on information gathering and reporting skills and use of social media, has been identified. However, the challenge is to train not just the accompaniers but also members of the Tindoga community. The accompaniers rely heavily on members of the community for information about the community, even during the brief periods of their presence in the community. The reasons for addressing this need go beyond the obvious requirements of dissemination of more first-hand and effective information regarding the Tindoga community and lobbying for the rights which they wish to assert. As the absence of accurate information and constructive information can breed or worsen conflict, it is important that the accompaniers and their informers in the community are placed in a position where they can develop a correct understanding of the conflict and the parties involved in the conflict and an ability to present the same correctly.

## **Structural violence**

Structural violence is cited by the Ministry as a contributor to the sufferings of Lumad peoples. Tackling structural violence should begin with identification of the particular types of structural violence afflicting a particular community; and identification of the types of structural violence and the measures for countering the violence, for tackling the root cause(s) of the violence and for transformation requires systematic inquiry and analysis.

For the Tindoga community, structural violence exists at various levels. First, at the national level, structural violence is found in the constitution. Although the constitution recognises the special status of indigenous peoples, indigenous peoples' rights (including in relation to ancestral domain) are specified to be subject to national

unity, development and/or projects.<sup>26</sup> In other words, indigenous peoples are not given special protection by the constitution (contrary to popular perception) but are, instead, entrenched in a subsidiary position by the constitution.

Structural violence is manifest at the social level in the lack of citizenship for approximately half of the members of the community. These individuals, in all age brackets, were not registered at birth, do not hold birth certificates and are therefore not citizens. Without citizenship, they encounter great difficulty in claiming civil rights or accessing basic social services.

Structural violence at a local, political level takes the form of a conundrum. According to the Bae, a certificate of ancestral domain titles was issued in September 2014 to a representative of several Lumad clans, including the clans that are part of the Tindoga community, at a ceremony attended by senior national, provincial and regional government officials. The certificate covers land believed to be under the control of a senior local politician. How can the Tindoga community, with its very limited capacity, realise the rights conferred upon it by one branch of the government by acting against the interests of a member of another branch of the government?

Structural violence is reinforced by discrimination and humiliation. This is especially conspicuous in the manner in which the community's grievances have been handled: when in April 2014 guards began shooting in the community and destroying houses and the community called for police help, according to the Bae, two elderly policemen turned up and did not intervene; and when the community organised a protest at the Bukidnon Provincial Capitol government offices in Malaybalay City after another episode of harassment in June 2015, the provincial governor gave the community, in response, a tractor, sacks of rice and boxes of noodles and canned goods.

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<sup>26</sup> Article II Section 22 and Article XII Section 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines.

Structural violence presents a particular challenge to the Lumad Accompaniment Program: when and how to develop the programme from giving protective presence through the occasional residency of several individuals in the confines of the location of the community to, as envisaged, “walking with the Lumads in their journey towards self-determination and ancestral domain”. The demand for resources, for conflict analysis, for strategic planning and for attention to minutiae will amplify and intensify with each step of the walk.

## **Active learning**

The early success of the Lumad Accompaniment Program in forestalling harassment and direct physical violence against the Tindoga community during periods when accompaniers are stationed in the community presents a further challenge.

The challenge lies in making more use of the accompaniers’ presence in the community when the community is enjoying respite from harassment and physical violence. The lack of preparation in relation to time gaps between the morning walk, the scheduled round of posting on social media and end-of-day logging has already been noted in internal reviews of the programme. There seems to be scope to step up the learning of accompaniers during the periods of their immersion, from casual mingling with members of the community to making more structured enquiry into the conditions and needs of the community.

Learning has significant implications. Learning is, according to the leaders of the Ministry, a key objective of the accompaniment programme and the lack of learning is a well-recognised risk of interventions. Furthermore, while repetitive accounts of absence of harassment and direct physical violence constitute good news, they have the potential to induce a false sense of comfort (while there remains significant risks of personal harm and damage to property and structural violence) and ennui even.

## **An uncharted walk**

The Lumad Accompaniment Program envisages “walking with the Lumads in their journey towards self-determination and ancestral domain”. The walk, for both the Tindoga community and the Ministry, is uncharted. Forging a path for this uncharted walk presents a complex challenge.

Provision of protective presence to the community seems a sure footed first step. The Ministry has also begun the process of engaging with other civil society actors with a view to creating a network of allies – for example, representatives of the United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ were invited to participate in activities during the visit to the community of the second batch of accompaniers. One aspect of this complex challenge is to secure commitment to the cause and further to maintain momentum among the group of allies, even as the path remains unclear.

