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# TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE

Success Stories from the Marawi Response Project



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**Towards Self-Reliance**  
Success Stories from the  
Marawi Response Project

March 2023



# FOREWORD

I had the pleasure of visiting the MRP in March 2022 to witness the incredible resilience and strength of the Maranao people. They had gone through two total upheavals, the 2017 siege followed by the COVID-19, but their spirit was unbreakable as they continued to work together to improve their own lives and their communities.

The project touched the lives of so many, but really this is a story of unleashing potential. USAID, Plan International, Maradeca and EcoWeb can all feel proud to support so many women leaders such as Samira who is now a gender-based violence (GBV) prevention champion and Meme who runs her small business in Dimapatoy, Bubong.

MRP also supported many brilliant young people. I am inspired by young social entrepreneurs such as Sittie and Nidah who are running their businesses and while also contributing to the wellbeing of their communities.

MRP is also a story of solidarity. Tens of thousands of families opened their homes and hearts to those displaced during the siege including Abaga Bangaray Chairman Karis whose community took in 36 families.

My sincerest gratitude to the thousands of people who have worked so hard to make this project possible. A special thank you to USAID/Philippines for its unwavering support, without which the MRP would not have been possible.

I look forward to keeping track of all the wonderful people highlighted in this book because your future truly shines bright!

My warmest regards,

John Lundine  
Sr. Director Development Programs  
Plan International USA



# **ABOUT THE MARAWI RESPONSE PROJECT (MRP)**

In May 2017, a series of firefights broke out between armed groups and state forces stationed in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur. The conflict that swept across the city over five months displaced thousands of citizens.

The U.S. government through the USAID committed over \$60 million for humanitarian and development support to communities affected by the Marawi conflict. Part of this commitment is MRP–USAID’s partnership with Plan International, the Philippine government, civil society, and the private sector to improve economic and social conditions of Lanao communities affected by the Marawi violent conflict. Implemented from August 2018 to March 2023, MRP channeled vital support to both home-based internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their host communities across 23 municipalities in Lanao Del Norte and Lanao Del Sur plus Marawi and Iligan cities.









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# PARTICIPATION







A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a clear plastic spray bottle with a blue trigger. The person is spraying a fine mist onto a row of mushroom cultivation bags. The bags are made of clear plastic and contain a substrate with several mushrooms growing from them. The mushrooms have white caps and gills. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the grow room environment with green vertical supports.

**HARVESTING  
CROPS OF HOPE:  
MUSHROOMS AND FOOD SECURITY**









Rice straws are a byproduct of growing rice and are usually burned by farmers by the end of the harvest season. Sittie Asia Mai thought she had found hope in this waste product after she and many others were displaced by the Marawi siege. For months they relied on relief goods but eventually, even their adoptive community of Ditsaan Ramin struggled to provide for IDPs like her. With many other determined individuals, she founded the Guinaopan Youth Action Organization (GYAO), planning to buy rice straws to use as a substrate for growing mushrooms.

Just as Sittie and her friends were preparing for their first mushroom harvest, the COVID-19 pandemic hit their community. Quarantine restrictions meant they could not ship their products to big cities. This situation posed a setback to GYAO, but they eventually decided to give back and share their first and what they thought would be their last harvest to help sustain the needs of Ditsaan Ramin.









Seeing Sittie's strength for turning a difficult situation around, MRP partnered with GYAO, providing much-needed training and production inputs to resume operations. GYAO has since expanded its reach through a supply partnership with the Ikram Agricultural Cooperative in Marawi City, ensuring a stable market for their mushrooms.

With this project moving forward, Sittie started branching out to other initiatives such as Peace Harvest, an organization promoting sustainable gardening in *madrasahs* (Islamic schools), proving that just like her mushrooms, Sittie continues to find light and hope even in challenging times.



A woman wearing a pink hijab and niqab is seated at a table covered with a patterned tablecloth. She is holding a white coffee cup with both hands. The background is a dark wall with a white floral arrangement hanging from the top. The text is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

**PEACE IS BREWING:  
NIDAH TRANSFORMS TRAUMA  
OVER CUPS OF COFFEE**





“I was trapped in Marawi after the explosions started,” said Norhanidah “Nidah” Macatoon, a working student at the time. “The gunfighting started right before my eyes. The next morning, after spending a sleepless night in my workplace, hearing all the bullets pass right over us, we walked for hours along Marawi’s deserted streets just so we could go back to our families.”

The trauma from the five-month siege weighed heavily on Nidah over the years and she knew that many others had similar, if not worse, experiences. This inspired Nidah to co-found Team Aqilah, a youth-led organization offering psychosocial support and advocating for mental health awareness for Muslim Filipinos in the province of Lanao del Sur. To date, they have provided mental health support services to around a thousand students and young adults.







Among those who sought their services was a former rebel turned coffee farmer. This inspired Nidah and her team to engage with other former Moro Islamic Liberation Front combatants now making a living as coffee farmers. Together, they launched Cup of Hope, a social enterprise selling coffee and supporting mental health initiatives.

Through an MRP grant, Cup of Hope launched a coffee shop in Marantao. This new shop not only supports mental health projects financially, it also transformed into a safe space for Nidah and other young Muslim Filipinos to have supportive conversations.







## Community Solidarity Groups

**672**

**CSGs**

**17,500**

**total members**

65% female & 35% male

**9,600**

**IDPs**

**7,900**

**host community  
members**

**5,500**

**youth members**

**16 federations**

6 women, 5 youth,  
5 farmers and fisherfolks

As of March 2023





**BACK TO THE BOOKS:  
JEHAN'S FIGHT FOR EDUCATION THROUGH  
DISPLACEMENT AND PANDEMIC**



In a temporary shelter for Marawi siege survivors in Barangay Sagonsongan, first-time volunteer Jehan had a revelation. She saw that children in the shelter still wanted to continue their education despite the trauma of the siege and the challenges of living life as IDPs. This inspired her to work with Project Sindao, a community-based youth group offering tutoring services, educational support, and, most importantly, a communal study space.

