



20 Annual 25 Peacebuilding Training Report

Bridging Theory and Practice:
Transformative Approaches
to Peacebuilding



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MPI 2025 Annual Peacebuilding Training Report

Bridging Theory and Practice:

Transformative Approaches to Peacebuilding

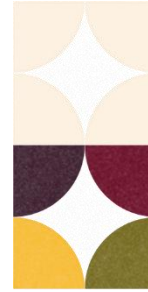
As we mark a significant milestone—**25 years of the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI)**—we continue to uphold MPI’s commitment to nurturing sacred and safe spaces, honoring the value of shared responsibility, and fostering united, collaborative efforts among a diverse global community of peacebuilders.

This year’s training brought together 143 peacebuilders, guided by 12 seasoned facilitators, supported by 15 dedicated secretariat volunteers, and the committed MPI staff, all representing 15 countries. An addition to our ever-growing MPI global community, MPI now spans over 65 countries—a testament to our collective journey and impact.

Embodying our mission, we launched eight new transformative courses, each co-facilitated by dynamic new duos. They worked alongside our participants and volunteers, who embraced fresh perspectives, cultivated deeper connections, and reaffirmed our shared purpose.

Together, we continue to bridge theory and action, transforming learning into lived practice and solidarity into sustainable change.

Let's take a glimpse into the *eight new courses!*



The **Education for Peace (EP)** course was led by two of MPI's esteemed mentors and long-time peacebuilding practitioners, **Jonathan “Jon” E. Rudy** and **Maria Ida “Deng” Giguiento**. Both are recognized as pillars of the peacebuilding field and have contributed significantly to the growth of MPI for 25 years.

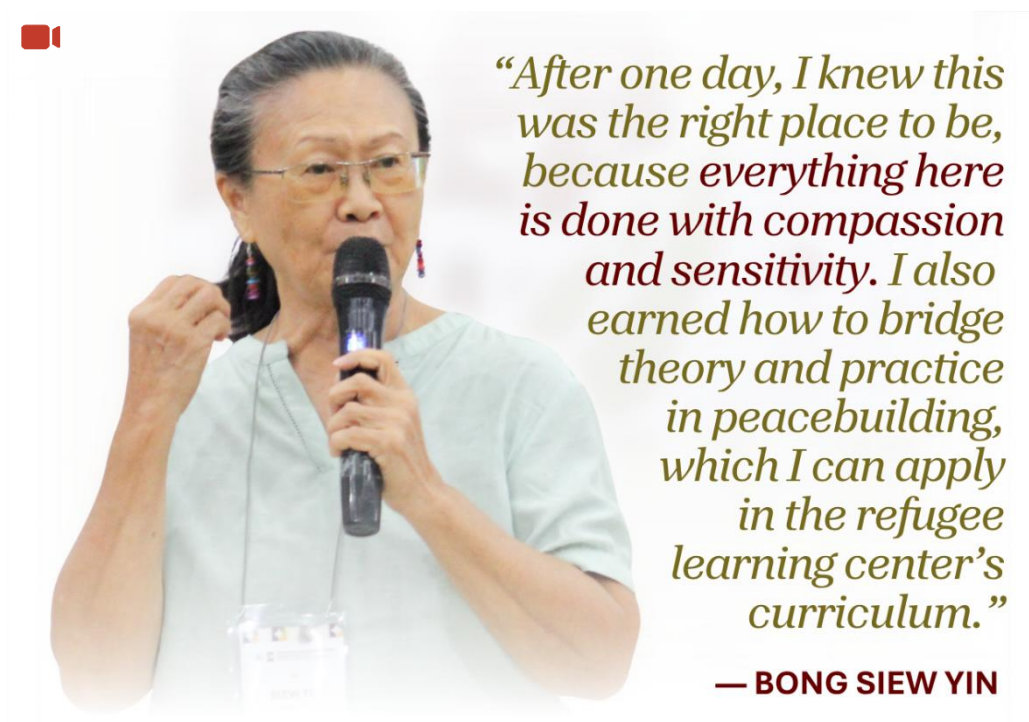
This course provided participants with a deep understanding of how education can serve as a transformative force in promoting a culture of peace. Jon and Deng guided the group through an engaging and participatory learning journey that examined education, not just as a method of instruction, but also as a tool for social transformation, healing, and community empowerment.



Participants explored key concepts and approaches in peace education, learning how educational strategies can be used to foster values of justice, empathy, and nonviolence. They were introduced to a variety of tools and resources that can support communities in building more peaceful and just societies. Through interactive discussions, case

studies, and reflective and collaborative activities, the facilitators demonstrated how peace education can be contextualized and applied across different age groups, regions, and cultural settings.

A central component of the course involved participants designing their own age-appropriate and context-specific peace education plans. This practical exercise allowed them to apply the knowledge and skills they gained in ways that would be relevant to their communities and fields of work. These presentations showcased creative, thoughtful, and locally grounded approaches to peace education, integrating the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the participants from various countries.



The course was marked by an inclusive, reflective, and dynamic atmosphere, where complex theories were made accessible through storytelling, group activities, and meaningful dialogue. The facilitators wove academic knowledge with real-life application, making the sessions engaging and impactful. Participants remained active and involved throughout the course, contributing their insights and co-creating a rich learning environment.

During their closing ritual, the participants shared how the EP course left them with a renewed appreciation for the role of both formal and informal education in peacebuilding, along with plans to implement what they had learned in their contexts. The Education for Peace course not only deepened theoretical understanding but also empowered participants with practical tools to become more effective educators, practitioners, and advocates for peace.



The **Fundamentals of Conflict Sensitivity and Transformation (FCST)** course was facilitated by two of MPI's dedicated and expert peacebuilders—seasoned peacebuilding practitioner Michael Frank “Mike” Alar and long-time collaborator of MPI, Marides “Madett” Gardiola.

This foundational course introduced key concepts of conflict, violence, and peace, beginning with the participants' cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. These personal narratives were then examined alongside established theoretical frameworks. The course explored the fundamentals of conflict sensitivity, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding as essential lenses for understanding and addressing complex social conflict dynamics.



Through this course, participants developed foundational skills in conflict analysis while learning from each other's diverse contexts. They were encouraged to reflect deeply on their existing work, uncovering peacebuilding elements they may not have previously recognized. This process empowered them to rethink and redesign their interventions through a more intentional, conflict-sensitive, and transformative approach.

