

a common goal.

Sectoral groups can contribute substantially to the DDR efforts. Previously, the use of special education programs using religious instructors and scholars proved successful in making a Muslim "the equal of every man so that he will have no cause or grievance to fight against the government".<sup>157</sup>

Towards an effective DDR effort in Mindanao, these groups can be tapped: (1) peace organizations; (2) religious institutions; and (3) local educational institutions. There are 16 peace organizations in Mindanao, nine of which are church-initiated.<sup>158</sup> These groups protect constitutional democracy, promote and propagate a culture of peace, provide assistance (*i.e.*, legal), and educate people on various (*i.e.*, justice, peace).

The religious institutions also play a critical role in the peace process in Mindanao. Groups that provide a key role in this process include the Bishops-Ulama Forum (BUF), Peace Advocates of Zamboanga (PAZ), Silsilah Movement (Inter-Faith Dialogue). These groups spearhead the inter-faith/cultural pluralism in Mindanao.

*Ulamas* (Muslim religious leaders) are influential in Muslim societies and therefore particularly useful in the mobilization of thousands, as well as in imparting issues to the communities. More than 670 *ulamas* attended the First Ulama Summit<sup>159</sup> spearheaded by the MILF in response to the need of addressing the Moro problem from their own people's perspective. The MILF exhorted the Muslim sectors (groups or individuals) to participate in this endeavour, which is supported by the Qu'ran:

"Verily never Allah change the condition of the people until they change it themselves (with their own souls)" [S. XIII:11]

In this Summit, strong resolutions were formulated to forge unity, solidarity and cooperation among Muslims and non-Muslims to please *Allah*. The *ulamas* had also mobilized thousands in separate rallies before the formal opening of talks between the government and the MILF.

The academe also has a key role in the process of changing perceptions, promoting multiculturalism, democratization and even advocacy and empowerment. The Mindanao State University (MSU), one of the biggest universities in the South with seven campuses in Western Mindanao (Marawi, Iligan City, Maguindanao, General Santos City, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu and Naawan), is an ideal

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Miriam Coronel Ferrer (ed.) *Peace Matters* (Quezon City: Conflict Resolution and Human Rights Program, University of the Philippines, 1997).

<sup>159</sup> Held last 23-24 February 1998 in Da'wah Center, Simuay, Sultan Kudarat.