

Mindanao (Philippines): Build the movements of survivors of conflict and climate disasters: MIHANDS thrust in 2023

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We, at MIHANDS (Multi-stakeholders Initiatives for Humanitarian Action against Disasters) are usually very grateful of the solidarity and support extended to us by the Europe Solidaire Sans Frontier (ESSF) and its network of donors and allies.



The year 2023 was a vibrant and busy year for MIHANDS as it was able to serve 1,186 families (5,244 individuals) food packs, hygiene kits, cooking/kitchen utensils, herbal medicines, safe drinking water and psychological first aid. Two hundred thirty (230) children received school supplies and infant kits and 122 women trained in soap-making herbal processing and production. This year was also spent in building capacities of survivors of natural calamities, fire incidents and armed conflicts; as well as self-organization and mobilization for rights-claiming campaign.

The first quarter, MIHANDS help the survivors of Typhoon Paeng (Codename:Nalgae) to organize & strengthen their organization - the Paeng Survivors' Movement (PSM). PSM has members and representatives from the different areas and provinces of Maguindanao, North Cotabato and Cotabato City. With their banner "Temendeg Ka!" - meaning Rise Up!, the PSM members rose and stood up from the devastation from Typhoon Paeng, self-organized and rose their ranks to voice out their demands to concerned agencies and authorities.



From self-organizing to building capacities, MIHANDS accompanied PSM in the conduct of participatory planning workshops, seminars and training on campaign management, public speaking and lobbying. Leaders and members of PSM are now using their acquired skills in their rights-claiming and lobbying activities. Barangay-level local groups were also formed as based-chapters of PSM.

MIHANDS together with grassroots NGOs, POs and PSM initiated the convergence of different religious leaders from various religious dominations to talk about worrying conditions of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) and equally urgent issues of conflicts and climate displacements. The convergence agreed to work together to help PSM (disaster survivors) lobby with authorities their demands for better recovery and rehabilitation programs and services such as safe and accessible relocation sites, reparation of damages, basic social services, due representation, etc. On this period, the conflict and climate survivors stood up for their demands to participate in the planning, designing and formulation of rehabilitation programs. Bearing the famous slogan “Nothing about us without us”, MIHANDS facilitated the PSM’s participation to various peace and humanitarian network meetings from the local to the national level (National Anti-Poverty Commission).

MIHANDS network and the PSM are campaigning for the passage of the Internally Displaced Persons Bill both in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and at the Philippine Congress.



By October and before the year ends, MIHANDS was seen actively participating in the Solidarity Campaign for Free Palestine that took place in different parts of Mindanao. The Online Forum on the Israel-Hamas War on October 21, 2023 was co-organized by MIHANDS member organizations together with some networks in Manila inviting a Palestinian NGO as main speaker that provided ground-level information about the real conditions of the people in Gaza. Pierre Rousset of the Europe Solidaire Sans Frontiers (ESSF) was also invited as International reactor together with some reactors from the youth, women and Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao. A tribal leader of the Teduray and Lambangian tribes of the IP of Mindanao clearly explained their plights about the ongoing land and territorial occupation by big Bangsamoro clans and politicians to their ancestral lands that also involved long and tedious legal process including killings of identified IP leaders, as somewhat of the same story and fate with the Israeli’s occupation in Palestine.



From online discussions and fora to actual organizing of physical mobilizations began with the launching of the NO TO WAR Philippines-Palestine Solidarity Pilipinas in the areas of Lanao del Norte, Iligan City, Cotabato City, Agusan del Sur and Bacolod City. There were such mobilizations in November 30 during Bonifacio Day [1] and December 10 for the International Human Rights Day.

From local crisis to national and international issues, MIHANDS members commit to accompany the disaster survivors of armed conflicts, natural and climate disasters to fight and defend their human rights!

MIHANDS network



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Footnotes

[1] Bonifacio Day is a national holiday in the Philippines, celebrated on 30 November in honour of Andrés Bonifacio, who was born on 30 November 1863 and became one of the founders of the Katipunan and the Philippine revolution.