Cultural Politics of Conflict, Peace and the UNSCR 1325: Strategising and Capacity Building for Indonesia and the Philippines

End of Project Report for the Period:
June 2008 to May 2010

This report highlights the major achievement of the two-year, two country project of Isis International in collaboration with BALAY Rehabilitation Centre, Inc. in Philippines and Atma Jaya University in Indonesia. This report is being submitted to ICCO as part of end of project requirements.

Isis International – Isis CPCP Project Teams in Indonesia and the Philippines
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Executive Summary

The two-year two-country project on the Cultural Politics of Conflict, Peace and the UNSCR 1325: Strategising and Capacity Building for Indonesia and the Philippines was an initiative of Isis International together with its partner organisations to continue its commitment in strengthening women's participation in peace building through: feminist action research, skills and capacity building and multi stakeholder dialogue. The use of creative methodologies such as story telling and informal dialogues allowed the women to surface their experiences in the home and in the communities as they strive for a peaceful and sustainable life. For the Philippines, the use of storytelling as a methodology for gathering data proved to be an important mode of exchange of information and support for the women. As they entrusted their stories to the researchers they were able to share how they find peace in their everyday life through the creative ways they negotiate for their participation and bridge understanding despite cultural and religious diversity within and outside of their homes. For Indonesia, the research phase reflected women's stories of participation in community and public life after the experience of conflict. Women's efforts of becoming peace agents began as early as 1997 where their homes and the market place served as a venue to share informally their values of peace building.

The Capacity Building Phase for both countries in the form of development communications arts strengthened women's confidence and communication skills enhancing their capacities as leaders and peace agents in their respective communities. For the Philippines, the five-day session on Women Crafting Messages for Peace Building facilitated women's creativity in telling their stories of strengths and challenges in peace building work. The use of theatre and visual arts and community radio allowed them to share their stories of peaceful negotiation and conflict handling, acceptance of diversity and calls for the strengthening of women's participation in peace and development work in the community. For Indonesia, different mediums such as local dance, radio drama and a song, shared women's stories of maximising the market place and their homes as sites for peace. These mediums allowed women to exhibit their creativity in arts and in daily life as they turned the loss of their loved ones to strength to stand for the rest of their families, and continue to find spaces in their communities to share peace.

The dialogues with peace advocates achieved by both countries strengthened women's participation in peace building making this a shared agenda for stakeholders. For the Philippines, the dialogues achieved exchanges among local government units on ways towards making gender

responsiveness part of good governance and government services. This also encouraged local government officials to ensure two seats for women in the village council. For Indonesia, the opportunity for the community leaders to speak with media practitioners and local government were achieved. This opportunity facilitated ways women were able to talk about their everyday participation, and correct misconceptions that women are merely victims in these situations. This provided the holistic viewing of women, recognised for their everyday contribution at the same time call attention to their immediate needs of livelihood.

Analysis of Implementation

In the course of the two-year implementation of the project the respective country teams worked on providing more detail into how the objectives of the project will be best achieved. **The feminist action research phase of the project took careful note of the use of creative methodologies to surface women's stories.** For the Philippines, the storytelling in groups and the deeper conversations with the women provided the space for them to discuss the most intimate parts of their lives, their dreams for the families, struggles with partners, and the simple ways they are present for their friends and neighbours that form part of the way they live a peaceful life. These spaces were much appreciated by women as these were novel to them even if they were used to sharing within capacity building spaces and psychosocial intervention. In January 2009, the women described the focused group discussions as "emotional band-aid" because of the relief they felt in being able to share and hear about each others joys and pains, while acknowledging the learning they gain from each other. For Indonesia, the sharing and data-gathering session with the women acknowledged how the conflict affected their lives in many ways. They shared the pain and grief they felt as they lost their loved ones to the conflict, and shared the struggles they went through in picking up their lives. They also acknowledged how the conflict has also allowed them to participate in community and public life, a new way to contribute that they have come to value. The Indonesia coordinator, noted how the conflict also allowed the women the space to move out of their otherwise constricted gender roles.

The capacity building sessions used integrated theatre arts to strengthen women's leadership skills in communications, articulation of their visions for participation and equality, as well as practical knowledge on international policies and frameworks that acknowledge women's role in various aspects of their lives. For the Philippines, the workshop on Women Crafting Messages for Peacebuilding, not only enhanced the women's creative expression but in many ways it also released tension. As the women went through creative exercises in theatre and in poetry they recalled times of conflict and fleeing their homes. As such, they were able to touch base with feelings of fear for their live, but took comfort in being able to acknowledge the reality of their situation and appreciate where they are now. The theatre pieces, posters and radio spots they produced allowed them to communicate the value of women's everyday participation in peacebuilding to other peace and development stakeholders in a non-threatening way. Thus, the call to gender responsiveness was not seen as a threat but rather a shared agenda by all. For Indonesia, the capacity building space was a first for the women in a number of ways. It was a first for them to engage with other peace and development stakeholders and be acknowledged as part of this circle. It was also the first formal capacity building

space for the women where: 1) the sharing of the research was done, 2) discussions on international policies supportive of women's rights and participation, 3) alternative frames such as Engendered Peace Journalism were shared with them and with media practitioners as an important part of peace and development work; and 4) skills sharing on the use of radio to produce short spots, and talk shows to discuss women's issues in peacebuilding.