In partnership with MRP, the services offered by Project Sindao were developed into a mobile safe spaces hub in remote areas of Lanao del Sur that provided peace education for women and children.

When COVID-19 hit their community, the problem of access to education resurfaced. “Only this time, it was because of the pandemic,” she said. Schools closed and when they reopened, there was a shift towards remote learning, making it difficult for those without reliable internet access.

“In many places, not all parents can read or write,” said Jehan. “And not all of them can afford private tutoring for their children.”







**“THE SESSIONS WERE  
RELIEF TO US PARENTS,  
AS IT WAS DIFFICULT  
FOR US TO ASSIST OUR  
CHILDREN IN THEIR  
MODULAR LEARNING.”**





Determined to assist the community, Project Sindao established a community learning hub using their safe spaces grant. They also mobilized grants from other organizations, enabling them to serve more kids and families.

Project Sindao is now helping children and parents to shift back to face-to-face classes, capturing lessons for similar challenges in future.



A man with dark hair, wearing a red polo shirt and a grey, textured vest, stands in profile against a background of dense green foliage. He is wearing a lanyard with an ID card around his neck. The ID card has a photo and the name 'KARIM M. SARIP'. The vest has a 'Karim' name tag on the left chest and a 'Supervisor' tag at the bottom. The text 'WRITING AND READING BEFORE WEDDING RINGS: KARIM AND HIS CLASSROOM ADVOCACY' is overlaid in large, white, bold letters with a blue outline. A vertical white bar is on the left side of the text.

**WRITING AND READING  
BEFORE WEDDING RINGS:  
KARIM AND HIS CLASSROOM ADVOCACY**



Raised by his grandmother in Marawi City after his parents separated, Karim is well aware of the power of a woman who can stand on her own. With support from his grandmother, they found ways to get by. “I found ways to use my talents somehow,” said Karim. “I taught dance. I tutored other kids.”

When, through diligence, he finally became a teacher, he found that his students faced difficult struggles including early and arranged marriages. One of his biggest frustrations was when a student informed him that she would be quitting school for an arranged marriage. Karim did all he could to persuade her to continue her studies. “She quit anyway,” he said, “and I felt like I failed.”











## Gender Role Socialization

- The process of learning and internalizing culturally approved ways of thinking, feeling and behaving according to one's gender
- We internalize social expectations for how we should behave accordingly

INFLUENCE

RELIGION  
Chastity  
Invitations





When the Marawi siege broke out, Karim was separated from his grandmother for five months before he finally found her in an evacuation center in Balo-i, Lanao del Norte and restart their lives with livelihood and advocacy support from MRP.

With his strong commitment to end GBV and advance female empowerment, MRP engaged Karim as a youth champion, conducting GBV awareness sessions in his community.

Even when he returned to teaching in Marawi, Karim integrated GBV awareness modules in his lesson plans. “This way I can help reduce child marriages in the community,” Karim explained. Through this, he hopes that both boys and girls alike will reach their full potential.



**“I WANT ALL OF MY STUDENTS TO BECOME CHAMPIONS OF ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE. THE SAME PRINCIPLES—ACCEPTANCE AND UNITY—HELP US HAVE A PEACEFUL COMMUNITY.”**



**Gender in Islam**

- The essence of Islam is revealed in the humanistic values it embodies: **ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE CONSIDERED EQUAL BECAUSE ALL ARE EQUALLY CREATED BY GOD (ALLAH)**
- The cornerstone of Islam is TAWHID which means complete faith and belief
- **Misconceptions** about the status of women in Islam:
  - That men are the masters and women are the slaves
  - That men are superior to women
  - That men are allowed to beat women
  - That one man equals two women
- And women shall have rights similar to the rights of men, according to what is equitable. (SurahAl Baqarah[The Heifer] 2:228)





**78 LEADERS**

**21 BARANGAYS**

**5 MUNICIPALITIES**

The rapid gender assessment of Lanao del Sur confirmed that GBV is occurring in the province, with child and early forced marriage, domestic violence, economic violence, and physical abuse being the most common forms. Interventions to address these GBV issues include:

- The development of a pool of local gender champions comprised of women and men leaders including youth.
- Round table discussions with Muslim religious leaders in Lanao del Sur to raise awareness on GBV harmful practices.
- Community-based GBV awareness raising campaigns.
- GAD planning and budget workshops for Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) and Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children (BCPC) officers in five municipalities.









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**TRUST**





**HILLS TO HARVEST:  
GROWING HOPE IN KARIS' VILLAGE**











**K**aris Macarambon, is the Barangay Chariman of Abaga, a scenic mountain village overlooking Lake Lanao in the Municipality of Balindong. After the Marawi siege, he opened up their community to IDPs. “Thirty-six households came here for refuge,” he said. “Some were taken in by their relatives in our barangay, while the local government provided shelters to those who did not have a place to stay.”

Meeting the needs of both IDPs and the host community members posed a challenge, given their limited resources.

When the MRP came to their village to provide grants for community solidarity groups (CSG), one of the projects the community initiated was the Abaga Provincial Demonstration farm. Abaga’s mountainous climate was perfect for farming and, soon, barren hills gave way to an abundant harvest of bell peppers.







“In the years the farmers worked together,” Karis said, “they remained united towards the same goal.” And together, they brought food to their tables and uplifted their lives.

At present, half of the 36 families that came to Abaga after the siege still live there. The farm, in the meantime, has quadrupled in size, growing a whole variety of crops using sustainable farming methods. The harvest is so abundant that it can supply markets as far as Cagayan de Oro City.

Inspired by their success, the local government of Balindong has tapped the farmers of Abaga to train other farmers in the municipality. Through this, Abaga farmers are spreading the seeds of change originally planted in their village.





