

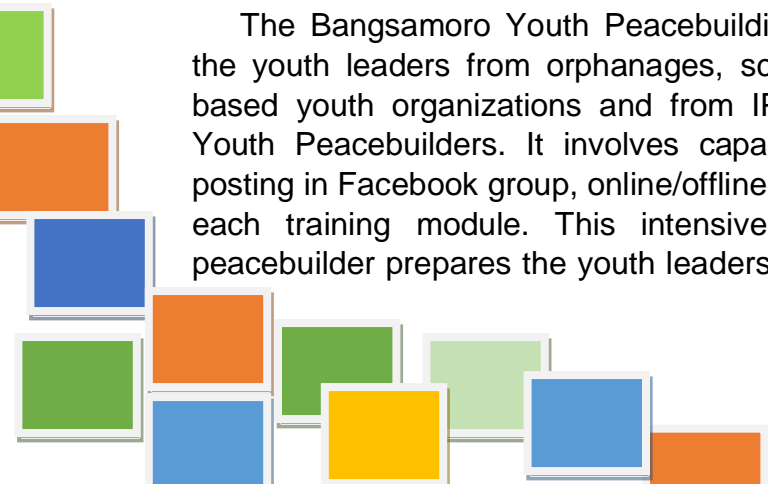
Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding: Empowering the Youth, Multiplying the Peacebuilders

In the prevalence of violent extremism and child soldiering, youth and children are at high risk. In a Rapid Assessment done by International Labour Organization-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC) Philippines on child soldiers in Central and Western Mindanao, there were estimated that 10.0 to 30.0 % of children in any given community are influenced by non-state armed groups or drafted as soldiers. Youth are easily ignored by the authorities after a conflict and excluded in most of time from decision-making processes and structures. They are now become vulnerable to violence. This in turn starts a cycle of poverty and frustration that makes youth vulnerable to criminality and re-recruitment into armed forces and groups. We cannot afford to let other youth and children be in another insurgencies involving them and using their vulnerability in terrorism and other personal interests. Capacitate them as peacebuilder to frontline in preventing and transforming violent extremism.

It is important to understand this problem so that the solution to this problem can be identified accordingly based on the needs of the community. In all aspect of this problem, the duty bearer and the community should go hand in hand to implement programs or resolution that will answer the call of change and solution. Since, we can identify the vulnerability of the youth in the community, the program should be dealt with them both as an asset and partners of the implementation. The formulation and implementation of the program should coming from them for they will benefit it and to increase sense of ownership. This should aim to bring back the culture of peace to young generation where they will be organized in respective institutions and be capacitated with necessary competencies as peacebuilders and young leaders. This in turn will result to the empowerment of these youth to multiply themselves as peacebuilders in their own communities. It will transcend the effect to a bigger society or a contributory to writ at large, Mindanao.

The government undertakes all efforts related to socioeconomic and development for MILF combatants and their communities and this includes communities and citizens affected by conflicts. There are existing programs for the youth like Master Peace and Youth Peace Table. The direct targets of these programs are selected youth leaders in the country. Also, the BARMM government has the social protection mechanisms while the NGOs working for children and youth focused on nutrition program in the region.

The Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding (BYP) intends to capacitate and empower the youth leaders from orphanages, schools, and youth organizations both religious based youth organizations and from IP communities. They are called Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilders. It involves capacity building program, online discussion and posting in Facebook group, online/offline conversation and actual tasks as application of each training module. This intensive and consistent training design for young peacebuilder prepares the youth leaders of the context and in maximizing the available



assets in the community. The learning of each session will provide space for creativity of each youth leader in creating advocacy work that is relevant and timely in the context they are in and in taking full advantage of the social media in promotion and information drive per se specifically on PTVE issues in the community. We will not just lessen their vulnerability in the recruitment of VEOs but we capitalize them as frontline for PTVE.

Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding (BYP) is a project initiated under Equal Access International-Philippines Peace Promotion Fellowship that intends to capacitate and empower the 20 youth leaders from orphanages, schools, and youth organizations both church based youth organizations and from IP communities to become peacebuilders. This project is in collaboration with Office of the Bangsamoro Youth Affairs (OBYA), The Goldin Institute, and Volunteers Initiatives in Bridging and Empowering Society (VIBES). It promotes strong leadership at grassroots level with peace lens. The participants are learning from one another, hear each other's experiences in our local communities, and gain the tools and insights that allow them create locally inspired and community approved solutions. During these four (4) months program, they interact with each other through monthly conversations for training and face to face workshops, online/offline call, weekly assignments and actual tasks or immersion session including journal writing. The course is broken into 6 Chapters as to be discussed in each month.

The project recognizes the full potential of young leaders who in one way or another considered to be very vulnerable to the recruitment of VEOs in the region. Empowering these youth leaders would not directly resolve security issues in the community, but it would surely augment human resources to work for community issues. These empowered youth community leaders will also frontline in advocating peacebuilding and PTVE. These youth leaders will multiply as they transfer and influence their fellow youth in their community. The primary resources that will be utilized in this project are the youth themselves.

The Selection of Participants

On November 18, 2019, the Office on Bangsamoro Youth Affairs (OBYA) through the leadership of Executive Director, MP Marjanie Macasalong, PhD assisted in the review and selection of participants for the Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding (BYP) in OBYA Office, Bangsamoro Government Center, Cotabato City.

The technical team of OBYA and the volunteers of BYP gathered together and reviewed the applications. After a thorough grading process and assessment of essay,



the team had the deliberation of successful participants. There were 20 participants identified who passed the screening and able to be part of the BYP.

BYP Launching and Orientation of Participants

Eighteen (18) youth peacebuilders who are qualified participants of the Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding attended the launching of the said program on November 23, 2019 in People's Center, MILG-BARMM, Cotabato City. The activity aimed to officially launch the Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding, present the BYP youth participants, and conduct orientation about the process and components of the BYP Project.

Diversed participants gathered from Bangsamoro communities, settler communities, and non-moro IPs in the provinces of Cotabato and Maguindanao and Cotabato City representing their organization and community.

Lo Ivan Castillon, Program Implementor of BYP discussed the overview and duration of the program. Equal Access International - Philippines Program Manager, Joel Dizon graced the launching and shared inspiring stories and on prevention and transforming of violent extremism.

"I am encouraging everyone to please participate for this golden opportunity to all of you. This is a very good program, the Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding. This has been our plan and very thankful for pushing it forward. We want you to help the Bangsamoro government to succeed.", MP Marjanie Macasalong said during the launching.

Aside from the launching, the participants were given an orientation of the processes involved in the program. This is to gain familiarity with the face to face workshop sessions and modular approach of learning interactions, meet training peers and identify common interests or questions, and determine the principles and practices for a shared learning community,

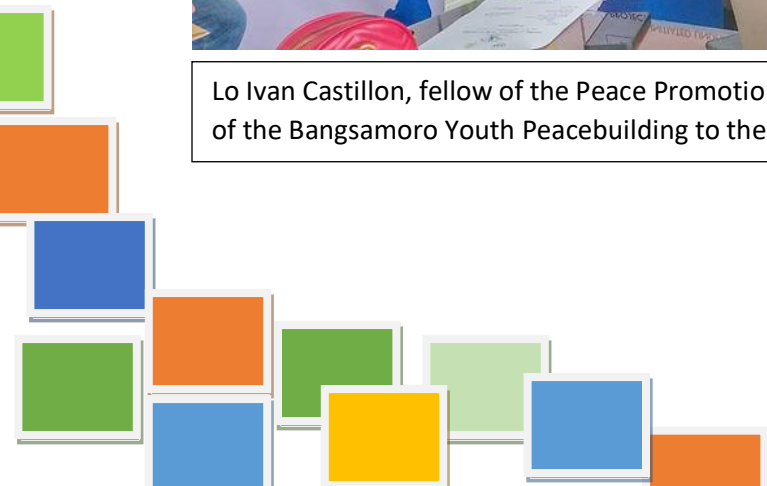




The participants, volunteers and guests take a pose after the launching and presentation of selected youth for the Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding project on 23 November 2019 in People's Center, MILG-BARMM, Cotabato City.



