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**INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESS?
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES EXPERIENCE OF ENGAGEMENT WITH
THE BANGSAMORO AND GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES**

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Abstract

The field of conflict transformation continues to evolve and emphasizes the central importance of more inclusive peace processes. Given the long history of exclusion and marginalization of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines, the need to have a voice and participate meaningfully in peace processes underway on their ancestral lands in the Philippines highlights the need for decolonizing systems and strengthening Indigenous Political Structures (IPS) as mechanisms for inclusion. This study elicits the experiences of indigenous peoples through their indigenous political structure (IPS) in working for inclusive peace in the context of Mindanao, the Philippines. This research focused on three IPS: the Teduray and Lambangian in the province of Maguindanao, Erumanen ne Menuvu and Tinenanen/ Kulemanen tribe of Cotabato. These IPS are within and adjacent to the proposed Bangsamoro Territory being negotiated by the Government of the Philippines and Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

The research focuses on the IPS perspectives on inclusion with and their experiences in the peace process of the State (Government of Philippines) and non-State actors (Moro Islamic Liberation Front); towards improving the mechanisms of achieving more inclusive peace and preventing violence. This action research project used a qualitative case study method for gathering data and information through focus group discussion (FGD), semi-structured in-depth interviews (one on one), and participant observations from Indigenous leaders and IPS members. The data were transcribed, translated, analyzed thematically and presented in the findings.

The findings of the study show that indigenous peoples' perspectives on inclusive peace centers on nurturing healthy social, ecological, and spiritual relations and upholding indigenous peoples' rights. The experiences in engaging with the peace process include policy advocacy, capacity building, and alliance/network building, community education and dialogue. Part of the essential lessons learned is that exclusion, despite its negative impact, amplifies the victims' voice, and living within the ancestral domain added power and legitimacy of the representatives to policymaking. The ways to improve the work for

inclusive peace include: strengthening Indigenous Political Structures (IPS), continuing dialogue and enhance diplomatic relations and work for the legal recognition of the ownership over their ancestral domain.

Understanding IP perspectives, giving voice to these experiences and aspirations offers new contributions to the growing literature on inclusive peace and the profound importance of post-colonial and conflict transformation agendas to support the deep cultural and structural impediments that Indigenous People work against for inclusion. The research concluded that enhancing the capacity of the actors (indigenous peoples) is important in working towards inclusive peace, involving sustained dialogues and conversations with peace stakeholders, rebuilding social cohesion and movement, engaging in policymaking platform and clarifying identity as a “starting point” for a positive assertion in an ethnically divided society.