

“Expanding NGO Involvement in Literacy for Women in Muslim Mindanao: The Philippine’s Experience”

**Prepared by: Myrna B. Lim
Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities –
Women in Enterprise Development,
Cotabato City, Philippines**

Executive Summary

The Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Inc. -WOME IN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (NDFCAI-WED) has been identified and selected by the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) as its NGO partner in the Philippines in its “1995 Programme for Establishing Literacy Resource Center for Women and Girls in the Philippines”. It was selected from amongst a number of NGOs engaged in literacy work and promotion in the country. The establishment of the Philippine Literacy Resource Centre for Women and Girls last 1995 further paved the way to the promotion of literacy activities in Mindanao and at the same time, affirming the nation’s commitment to the vision of Education for All.

In support of the ACCU goals, the NDFCAI-WED seeks other funding and linkages. Thus, in partnership with UNESCO-World Education, Inc., it spearheaded the development of the Mindanao NGO Literacy Network. The Foundation played an instrumental role not only in the implementation of network activities and projects but also in building bridges to follow on activities.

The UNESCO-World Education project entitled “Mindanao NGO Women Education Project: Expanding NGO Involvement in Functional Literacy in Muslim Mindanao” is a three(3) year project, designed to improve and strengthen the institutional capabilities of NGOs engaged in literacy work, through capability-building training workshops. Since its launching in 1996, the project has conducted training workshops in various areas of Mindanao, in response to the numerous training needs as raised and recommended by the NGO partners. World Education, in partnership with NDFCAI-WED spearheaded the establishment of the network and played a lead role as a bridging organization.

The Foundation sees the strategic role of networks in rapidly expanding and reaching a larger spread of individuals provided with qualified literacy programmes throughout Mindanao and in the Philippines. Most importantly, the formation of the Mindanao Network in collaboration with other existing literacy initiatives help create a positive and supportive environment for influencing the policy sphere in Muslim Mindanao.

This provides an account of the collaborative initiative between Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Inc. – WOMEN IN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (NDFCAI-WED) and its organized network of 19 local NGOs in all over the Island of Mindanao in southern Philippines. This initiative gained its momentum with the assistance of World Education, an international NGO; and the Literacy Division of UNESCO/Paris which are both promoters of Functional Literacy for Women. The initiative, **Expanding Local NGO Involvement in Functional Literacy for Women in Muslim Mindanao**, began in early 1996 and ended in May 1999.

The goal of the initiative was to increase functional literacy opportunities for women and girls in Muslim Mindanao. In order to achieve this goal, NDFCAI-WED (which works with a largely Muslim clientele in and around Cotabato City, Maguindanao) carried out a three-year institutional

strengthening activity to increase the capabilities of a network of Mindanao-based NGOs to design, implement and evaluate functional literacy programmes for women and girls.

The NGOs that participated and became the part of the Mindanao Literacy NGO Network were selected based on their utmost need for training and institutional assistance in the promotion and implementation of literacy in their respective areas.

The local NGOs under the network represent almost all provinces in Muslim Mindanao serving multi-cultural communities (Lumads, Muslims, indigenous peoples and Christians); are generally small institutions and have limited operating budgets. The training opportunities and programme assistance offered through this collaborative initiative thus responded to a major need, as many NGOs had forgone staff training needs in order to use limited budgets for project implementation activities.

The staff of the network member NGOs actively participated in a wide range of capacity building training. The training provided were in the areas of: *facilitator and advanced facilitator training; literacy materials development; management of literacy programmes; budgeting and financial management; evaluation of literacy programmes; culture of peace; community organizing strategies (basic and advanced); proposal development and fundraising; interagency coordination; and advocacy*. In addition, *yearly evaluation workshops* engaged network members in an assessment of the year's activities, the relevance of those activities to individual NGO needs, and the planning of the following year's activities.

A number of innovative and well-tested by-products have emerged from network activities over the three years:

First, **a broad range of training packages were developed** that can be used in training NGO staff in the future. Many of these packages were developed by the NGO members of the network that took on responsibilities for training other network members in their specific areas of expertise. A *training manual for literacy facilitators* was developed in Filipino and will be widely disseminated. Materials that link *literacy to income generation, health and other development sectors* have been developed, tested and produced for the use of network members as well as by other agencies working in the field of literacy in Mindanao and other parts of the Philippines.

In addition to capacity building, considerable time and energy was invested in **establishing the network's role as an advocate for expanded literacy activities in the region and in working closely with local government units and provincial governments on the development of more comprehensive literacy strategies at the local level**. The advocacy role of the network was highlighted at the **February 1999 "Mindanao Literacy Summit", organized by NDFCAI-WED** which brought together 150 leaders and heads of NGOs, local and national government units and funding agencies to discuss the future of literacy work in Mindanao.