Lo Ivan Castillon, fellow of the Peace Promotion Fellowship presents the project and the objectives of the Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding to the selected participants.





MP Marjanie Macasalong, PhD, Executive Director of Office of the Bangsamoro Youth Affairs (OBYA) shares inspirational message to the youth peacebuilders and highlights the important role of youth in the transition of BARMM.



Joel Dizon, Program Officer of Equal Access International (EAI) Philippines shares to the youth participants the background and the works of EAI worldwide. Also, he gives a closing inspirational message for the youth leaders during the launching of Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding project.



The volunteers of the Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding project takes closing pose on 23 November 2019 in People's Center, MILG-BARMM, Cotabato City.

Basics of Peace and Conflict and Context for Change Workshops

The Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding conducted its first session of workshop on Basics of Peace and Conflict and Community Context on 7 December 2019 at BARMM-BRIDGE Conference Room, Bangsamoro Government Center, Cotabato City. The primary aim of this session is to prepare the youth participants of theories, principles, and utilize tools for peacebuilding and community grassroots leadership. Primarily, the session aims to understand Conflict and Peace Basics, Mindanao and Bangsamoro History, and Transitional Justice, understand and commit to inclusion and equity in community leadership, and identify common issues surrounding community change

In the module of Basics of Peace and Conflict, it highlighted the important concepts on peace and history of Mindanao. The following resource speakers took led the discussion:

- Najive Nava on Basics of Peace and Conflict
- Lo Ivan Castillon on Conflict Management Styles
- Ronna Farida Buisan on Journey of Mindanao Conflict
- Lo Ivan Castillon on Overview of Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

In this module on Community Context, the participants explored various principles in understanding the context. It involves discussions on community

leaderships, justice, equity and concepts of power, privilege, and oppression and use a systems perspective to assess community situations. The following resource speakers shared their inputs and experiences:

- Jose Marie Gomez on Monkey Business and Systems Thinking
- Jofel Delicana on Zooming Concepts
- Hussien Abu on Power, Privilege and Understanding Oppression
- Rona Farida Buisan on Single Story

The session ended with sharing of learnings. The following are some of their learnings:

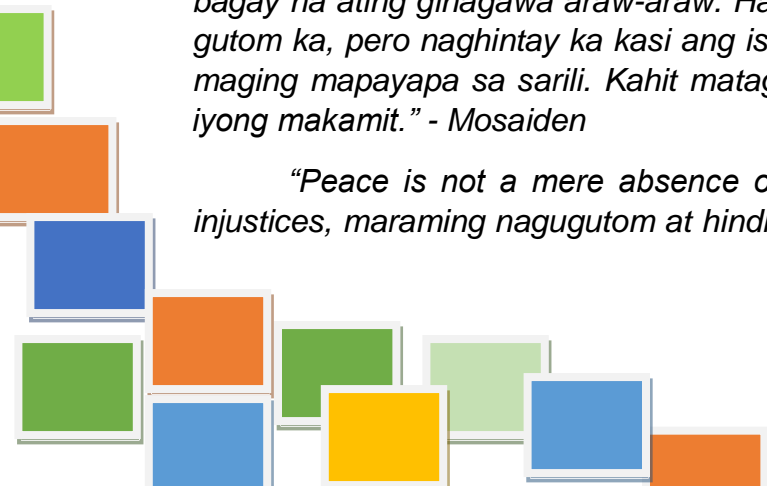
- It was the first time I encountered and understood the Mindanao History and other concepts of peace.
- There are complex contexts I have encountered in the community but these inputs provided me principles to understand and take perspectives in different lenses.
- Single story in my community is the first hand experience I have of prejudices and biases.
- One problem is not only a problem for it encompasses other conflicting problems in my community.