**FABRIC OF SOCIETY:  
MEME STITCHES TOGETHER A COMMUNITY**









**M**eme of Dimapatoy, Bubong has a big heart. Born Rasmia Mikunug, Meme (pronounced Mimi), is the second of ten siblings and is no stranger to helping those in need.

After the Marawi siege, she and her family took in IDPs, even those unrelated to them. By Ramadan of that year, they were providing food and shelter for 40 IDPs. While this posed a great responsibility for her and her family, Meme found joy in it.

When the MRP team came to their barangay, Meme thought she could help the IDPs living with them avail of grants. She joined Salimbago Ka Masa, a CSG, and was later surprised to find out that members of the host community such as herself would also be supported by the project.









Salimbago Ka Masa received a dressmaking grant, which included sewing machines and training support. At first, they used what they learned to sew clothes for their families. Eventually, they expanded and began to make an income from their newfound skills.

Though Salimbago Ka Masa was organized for livelihood, it soon became more than that. Meme's warm leadership, created a bond in her community that brings people together for civic and livelihood activities.







For Meme, it all boils down to trust. “Your colleagues should trust you,” she said. “And you must be worthy of that trust as a team leader.”











**DANCING AWAY THE PAIN:  
SANIRA FINDS COMMUNITY  
THROUGH TRADITION**



**S**anira was 13 when the Marawi siege broke out. In the chaos, she and her family were displaced to the nearby Ditsaan Ramain. Having experienced such an ordeal at a young age, she found it difficult to process the events and the feelings behind them. Socializing with new faces, in particular, was the biggest challenge.

Seven years later, Sanira looks back with empathy toward her younger self. “I was a child,” she said. “I did not know how to deal with the change of environment, finding myself with no friends.”

One day, however, she finally found a sense of community through a local cultural dance group. There, she found a sense of belonging and a passion for the art of dance. This dance group would soon evolve into Ogop Ka Youth Organization with 37 members.

MRP provided Maranao musical instruments to Sanira and her youth group, which enabled them to organize cultural presentations.



















The cultural presentations not only helped to fund scholarship grants to members of the Ogop Ka Youth organization but also celebrated their Maranao cultural heritage.

“I do not want the next generation to be ignorant of our past,” said Sanira. “Our roots, our history could disappear. I feel responsible for preserving our identity by learning traditions and sharing them through dance.”





**121**  
**COMMUNITIES**

MRP granted social cohesion grants assistance that facilitated engagement between host and displaced communities. These grants supported cultural heritage events and upgrading of community facilities.



**80,770**  
**YOUTH**  
**BENEFICIARIES**  
as of March 2023



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From 2019 to 2022, MRP supported displaced and host community youth through workforce readiness and other training programs and small grants support for economic improvement and civic engagement.



A male mechanic with short dark hair, wearing a grey and blue Hyundai uniform, is leaning over the open hood of a car. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background shows a workshop environment with a concrete wall and a car wheel visible on the right.

**FROM FEAR TO  
FRIENDSHIP:**

**ALLANOR LEADS THE WAY THROUGH PREJUDICES**





Allanor Mauna felt that his dreams died after the Marawi siege. He was studying Education in college and was less than two years away from receiving a bachelor's degree. In the wake of the siege he had to quit school amid his family's struggle with finances and the care of his ailing mother.

In October 2019, Allanor and five other scholars were enrolled in a six-month intensive training at the Hyundai Dream Center Philippines, the result of a partnership between Hyundai, USAID and Plan International. For them, this meant a chance at a stable, well-paying job in the automotive industry.

Once Allanor and his fellow scholars set foot on the training venue, however, he knew that their trials were far from over. Their fellow scholars from Luzon and the Visayas seemed uncomfortable around them. Allanor soon found out why.





**HYUNDAI  
DREAM CENTRE  
PHILIPPINES**





“The Marawi siege was still fresh on everyone’s minds,” he said. “Outsiders feared displaced Marawi residents.”

But months of working together allowed them to share their experiences and they formed bonds with classmates. Allanor was later elected batch president. The first Muslim batch president in the program’s history.

“It was a huge honor for me,” said Allanor. “And a chance to correct misconceptions about us. Trust and friendship paved the way for understanding.”

Now back in Marantao with new skills, Allanor began to offer specialized car care services to give back to his community.











**CHANGE OF HEART:  
HOW HENRY TURNED HIS  
DISTRUST INTO RESPECT**





Iligan City is the industrial hub of Northern Mindanao, it is cosmopolitan and liberal. Only 40 kilometers away, the Islamic City of Marawi presents a stark contrast with its known conservative culture.

Among those who used to harbor distrust for the “other city” was Henry Echavez, the president of the Santiago Fisherfolk and Livelihood Association (SANFLA) in Iligan City.

In the wake of the Marawi siege, however, IDPs from Marawi began trickling into his community. “At first, we just stayed away from each other,” said Henry. “Most of the Maranao in our barangay kept to themselves anyway.”



But when SANFLA was chosen to receive MRP support for an aquaculture livelihood project, Henry found himself interacting with the Maranao residents in the community. Over time, they began to bond over fishing and farming practices and eventually collaborated on bigger projects.

“We realized that they are actually peaceful people, and very industrious,” Henry shared. “Many IDPs have established new businesses such as sari-sari stores and hardware shops in our barangay, which cater to both Muslims and Christians alike.”

“We are now much bigger as an organization,” he continued. “If blessed with an opportunity to participate in other programs with the Maranao people, we would now be most willing to do so!”



