



COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE

Pakigdait CC, Inc.

Faiths /Traditions Represented: Islam, Indigenous, and Christian.

Location of CC: Mindanao, Philippines

Key Areas of Focus: Peace - Building

Summary:

Pakigdait, Incorporated CC is an interfaith grassroots peacebuilding organization founded and organized in 2001. They envision a society where reconciliation reigns in the heart of every individual and is practiced in their homes and communities. They aim to enhance the capacity of individuals, groups, and communities to transform conflict towards constructive change. Pakigdait conducts interfaith dialogue among Muslim and Christian leaders, and this has paved the way for the creation of the ad-hoc Municipal Inter-Faith Council (MIFC) composed of an equal number of Christian and Muslim representatives. Pakigdait was recognized as the best non-government organization in the Philippines during the year 2007 by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (First Infantry TABAK Division).

1. Can you please help me understand the current religious/cultural/political contexts in the area where your CC is working?

Over the years, the chronic conflict in Mindanao has enormously affected a good number of people and destroyed hundreds of communities. It did not only claim thousands of innocent lives but has also destroyed properties and most importantly it has ruined the painstakingly established good relationships between Muslims and Christians in the area.

The protracted war between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Philippine Government troops has ravaged the Municipality of Kauswagan in the Province of Lanao del Norte. Seeing the atrocities brought by the war, a few peace-loving people in the province decided to establish an organization that will respond to the challenge of peace-building.

It is in this context that we the Pakigdait ug Pag-amoma Alang sa Kalinaw (Pakigdait Incorporated) came about in 2001. Armed with the desire to contribute to the peace-building work in Mindanao, we gathered various faith groups to share experiences and formulate strategies to address the chronic conflict.



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2. Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed where your CC is working?

The location and home of Pakigdait, Inc. CC is in one of the most war-torn areas of Mindanao, where religion is often times mistakenly perceived to be the cause of an age-old conflict in Southern Philippines.

3. Can you please briefly describe the main activities or programs your CC is doing this year?

We are anchored on the vision that “A society where reconciliation reigns in every heart of individuals and practiced in homes and communities”, and aim to “enhance individuals, groups, and communities capacity to transform conflict towards constructive change.”

We are deeply engaged in resolving land conflicts between Muslims and Christians. This activity came along as Pakigdait CC and Interfaith Council of Mindanao CC’s collaboration to assist a multi-faith group of people understand the recent “Framework Agreement” between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The Framework Agreement will draft the basic law that should govern the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. One of the concerns rests in the idea that many of the community interests are currently dominated by non-Muslims.

4. Between which specific religions or cultures are bridges being built?

We are promoting trust and confidence among Muslims and Christians in order to create peace and solidarity in the community of Mindanao.

5. Please explain the method or strategy that your CC uses to bring together people of different cultures and faiths that would otherwise not interact or cooperate with each other.

We conduct interfaith dialogue among Muslim and Christian leaders. This has paved the way for the creation of the ad hoc Municipal Inter-Faith Council (MIFC) composed of an equal number of Christian and Muslim representatives. As a result, a building that was formerly used by combatants and victims of the Mindanao war in Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte, now serves as the Peace Centre Building and is used for on-site trainings and assemblies, and Maranao language classes to bridge the communication divide in Kauswagan and nearby Iligan City. The yearly Lanao del Norte Month of Peace, celebrated every March is also a showcase of the successful policy-making and lobbying done by peace-based civil society organizations with the LGU on the provincial level.

7. How do you see your CC’s work improving cooperation among people of different traditions?

The very composition of diverse religions in our membership improves the needed cooperation between members of different faiths in this area. In our CC, we have



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Muslim members talking to Christian landowners and Christian members talking to Muslim landowners. The regular activities we conduct via Masjid-and-Church visits in partnership with the Interfaith Council of Mindanao CC is another fruitful activity that brings cooperation and understanding about each religion from firsthand experience.

8. How is the work of your CC helping to prevent religiously inspired violence or transforming conflicts?

Our ongoing intervention on the land disputes has lessened what could erupt into another misinterpreted religious conflict between Muslims and Christian landowners. While the land dispute it is only one aspect of the bigger picture, the efforts to address this particular problem is surely a means to extricate a strand from the complex whole.

11. How is your CC's work helping to achieve the mission of URI?

URI is a network to end religiously motivated violence and interfaith conflict. We believe that URI has networks around the country, the region, and global level to espouse what is happening on the ground. It is true that the conflict has nothing to do with religion, but other interested groups are interpreting the issues as religious in nature because of the political and economic benefits they derive from the conflict. Part of the compassion and reconciliation activity is an expertise that URI possesses. Our work assists in bringing to light the real cause of the problem, which is not actually religious in nature although the involved parties are of different religions. Such is the act of "ending religiously motivated violence..." and thus, "cultivating peace..."

12. Within your CC, you have members from different faiths/cultural traditions. How would you describe cooperation between these members? What are the challenges?

Pakigdait became the first interfaith community-based organization that is devoted mainly to peace-building work in the Province of Lanao del Norte and probably in the whole of Mindanao. We are composed of well-meaning people who profess diverse faiths and beliefs namely: Islam, Indigenous Peoples, and the different Christian denominations from the Roman Catholic, Philippine Independent, Assembly of God, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and The Seventh-Day Adventist.