The NDFCAI-WED is working closely with the Philippine National Non-formal Education Programme of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, World Education and with UNESCO/Jakarta to secure nearly \$1,150,000 **funding assistance for programme implementation activities for the 1999-2000 period**. As a result, the network was able to access funding from the Department of Education, Culture and Sports – Bureau of Non-formal Education and has been implemented by nine network members to reach an estimated 38,000 learners. Funding from UNESCO Jakarta provided assistance to five smaller NGO network members to help them expand existing literacy activities for another 200 learners. Funds received from USAID's Office of Transitional Initiatives through World Education has enabled five NGOs to respond to literacy needs of an estimated 1,500 learners in areas with heavy concentrations of former Moro Liberation Front men and women. A second round of assistance through UNESCO Jakarta focus on linking literacy

to UNESCO's Culture of Peace Programme and will enable three members of the network to reach an additional 150 learners. Counterpart funding leverage during this same time period is estimated at \$70,000.

Through participation in the initiative, **opportunities for women's literacy in Mindanao have expanded.** More programmes are operating and more learners are enrolled; with over 80% of them being women and older girls. **The institutional capacity of 19 partner agencies—mainly NGOs but also a number of literacy coordinating councils which are government agencies—have been increased.**

Network members have learned the value of self-assessment and how to assess their own strengths and weaknesses. They have also demonstrated the use of this information to improve their practices. They have learned to identify problems in their programmes and look for local and regional resources to address those problems.

The network members grew to work with, share and learn from other NGOs and are grateful to realize that they would never have had the occasion to interact with each other had it not been for this initiative. NGO members of the **network have learned to work more closely with government agencies and local literacy coordinating councils.** They have learned from **first hand experience that literacy programme implementation is enhanced by an environment that is politically, socially and economically stable.**

Perhaps the most lasting contribution of the network activities over three years has been the recognition given to local groups for the dedicated **time, energy and resources that they have dedicated to further expand literacy and basic education opportunities for women in the region.**

I. Introduction

The NDFCAI-WED humbly started its literacy work in 1984 as a community extension arm of a local university. Armed with three staffs, the goal of the project then was to educate as many illiterate poor women and out-of-school youth in basic adult/functional literacy, continuing education and micro-enterprise. This is to help improve the socio-economic status, increase productivity, income and business of the women, enabling them to be empowered, economically productive and responsible members of their families, their communities and the society in general.

Since then the project WOMEN IN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT has grown into a more complex service-oriented NGO. Now with a wide and diverse NGO network trained in literacy work, NDFCAI-WED is not alone to help empower thousands of Muslim women, Lumads and IP's of Mindanao – to foster peace, build communities, promote sustainable development in Southern Philippines. Literacy efforts has been expanded reaching and spreading all throughout Mindanao.

Today, with funding support from USAID (since 1984), UNESCO World Education, Inc., Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) and other donor agencies, NDFCAI-WED and its network of partner NGOs are reaching out to high risks, unserved and marginalized sectors of Mindanao, Philippines.

II. Background of the Initiative

Mindanao was the site of a protracted conflict between the Moro Liberation Front and the central government of the Philippines for nearly 30 years. Even before the signing of the Peace Accords in

1996, efforts to create and install the government of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao signaled an end to central government's political, social and economic neglect and opened the potential to turn the prevailing situation around.

A number of innovations during the past ten years in the area of basic education contributed to a more favorable climate for addressing women's education and training issues. UNICEF's Area which is Based on Child Survival and Development (ABCSD) Programme made headway through its Female Functional Literacy Component, which introduced a tailor made, highly decentralized approach in programme planning and literacy materials development that encouraged inter-sectoral collaboration at the grass roots level. ADB-funded Philippine Non-formal Education Project, which is ongoing, has promoted significant reform in the way of non-formal education activities are planned, implemented and evaluated, especially at the grassroots level. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)-funded Local Government Planning Programme has provided major assistance to expand local government's role in providing basic services such as education and literacy. This programme has included a major gender perspective thus helping those implementing programmes at the local level better understand the need for addressing women's social, economic and educational issues.