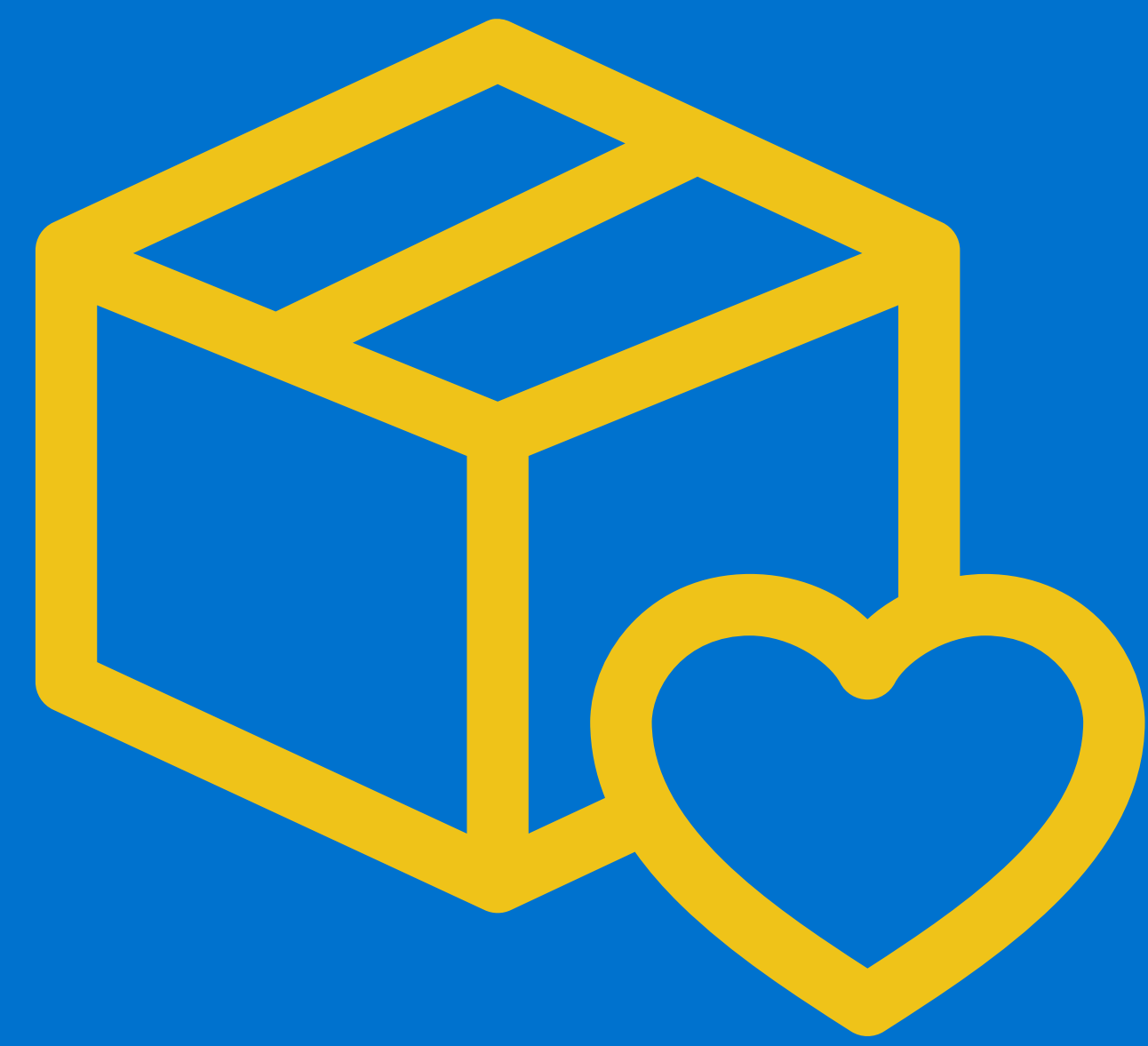












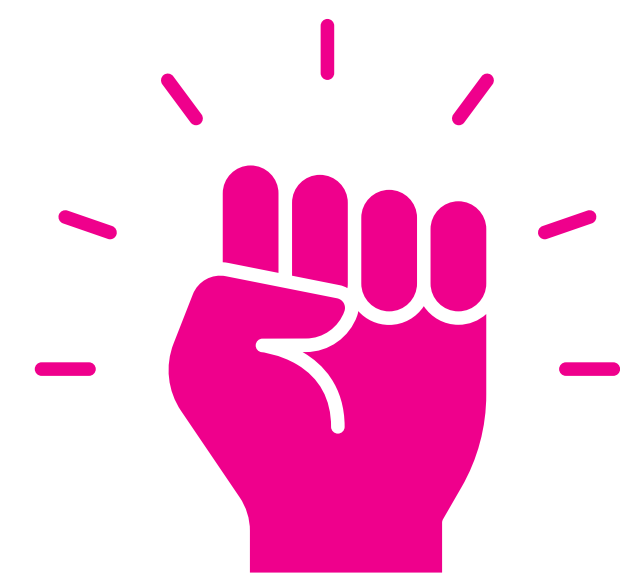
## **PHP 78.9M LIVELIHOOD micro-grants**

MRP awards community grants to CSGs to help improve economic conditions of IDPs and host community members. As of March 2023, 11,326 CSG members have benefitted from livelihood micro grant packages.









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**EMPOWERMENT**





**COMING BACK HOME:  
AMENODEN'S STORY OF RISING UP**









**A**menoden considers himself more of an entrepreneur than a farmer. In 2006, he left his home of Barangay Abaga, Balindong to find his fortune in Boracay island.

When the 2017 Marawi siege began, affecting many of his relatives, he invited two of his siblings to Boracay to help manage his shops. However, just as his siblings settled in, the entire island was closed off for rehabilitation. This and several other misfortunes including the COVID-19 pandemic forced Amenoden and his siblings back to their hometown.