FCST was highly participatory and utilized dynamic methodologies such as group discussions, simulations, role-plays, games, creative arts, and interactive lectures. These methods not only enriched the learning experience but also fostered a collaborative environment where meaningful insights and connections could emerge.

“...I was able to see conflict through a different lens and learn how it may either be an opportunity to connect people or divide the community. I am very thankful that we had safe spaces where we were able to share our struggles and be heard.”

— **RAISSA MARFA**



This course was always filled with laughter, fun, and creative activities, and the thoughtful engagement in answering difficult questions regarding conflict and its conflict-sensitive solutions. If you want to experience it for yourself, you are invited to the 2026 Annual Peacebuilding Training.



The **Strategic Peacebuilding (SPB)** course was facilitated by **Jeremy Simons** and **Charmaine Baconga**—a fresh pairing, deeply rooted in the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI). Jeremy was one of MPI’s team members in the initial phase of the Resource-based Conflict and Peacebuilding Training Program. While Charmaine is a first-time MPI facilitator for the Annual Peacebuilding Training, she previously served as an intern facilitator in MPI’s field-based courses and has extensive experience collaborating and facilitating local peacebuilding trainings with other organizations and CSOs engaged in grassroots peace and development efforts across Mindanao.

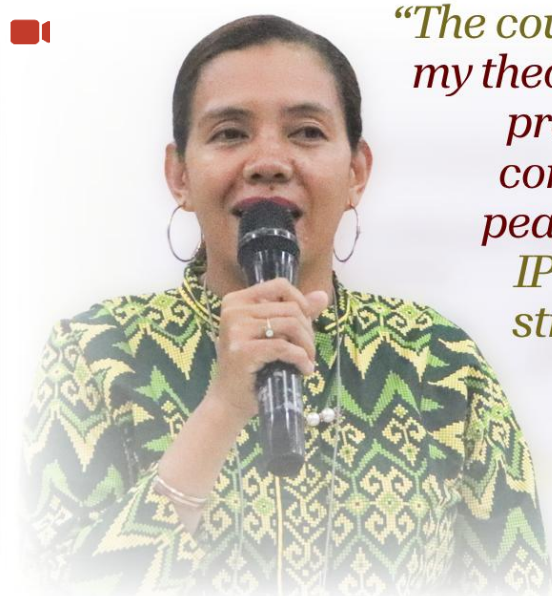
This course offered a deep dive into the historical and current causes of conflict and violence. Participants were introduced to key concepts and frameworks in strategic peacebuilding, acquiring essential skills to analyze, navigate, and transform complex conflicts in today’s fast-changing world.

The course highlighted the foundational values and principles of strategic peacebuilding, particularly focusing on assessing both "horizontal" (community-level) and "vertical" (institutional and policy-level) capacities. These frameworks support sustainable

conflict transformation and reconciliation that respond to both systemic and grassroots needs. Participants were also guided in crafting their context-specific frameworks, allowing them to apply these insights directly within their organizations and communities.

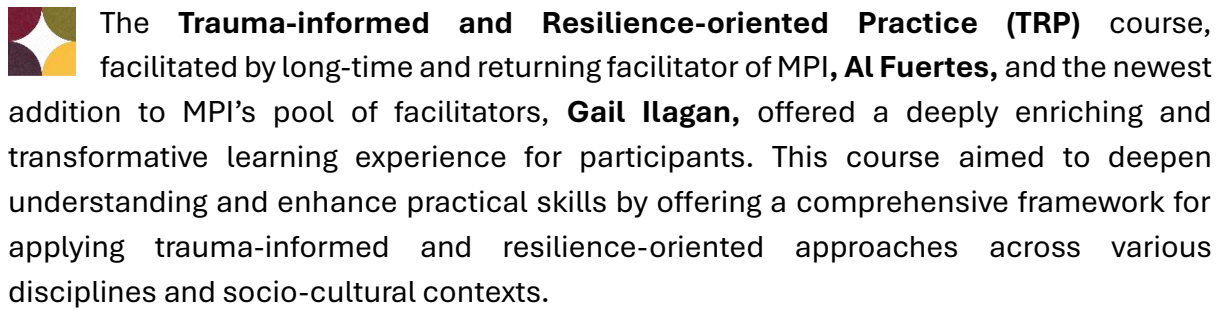


One of the most challenging yet powerful parts of the course involved revisiting historical conflicts across different regions and exploring actionable solutions through reflective discussions and strategic frameworks. What truly stood out was the upholding of a sacred, safe space—an environment where open, respectful, and transformative conversations unfolded. There was a strong sense of trust and dialogue that was both present and inspiring.



“The course has strengthened both my theoretical understanding and practical capacity to address conflict and build sustainable peace in my community. As an IP [Indigenous People], I saw strong parallels between this global peacebuilding principle and values that guide our own conflict resolution practices...”

— HELEN MAE BETITO



Throughout the course, participants explored the principles and application of trauma-informed care, an approach that recognizes the profound and lasting effects of violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences on individuals and communities. Participants were guided in understanding how trauma manifests in behavior, relationships, and systems, and how such awareness can lead to the design of more compassionate, responsive, and effective services and policies.

A key focus of the course was to equip participants with the tools to create and implement systems that are not only trauma-informed but also resilience-oriented. This involved recognizing and strengthening the multiple factors—psychosocial, cultural, spiritual, and structural that contribute to both individual and collective resilience. Participants were encouraged to apply these insights in real-life settings, paying particular attention to the needs of trauma survivors and the long-term processes of healing and recovery.

The course also tackled complex and sensitive issues related to the psychosocial well-being of individuals, communities, and institutions of authority. Discussions were held in intentionally created safe and sacred spaces, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment where participants could share, reflect, and learn from one another.

“MPI gave us goals, lessons learned, and trained us to become peacebuilders. But most importantly, they taught us to make sure that we ourselves are healed from our own traumas as we serve others as well..”

— SREYHUON SUNG



The TRP course served not only as a learning course but also as a healing journey, supporting the transformation of the mind, body, and heart in ways that contributed to the spirit and practice of peacebuilding. It emphasized the importance of empathy, cultural sensitivity, and systemic awareness in addressing trauma and promoting sustainable peace.