At the same time, the role of civil society in providing education and training opportunities has increased significantly in Mindanao. NGOs have become more involved in basic education and literacy. An assessment in the early 1990s of institutional performance demonstrated that staff development was a major need, as was the strengthening of NGO institutional capacity to better plan, implement and evaluate literacy programmes for women. Although the number of learners in programmes was limited through the early 1990s, NGO programmes were seen by many as offering important opportunities for expansion. The basic premises behind the network initiative were thus to work with NGOs in Mindanao and to help NGOs meet the increasing demand for women's literacy and training activities that the government could not meet.

III. Target Groups

Women and older girls were the ultimate beneficiaries of the initiative. Female literacy rates in Muslim Mindanao were estimated at 42% in the early 1990s in comparison with 89% at the national level. It is well known and well documented that women and girls in Muslim Mindanao have traditionally been less served by the formal education system and social services for a range of cultural, social, political and economic reasons.

Local NGOs and their staffs were considered the intermediate beneficiaries of activities carried out through the initiative. In order to reach girls and women with improved literacy programme practices, the activity was designed to address the capacity building needs of NGOs. Enhanced institutional capabilities to design, deliver and evaluate literacy training for women were seen as critical primary investments in developing future programmatic efforts of the participating NGOs.

The 19 network partner agencies that participated in the initiative are included as Annex A of this report. These include both NGOs and literacy coordinating councils, the latter being groupings of governmental and non-governmental groups.

IV. Objectives

The **development objectives** of the three-year activity were:

- a. to increase functional literacy opportunities for women and girls in Muslim Mindanao, and

- b. to improve the institutional capabilities of regional and local NGOs to design, implement and evaluate functional literacy programmes for women and girls.

The **immediate objectives** of the initiative included the following:

- a. Staff from participating NGOs will have an increased capacity to plan, implement and evaluate female functional literacy programmes;

indicator: increased number of NGO staff trained in materials development, planning and implementation of literacy programmes, and evaluation of functional literacy programmes for women.

- b. Staff from participating NGOs will have developed and implemented a strategy for replicating capacity building activities within their own organizations as well as with NGOs in their geographic area

Indicators: degree of horizontal spread of capacity building training within participating NGOs and degree of geographic expansion of network over the three years.

- c. NGOs will have adapted or prepared new literacy materials for use in female functional literacy programmes

indicator: literacy materials developed, tested, produced, disseminated and in use by participating NGOs.

- d. Functional literacy classes will have been organized for an increased number of women and girls in both urban and rural areas of Mindanao

Indicators: increased number of NGOs offering female functional literacy programmes for women and girls; increased number of girls and women enrolled in functional literacy programmes.

- e. Implementing NGOs will be involved in a regional network focused on expanding functional literacy opportunities for women

indicator: existence of a regional network of NGOs concerned with functional literacy for women and literacy linked to income generation.

- f. Cooperation and collaboration will have increased between government and NGOs on issues related to women's education, life skills training, maternal and child health, and income generation skills training

Indicator: increased number of instances of cooperation and collaboration between NGOs and government evidenced by joint development of literacy materials, sharing of material and human resources, joint literacy programme development and policy dialogue.

V. **Implementation Strategy**

NDFCAI-WED, true to its vision of realizing a literate Mindanao, expanded its services, not only to serve the learners of its communities but also worked towards assisting, facilitating the institutional development and growth of Mindanao NGOs engaged in humanitarian activities. Generally, these

small NGOs in the past were into diverse development projects but has never undertaken literacy and adult education as a concern. **Through the UNESCO and ACCU projects, NDFCAI-WED pushed for advocating and exposing other NGOs in the rudiments and procedures of integrating literacy in all project activities.** NDFCAI-WED networked, forged alliances and partnerships with both the NGOs, the civil societies and more, particularly the government. Today, there are nineteen(19) partner NGOs which are trained institutionally capable and prepared to implement a literacy project. These NGOs are located all over Mindanao and are implementing projects in high risks, unreachable areas of Muslim Mindanao where peace and order are the major problems to contend with.

This network was realized through the assistance of the World Education, Inc, an international NGO based in Boston, MA. (USA) and the bridging role of NDFCAI-WED.

Staff from World Education's office in the Philippines participated on a regular basis in all activities, with staff from World Education/Boston participating in a limited number of activities each year. Initially, staff from the Literacy Division of UNESCO/Paris provided oversight for the implementation of activities initially. During the second year of implementation, oversight of the activity was transferred to the Education Advisor at the UNESCO Office for Science and Technology in Jakarta. UNESCO staff from both offices made site visits over the three years. The Education Officer from UNESCO/Jakarta conducted the mid-term evaluation.

