

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an attempt to analyze the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) experience of Mindanao, this study delves into the historical background of the conflict on this island, together with the vectors of firearms imports, government efforts to curb the proliferation of firearms, and the negotiations for peace.

A number of factors have been attributed as the causes of the Mindanao conflict, including religion, Muslim oppression and socio-economic deprivation, the political machinations of various domestic and foreign forces, and the Philippine Government's ineptitude in Mindanao. Calls for Muslim autonomy, secessionism or federation eventually took an armed revolutionary dimension in the 1970s, led by the radical elements of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The proliferation of small arms has exacerbated the conflict in Mindanao. As early as 1969, the MNLF enjoyed foreign support, including the supply of arms and military training. Present-day sources of illegal firearms circulating in Mindanao include those firearms lost during military or police operations, unlicensed manufacturers, foreign shipments, gunrunning, and rebels' manufacture of their own firearms. In 1998, police figures suggested that there were some 329,985 firearms nationwide in the hands of gun enthusiasts, political warlords, criminal syndicates, and even government officials and employees.

In Mindanao, individuals possess firearms for security, power and prestige, as well as for socio-economic reasons. It is also reportedly the "culture" among Muslims to possess firearms, as Muslims from this region often associate the right to possess firearms with their religious heritage. In addition, the easy access and affordability of firearms contributes to their proliferation. Gun smuggling is also prevalent, given to the country's geographic configuration, prospects for huge profits, increased connivance between syndicates and police officers, and involvement on the part of politically influential families. To date, despite government efforts to address the problem, guns still proliferate in Mindanao.

Since 1946, the Philippine Government has also tried to resolve the conflict in Mindanao primarily through assimilation and autonomy, as well as a combination of military, political, economic and social means. However, the fighting between government and secessionist forces continued until the relative peace in 1996, which was achieved with the signing of the peace agreement between the Government and MNLF.

The integration of the MNLF forces into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) is the most tangible elements of success achieved the 1996 peace agreement. By September 1999, a total of 4,850 MNLF members have been integrated into the AFP and PNP respectively. However, this reintegration of the MNLF members to the mainstream society was done without disarmament and demobilization. The Government recognized that the MNLF could not be forced to turn in their firearms and thus chose to emphasize instead the MNLF's