In the second week of the training, from May 26-30, 2025, the following courses were offered in the MPI 2025 Annual Peacebuilding Training:



The **Climate Justice: A Peacebuilding Approach (CJ)** course facilitated critical conversations, shared lived experiences, and encouraged transformative learning led by long-time MPI facilitator **Jeremy Simons** and returning co-facilitator **May Che Capili**. Their combined expertise and deep commitment to participatory and grounded methodologies created a powerful learning experience that was both intellectually rigorous and emotionally resonant.

Together with a diverse group of peacebuilders from across the globe, the facilitators led an in-depth exploration of the intersections between climate justice, peacebuilding, and systems of violence. Through interactive discussions, reflective practices, and contextual case studies, the participants unpacked the complex and often overlooked relationships between ecological degradation, climate injustice, and structural forms of violence.

The course equipped participants with tools to examine and respond to socio-ecological challenges in their contexts. The course aimed not only to build knowledge, but to also nurture the capacity of participants to sustain, restore, and regenerate the relationships between people and their environment. Through hands-on learning and collaborative group work, participants analyzed and tackled real-world issues and collaboratively developed strategic approaches to map and transform these challenges.

Key themes included environmental peacebuilding, community-based renewable energy, climate and carbon justice, restorative compensation, and the connections between climate and public health, with a strong emphasis on experiences and innovations across Asia and the Pacific. What made this course particularly moving was its integration of theory, practice, creativity, and personal engagement. The facilitators created a safe and inspiring learning space where participants were not only learners but also co-creators of knowledge and community.



One of the highlights was the field visits to communities in Sta. Cruz and Toril in Davao City, which grounded the discussions in real-life contexts and deepened each participant's understanding of the stakes and the hopes of environmental peacebuilding.

At its core, *Climate Justice: A Peacebuilding Approach* challenged participants to reimagine peace not just as the absence of war, but as a regenerative relationship between people, planet, and power. The course affirmed that climate justice is not only an environmental concern, but also a justice and peace issue—one that demands collective action, courage, and compassion.

This course continues to plant the seed of transformation, resilience, and hope in the hearts of those who will go on to build peace, not only among people, but with the earth itself.



WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE BECAUSE SOMETHING WORKED.” – MARSHALL GOLDSMITH.



“As Jeremy shared this quote, this reminds us why, across countries, we are here in MPI—to carry that in our hearts as we rebuild where peacebuilding and climate justice are interconnected.”

— PABITRA PARAMANYA



The **Designing Peace Programs (DPP)** course, facilitated by MPI’s seasoned peacebuilding practitioner **Jonathan “Jon” Rudy**, together with returning facilitator **Twinkle “Tala” Bautista**, created a thoughtful and engaging learning environment for both emerging and experienced peacebuilders.

Designing a peacebuilding program is a complex yet deeply meaningful process. Whether developing violence prevention initiatives, fostering inter-religious dialogue, creating restorative justice mechanisms, or integrating a culture of peace into educational curricula, the principles of program design share common ground. This course provided participants with foundational concepts, practical skills, and context-sensitive approaches essential to effective peace program development.

Like gardeners who prepare the soil, plant with care, and monitor the growth, peacebuilders must also plan, nurture, and evaluate their initiatives. This course guided participants through every step, from envisioning a program to developing its final evaluation plan. By the end of the course, each participant had crafted a program design rooted in the realities of their context and shaped by the insights shared throughout the course.

Participants’ reflections were evident during the creative exercise, where they created dioramas, miniature models visualizing their dream communities that integrated environmental stewardship and visions for a peaceful, inclusive future. These tangible

representations were not only imaginative but also deeply grounded in the participants' realities and aspirations. Below are the stories and insights from each group's diorama:



- **Diorama 1: *Community of Hope***
This diorama depicted a remote community with limited access to social services. It highlighted the potential for transformation through good governance and responsive leadership. The scene illustrated how livelihood, public institutions, and social harmony can thrive even in far-flung areas when guided by inclusive and visionary leadership.
- **Diorama 2: *Healing Through Dialogue***
This model represented people affected by misunderstanding, conflict, and differing views and perspectives. It envisioned a space for storytelling and trauma healing. It portrayed a journey of growth over time. The diorama affirmed that while conflict is natural, peace is possible when communities come together with openness and empathy.
- **Diorama 3: *The Nest of Peace—A Vision for BARMM***
Inspired by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), this diorama showcased diverse stakeholders—Moros, Indigenous Peoples, settlers, and the rest of the diverse groups that are working together toward shared peace. The nest symbolized care and collective responsibility, with “eggs of peace” representing fragile but hopeful processes nurtured by the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. The recent BARMM elections on May 12, 2025, were likened to a bird taking flight from the nest, symbolizing ongoing peace in motion.

- **Diorama 4: *Weaving Harmony in Conflict-affected Communities***

This diorama included former rebels, youth, students, civil society actors, institutions, and even animals, capturing the interconnectedness of all stakeholders. It depicted a vision of a harmonious community in the aftermath of conflict, underscoring the need for inclusive dialogue and sustained trust-building across generations and sectors.

- **Diorama 5: *Guns to Gardens—A Global Transformation***

This bold and symbolic diorama spoke to the global nature of conflict and the universal potential for peace. A gun was transformed into a bouquet, representing how violence can be turned into opportunity and beauty through community-led efforts. It served as a powerful reminder that while conflict is everywhere, so is the potential for peace.



Another compelling and transformative element of the course was the emphasis on deep listening, not only as a skill but also as a value to embody. Before any meaningful design can take place, one must truly listen to the community, stakeholders, and context. This principle resonated strongly throughout the course, particularly in its synergy with the *Climate Justice: A Peacebuilding Approach* course, where cross-learning between participants enriched both groups.


Initially, this focus on listening led to moments of tension and discomfort, as participants were invited to slow down and engage more intentionally. However, as the course progressed, it became clear that this approach was not only necessary but also transformative. It reminded everyone that *the essence of peacebuilding begins not with action, but with presence, humility, and a willingness to listen.*

Ultimately, *Designing Peace Programs* did more than teach how to design a peacebuilding program; it reminded all the participants that the heart of peacebuilding lies in relationships, reflection, and being rooted in the communities we serve.

“But despite our differences in culture, ways, and ideas of doing things, we were all bonded by one common passion, and that is peace.”