In turn, NDFCAI-WED, realizing the important need of placing muscles to the bones have source out, established linkages and partnership with different international and local institutions who are interested in bringing development through literacy. Its role has not only been limited to finding financial assistance to its own institution but has widened its horizon to accommodate and include all network partners for them to use their learned skills in literacy. The Foundation serves as "guarantee" to donor agencies for smaller institutions to be able to access funds.

The strategy is to create a core group of well-trained and capable NGOs who would be able to replicate capability-building seminars for other NGOs as well as provide technical assistance to other NGOs in the areas of community organizing and literacy programme design. The network was able to collaborate with the Literacy Coordinating Councils (LCC), Department of Education, Culture and Sports and other agencies building channels of trust and commitment to promote joint literacy activities. The partnership that was established, highlights the involvement and participation of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports as resource people in training methods, materials development and facilitators training.

The NDFCAI-WED and other larger NGOs have shared their resources and small amounts of private funds to help other NGOs that are not yet well accustomed to competing with larger and more recognized agencies.

The project was carried out in three phases. The first phase focused on providing capacity building activities to a limited number of NGOs, which later served as the core planning and training group throughout the three years. The second phase brought about an increased in the number of NGOs and with the training provided by the member NGOs organized during the first phase. In the third phase, additional NGOs were added to the group and there was a major focus on consolidation of project learning, advocacy work and the development of proposals for securing funding for expanding literacy programme for a larger number of learners.

Each phase of the project initiative began with an assessment of NGO institutional capabilities to plan, implement and evaluate functional literacy programmes. These assessments were the central aspect of not only an initial/yearly review by each NGO and of its capacity, but also as an end-of-the-year review of accomplishments and improvements. The yearly assessments provided valuable

information on NGO training needs and allowed organizers to plan training activities in direct response to individual and collective needs.

Training and capacity building activities were practical, contextualized and hands on. Each training activity offered an opportunity for immediate application of training content and skills to the specific situation in which each NGO was working. Training activities were held in a number of different locations in the Mindanao region, thus giving the network NGO staff the opportunity to visit other projects to see first hand what their partners in the network were doing at the grass roots level. **The opportunity to learn first hand from the experiences of other NGOs was a critical element of learning that took place in network activities.** National and local resource persons were largely responsible for facilitating training and capacity building activities, with only limited number from international experts. This option helped local groups look for local, time tested solutions to local problems.

VI. Project Accomplishments and Outcomes

The progress reports; the mid-term evaluation; interviews with participating NGOs; the outcomes of the **First Mindanao Summit on Literacy**; and a retrospective assessment of activities undertaken over the project's three year implementation all demonstrate that the initiative has been successful in meeting its two development objectives:

- a. to increase functional literacy opportunities for women and girls in Muslim Mindanao, and
- b. to improve the institutional capabilities of regional and local NGOs to design, implement and evaluate functional literacy programmes for women and girls.

Specifically, the network was able to accomplish the following:

- a. **The network expanded their literacy programming for women and girls through increased NGO collaboration with local government units** to provide more literacy opportunities for women and girls in Muslim Mindanao.
- b. **Staff members from 19 partner organizations were trained in a range of issues related to literacy** programme design, implementation, management and evaluation.
- c. **The bridging role the NDFCAI-WED has assumed enabled the network to access funding for programme implementation which helped provide an immediate and very practical opportunity for network members to apply what they have learned in training and capacity building activities to the real world of literacy work.** In each instance, implementation activities include continued opportunities for network members to work with each other, to reflect on their experiences in programme implementation as it evolves and to address any weaknesses that may emerge.

The following section of this report presents the activities undertaken and result of the project by examining each immediate objectives established.

Objective 1: Participating NGOs will have developed an increased capacity to plan, implement and evaluate female functional literacy programmes

Capability Building Training Workshops. One of the most significant achievements of the project was bringing together like-minded organizations which are basically small and have difficulty of accessing funds for literacy implementation. Through the UNESCO-World Education project, the nineteen(19) member NGOs learn to work and share project experiences and institutional resources for a common goal of working towards a literate Mindanao.

While there is commonality of purpose and over-all goals towards literacy, education and training, the range of literacy services and delivery modes differ. Through the Mindanao NGO Network, small NGOs have been afforded institutional and staff development which were otherwise difficult to conduct due to scarce and limited resources. Today, there has been a significant improvement in institutional capabilities, a more focused literacy implementation and more particularly, staff competencies.

Network training activities were designed in response to needs identified by network members. Training activities were facilitated by a mix of local, regional, national and international consultants, with the bulk of the facilitation being done by regional and national experts. In many instances, network members were contracted on a fee-for-service basis to design and deliver training for their partnering organizations. In this way, the capacity of network members to be providers of services to other organizations was developed as was the concept of how NGOs can market their services to a wider range of organizations.