The facilitator asked the participants of their understanding on peace. Make a definition of peace based on their understanding. The facilitator guided the participants to write their ideas about peace. Then, they consolidated all the answers to form a definition of peace of the group. Here are some of their answers:

“Peace for me is small gift from god. Small gift but very important in our community. You can make peace begins to say sorry to those people make you hurt. And you can make peace to show or give your smile to everyone. Because peace is for everyone and need of everyone. Base on my encounter about peace is to see people or everyone in one community make unity and cooperation to each other. To help people needs help. And to being respectful and to being honest. And not all about peace is to be in place. It can make peace to yourself. To have patience and to still be calmed your heart and brain to anything.” – Bibol Maliga

“Peace is like a slow internet connection, dahil gaano man ito katagal, worth the wait naman. Ang peace kasi ay di lang patungkol sa giyera, pwede din ito sa mga bagay na ating ginagawa araw-araw. Halimbawa sa kakahintay mo ng order, gutom na gutom ka, pero naghintay ka kasi ang isipan mo darating din ito. At nasasanay tayo na maging mapayapa sa sarili. Kahit matagal man ito dahil matyaga ka nag hintay ito ay iyong makamit.” - Mosaiden

“Peace is not a mere absence of war, kasi if the community still experiencing injustices, maraming nagugutom at hindi nag cocooperate sa government, kahit tahimik



ang lugar, negative peace parin ito. Ang ating gusting mangyari ay magkaroon ng positive peace.” - Utto

The last chapter of the modules talked about the story of Nigerian-American novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie that encourages to listen to multiple perspectives to empower, repair and challenge us to reject the single story for a more accurate, multi-layered story entitled the “The danger of a single story”.



During the first workshop session of Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding project on Basics of Conflict and Context for Change on 07 December 2019 in BARMM-BRIDGE Conference Room, Bangsamoro Government Center, Cotabato City.



The resource speakers of the first workshop session of Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding project on Basics of Conflict and Context for Change on 07 December 2019 in BARMM-BRIDGE Conference Room, Bangsamoro Government Center, Cotabato City.

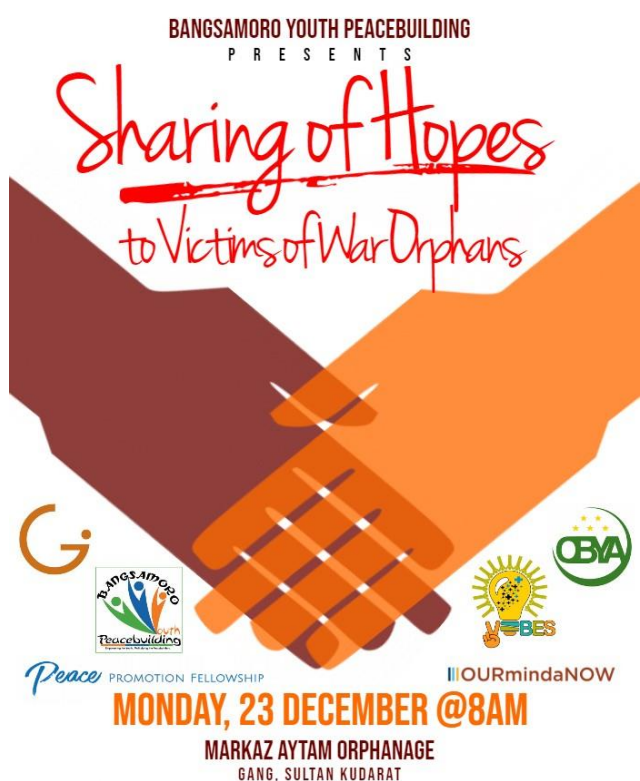


The youth participants of Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding project actively participates in the discussion during the first workshop session on 07 December in Cotabato City.