— HELEN VAVIA



 The **Peace Games (PG)** course was facilitated by MPI’s newest duo, **Oliver Wiechmann**, a seasoned crisis simulation for peace facilitator from Germany, and **Gimaidee Ann “Mai” Moya**, who serves as the Director of the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute. Over the five days, participants were introduced to the innovative method of using *simulation games* for conflict transformation.

Through hands-on engagement in a complete simulation game, they not only experienced the dynamics of conflict scenarios but also developed a deeper appreciation for the power of interactive learning. The process helped participants learn essential facilitation techniques and demonstrated how simulation games can serve as an effective tool for analyzing, reflecting upon, and responding to real-life conflicts.

A unique feature of the course was the collaborative creation of simulation game scenarios. Participants worked together to design their own simulations, integrating their insights, experiences, and creativity to ensure the simulation was relevant to the realities in their communities.

The course drew a vibrant and youthful group of participants, who brought fresh perspectives and dynamic energy into the learning space. Many expressed that the experience opened their eyes to new possibilities and engagement, especially in working with other young people.



Ultimately, this course not only enhanced participants' technical skills, but also strengthened their confidence to use creative approaches in their peacebuilding work, making the learning both meaningful and impactful.

“We were challenged to practice empathy—to place ourselves in someone’s shoes and understand the depths of their struggles and perspectives. It was no longer about winning or completing a task, but internalizing, and reflecting.”

— ASHLEY CONGRESO






The **Praxis of Forgiveness and Reconciliation Amidst Polarization (PFRP)**

course, facilitated by one of the returning facilitators of MPI in its early years, **Al Fuertes**, together with a long-time, seasoned, and considered pillar of peacebuilding, **Maria Ida “Deng” Giguiento**, provided a space for deep reflection and learning, especially for those engaged in peacebuilding in communities affected by long-term conflict, violence, and trauma. In contexts where relationships are fractured and cultural systems disrupted, the path to healing is rarely straightforward. The course acknowledged and recognized both the complexity and the necessity of exploring forgiveness and reconciliation in ways that are sensitive to context, culture, and lived experience.



Participants examined critical and nuanced questions, one of which was: How can forgiveness be an approach amid ongoing harm? The course also explored the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation, including contexts and realities where reconciliation occurs without forgiveness and vice versa. Additionally, participants delved into the psychological, cultural, spiritual, and political dimensions of these processes, helping others find their own understanding of forgiveness in the realm of politics and collective memory.

This interdisciplinary course encouraged participants to engage with diverse perspectives and lived realities. It drew on insights from peacebuilding, psychology, theology, philosophy, and political science to foster a holistic and contextual understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation. Participants tested theories and deconstructed assumptions about forgiveness and reconciliation, viewing them not just as tools but as real-life human experiences that each peacebuilder encounters.



“We have been going through reconciliation for more than 10 years. It’s tiring for most of us and doesn’t make sense, but today, I got new hope for my people. I’m going back home with a message of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation.”

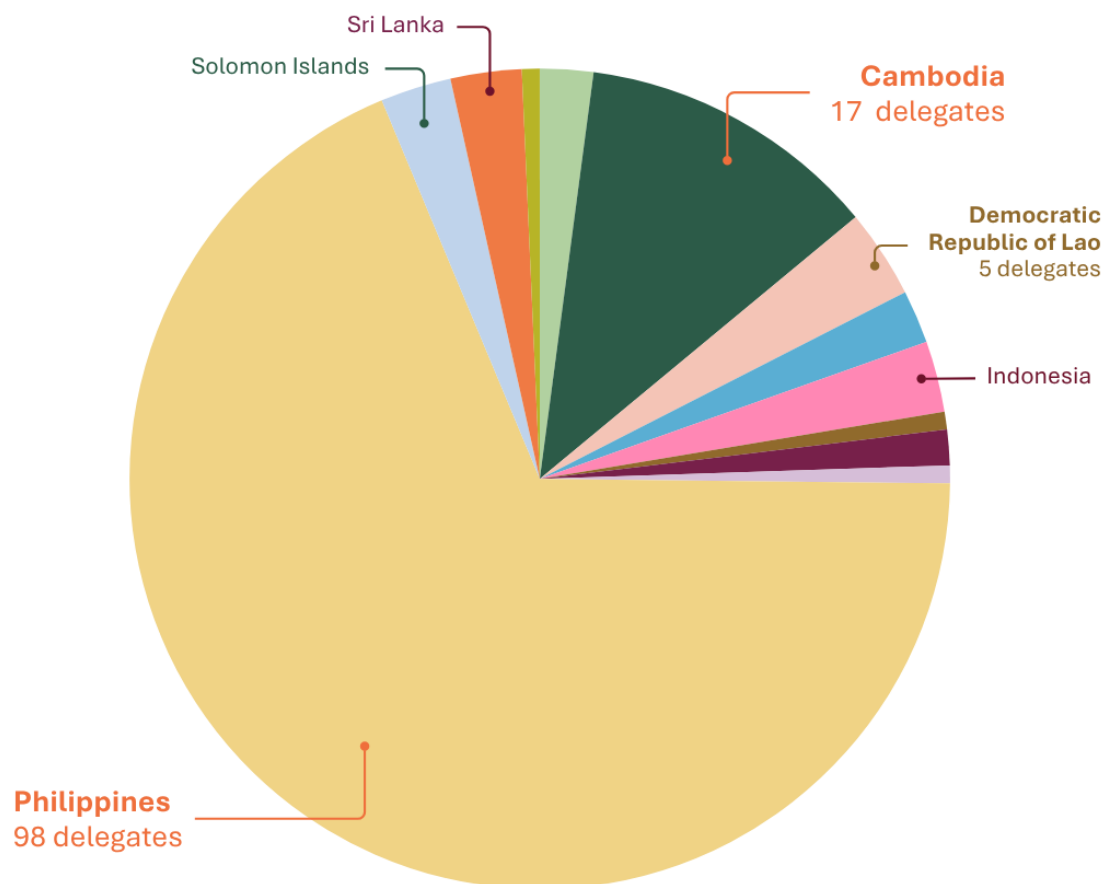
— K E L U N D A N G












An example of this transformative journey was the panel presentation entitled, **The Journey to Forgiveness & Reconciliation: A Panel Presentation on the 1994 Rwanda Mass Genocide**, which was shown in the class. This session offered a profound reflection on Rwanda’s healing journey following the 1994 genocide.