Capacity Building in Evaluation. From the outset of network activities, evaluation was viewed in terms of ‘evaluation for improvement’ rather than evaluation for judgement. The focus on the formative uses of evaluation thus shaped the training and capacity building efforts of the initiative.

In addition to specific training in evaluation of literacy programmes, participating NGOs were engaged in a five-part practical evaluation and planning exercise involving their respective organization and their participation in network activities. This process included:

- **A yearly self-assessment** that required each NGO to state and review its philosophy of literacy and the literacy methods used in its programmes; the number of learners served; the kind of programmes offered; and the level of financial, human and material resources invested in literacy activities.
- **A training needs assessment**, a by-product of the yearly self-assessment asks for basic information on what each NGO thought its training needs. This is both in terms of technical and/or sectoral training as well as its training needs in the areas of project planning, project management, literacy materials development and literacy programme evaluation.
- **Yearly training and technical assistance plans** were developed by network organizers and participating NGOs in response to the results of NGO training needs assessments. The development of this plan helped NGOs to make the connection between the results of needs assessment and the development of a strategy to address training needs.
- **A yearly NGO literacy programme implementation plans** that included not only the evaluation of the systems to support the delivery of literacy programmes but increased NGO capacity to measure learner and facilitator performance in literacy programmes.
- **A yearly planning meetings of the NGO network** was viewed as the culminating evaluation activity for participating NGOs in the network. This provided an opportunity for reflecting on the past year’s activities and the preparation of the next year’s training and technical assistance plan for the network.

Objective 2: Participating NGOs (agencies) will have developed and implemented a strategy for replicating capacity building activities with their own NGO (agency) and with other NGOs in their geographic area

Resource Generation Assessing Project Funds. While this project has primarily focused on institutional capability building for NGOs and not on funding for literacy activities, funding inevitably becomes a vital component for expansion and sustainability of literacy activities. And while the actual implementation of literacy projects was not a required activity for this project, NGOs feel that this is complementary to the capacity building.

The Mindanao NGO Network, again with NDFCAI-WED as a lead agency, is implementing the ADB-PNFED project in eleven (11) provinces of Mindanao, serving 38,500 learners. The learning materials (developed under the ACCU project and under World Education) are currently being used by the network in its literacy activities. The network supports the goals of the government on literacy and education.

Capacity for Replication and Re-echo of Network Training. Most network training activities were designed from a training of trainers perspective so that participating agencies would have training materials and training packages in hand for use in the training of other staff from their organizations. At the outset of the project, it has been clear that participating agencies were encouraged to select participants from their organizations for network training activities who would be able to share what they learned in the workshops with their colleagues upon their return from training. In so doing, network organizers were helping participating agencies think in terms of developing internal teams who could ensure the horizontal spread of the skills and information being developed through network training activities. While the issue of continuity in participation was difficult to manage, there was, over time, a greater appreciation on the part of network members for making sure that some of the same participants attended each training activity.

The greatest amount of horizontal spread of network training content into participating agencies was in the area of facilitator training and community organizing. Both topics were immediately applicable to the needs of the participating agencies and their staff.

During the initial selection process, care was given to ensuring as wide a geographic spread as possible. With the new intakes at the beginning of the second and third year of network activities, the same care was used in bringing groups from areas of Mindanao, which had not been part of the earlier coverage. By the end of the third year, all areas of Mindanao were represented, going well beyond the original conception of “Muslim Mindanao” and into areas with Lumads and indigenous peoples.

Objective 3: NGOs will have adapted or prepared new literacy materials for use in female functional literacy programmes

Instructional Materials Development. The goal of materials development was to assist other organizations with the development and adaptation of literacy materials to the needs of local learners. Each workshop resulted in the development of draft lessons of new literacy materials, for which participating agencies have the opportunity to further develop and pre-test their on-going literacy programmes. These activities provided working relationships with government agencies and demonstrate the critical role of the NGOs have to play in expanding literacy activities for women in Mindanao.

Under the ACCU-LRC project, eleven(11) learning materials were developed and one(1) audio-visual material was developed. The materials are being reproduced and utilized by network partners and other non-government organizations in their literacy implementation.

Under the UNESCO-World Education Mindanao Network Project, fourteen(14) prototype instructional materials were developed and are ready for printing. The problem of lack of printing funds is currently being faced.