Sharing of Hopes to Young Orphans

Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilders gave fun-filled time of sharing, and games to young orphans of Markadz Al-Aytam ages 7-18 in their first immersion as BYP participants on 23 December 2019 in Gang, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. The orphans shared their experiences and appreciation to every game and activity. The young peacebuilders were given the opportunity to learn from their interactions and for leading in the group activities. They also extended shared how meaningful the activity during the post activity session emphasizing the fun and meaning experience with the orphans. It was indeed full of hopes where both the orphans and young peacebuilders learned from one another highlighting peace, love, respect, and understanding. The activity aimed to understand the context of privilege and oppression, gather narrative and stories of inspiration from the lives of the orphans and practice facilitation skills of the young peacebuilders.



The BYPs practiced their facilitation and leadership skills in leading the groups during the games and reflection sessions. The BYP distributed the snacks for all and the prizes for the winning teams during the games. Here are some of the reflections of the BYP participants:

“Nalamanko ang kwento ng mga batang ulila at ramdam ko ang saya na kami’y nakasama nila sa maikling panahon. Napakasayang makitaang mga ngiti sakabila ng malulungkot nilang kwento. Sa pagkakataong nakasalamuha naming sila, marami kaming nalaman na mahahalagang aral sa buhay bilang mga kabataan. Ito ang simula ng marami pang mgahakbang at kontibusyon na pwede ko pang magawa.”

“Masakit isipin na yung mga ibang bata doon ay walang tatay at nanay. May umabot na doon ng halos 5 hanggang 10 taon na nasa pangangalaga ng ampunan. Ramdam ko habang nakakasalamuha ko sila, na yong iba gusto parin nilang magkaroon ng magulang. Habang kinukwento nila ang kanilang pinagdadaanan, iniisip ko na maswerte parin ako kahit na minsan naramdaman ko na binabaliwala ako ng

aking mga magulang. Mahirap ang kanilang pinagdadaan kaysa sa akin, iyan ang napagtanto ko.”

After the activity, the team visited the dorms of the orphans and saw the situation of every resident in the institution. The team toured in all the available facilities and structures of the orphanage. This was to fully understand the context of the institution.

The activity was initiated under the peace promotion fellowship project of Equal Access International - Philippines in collaboration with Positive VIBES and Office on Bangsamoro Youth Affairs and supported by The Goldin Institute, an international government organization based in Chicago, USA.



The BYPs, volunteers and young orphans of Markaz Aytam orphanage take a photo opportunity at the end of the activity.



The young orphans and the BYPs are actively sharing and planning for the games of the day. All are excited to compete and win the games. The BYPs and volunteers ensure that after the games, they should process and share what they have learned.

Asset and Opportunity Mapping and Understanding Questions Workshop

BYP conducted its second workshop session on “Asset and Opportunity Mapping” and “Understanding Questions” in Casa Tomas Resort, Cusiong, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao on 04 January 2020. The session aimed to understand the principles of Asset Based Community Development, realize the shift from a deficit-mindset to an asset-based approach understand the basic principles of Appreciative Inquiry, identify what makes a strength-based question and learn how to ask questions that produce insight and motivate action, and practice through an exercise engaging questions and mapping and learn how to connect people and institutions through a community asset map,

In this session, the following resource speakers shared and discussed the modules in interactive approach:

- Hussien Abu
- Ronna Farida Buisan
- Ikkah Justine Gonzales
- Lo Ivan Castillon

In Asset and Opportunity Mapping, the participants appreciate the community asset and opportunities where they shared their ideas in the adage, “You can’t do very much with stuff you don’t have—you need to do what you can do with what you’ve got.” It was also highlighted the shifting from deficit-mindset to asset –based principles and sees the community as partner and not as client.

In this topic, the participants were introduced to the simple principle for building citizen- powered communities of Professor John Kretzman, “You can’t do very much with stuff you don’t have—you need to do what you can do with what you’ve got.”

After they drew and discussed with their team members, the participants presented their output in the plenary and shared what made their identified assets as assets and how these could be opportunities.