Featuring a Rwandan group of individuals based in Rwanda, the panelists explored the difficult but transformative process of forgiveness and reconciliation. They shared how, despite immense pain and trauma, many Rwandans made a conscious choice to forgive and rebuild their communities. Their testimonies accentuated the critical role of faith, collective action, and a shared commitment to peace in overcoming deep divisions.

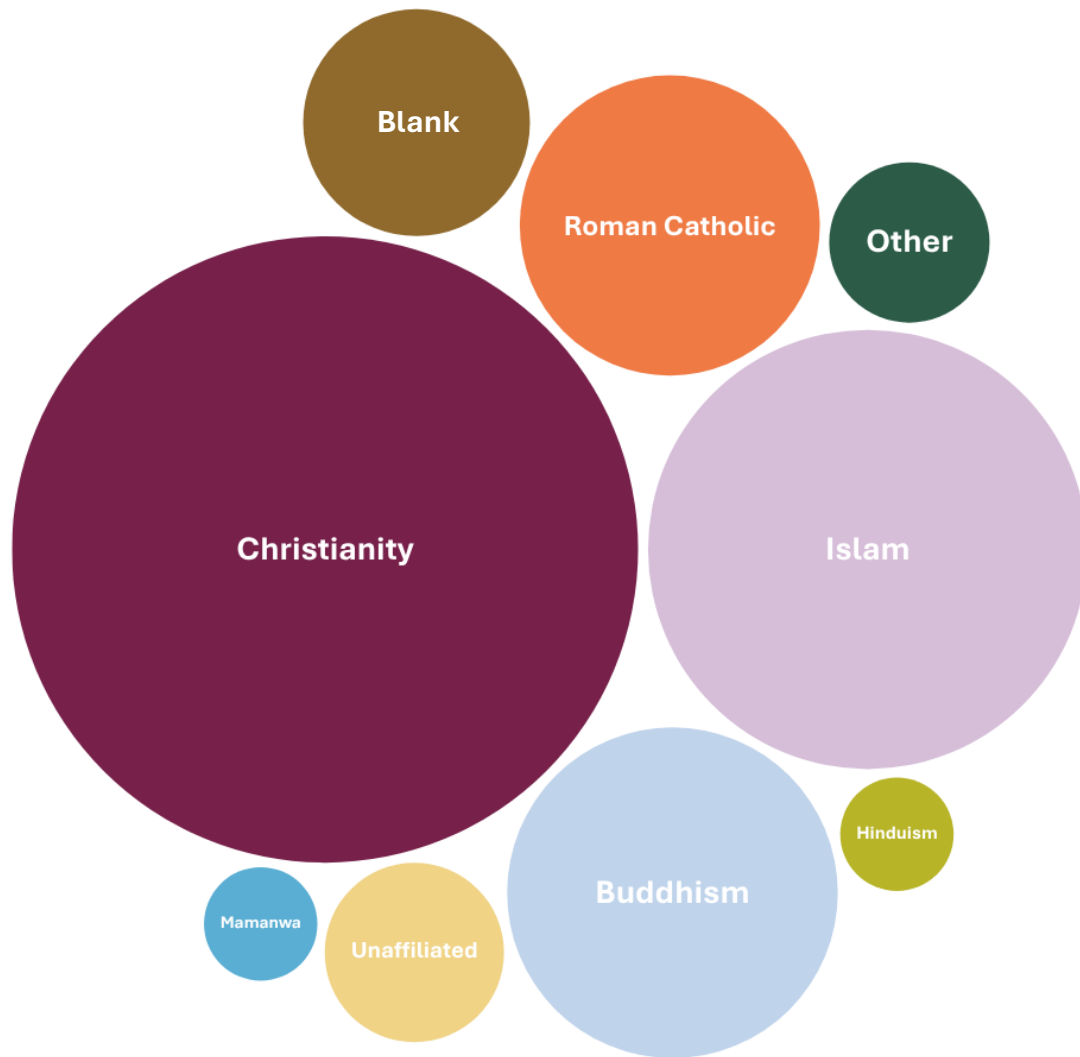
The panelists spoke candidly about the personal liberation that accompanied forgiveness—how letting go of anger and resentment enabled them to live side by side with former perpetrators, even within the same village. Their stories served as a powerful reminder that peace is not only possible—it is a choice. As stated, *“There is no way to peace; peace is the only way.”*