The network organized one major literacy materials development workshop within the three-year project. National and regional resource persons served as workshop facilitators and where possible, maximum use was made of examples of literacy materials are being used in the region. The materials developed are now being used within their respective community and target learners. This is one of the concrete results, which demonstrate the relevance and usefulness of the materials.

The literacy materials development workshops were practical in orientation and provided participating agencies with an exposure to the principles of materials development but as well to the importance of the integration of meaningful development content with reading, writing and basic math skills. The workshops resulted in drafts of several sets of learning materials such as booklets, posters, primers and video all linked to family life, values formation, income generation, health, community development, gardening and the culture of peace. Another product of these workshops was the development of a better understanding on how to adapt existing literacy materials of other organizations for use with a new client group or in a different geographic area.

Objective 4: Functional literacy classes will have been organized for an increased number of women and girls in both urban and rural areas of Mindanao

The best statement of increased NGO capacity to plan and implement literacy activities for women in particular, and for the larger community in general, is the 38,500 new rural and urban learner “places” for 1999-2000. This increase in learning opportunities is linked to nearly \$1,150,000 in new funding accessed by NDFCAI-WED to implement literacy projects in eight provinces (8) of Mindanao. Funding for these activities were secured through the development of proposals which were responsive to specific donor interests and concerns. Training on proposal development and accessing funding had been an important part of capacity building involved in the three-year initiative.

The challenge will be to sustain this level of funding for literacy programme implementation over time.

Objective 5: Implementing NGOs (agencies) will be involved in a regional network focused on functional literacy form women

The formation of a Mindanao Literacy Networking in collaboration with other literacy groups and organizations, helped creation of a more positive and supportive environment for influencing the sphere of national policies and goals on education. As presented during the Mindanao Summit, it underscored the real status of literacy in the Philippines.

Its establishment clearly indicated that there is a regional network of organizations very much concerned with the support and expansion of educational opportunities for women in Mindanao. The work of the network was featured and recognized during the 1999 First Mindanao Summit on Literacy organized by Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Inc. – WOMEN IN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT in Davao City.

It emphasized the need to focus on non-formal education, to promote literacy which has proven to be an effective stepping stone into building a more confident self-reliant learners elevating them into higher planes of efficiency, better health, community participation and civic consciousness. Through networking, we are able to provide literacy education and training by reaching out to the poor, most isolated and hard to reach communities.

The Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) also sought to advocate, raise awareness and build consensus on the problems of illiteracy in the Asia/Pacific region. The ACCU LRC network serves as a common venue for the country member LRCs in the Asia Pacific to discuss vital issues on literacy, identify problems, discuss solutions and share information and experiences that worked in each country. The ACCU LRC network of the Asia Pacific, formalized common threads to forge partnership towards a stronger literacy agenda in the Asia Pacific.

Today, NDFCAI-WED looks into the future, hopeful with its network of partners, the Mindanao Literacy NGO Network for Philippines and local partners and the ACCU LRC network for the Asian Region.

Network activities have provided a forum for participating agencies to come together, discuss important issues and develop training responses to the specific needs of participating agencies.

Objective 6: Cooperation and collaboration will have increased between government and NGOs on issues related to women's education, life skills training, maternal and child health and income generation skills training

Cooperation and collaboration have increased between NGOs and government on issues related to women's education and training in Mindanao. This relationship increased because of the gradual devolution of responsibilities to the local level and the growing recognition that local NGOs represent viable means of reaching larger numbers of people with literacy promotion and work. At the same time, some of the increase in collaboration can be attributed to progress on peace and conflict resolution in the region, for which a large measure of the success of network activities related to this objective derive. Yet, much of the increase in collaboration and cooperation is due to the role played by NDFCAI-WED as the coordinator of network activities.

It is in this context that the Strategic Programmes for Enhancing Education and Development in Mindanao (SPEED-MINDANAO) Coalition, spearheaded by the Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Inc. - WOMEN IN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (NDFCAI-WED), organized the 1st **Mindanao Summit on Literacy with the theme, "Reaching the Unreached through Literacy, Education and Training"** last February 17-19, 1999 at Davao City. The 3-day summit were attended by 150 heads of institutions as well as non-government organizations strategically located all over Mindanao. The Summit Resolutions as approved, invoked all sectors, both the government and civil societies to work collaboratively towards the achievement of a literate Mindanao.

The February 1999 First Mindanao Summit on Literacy was a concrete manifestation of the growing potential of NGO/government collaboration. The presence of Governor Datu Zacaria Candao of Maguindanao and his strong advocacy for government collaboration with NGOs on literacy issues was made even stronger by his continued working relationship with NGOs on literacy implementation issues. The presence and participation of national educational authorities at the Summit clearly demonstrated the position of the national government and its support for increased government/NGO collaboration. The presence and participation of representatives of international donor agencies and of national foundations likewise signaled the support of another sphere for increased NGO-GO collaboration and cooperation.

