

Rehabilitation and Peace Building

“Building Peace through Communities Empowerment” in Lanao del Sur

Brief introduction of the program :

Following Marawi’s crisis and the battle between ISIS affiliated groups and government forces, the city has been partially destroyed. It is important to ensure that resentment over its destruction does not create a more fertile ground for extremists recruitment. Therefore, involving local population, ethnic groups, local religious bodies, traditional leaders etc. in the rehabilitation of Marawi City is a key aspect to stabilize the situation and ensure populations will be able to bounce back and to live anew together. ACTED’s proposition is, through a *people-to-people* approach , to support population to take decisions and actions to rebuild the city. The objectives of ACTED’s work in participating to the rehabilitation and peace building process are :

- Political mediation, provincial dialogues to define priorities,
- Reconciliation during and after conflicts via a inclusive approach (notably by building tolerance and understanding through inter-group dialogue sessions)
- Stabilization and strengthening of state and civil society structures and “voice” in post-conflict context

Via these 3 mains objectives, the project will contribute to tackling extremism and limit the ongoing radicalization process.



About ACTED

Since 1993, as the second French NGO, ACTED has been committed to immediate humanitarian relief to support those in urgent need and protect people’s dignity, while co-creating longer term opportunities for sustainable growth and fulfilling people’s potential.

ACTED implements more than 450 projects a year reaching 11 million beneficiaries in 35 countries, with a budget of 198 million euros.

We have 300 international staff and 4,300 national staff in our teams.

ACTED in the Philippines

ACTED has been operational in the Philippines since 2012. Moving forward in 2016, through early recovery and into longer term rehabilitation, ACTED is focusing its programs on Water, Hygiene and Sanitation, Shelter, Food Security and Livelihoods sectors.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) will continue to be mainstreamed across all our interventions. It includes all activities and measures which can be taken up before, during and after a disaster - with the purpose to avoid it, reduce its impact or recover from its losses while Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD).

ACTED’s efforts to build resilience in the Philippines aim at contributing to a sustainable reduction in vulnerability through increased capacity of local populations, governments and other actors; improved ability to identify, address and reduce risk, and improved social and economic conditions of vulnerable populations.

Since 2014, **ACTED supported more than of 1,300,000 people in the Philippines** in terms of emergency assistance, rehabilitation and development operations.

Past and current partners in the Philippines include:

- UN Agencies (UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, IOM)
- American Government (OFDA)
- French Gouvernement (ASEN, Centre de Crise and Agence Française de Développement)
- British Gouvernement (DFID)
- Private Donors (Shelter Box, SWS, Alstom Foundation, Suez)



Context Introduction

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Marawi City key data:

- ✓ ARMM is one of the poorest areas of the country with a poverty incidence of 53.7% according the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)
- ✓ Marawi City is located in Lanao del Sur, the poorest province of ARMM, with a poverty incidence of 71.9% in 2015 (PSA)
- ✓ Marawi City has a population of over 200 000 inhabitants, about 94% of them being Muslims and 6% being Christians
- ✓ Presence of 70 insurgent rebel groups in the region of Mindanao and the progression of ISIS-affiliated groups,

On May 23, 2017 violent clashes erupted in Marawi City, between the Philippines Army Forces and the ISIS-affiliated militants, the Maute group and Abu Sayyaf, eventually leading to a 5-month siege. By the end of December 2017, the Filipino Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), revealed that more than **400,000 individuals had been displaced** as a direct result of the conflict in Marawi City. On October 17, 2017, President Duterte declared the liberation of the city. And on October 29, the military confirmed that several *barangays* were safe. Then the Marawi municipality initiated “Brigada Marawi”, a 4-phase plan aiming at restoring the main city’s infrastructures and allowing citizens to return to areas cleared of unexploded ordinances (UXOs) and deemed safe. After five months of displacement a period of return for displaced families started, along with rehabilitation. However, if an orderly return of families has started to safe locations in Marawi City, it is estimate that only 40% percent as actually returned. **The majority of families are not expected to return before mid-end 2018** given the time needed to clear the residential areas of UXOs, and the rehabilitation of basic infrastructures



Marawi’s destruction in a nutshell

822 militants, 162 government forces and 47 civilians were killed in the conflict. Based on the government’s post-conflict needs assessment, the Marawi siege left **USD 357 million worth of property damaged**, including more than **2.3 million worth of school damages** and at least **USD 1 billion would be required for the complete rebuilding and rehabilitation of the city**. It is estimated that the full recovery process will take four years.