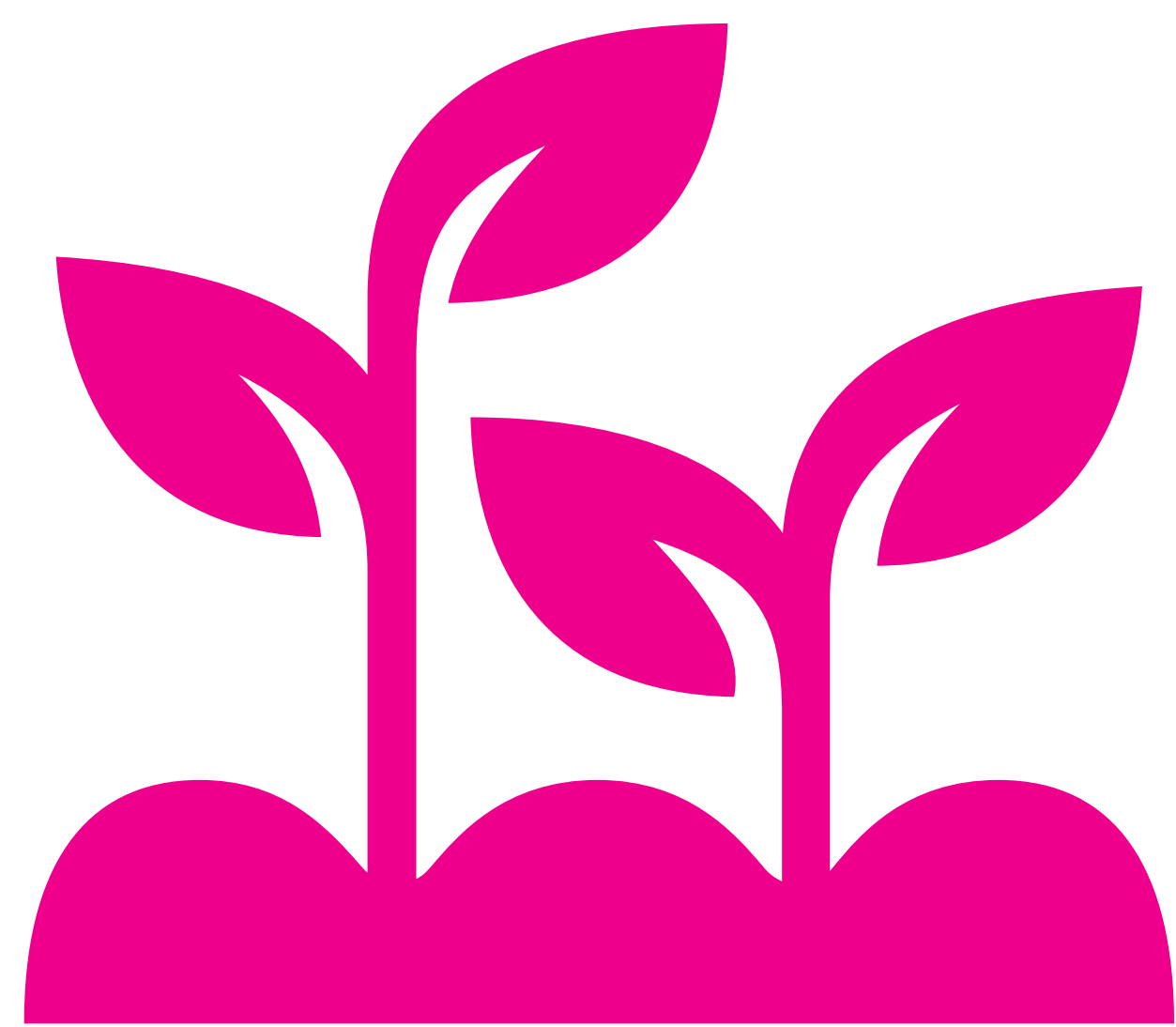
He arrived home just in time to sign up for Salapidaw, a CSG that MRP was training as part of a horticultural livelihood support grant. While this was vastly different from his previous life, Amenoden said that it expanded his economic options and it gave him a better appreciation of farming.

“I didn’t just join for myself,” said Amenoden. “I saw it as a way to help the community that took me back in. This work sustains the people of Barangay Abaga.”









**12 demo farms  
support grants**

**23 community  
solidarity groups**

Demonstration farm is a learning hub and production center for crop products. MRP awarded demonstration farm and support grants for horticulture, mariculture and aquaculture production. It benefitted CSGs in nine barangays in the municipalities of Balindong, Baloi, Ditsaan Ramin, Marantao and city of Iligan.









**LET'S TALK THIS THROUGH:  
NURJEHAN BUILDS PEACE THROUGH DIALOGUE**













Nurjehan grew up seeing personal conflicts escalate into *rido* or clan wars that often became violent. Many people lived in fear of being targeted by rival families, ultimately limiting their participation in community activities. This was particularly hard for young people like Nurjehan, as it kept them from living normal lives, all for conflicts that they were not personally involved in.

But Nurjehan believed that this didn't have to be the case. With other members of the Salimbago Youth Alliance, she established Project RINAWareness, an initiative to empower women and the youth to participate in peacebuilding and conflict mitigation. The project was launched under the 2021 Peace Promotion Fellowship of Equal Access International, supported by USAID and Plan International.



Through this project, Nurjehan hopes that instead of constantly living in fear, young people can share stories and initiate dialogue that prevents conflict from escalating into violence. She said that this is important not only to the youth but to the entire community as well.

**“DEVELOPMENT COMES  
AFTER PEACE IS  
ATTAINED.”**

And with development, she believes, everyone can have a better life.

Although Nurjehan knows that the practice of *rido* will not end with their generation, she hopes that the conversations they are starting will slowly change people’s mindsets toward more peaceful means of conflict resolution.











**MOTHER KNOWS BEST:  
NASHIBA STITCHES TOGETHER LIVELIHOOD  
AND A COMMUNITY OF WOMEN**





“My mother used to tell me that the (household) skills she taught me would someday save me,” said Nashiba Macabando, 46. And her mother was right, although the circumstances were probably not what she had imagined.