The Regional Development Councils of Regions X and XII passed and approved resolutions fully supporting the Mindanao Literacy Summit Resolutions which invoke all local government units to appropriate local funds to specifically undertake literacy projects for and in collaboration with the civil society, NGOs and POs.

Today, fifty (50) learning classes are funded by the Provincial Government of Misamis Oriental and the Municipal Government of Sultan sa Barongis in Maguindanao with other (Local Government Unit) LGUs following suit with the network, being responsible for monitoring the implementation of the project.

VII. Challenges in the Future

The goals of the next phase of the development in literacy for women in Muslim Mindanao is to further strengthen and maintain the advocacy work of the NGOs and to continually seek for funding for literacy programme implementation.

It has been realized that networks are important venues through which organizations could discuss and thresh out various range of issues and various entry points for mutual sharing of resources.

The formation of a Mindanao Literacy Networking in collaboration with other literacy groups and organizations, helps creation of a more positive and supportive environment for influencing the sphere of national policies and goals on education. As presented during the Mindanao Summit, it underscored the real status of literacy in the Philippines.

It emphasized the need to focus on non-formal education, to promote literacy which has proven to be an effective stepping stone into building a more confident and self-reliant learners, elevating them into higher planes of efficiency, better health, community participation and civic consciousness. Through networking, we are able to provide literacy education and training by reaching out to the poor, most isolated and hard to reach communities.

ACCU sought to advocate, raise awareness and build consensus on the problems of illiteracy in the Asia Pacific. The ACCU LRC network is serving as a common venue for the country member LRCs in the Asia Pacific to discuss vital issues on literacy, identify problem, discuss solutions and share information and experiences that worked in each country. The ACCU LRC network of the Asia Pacific, formalized common threads to forge partnership towards a stronger literacy agenda in the Asia Pacific.

Today, NDFCAI-WED looks into the future, hopeful with its network of partners, the Mindanao Literacy NGO Network for Philippines and local partners and the ACCU LRC network for the Asian Region.

Annex A : Description of Network NGOs

As of 1998, the Network is comprised of the following NGOs. They are listed in alphabetical order:

1. *Bangsamoro Women Foundation for Peace and Development* is a new NGO established as a result of the Peace Agreement Signing between the government and the MNLF fighters led by Nur Misuari.
2. *Bukagan Ecological Association (BEA)*. In its seventh year of operation in Misamis Occidental, BEA serves the Subanen cultural communities. Their main focus is on environmental education in Northern Mindanao. Their Subanen and Adult Alternative Education for Development project component was recently awarded second place honors in the National Literacy Awards Search for Most Outstanding Literacy Programme. BEA publishes a quarterly newsletter of its activities.
3. *Kadtuntaya Foundation* A Maguindanaon term meaning “understanding each other in order to foster better relations”, the Kadtuntaya Foundation (KFI) was formed as a result of the 1986 EDSA Revolution and the need to sustain Muslim-Christian dialogue. As a development-oriented NGO within the Securities and Exchange Commission since 1989, it works with the urban and rural communities in Cotabato City and Maguindanao province. It coordinates research activities with the government and has facilitated the establishment of ten community-based multi-sectoral organizations and cooperative socio-economic projects.
4. *Lanao Council of Literacy Service Providers* is a consortium of three NGOs who are seeking institutional capacity building training. The *Gender Advocates of Lanao Sur (GAD)* is a newly established group of professionals who were organized a result of CIDA’s GAD training which NDFCAI-WED initiated under its CIDA contract on gender. They were given the Literacy Service Contracting Scheme (LSCS) by DECS-BNFE. It is hoped that this group will form a literacy coordinating council similar to the ones in Davao and Misamis Oriental.
5. *Local Literacy Coordinating Council in Davao del Sur* has been actively promoting the EFA 2000, a goal of eradicating illiteracy since 1995. Activities center on improving the quality of formal education and a basic, functional literacy and continuing education programme to enhance skills in livelihood education for empowerment. The LCC targets 6 municipalities of Davao del Sur, comprising of an illiterate population of approximately 51,000 people.
6. *Local Literacy Coordination Council in Claveria District of Misamis Oriental* Organized by the DECS, the Council serves as the umbrella organization of all literacy efforts both by the government and NGOs. Its main objective is to implement programmes to institutionalize its members to ensure an effective means to eradicate illiteracy. The LCC targets those populations that had been deprived of education and social services in the past and offers non-formal education vocational courses and training in functional literacy and other technical skills. It is charged with the management, implementation, monitoring and pre/post evaluation of projects involved in instructional materials development, ensuring participation of members in literacy facilitator training and conducting literacy classes.
7. *Lumad Development* is an NGO engaged in agricultural training activities integrating literacy. It serves the areas of Davao Sur, particularly the Malitobog area. It was awarded the 1996 Most Outstanding National Literacy programme by the DECS-BNFE and UNESCO.
8. *Maguindanao Development Foundation, Inc.* is an NGO based in South Cotabato, Koronadal and serves the upland farmers and is focused on agricultural technology transfer in the SOCSARGEN area. In 1996 they started literacy classes for the wives of farmers.