A context clouded by religious and political tensions

For 60 years, the indigenous and Muslim populations of Mindanao have been coexisting with Christians, who arrived on the island during the 1950s and 1960s, not without any tensions. Nowadays, the region has a large number of militant groups, the most important being the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the New People Army (NPA), of communism loyalty. The militant groups, led by MNLF and MILF demand more autonomy for ARMM, a region with a largely Muslim population. After nearly 40 years of conflict with the government, the opportunity for greater autonomy may finally present itself, in the form of the **Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL)**. If implemented, the bill – currently under consideration in the Congress with a vote planned for March 2018 – would give more autonomy to the ARMM region and would satisfy the Muslim population.

However, negotiations are complicated by the increasing proportion of Christians on the island of Mindanao and by the presence of different indigenous groups. Both are opposed to the BBL, for different reasons. On the other hand, ISIS-affiliated groups and their most extremist branches, Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, and the Maute group, in open conflict with the government and Christian population, feed on tensions and have every interest in the law failing to pass. This conflict reached its climax with the Battle of Marawi, which lasted 5 months. With the impatience of the Muslim community, the rise of Islamist groups and Christian population of ARMM threatening to create militias if the BBL passes, the result of the vote in March will have very significant repercussions on the region.

Marawi rehabilitation needed

Communities, the great absents of the reconstruction process

As to date, 60 barangays out of 96 have not been able to return to Marawi City as their homes have been completely damaged. Thus relief efforts still remain a priority until early 2018, as those households have great needs in terms of shelter, food security, WASH, Livelihood. However with a great number of casualties, most of the city destroyed and tension among populations arising, the peace building process and rehabilitation of Marawi is the great challenge for the years to come. To that purpose, the government has mandate “Bangon Marawi” an inter-agency Task Force organized to facilitate the rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction attempts in the city in the aftermath of the battle. However, the lack of inclusion of Civil Society organizations and communities in the process is problematic. The task force in charge of the rehabilitation and recovery has been set up at the national level and the different governmental agencies got into competition to take the lead of the process and in doing so, caring little for the priorities and need of the population and local authorities. In the different rehabilitation draft plans, infrastructure is highlighted, with a real lack community based approach, local involvement or livelihood rehabilitation which are key elements to successfully rehabilitate Marawi City and reduce local tension between communities.



The region on the brink of ignition

While rebuilding infrastructures appears to be the main concern of leading stakeholders, social cohesion remains absent from their plan, threatening the long-term success of the rehabilitation process. An increasing part of the population is nourishing resentment against the government and the Army who they consider responsible for Marawi’s destruction. Even more alarming is the shift in people’s mind regarding their perception of ISIS-affiliated groups. During a focus group discussion with children led by ACTED in the frame of an assessments on returnees, 30% of them verbalized their admiration for the Maute Group and ISIS. This is particularly worrisome considering the impact of the conflict on education, which remains a critical concern as 22 out of 69 public schools were totally damaged, leaving a large number of students without school structures. Out-of-school children are particularly exposed to radicalization and represent privileged targets for ISIS groups’ recruitment. With livelihood opportunities destroyed, families are more likely to resort to negative coping mechanisms and send their children to armed groups, phenomenon reinforced by the fact that ISIS affiliated groups are offering financial support to people willing to grow their ranks.



Linking Relief, Development and Security

Involving all strata of Civil society to focus on the needs and priorities of the local population is paramount to avoid more trouble, mainstreaming protection issues and foster cohesion between the different local stakeholders as tensions are arising. ACTED aims at linking Relief, Development and Security in order for rehabilitation to go along new crisis prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding including. The project encourages a recovery and rehabilitation approach which focuses on involving local population, political, religious, ethnic and armed groups for them to interact, address divisions within the community and reach a compromise on the main priorities and thus guiding the action of authorities and relief actors such as international NGOs.