Another important objective of the project was to strengthen women's use of the UNSCR 1325. However, the project revealed that this was the first time women learned about it including women community leaders involved in peacebuilding work, despite the 10 years since its approval by member states. The session on understanding UNSCR 1325, falls under the principle of feminist knowledge sharing which both country teams are committed as part of the action research and capacity building phases of the project. For the Philippines, even before the women knew about the resolution they already took part in many efforts to restore life and peace in their communities. Still the women affirmed the need to know about such resolutions, since they continue to hold strong hopes in policies that support women's rights and participation provided the women know it and are able to access it. They noted local policies like the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act that were effective in preventing domestic violence in the community because information was shared . **Most of them noted, if the same effort in information dissemination on the UNSCR 1325 were taken seriously, the policy would take its effect for women's rights.** The same was also noted in Indonesia when the women heard about UNSCR 1325 for the first time. Women took a certain pride in the informal ways they have contributed to peacebuilding within their families and daily work. The Indonesia team, given women's exposure to capacity building activities took pains in developing sessions that made women more aware of the international policies that could also be taken up at a local level.

The last important aspect of project implementation was to also sensitise the media in their role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, particularly in how women are portrayed. For the Philippines, community systems like the family, organisations, friends and linkages with local government and non-government organisations were the women's major sources of information and value sharing. Thus the dialogues held in the Philippines expanded beyond a dialogue with media to include local peace and development stakeholders that could also responds to strengthening and supporting women's participation. At the multi-stakeholder dialogues women creatively communicated their needs in their everyday commitment in peacebuilding, while local governments and non-government organisations exchanged ways to approach gender, peace and development work. Ultimately concrete commitments to ensure women's participation in local governance, and more gender responsive programmes that address women's immediate needs in conflict situations were develped. Women's exposure to the development communications workshop and dialogue made the women reflective of the need for community media that could take up awareness raising on the importance of women's participation and their unique contribution in peace building. For the Indonesia, women community leaders had a dialogue with other stakeholders. The dialogues were attended by few media practitioners , and the women took the opportunity to engage with them for the first time. In an effort to balance women's portrayal in media, the women community leaders shared the challenges they faced in the situation as well as their contribution. The women's sharing calls attention

to the urgency of media attention on women in situations of armed conflict together with other pressing issues such as displacement brought about by flood.

Opportunities and Strengths

The narratives of women that came out of the researches of the Philippines and Indonesia speak of women's strength and resilience and picking up their lives after conflict - are everyday strengths that in most times goes unrecognised. Bringing this into the public space as an area of dialogue among stakeholders is also very timely as the provisions of the UNSCR 1325 of participation, representation and protection of women's rights are not only to be problematised by women or the states but rather an agenda that stakeholders in peace and development need to be very mindful of.

As the respective project teams culminate this project they have become more mindful of how states take up the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, as well as how local stakeholders can be more committed to its successful implementation, such as in the Philippines, where the UNSCR 1325 Implementation Plan has recently been developed. Yet in the experience of the Philippines, while women contributed to a strong local peace movement that has committed to many efforts in building cultures of peace and strengthened community life, this movement also needs to take on a stronger gender perspective that allows them to be conscious of women's inclusion and participation in various spaces for peacebuilding. For Indonesia, the project teams noted that it will take a longer time for their state to act on the development and implementation of a national action plan for the UNSCR 1325, but women have taken this initial opportunity to speak of their need for programme and policy support for women's participation.

Given the commitment of all partner institution's for media and information work as part of attaining holistic and sustainable peace, the women became more reflective of message development and maintaining relations with media. For the Philippines, the exposure to development communications has opened up their dreams for a community media that would help sustain their peace and development work and have gained their confidence in producing media forms that speak of their needs and situation. For Indonesia, it has also inspired the women to think of their own stories as newsworthy and be willing to share these with various media. For others it has also inspired to produce women and peace building themes in various radio formats.

