



Mindanao, Philippines

About YAP Mindanao

Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP) Mindanao works in the Zamboanga del Sur Province in Mindanao, Philippines. It is based in the town of Josefina in the northern part of the province and works through Peace Community Ambassadors - an active and dedicated committee of volunteers representing a wide cross-section of the local community.

The Situation

The island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines is home to one of the world's longest-running conflicts. Christians, Muslims, and local Indigenous groups are involved in a conflict that is often described in terms of religious orientation but at its root involves complex clashes of interest over land, natural resources, and political power.

In Josefina, the Subanen indigenous population have been marginalised and displaced from their traditional land by Christian settlers who arrived from islands to the north. This marginalisation contributed to Josefina being a major centre in insurgent struggles against the government in past decades. Today, the impact of conflict in surrounding areas continues to affect Josefina and the

Subanen population continues to face some of the worst poverty, inequality and exclusion in the Philippines.

The Project

In Josefina, YAP works with both the indigenous and settler populations to encourage and support local efforts to foster a culture of peace. Week-long peacemaking workshops that provide training in conflict transformation are an important part of this work. Each workshop includes a wide cross-section of the community including settler and indigenous populations, women and men, students and teachers, young and old, and people of varying occupations. YAP is increasingly also engaging with peacebuilding efforts between Christian and Muslim groups throughout other parts of Zamboanga del Sur building on earlier experience with this work elsewhere in Mindanao.

Given the specific challenges around landlessness and marginalisation, local participants in YAP workshops have set out to establish a livelihood project to empower the Subanen community. The project, implemented in partnership with UnitingWorld Relief and Development, builds on the YAP workshops to provide



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opportunities for Subanen families to join an organic gardening and livestock cooperative and participate in health, microfinance and educational support programs.

Achievements

Since starting in Zamboanga del Sur, YAP Mindanao has run workshops that have involved a wide cross-section of the local community. Farmers, students, teachers, community police officers, and village leaders have all been active participants in the peacemaking programs. The livelihood programs have been a direct result of the YAP workshops after local leaders and the Subanen community, identified the importance of ensuring the rights and socio-economic opportunities of marginalised groups if sustainable peace is to be experienced in Josefina.

The Future

Over the next three years, YAP Mindanao through Peace Community Ambassadors will continue to work with local Subanen families in the implementation of livelihood and development programs in Josefina. A formation centre is being built on land held by Peace Community Ambassadors to allow for training, meetings, and YAP peace workshops which will continue to serve as are the pathway for participation in the other programs. YAP will also explore opportunities to grow beyond its base in Josefina in order to contribute to broader efforts seeking sustainable peace across Zamboanga del Sur Province.

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Should the funds raised exceed the amount required to meet the needs of YAP - Mindanao, UnitingWorld will use the excess funds to help people involved in similar projects.

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