Our approach : “Triple Nexus”, Linking relief, development and security

ACTED has implemented similar approaches in several conflict-ridden countries of South East Asia. ACTED developed a strong expertise in this approach.

“With the help of CSOs, we in government are able to reach and engage more people and to connect to communities and involve them in national development plans.”- former DSWD Secretary Solinan

Our methodology:

Via its approach, ACTED specifically encourages different stakeholders – from groups of citizens, communities CSOs and private sector to (local) governments and supportive sector institutions, at barangays level – to work effectively together in co-constructing ways to act collectively and in their own best interest and thus be agents of dynamic development processes at local level.

Marawi rehabilitation is a concern for the whole local population. The key reason ACTED promotes effective governance is so that the state provides essential services and fairly redistributes resources. ACTED’s work in improving public services focuses on an approach aimed at citizens, public institutions, and CSOs involvement.

The project will be divided on several steps.

1. Identifying local actors representative of the civil society,
2. Identifying a safe space and organizing a series of inter-group dialogue sessions which aim at bringing together all local actors which would naturally not talk together because of existing tensions.
3. Supporting dialogue and peaceful interactions between communities in conflict, incl. people-to-people approach to build tolerance and trust (intra and inter-group dialogue sessions, sport competitions);
4. Supporting the definition of a local strategy (barangays level) of the top priorities in terms of infrastructures needs to improve access to public services, notably via the empowerment of civil society organizations to advocate for better access to justice, and bring representative cases on behalf of low income or disadvantaged groups
5. Linking the result of the consultation comprised of all the stakeholders to the authorities and the official “task force” committee for advocacy and supporting the implementation of the population top priorities (via technical and financial support)
6. Ultimately providing infrastructures and/or services, which result of a compromise between communities, to reduce sources of tensions and conflict.

Benefit of this approach :

ACTED believes that the way Marawi rehabilitation is currently conducted will affect the future stability of the overall region. Based on observations of the political structuration of the “Task Force”, it appears that the involvement of the civil society is very limited, with infrastructures being built back by the Government with a lack of local stakeholders consultation about their needs. This fuels the resentment of the population, giving more ground for recruitment to Isis-affiliated groups as they offer an opportunity to exert frustrations. They are also starting to appear as more population friendly by opposition to the government following Marawi’s destruction. Involving all groups of civil is the only way to build durable peace, reconcile all communities and limit radicalisation across the region. To rebuild social cohesion via dialogue is the top priority and certainly the main challenge.

A people-to-people approach **will allow for each group to be involved in the decision process**, avoiding a sense of exclusion from certain groups and prevent existing divisions to be reinforced which could contribute to new conflicts:

- The long-term consultations and discussions will have the advantage of giving **ownership of the rehabilitation process back to the population** but also of producing **a tangible result, in the form of an infrastructure** which will meet the priority needs expressed by the beneficiaries.
- A basic infrastructure (which could be a market, classroom, health care centre, etc.), result of the decision taken by the population, will be more than a public service to improve life but more the **symbol of a compromise** built by all actors and it will **develop their feeling of community membership**.
- By gathering all stakeholders and using decision making as mediation tool, they will be involved in **defining and building a community living environment** which reinforces the stabilization process and ultimately, **limiting radicalization**.

Impact Statement and

Indicators of Achievement:

Peace-building, reconciliation and conflict resolution efforts contribute to stabilization, recovery, development and generate immediate peace dividends for the population.

- Number of people reached through activities aimed at increasing social-cohesion and peaceful coexistence in/between communities adversely affected by conflict and division;
- Number of dispute resolution and peace initiatives developed/strengthened.

2 year project

600,000 euros

30,000 potential beneficiaries


ACTED

CONTACT US

Thibault Henry, Country Director

thibault.henry@acted.org, +63 (0) 977 189 8499