Nashiba, like many others, was displaced from her home in Marawi to the town of Poono Marantao. Despite the circumstances, she was welcomed warmly by fellow mothers in her new community.

“We were all eager to do something useful,” she said. “And what better way to do it than with the skills our own mothers taught us?”







They banded together to establish Pakaranon Women, a CSG that received entrepreneurial skills training and a dressmaking grant from the MRP. They started out making clothes but quickly realized they could not compete with fast fashion sold in shops. Instead, they shifted to making top-quality bed sheets, pillowcases, and curtains, which were in high demand.

Their success grew even more when they recently started marketing online.

“All of us had phones and social media accounts,” said Nashiba. “While our kids were in school, we would sell from the comfort of our homes.”

Today, their initiative employs 84 members, allowing them to support their families. “Who knew I would find family in strangers?” Nashiba mused. “I hope all displaced women can have the same opportunities as I did.”

Nashiba now leads the Marantao Women’s Association, a federation of women entrepreneurs and workers working with the local government of Marantao to advance the protection of women against domestic violence.





**148,200**  
**WOMEN**  
**PARTICIPANTS**



in livelihood and social cohesion grants  
and training support.









**ENCOURAGING  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP:  
BUSINESS IN BUTIG BOOM AS  
AMENODIN LEADS THE WAY**



Amenodin Said Isra, a father of four, used to live in one of the areas most affected by the Marawi siege. He and his family had to leave behind their home and their many buy-and-sell businesses, seeking refuge in his wife's hometown, Butig.

A businessman and a leader by heart, he organized his neighbors into Inungka, a CSG that received a grocery grant from the MRP. This grant included commodities that they used to set up 15 grocery stores across the town. He explained that instead of concentrating their grant into a single store, they thought it would be more strategic to distribute it among different branches in their community.







“We want to avoid putting all our eggs in one basket since it will make us vulnerable to losing our capital,” he said.

The group meets every six months to strategize. Recently, they registered their group with the Cooperative Development Agency, which will qualify them for additional support from the government.

Four years after losing everything they owned, Amenodin and his fellow IDPs are now enjoying the outcome of their hardwork. Ultimately, their success was not theirs alone. With the influx of customers and subsequent development of surrounding areas, their host community of Butig is grateful to them for making their barangay a more conducive place for business.













# **MOTHERS OF THE EARTH:**

**SAMINA RAISES BOTH CHILDREN  
AND CROPS IN HER NEW HOME**



Displaced from their Marawi City home, Samina Lao-an and her family moved to the Bayanihan Village of Santa Elena in Iligan City. There, her husband earned a meager income as a pedicab driver. And though Samina had gone to college, she could not work a regular job as she had to care of their six children.

Samina soon became involved with Katagompiya Women, a group of unemployed mothers who were engaged with the MRP demonstration farm in their barangay. Under Samina's leadership, they established a work rotation that allowed them to care for the farm while also caring for their homes. Their farm harvest soon made its way into their daily meals.

Noraima Daranda, another member of Katagompiya, said that the farm fostered a sense of community.

“We are happy when we are together at the farm,” said Noraima. “We do not feel burdened with work because we enjoy each other's company. And seeing the fruits of our labor fills us with happiness.”





Determined to expand their farm, Katagompiya sought additional support from the Iligan City government, which allowed them to increase their harvest, diversify their crops, and link to suppliers and vegetable wholesalers.

They began to sell their produce as well as feed their families. For Samina, the obvious next step is for them to own market stalls. Through this, she hopes that Katagompiya can better support their families.

“As mothers, there is nothing we would not do for our children,” said Samina.







**FROM SCRAPS TO STRAPS:  
SALIKA WEAVES TOGETHER  
TRADITION AND FASHION**



Salika Maguindanao grew up watching her mother, Saadera Basmala, weaving beautiful, intricate Maranao textiles. It was therefore only natural for her to turn to this craft while living in an evacuation center after the Marawi siege.

As she wove *langkit* or Maranao cloth strips in the center, other evacuees gathered around, fascinated by her work. Salika realized that between their interest and her skills, they could earn an income despite having lost everything.

With bamboo and fabric scraps, Salika, along with her mother and her husband, Jardin Samad, taught evacuees the art of *langkit* weaving. Among her best students were other women and out-of-school youth in the evacuation center who would later help her establish the brand Maranao Collectibles.

Seeing the potential of their brand, the MRP linked Maranao Collectibles with business expos, both local and international, where Salika was able to make connections and reach a wider market.