Another, perhaps even more difficult aspect of this complex challenge relates to the necessary involvement of all primary stakeholders in forging the path, in other words, engagement with parties whose interests are in direct conflict (including, for instance, other Lumad clans with competing interests). However difficult this may be, there is no avoiding the fact that the final destination of self-determination and ancestral domain cannot be reached through unilateral action. Furthermore, the absence of such engagement has tactical implications. Without any such engagement, the Tindoga community and their accompaniers could, at best, only second guess the response to key decision or action; they would also be vulnerable to accusation of not acting in good faith; and these other primary stakeholders may feel at liberty to distance themselves from the situation.

## Conclusion

IFI's Lumad Accompaniment Program makes an interesting case study in community security. It demonstrates how a homegrown domestic and local initiative, under committed leadership, on a slim budget and with the participation of a small group of individuals, can quickly deliver respite from harassment and violence.

This paper describes the vision of the Ministry and the extended scope of accompaniment conceived pursuant to it and provides detailed analyses of the pre-conditions to implementation of the pilot project, the key characteristics of the programme plus the particular challenges for moving the programme from just provision of protective presence to accompaniment-at-large.

The accompaniment programme is evolving and is picking up pace. In the space of a little over two months between the first and second dispatches of accompaniers to the Tindoga community, the Ministry's internal reports have developed from an account of general impressions to include a list of do's and don'ts for accompaniers, a SWOT<sup>27</sup> analysis and specific recommendations.

Finally, recognition should be given to the important role of intuition in the development and implementation of the programme. Some of the special characteristics of the programme spring from intuition, albeit intuition that is backed by the experience, knowledge and understanding of the IFI as a church steeped in the traditions of activism. These include the choice of the relatively secure and organised Tindoga community for the pilot, the decision to rely on the community's existing early warning and defence systems, the choice of fluorescent pink as the colour of the accompaniers' vests and the manner of giving notice of the presence of accompaniers in the community.

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<sup>27</sup> SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

At present, the respite is judged to be temporary and fragile because the programme has been in implementation for just a few months. The effectiveness of the Lumad Accompaniment Program in delivering community security – measured against the twin objectives of freedom from fear and freedom from want – can only be and should continually be tested over time.

# Appendix

## Components of the Mindanao Lumad Ministry

1. **Advocacy – Lumad Right to Self Determination and Ancestral Domain.** Mobilise church members and utilize all platforms for advocacy so that the call of Lumads for their right to self-determination and ancestral domain shall be amplified in the widest sphere possible and generate support. This intervention includes the engagement of key government departments like the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples; international players such as the United Nations, other ecumenical and church partners nationally and internationally, but equally activating the Bishops, Clergy and church members of IFI around the issues of self-determination and ancestral domain.
2. **Education.** Maximize all avenues to educate the faithful to deepen their understanding of the history and struggle of the Lumads and motivate them to be more responsive to the plight of the Lumads. Corresponding educational materials shall be published for this purpose. The IFI recognises the rich spirituality of Lumads, their connection to the land and environment, and their ancient wisdom. IFI congregations can be enriched, challenged and inspired by the dialogue, interaction and accompaniment of Lumad communities, mutual partnership of shared learning and exchange.
3. **Policy Influencing.** Key actors, state and non-state, at the local and national levels shall be engaged with, in the interest of influencing state policy towards more relevant, responsive programs that are sensitive to Lumad rights and culture. Bishops will be called on to make particular visits to government, the United Nations, international agencies alongside Lumad partners on key issues. IFI Lumad Ministry will thus conduct regular analysis to identify priority issues and the most strategic

interventions. Such interventions will be conducted at the national level and to Local Government Units (LGUs).

4. **Solidarity and long term accompaniment.** Avenues shall be facilitated so that the faithful and church communities shall have consistent and meaningful engagements with Lumads and their communities to foster deeper commitment of the faithful to walk with the Lumads in their journey towards self-determination and ancestral domain. This accompaniment may extend to protection of Lumad communities by IFI churches, support to Lumad mobilizations, campaigns and relevant actions.
5. **Identifying, connecting and resourcing legal and paralegal support.** Raise the capabilities of the Lumad communities to defend their individual and collective rights. Facilitate assistance to Lumad who are victims of violation of their IP / human rights. Facilitate aid to Lumads engaged in legal defensive and offensives to uphold their rights.

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The Iglesia Filipina Independiente was formed in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as part of the nationalist struggle against Spanish colonialism and American imperialism. The Mindanao Lumad Ministry (MLM) is a concrete manifestation of the church's solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples' community but without the purpose to proselytize. The ministry includes advocacy, education, policy influencing, solidarity, long-term accompaniment, and mobilizing of legal/paralegal support.

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