Data Disaggregated by **C**ountry of Participants



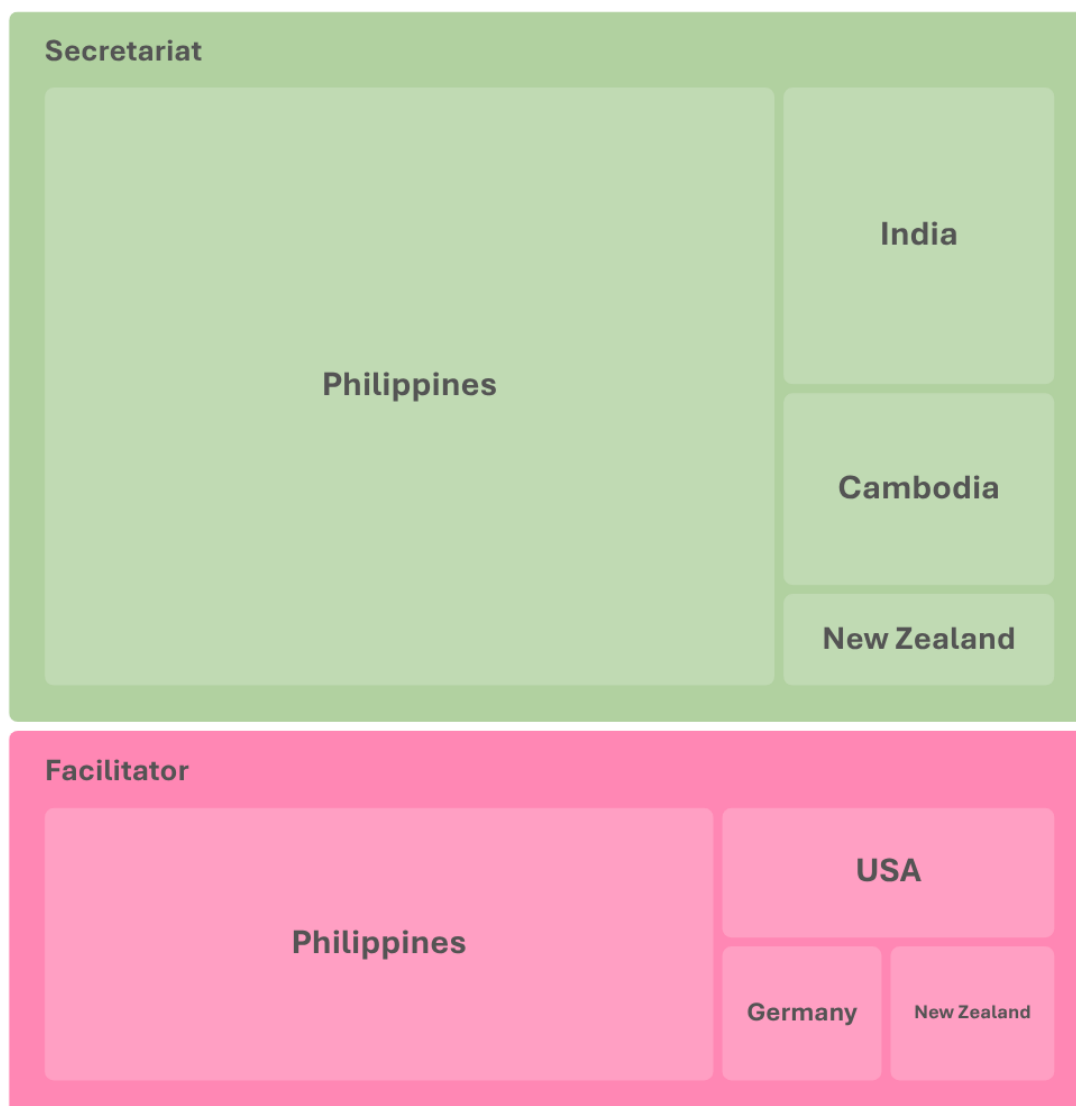
Countries	Male	Female	Non-binary	Total
 Bangladesh	2	1		3
 Cambodia	9	8		17
 Democratic Republic of Lao	5			5
 India	3			3
 Indonesia	3	1		4
 Italy	1			1
 Nepal		2		2
 Papua New Guinea		1		1
 Philippines	40	54	4	98
 Solomon Islands	3	1		4
 Sri Lanka		4		4
 USA	1			1
Total	67	72	4	143

Data Disaggregated by Religious Affiliation of Participants



Religion	Male	Female	Non-binary	Total
Blank	4	4		8
Buddhism	9	8		17
Christianity	36	37	2	73
Hinduism	1	1		2
Islam	11	17	2	30
Magbabaja/Mamanwa	1	1		2
Other	2	2		4
Unaffiliated	3	2		5
Total	67	72	4	143

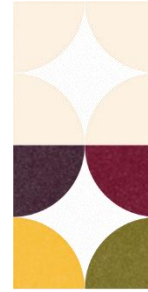
Data Disaggregated by **Countr**y of Facilitators & Secretariat



Role	Countries	Male	Female	Total
Facilitator	Germany	1		1
	Philippines	1	7	8
	USA	2		2
	New Zealand	1		1
Secretariat	Cambodia	1		1
	India	1	2	3
	New Zealand		1	1
	Philippines	3	7	10
Total		10	17	27

MPI 2025

Special Events!



OPENING CEREMONIES

At the beginning of Week 1 and Week 2, participants, facilitators, and the MPI 2025 secretariat team assembled in the plenary hall for the official opening of the MPI 2025 Annual Peacebuilding Training. After the preliminaries, everyone present was invited to participate in the Parade of Nations, an MPI tradition that dates to its first decade. During this beautiful display of cultural diversity, the participants, grouped according to their national identity and wearing their native dress, proudly walked down the aisle, to the accompaniment of music and with the assistance of the Madayaw Cultural Ensemble, to the front of the hall, which ended with the Week 1 and Week 2 MPI 2025 group photo.



After the Parade of Nations, the facilitators of the courses for Week 1 and Week 2 were formally introduced, followed by the Inspirational Messages delivered by two of MPI's

distinguished facilitators. As a backdrop to these Opening Ceremonies, but a dynamic component, was the Madayaw Cultural Ensemble that added vibrancy and color to this gathering and provided everyone the opportunity to see the richness of Philippine culture through traditional dances that reflect the country's diverse heritage and artistic spirit.

In Week 1, the Madayaw Cultural Ensemble performed a series of traditional dances from the Maguindanaon people, whose name means “people of the flood plain.” They primarily reside in the fertile Pulangi River valley and delta in Mindanao, regions that occasionally experience flooding. The Pulangi River, which originates from the mountains of the Pantaron range sustained and nourished by the Liguasan Marsh and Lake Buluan in south-central Mindanao.



In Week 1, the ensemble opened with *Sagayan*, a ceremonial dance symbolizing nobility, gallantry, and honor. It portrayed fierce warriors wielding intricately painted shields and double-bladed swords, reflecting the warrior heritage of the Maguindanaon people. This was followed by *Silong sa Ganding*, a highly disciplined and physically demanding dance traditionally performed in royal courts, showcasing elegance, precision, and control.

The final performance during the Week 1 Opening Ceremony was *Pawakan*, a lively and theatrical dance that imitated a cockfight. Male and female dancers embodied the movements of roosters, engaging in mock combat until one individual or group emerged victorious. Through these performances, the Madayaw Ensemble highlighted the richness, discipline, and symbolic storytelling embedded in Maguindanaon dance traditions.

In Week 2, the Madayaw Cultural Ensemble presented the rich cultural heritage of the Sama people through two traditional dances: the Tauti and Igal. The Sama people are a diverse indigenous group found throughout Mindanao, with large populations in the Sulu Archipelago, Tawi-Tawi, and Samal Island in the Davao Gulf.



Tauti is an occupational dance from Tawi-Tawi that portrays the solitary efforts of a fisherman catching catfish. Performed solo, it reflected the patience, skill, and perseverance required in traditional fishing practices. Following this, the Igal dance was performed—a graceful and expressive dance form that holds deep cultural significance among the Sama Dilaut, or "Sama of the Sea." Known for their close connection to the ocean, the Sama Dilaut are a subgroup of the Sama-Bajau people, often referred to as "Sea Gypsies" in Southeast Asia.