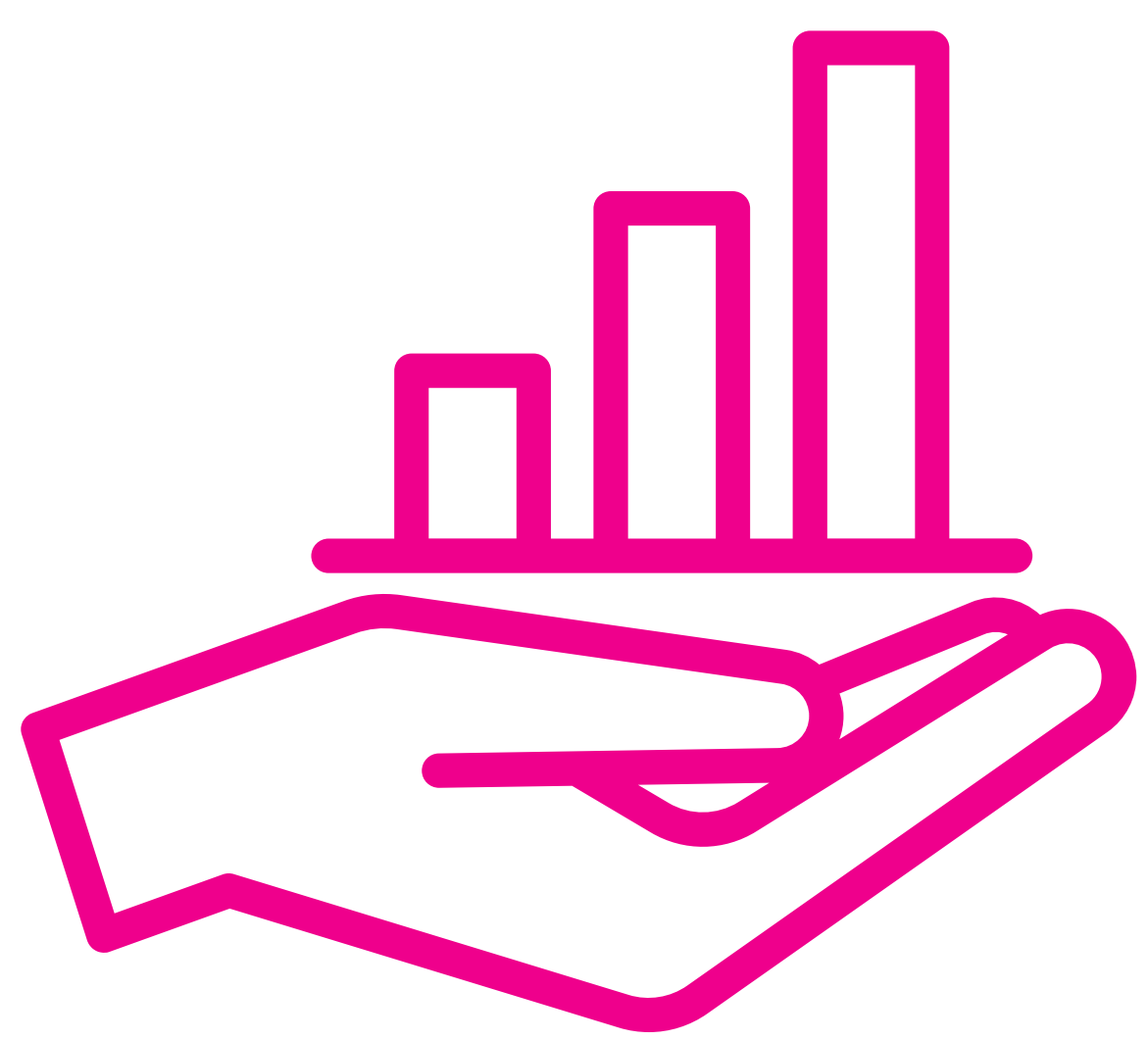
For Salika, this was extra meaningful because she had long felt the need to preserve this art that had been passed on through generations. At the same time, she knew that they also had to adapt to the sensibilities of the local market. With sewing machines and other equipment they received from the MRP, Maranao Collectibles began creating trendy bags and accessories featuring decorative langkit details.

What started as a woman and her loom in an evacuation center is now a brand that employs 80 people, all taught by Salika and her family.









**394 BUSINESS  
RECOVERY GRANTS  
WORTH PHP 106-MILLION  
to 731 ENTREPRENEURS**

In its four years of implementation, MRP has awarded grants to select displaced business owners who used to operate in Marawi City to help revitalize their businesses and expand employment opportunities.













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# REPRESENTATION





**TEACH A MAN TO FISH:  
AMINOLAH'S DISPLACEMENT  
HELPS HIM LEAD THE WAY**





**S**hy and reserved, Aminolah “Kap” Mapupuno, was not the type to be involved in politics. A self-described introvert, he prefers the obscurity of his old job as a cashier at the Mindanao State University (MSU) in Marawi City.

He and his family lived a comfortable life until the Marawi siege forced them to flee to Iligan City. There, Kap experienced the difficulties of living in displacement and decided to return to his ancestral home in Balindong at the end of the siege.

Back home, he discovered that IDPs were not getting adequate assistance to recover from the effects of the siege and stand on their own. Determined to change this, he ran for the seat of Barangay Captain of the lakeshore village of Bantogawato and won.









Through the leadership of this quiet man, the barangay linked with the MRP for a tilapia farming grant. What was initially a small tilapia farm grew and later caught the attention—and the support—of the provincial government of Lanao del Sur.

But what Kap is most proud of is how well IDPs and locals in his barangay get along. For him, it all boils down to treating all people equally and with respect, things that he wished he had when he himself was an IDP.






**9,361**  
**INDIVIDUALS TRAINED**

MRP trained CSGs on various civic engagement and gender training sessions, equipping members on learning topics such as peace building, functional literacy, gender equality, and female empowerment awareness training.





**LEADER OF CHANGE:  
DR. ANWAR'S SURVIVOR-CENTERED  
APPROACH TO GBV**



Religious leaders are among the most trusted members of the community, seen as role models and keepers of the peace. Dr. Anwar M. Radiamoda is one such leader. Dr. Anwar is the Acting Director of the Shari'ah Center, an Associate Professor at the King Faisal Center in MSU-Marawi, and holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Shari'ah Law. He is considered a leader among the leaders and is much respected by the community.

Among the cases that he and other leaders are called on to arbitrate are those involving GBV. Dr. Anwar acknowledged that helping GBV survivors has not been easy with limited research and guidance.







In 2020, the rapid gender assessment in Lanao del Sur found that GBV is still rampant in the province, most commonly in the form of child marriage, domestic violence, economic violence, and LGBTQIA+ discrimination.

For Dr. Anwar, religious leaders must be aware of the negative impact of GBV and their crucial role in ending it. To aid this, he helped design and commission a study focusing on the perceptions of religious leaders towards GBV and their role in managing cases brought up to them. Dr. Anwar hopes that through this he can better raise awareness and train other leaders towards a survivor-centered approach to GBV in the Maranao context.