Long Term Impacts and Outcomes

The long-term impact and outcomes of the project may be captured on the level of the women as peace and development stakeholders; and Isis International as the lead project proponent. For the women, the confidence they gained in their everyday contributions has inspired them to speak about these and encourage other women and men to take part in peace and community building. They have affirmed the value of organising that provides immediate assistance in times of need as well as awareness in communicating effectively in numbers. **Despite encountering male dominance in leadership in local and community organisations women have and will continue claiming for spaces in the G7 Farmers organisation in Pikit, Philippines or taking advantage of the marketplace in Sulawesi,**

Indonesia, as spaces to share values for peace. The capacities in communications that they gained has also inspired them to develop and disseminate their peace messages in various forms. Women of Pikit appreciated the use of theatre and radio and now seek for the development of community media in their place. While women leaders of the Sulawesi Islands gained the confidence in speaking with stakeholders like themselves as well as be inspired in producing various radio materials.

Peace and development stakeholders in the Sulawesi Islands in Indonesia and Pikit North Cotabato in the Philippines were called to be more responsive to various needs of women in these contexts. The women leaders in Sulawesi Islands called for women's basic needs for education as part of acknowledging their basic rights and commitments to strengthening their capacities. Other commitment areas were to look into strengthening women's participation in local and national government; and the role media can play in disseminating the peace messages that women produce. For Indonesia, these are initial commitments that may lead to strengthened partnerships in favour of women. **For the Philippines, concrete commitments towards strengthened participation of women in local governance were achieved** despite very evident male dominance in leadership in various organisations in Pikit. Achieved through creative and non-violent communication, the local leadership in Pikit acknowledged that the local council could benefit with having two women representatives in the local council. Another commitment area was for inter-government support on gender responsiveness as part of good governance (even in conflict situations) that involves network building for local governments in Pikit, North Cotabato and Davao. This commitment is directly in support of the Pikit municipal council's commitment to gender and good governance in their programmes and policies that is meant to benefit women in Pikit.

The outputs and outcomes of the project are disseminated through various medium, such as Isis website, e-newsletter, listserv and Women in Action magazine, forum and etc., among project partners, multi-stakeholders, women peace advocates and networks in national, regional and international levels. **The results of the project have been utilized in the other peace initiatives that Isis involved**, for example, "Women Making Airwaves for Peace" - community radio training workshop for women in Southeast Asia (including Philippines and Indonesia) and Pacific in Manila Philippines in October 2009, and for South and Central Asia in Bangalore India in February 2010. The results of this project also stirred the interests of the other Isis International partners from government agencies (for example, National Committee on Women – NCW and Office of Presidential Advisor on Peace Process - OPAPP) and civil societies on the further collaboration in implementing and monitoring the national action plan on UNSCR1325, which was launched in April 2010.

As for Isis International, a thirty-seven year old feminist development communications organisation, the two year project has strengthened its institutional commitment to peace building work through media and information and communication given the needs specified by women leaders in Indonesia and the Philippines. The project has affirmed the need to continue to work with national and local government, and media as strategic partners in strengthening women's participation and in achieving holistic, sustainable and lasting peace. Given Isis' existing programmes such as the Isis International Activist School, the institution continues capacity building support for the women leaders

in both countries in the use of various development communications tools to sustain women as leaders and their efforts in peace and development work. The project outcomes has also shed light on continued work needed with different types of media: mainstream, alternative and community media in terms of strengthening skills and commitment of strategic stakeholders in peace and development work. The frames of engendered peace journalism can continue to form part of theoretical and practical ways media can contribute to a true portrayal of women's situation in conflict. **It can also play a crucial role in disseminating information on the UNSCR 1325 so that massive awareness on the policy can be shared in various countries. Mainstream, alternative and community media can all play a role in monitoring the implementation of the said resolution, be it in the form of media monitoring on women's portrayal , or on how states have taken its commitment to implementing the resolution.**

Organisational Changes and Development

Within the two-years of the project implementation, changes in leadership has taken place both on the institutional level and project management level. The Project began in 2008 when the Associate Director of Isis International took the main lead in the development of the project and in the initial discussions with ICCO. By the end of 2008, however, the interim term of the Associate Director ended and Isis International had taken on a new Executive Director. While the support of the AD particularly regarding this project was gradual and the transition of tasks were smooth, levels of strain within the project working team was not avoided. However, with the highly competent ED and the continued commitment of the team, such strain was managed through dialogue and creative problem solving techniques. Ultimately, particularly the political direction of the project was sustained even within the change of institutional leadership.

What proved to be more of a challenge was the staff changes within the project team. This was critical especially since the changes were in the research associates. At separate instances two research associates were initially delayed in the submission of their required tasks until it came to the point when they could no longer complete their tasks. This caused some disruption in the team relationship as well as some delays in the working timetable. Fortunately, with Isis' pool of competent and experienced associates, these people were quickly replaced and research outputs were managed accordingly.

With the over all guidance of the Isis Executive Director and close supervision of the Project Coordinator the project was put back on track and has been successfully completed.