The Igal dance, characterized by fluid hand gestures and gentle, flowing movements, is traditionally performed during important rituals and celebrations such as weddings. It shares similarities with Pangalay in the Tausug tradition and Pamansak in the Yakan culture, both of which also mean "dance." These performances beautifully highlighted the storytelling traditions and cultural identity of the Sama people, giving the MPI 2025 participants a taste of the abundance of cultural diversity in Mindanao.

INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGES

As part of the Opening Ceremonies of the MPI 2025 Annual Peacebuilding Training in Week 1 and Week 2, two of MPI's esteemed facilitators offered their inspirational messages to all assembled in the plenary hall. These moments set a reflective tone and created an energizing spirit for the weeks of learning.

In Week 1, **Michael Frank “Mike” Alar** shared a moving message that resonated with participants from around the world. He emphasized the importance of connection and the transformative power of storytelling in peacebuilding.



Mike encouraged everyone to be open in sharing their personal stories and experiences, reminding us not to be afraid. At the same time, he highlighted the importance of creating intentional spaces for others to share their narratives, believing deeply in the collective wisdom that arises when voices are heard. **Mike reminded us that as we strive to inspire others, we must also remain open to being inspired in return, especially by the stories of fellow peacebuilders.** Through this, he highlighted storytelling as a vital bridge toward nurturing and empowering the next generation of peacebuilders.

In Week 2, **Al Fuertes** offered a powerful reflection that invited the participants to look inward and apply this outwardly as a peacebuilder.

Al urged peacebuilders to revisit and hold on to the core values and reasons that initially called them to the path of peacebuilding. His message emphasized the ongoing need to sustain conversations, create safe spaces for dialogue, and continue exchanging stories, ideas, and peace actions. **Al called on all of us to respond to the cries for social transformation with a commitment to nonviolence, collective wisdom, and peaceful engagement.** His words served as a compelling reminder of the depth and discipline required in the journey of building peace.



Together, these inspirational messages laid a strong foundation for the two-week intensive training, reminding all of us of the power of connection, reflection, and shared purpose in the work of peacebuilding.

OPEN SESSIONS

The Open Sessions have been an integral part of the Annual Peacebuilding Training, which welcomes all participants and alumni who wish to share their work with fellow global peacebuilders. This year, we were honored to include Let the Paper Clips Speak!—a 60-minute creative activity held over two Tuesdays during the training.

This session was a quiet, reflective opportunity designed to help participants explore conflict from a personal and creative perspective. Facilitated by Nicola Alice Hens of GIZ-CPS Philippines, the session was held weekly at Chrysanthemum Hall and was open to all MPI 2025 participants, alumni, and guests.

The activity offered a unique, non-verbal approach to conflict reflection—one that goes beyond traditional analysis and encourages participants to access personal insight through storyboarding.

Participants used everyday materials, such as paper clips, markers, and yarn, to visually map out a conflict scenario. This included



identifying roles, recognizing unmet needs, and tracing the turning points of the conflict. The activity was intentionally designed to be non-threatening and accessible—no artistic skills were required, and sharing was entirely optional.

“Let the Paper Clips Speak” provided participants a meaningful opportunity to pause, reflect, and reframe their understanding of conflict. By engaging with creative expression, many found new perspectives on old narratives, without the need for words. The session’s accessible format, gentle facilitation, and open structure made it a welcome space for quiet transformation within the MPI 2025 Open Session experience.

ALUMNI NIGHT AND ORIENTATION

During Weeks 1 and 2, MPI dedicated time and space to an Alumni Night and Orientation held in conjunction with the Open Sessions. This provided a meaningful opportunity for both current participants and returning alumni to deepen their understanding of MPI’s ongoing initiatives and to see how they can continue to be engaged with MPI.

The Orientation highlighted various ways alumni can remain actively involved with MPI. Alumni can contribute written reflections or articles, serve as facilitators when they meet the necessary qualifications, organize regional alumni gatherings, serve as a secretariat volunteer, or be part of MPI's customized courses, and more. Through these opportunities, alumni can continue to play a vital role in advancing MPI's mission of peacebuilding and social transformation across the globe.

This year, MPI was honored to welcome Mr. Paul Lee, a participant who is also a member of the Steering Committee of the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI)—MPI's sister institute in South Korea. Mr. Lee shared his personal journey into peacebuilding,



shaped by his unique identity as a Korean living in the United States. His deep longing for peace led him to discover NARPI's website, where he began engaging with its online platforms and youth-led gatherings and programs. His involvement grew steadily, and in 2024, he contributed as a facilitator at the NARPI Summer Peacebuilding Training, actively sharing his insights and experiences with fellow peacebuilders.

To know more about NARPI, visit their [website](#).

CLOSING CEREMONIES

The Closing Ceremonies of Weeks 1 and 2 were filled with vibrant and creative performances as each class presented the key lessons and insights gained from the eight new transformative courses. These presentations not only exhibited what the participants learned but also symbolized the growth, resilience, and creativity nurtured throughout the training.

Testimonials were offered by the participants from each class, sharing what they learned and how they were changed by this experience, and what they will be remembered for as they return to their home location. Participants also shared their talents and their culture, singing favorite songs, performing traditional dances, and celebrating the solidarity felt by all.

More than just a celebration, the closings also served as a heartfelt tribute to the many individuals who worked tirelessly behind the scenes. It was a moment to honor the Facilitators and Secretariat Team for their contributions, while also acknowledging the

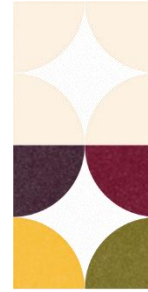
collective victories, deepened learning, newfound friendships, meaningful collaborations, and the shared commitment to building just and peaceful societies around the world.



As echoed in the closing ritual messages, each peacebuilder is a living message—an open letter to be read by others. In sharing the messages of peace, we are reminded that our values, character, and actions matter. Often, we may be the only tangible example of peace someone encounters.

This is why, as we reflected during Week 2, we must stand together. With mutual support and solidarity, we can continue to move forward, embodying peace in action and walking alongside one another in this ongoing journey.