**SPEAKING OUT:  
SAMIRA BECOMES A CHAMPION FOR GBV**



In the beginning, Samira, a college student, was reluctant to become a GBV responder. However, after learning more about gender, the impact of GBV, and the referral pathways for GBV, she decided that it was worth fighting for.

“I realized it was important to be aware of all of these so that I can educate and help my community,” she said.

She then helped organize community awareness raising activities not just for the youth, but also for men and women of all ages and traditional leaders. Because of her active participation and leadership, she was elected as co-chairperson of Voice of iMarantaon Youth Solidarity Association (ViMYSA), a federation representing the youth sector in Marantao.









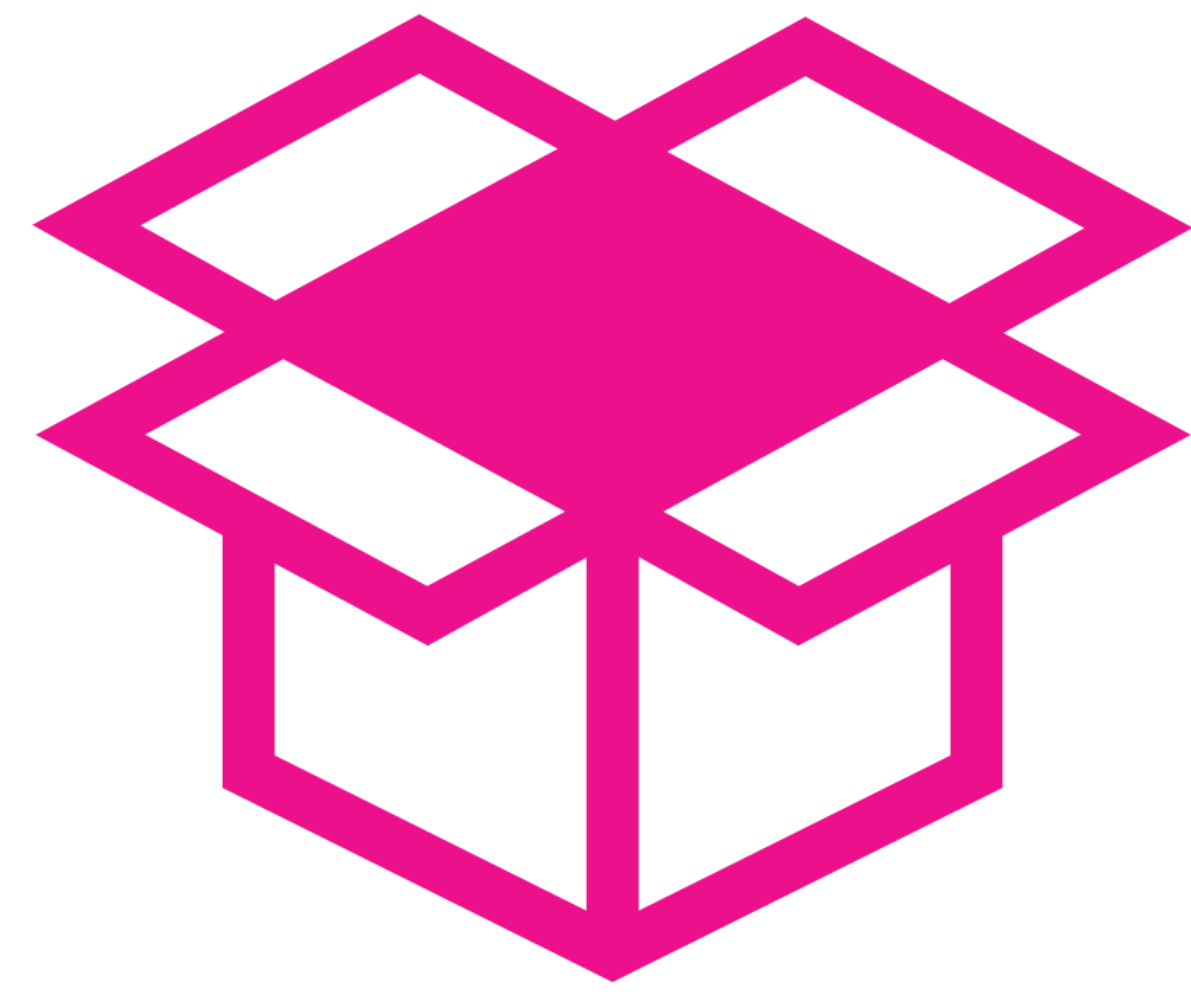
To sustain her advocacy, she has prioritized programs for out-of-school youth in Marantao, a group particularly vulnerable to GBV. She also regularly posts stories about gender and culture on her Facebook page to help raise awareness.

For Samira, her voice is her power. And though she never expected to be a gender champion or youth leader, she heartily accepts the role now.

“Thank you, MRP,” said Samira. “Because you healed us, and at the same time you helped us heal other people.”







## grants

**613**

**economic  
development grants**

**317**

**social cohesion  
grants**

**70**

**COVID-19  
response grants**

As of March 2023





**beneficiaries**

**12,000**

**economic development**

**258,000**

**social cohesion**

As of March 2023





A group of approximately 25 people, including men and women of various ages, are posed for a group photograph. They are arranged in several rows, with some individuals seated on plastic chairs in the front. Most of the people are wearing light blue polo shirts with the USAID and PLAN International logos on the chest. The background features a large, lush green tree and a building with a balcony. To the left, a blue banner is partially visible, displaying the USAID and PLAN International logos and the text 'MARAWI RESPONSE PROJECT'. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

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# Acknowledgments

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## USAID and Plan International's Marawi Response Project

empowers internally displaced people of Marawi to achieve self-reliance by actively contributing to the social and economic development of their communities.