It was also emphasized that as peacebuilders, the need to work and maximize the available resources in our communities. During the sharing, the participants shared their thoughts on assets and opportunities in their respective communities. They also appreciate the things and systems in their communities where they can work with in their possible initiatives.

As facilitator, Ikkah Justine Gonzales said, “activities like these maximize one’s potential. It helps an individual go beyond the boundaries- applying knowledge that stands to improve managerial decision-making (leadership), providing opportunities for learning, and developing communication and collaborative skills (teamwork).”



In Understanding Questions, the participants discussed and shared their learning experiences on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry and how to ask questions that produce insight and motivate action.

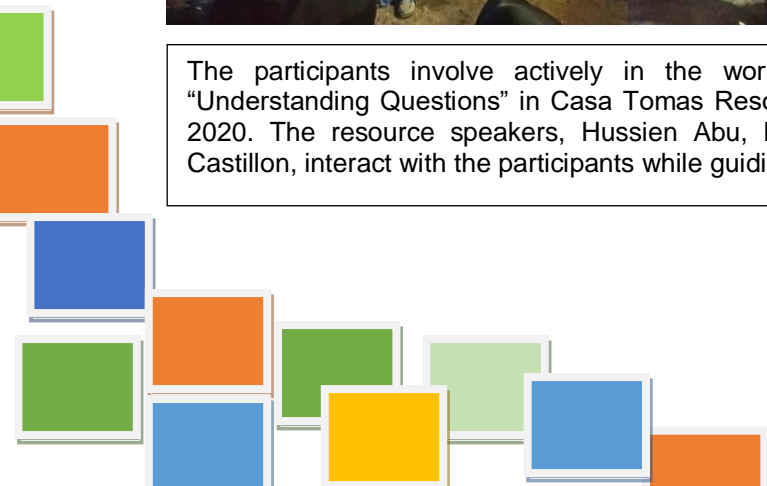
One facilitator also reflected that “it is a comprehensive process that requires time and creativity. The solutions and innovation that it may surface during the process are more sensible for these are crafted from experience and personal encounter. There is no single question that can capture everything. It needs many questions that do not directly answer the problem. Instead, it creates an environment to really understand the context, offer other options to take, and facilitate learning. The questions are design for a purpose of a participatory, interactive, strong sense of collaborative processes. Reflection captures the learnings and best principles of certain individual or community of people. It also adheres for a strong sense of ownership.”



BYP participants and VIBES volunteers take a pose after the second workshop session on “Asset and Opportunity Mapping” and “Understanding Questions” in Casa Tomas Resort, Cusiong, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao on 04 January 2020.



The participants involve actively in the workshop session on “Asset and Opportunity Mapping” and “Understanding Questions” in Casa Tomas Resort, Cusiong, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao on 04 January 2020. The resource speakers, Hussien Abu, Ronna Farida Buisan, Ikkah Justine Gonzales and Lo Ivan Castillon, interact with the participants while guiding them on the modules.



Tara sa Bahay Maria

For this immersion session of Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilders, they had the opportunity to visit Bahay Maria Foundation, the home for the aged, sick and abandoned, on 12 January 2020 in Cotabato City. More than 30 volunteers and BYPs participated the activity. The 29 residents of the institution together with the staff were also involved in the activities and sharing sessions of the visit. Primarily, the immersion session aimed to visit the elders and residents of the institution, listen and learn to the wisdom and stories of elders, and understand and practice service in the community.

Highlighted in the activity the short program organized by the young peacebuilders especially the entertaining number of the residents and group presentation of volunteers. The volunteers assisted in the preparation for the lunch of the elders. The short sharing session of the volunteers with the residents made the activity more meaningful. There were also a blood pressure check-up service and a provision of hygiene kit.

During the post conference session, the volunteers shared their realizations and learnings in the activity. "Being happy despite the kind of situation they have had, contentment is a key to one's happiness, our presence is a gift for them, and love transcends in all ages and knows no boundaries" are some of the realizations they shared in the session. Also, some of the learnings of the participants are appreciating little things of what we have, understanding the context of the institution, and learning from different stories of life, of hope and struggle.