Meet the Faces of Peace: *the MPI 2025 Team!*



The success of the MPI 2025 Annual Peacebuilding Training is a testament to the dedication and collaboration of a remarkable team.

FACILITATORS

MPI extends its heartfelt gratitude to the 12 facilitators from Germany, New Zealand, the USA, and the Philippines, whose expertise and commitment enriched every aspect of the training.



In 2025, MPI welcomed a diverse group of facilitators to the Annual Peacebuilding Training. Among them were Jon Rudy, Deng Giguiento, and Mike Alar, seasoned facilitators who have been with us for more than two decades, as well as Al Fuertes, who was a part of MPI's pioneering years. We also welcomed returning facilitators, Jeremy Simons, Twinkle Bautista, and May Che Capili. In addition, MPI added these facilitators to its roster: Gail Ilagan, Charmaine Bacong, Oliver Wiechmann, Madette Gardiola, and Mai Moya, who facilitated for the first time at MPI 2025. This reflects MPI's expanding network and growing collaboration with peacebuilders around the world.

Each facilitator brought their expertise and deep commitment to peacebuilding. They all shared a strong connection to MPI's vision and mission. Together, they represented the evolving yet rooted spirit of MPI's dedication to fostering just and peaceful communities across Asia, the Pacific, and beyond.

SECRETARIAT TEAM

Equally vital were the 15 secretariat volunteers from Cambodia, India, New Zealand, and remote areas of the Philippines, who worked tirelessly, often beyond regular hours, to ensure the smooth flow of preparations, courses, and activities. These volunteers provided invaluable support to MPI's dedicated nine-person staff, and together they formed the MPI 2025 Secretariat Team.



These energetic and diverse volunteers brought their unique stories and strengths to MPI. Among them were two passionate peacebuilders, Sam Arn Thea from Cambodia and Chattu Sinha from India, who are alumni of the Annual Peacebuilding Training and are currently participating in [MPI's Grassroots Peacebuilding Mentors Training Program](#). Their journey from being mentees in past programs to becoming mentors in this current program is a testament to the ripple effect of MPI's work.

MPI was also honored by the presence of Mini Sukumaran Nair, a 2005 alumna from India, who returned and generously shared her skills and wisdom with the 2025 secretariat team. MPI's long-standing partnerships continued to flourish. Aastha Arora, a student

from CHRIST (Deemed to be University) in Bengaluru, India, joined the secretariat team for the second time. Pro Peace, formerly forumZFD, a German peacebuilding organization working in the Philippines, sent two dedicated Filipinos, Monaliza Bobis and Sylvestre Reyes from Mindanao, to volunteer. MPI welcomed Filipino Datu Beds Kali once again, a



former MPI Annual Training secretariat volunteer and MPI facilitator, who is now working with a peacebuilding organization in Cambodia, strengthening MPI's ties across borders.

These volunteers, who served with joy and dedication, worked alongside the committed and passionate MPI staff, who went “the extra mile” and willingly worked in the early morning hours and late evenings. Hand in hand, they faced uncertainties and challenges with a united, undeterred spirit. Together, they formed a multifaceted, beautiful mosaic of shared purpose, woven across cultures and communities, united in their commitment to peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE MPI PARTNERS

MPI wishes to express its heartfelt gratitude to its collaborating partners that sent participants to the MPI 2025 Annual Peacebuilding Training. Your encouragement, friendship, and thoughtful check-ins during these stressful and challenging times meant a great deal to us. We could not have completed the MPI 2025 Annual Peacebuilding Training without your unwavering support and trust in our ability to train your staff and partners as the next generation of peacebuilders.



Cooperation Committee
for Cambodia



Solomon Islands Government
Ministry of Traditional Governance,
Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs



Office of the Presidential Adviser
on Peace, Reconciliation
and Unity (OPAPRU)



Papua New Guinea
Council of Churches



SANTI Corps



MPI also wishes to thank all the MPI 2025 Annual Peacebuilding Training participants, now our alumni, for being catalysts for change and social transformation and building just-peace communities and societies in your localities and beyond.

To everyone—and yes, especially to you—who seeks a just and peaceful world, we warmly invite you to join the **MPI 2026 Annual Peacebuilding Training!**



MPI's 25th Anniversary

FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON

A GATHERING OF ALUMNI, NETWORK & FRIENDS!



In celebration of the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute's (MPI) 25th anniversary as a trusted resource for peacebuilders across Asia, the Pacific, and the globe, MPI held a meaningful Anniversary Gathering and Fundraising Luncheon on May 24, 2025, in Davao City, Philippines.

This event marked a significant milestone in MPI's journey and served as a key initiative to support the production of its **Silver Anniversary Commemorative Publication**. The celebration was simple yet deeply heartfelt.



A highlight of the gathering was a **talk show featuring some of the foundational figures in MPI's history**: Maria Ida "Deng" Giguiento, the first Peacebuilding Training Program Officer during MPI's early days under Catholic Relief Services Philippines; Christine Vertucci, who served as Director for 14 years and retired in

October 2023; Fred Goddard, who contributed a decade of service; and Gimaidee “Mai” Ann Moya, MPI’s current Director. Their reflections brought to life MPI’s rich legacy and evolving vision.

The event welcomed over 100 participants, including MPI alumni, former MPI staff, long-time partners, and representatives from collaborating organizations in the Philippines and Cambodia. Adding a heartfelt touch, video messages from mentors and pioneers such as Mohammed Abu-Nimer and John Paul Lederach, as well as long-time facilitators like Wendy Kroeker, former staff like Marlies Roth, and numerous alumni from around the world were played, expressing their support and sharing memories of MPI’s impact through the years.

This gathering not only honored MPI’s journey in the past but also looked ahead with hope, unity, and a renewed commitment to peacebuilding. The proceeds from the luncheon will contribute to the development of MPI’s commemorative publication, a tribute to 25 years of peacebuilding excellence and collaboration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DONORS AND SPONSORS

Al Fuertes	Lynette Grace Tagalo
Arlene Molde	Mark Boot
Carmen Lauzon Gatmaytan	May Che Capili
Christina V. Lomoljo	Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)
Christine Vertucci	Mini Sukumaran Nair
Danilo Caspe	Myla Leguro
Dolores Corro	Nicola Hans
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