9. *Mimbahandi Tribal Council* is a community-based organization established in 1993. They operate in Camagong, Nasipit, Agusan. They are closely cooperating and coordinating with the Office for Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC), a national agency responsible for the country's IP's and cultural minorities. Mimbahandi's expertise lies in the areas of childcare development and adult education.
10. *Mindanao State University - Tawi Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography* is a state university whose community extension project is engaged in providing literacy in the island municipalities of Tawi Tawi.
11. *Neighbors Population and Development Services* is an NGO working on family planning and reproductive health. It implements projects in close collaboration with Department of Health, Population Office, POPCOM and LGUs, etc. It is involved in adult education of mothers, most of whom are illiterates.
12. *Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Women in Enterprise Development (NDFCAI-WED) Project* was established by the Notre Dame University in 1987 to provide opportunities for education, training and empowerment to the underserved, poor and unemployed women and girls residing in the ARMM. WED training centers offer training in adult education, livelihood skills, enterprise development and credit assistance for a culturally mixed group of Muslim, Christian and indigenous women. Projects promote peace and inter-faith understanding among the different religious and ethnic groups and have gained numerous awards and recognition from national and international organizations. The WED project in particular offers a Gender and Development Training Package. The Foundation activities link to ADB-BNFE Project, the Provincial Government, ADB-Kabulnan Project, CIDA Gender initiatives, the Aboitiz Group Foundation and capacity building workshop of the Networking project, serving over 40,000 learners and 18 NGOs.
13. *Sarangbangun Foundation* is a Jolo, Sulu based NGO who's project activity is centered more on maternal-child health care. Adult education and literacy is now a new project component. It works collaboratively with LGUs and line agencies.
14. *Self-Help Education Programme Appropriate for Cultural Communities (SHEPACC)* An NGO serving the cultural communities of Malaybalay, Bukidnon operating in the northern part of Mindanao. Their existing literacy programme serves young children and adult learners. As of April 1998, they operate learning centers for Manobo communities in nine sites of the municipality of San Fernando, in the hinterlands of Burkidnon province. They still hope to expand their literacy activities. They have strong collaboration with the local government units of Burkidnon province with the DECS.
15. *The Yakan Ministry Foundation* is a church-based NGO serving Basilan and Zamboanga. It implements functional literacy activities serving the Yakans and other tribes of the areas.
16. *Tiruray Day School Project* Founded in 1982 by the Notre Dame Educational Association (NDEA), the project operates in the Municipality of North Upi, in the province of Maguindanao under the ARMM region. Affiliated with Christian Children's Fund (CCF), the project current serves 450 indigent (Tiruray) children and their families under a Sponsorship Programme of CCF. The project provides provisions of tuition and school supplies/uniforms to children in formal schools. Parents are offered training on livelihood skills such as tailoring and dressmaking, food production and preservation skills related to agriculture and training in health methods and disease prevention. In addition, children are provided with medical and dental check-ups, immunization and medical and food supplies.

17. *Tribal Mission Philippines* is a multi-denominational Christian-based NGO working with the IPs in the area of Davao City and Davao del Sur. Literacy is a project activity integrated in its numerous projects.
18. *Tribal Leaders Development Foundation, Inc.* serves the areas of Tboli and Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. It is involved in primary services on environment, enterprise development and now literacy. It works closely with the DECS-NFE programme.
19. *78th Infantry Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, Philippine Army Literacy Programme Service (ALPS)*. A community relations activity of the Philippine Army which is community-based and being implemented by military personnel. The ALPS, while a nationally mandated programme, is not fully implemented in all provinces. The 78th Infantry Battalion operating in the Mileb, Sultan Sa Barongis, Maguindanao has closely been working with NDFCAI-WED in the ADB-Kabulnan Literacy Project.