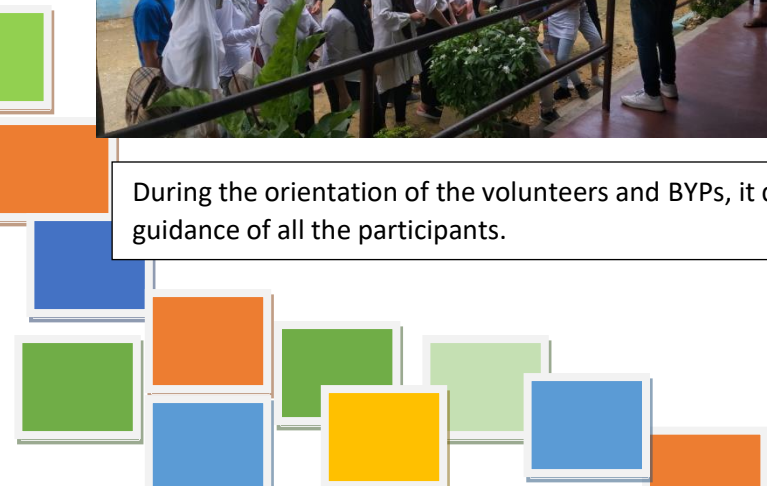




The BYPs, and volunteers during the conduct of immersion session in Bahay Maria Foundation, home for the aged, sick and abandon, in Cotabato City on 20 January 2020.



During the orientation of the volunteers and BYPs, it discusses the do's and dont's in the institution for the guidance of all the participants.





The BYPs and volunteers enjoy the every moment they have with the residents of Bahay Maria where stories and laughters are shared, games and presentations are full of fun and time and service are memorable.

The Bangsamoro Youth Peacebuilding (BYP) is a project initiated under Equal Access International-Philippines Peace Promotion Fellowship that intends to capacitate and empower the 20 youth leaders from orphanages, schools, and youth organizations both church based youth organizations and from IP communities to become peacebuilders. This project is in collaboration with Office of the Bangsamoro Youth Affairs (OBYA), The Goldin Institute, and Volunteers Initiatives in Bridging and Empowering Society (VIBES). It covers Cotabato City, Maguindanao and North Cotabato. The primary community issue of this intervention is the state that the youth are easily ignored after conflict, used and treated as problems of the community and vulnerable to violence, recruitment into armed groups. It has the following objectives:

- Capacitate the Bangsamoro Youth of the necessary knowledge and skills on peacebuilding and in taking peace initiatives in their respective communities
- Utilize social media for advocacies, positive and interactive information platform and peace promoting activities
- Establish conversation session among Bangsamoro Youth Fellows for sharing and learning exchange
- Explore and learn actual situations of the communities through field visits
- Initiate peace promoting activities in the respective communities of the Bangsamoro Youth

This is our greatest dream for the Bangsamoro youth. This is how we want to work for our fellow youth. This is how we dedicate and commit our advocacy for the Bangsamoro youth. Empowering the youth, multiplying the peacebuilders.

As to this on-going implementation of the project, it reached 20 youth peacebuilders, 12 youth mentors, 220 victims of war orphans, 29 residents of the home for the aged, sick and abandon, and 21 volunteers involved in all activities. To support our project for the youth in the Bangsamoro, you can:

- Volunteer as mentor, resource person, facilitator or support workforce
- Donate cash, food or kits for the youth participants
- Donate cash, food or kits for the orphans, IP children, elderly and PWD institutions during the immersion session
- Sponsor a potential youth leader for Php 2,650.00
- Visit, like and share our Facebook Page

For details, you visit us in our facebook page or email us in the following details.

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/bangsamoroyouthpeacebuilding/>

Email Address: bangsamoroyouthpeacebuilding@gmail.com

