

Stakeholders' Contribution to the Cotabato Historical Conflict: Experiences and Perspectives on Conflict

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Abstract. Understanding stakeholders' contributions to the Cotabato historical conflict has agreeable benefits for the community, especially for human security. Stakeholders were the primary actors in times of conflict. This study employed phenomenological research design to capture stakeholders' experiences about their contributions in pre- and post-conflict scenarios. Results show promising initiatives on how the inter-agency collaborative efforts stabilize and maintain the safety among the people. The historical conflicts in Cotabato come in series, massive displacement and attacks. Cultural stereotyping and misunderstanding became the dividing factors that caused the conflict to last so long. The late 1960s to 2000s were the years when the province suffered from economic losses and failure, unstable living conditions, starvation, and discrimination brought by different parties involved between GRP vs. Blackshirt; this war was between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro people who inhabited the Province of Cotabato that called themselves as Blackshirt, GRP vs. NPA; this war was between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the New Peoples' Army who fought for reform the government; GRP and a group of Umbrakato and ILAGA vs. Moro; the Ilonggo Land Grabbers Association was headed by Umbrakato who fought against the Moro and maintained alliance with the Philippine government. However, LGU, military, and barangay officials' commitment to normalizing the situation was the highest support. As a result, people return home confident in a peaceful situation and hoping for peace. Another striking initiative was headed by LGUs, NGOs, and religious groups to health care facilities and food. A community-based program like Duyog Ramadhan helped increase community awareness and encourage cooperation. On the other hand, establishing military camps and observatory units to identify conflicted areas improves human security. This study, therefore, provides a meaningful reference to how, in conflict situations, stakeholders can improve areas where human security is challenged.

Keywords: Cotabato historical conflict; Narratives; Conflict-affected areas; Stakeholders; Human security.

1.0 Introduction

The island of Mindanao is historically a land of promise because of its rich fauna and flora resources and, at the same time, the diversity of cultures that emerged in various regions. Even though this island produced exquisite resources for individuals, peace remains elusive. Mindanao becomes the arena of war between the Moro and the Christian settlers due to land-grabbing issues, rido, injustices, and discrimination (Mallo, 2024). Province by province, each experienced instability and underdevelopment because of these existing issues. In particular, the historical conflicts in the province of Cotabato were disturbing and unforgettable, and they caused unrest. They led to the failure of human security and development, but they were also crucial for the region's improvement. It

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became a long struggle for stability in the province. Numerous causes of the conflict were also identified, such as ancestral domain and economic depression (Ochiai, 2016). These conflicts crumpled and represented the dying economy and the degrading sustainable upliftment of the community to recovery. However, the coming of local and non-government organizations, church leaders, and other stakeholders as support entities forged alliances to combat these conflicts. They aimed to prioritize health, economic upliftment, and social and psychological recovery.

On the other hand, stakeholders (both internal and external) were the prime actors in conflict situations who support the formulation of aid in minimal and larger spheres of deficiency, influencing the interplay between the community and stakeholders. Some factors influencing the participation of stakeholders' performance include reforms in local economic development with local policy support (Wu & Zhang, 2014), advocacy tourism (Duarte Alonso & Nyanjom, 2017; E. Mallo, 2024), and the priority of stakeholders in HEIs (de la Torre et al., 2019). However, few have tackled stakeholders' participation in post-conflict scenarios and their contribution to the community. Damoah et al. (2020) stated that stakeholders' abandonment may result in a bad image, slow economic growth, discouraged investment, and financial loss. That is why the unwavering support given by stakeholders must be considered and taken into account.

Furthermore, this paper aims to capture and understand stakeholders' contributions in post-conflict scenarios. It will provide reliable data on social support and literature on stakeholders' specific contributions in conflict scenarios. Specifically, it will address the research question: What narratives can stakeholders share on historical conflicts in selected municipalities in Cotabato Province?

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a phenomenological research design. This design facilitated exploring participants' lived experiences in conflict settings. It also captured the unique stories of their situations, feelings, and emotions in the context of contribution in a scenario where human security and survival were at stake. In the words of Creswell & Creswell (2018), people's experiences are the products of their expression during the time and situation when they experience a certain phenomenon.

2.2 Research Locale

This research occurred in the province of Cotabato, part of Region XII, also known as the SOCCSKARGEN region. The province's total land area, including urban and rural areas, is 9,008.90 square kilometers. According to the most recent Regional Department of Tourism XII survey conducted in March 2021, the Cotabato province reported 216,182 domestic and foreign tourists. In addition, some local attractions in the province can be found in nearby neighboring municipalities of Aleosan, Pikit, and Makilala, which have been identified as research participants. These areas were identified before being included in the geographical area of BARMM.

Aleosan has a total area of 225.44 square kilometers, accounting for 2.42 percent of the province's total land area. According to the 2020 Census, the municipality had 41,944 people across 19 barangays. The U.K. Peak is a thriving tourist attraction in the barangays of Upper Mingading and Katalicanan. In comparison, the Municipality of Pikit has a total land area of 604.61 square kilometers or 6.49 percent of the total land area of Cotabato. It had a total population of 164,646 people, according to the 2020 Census. The historical Fort Pikit, built during the Spanish military regime in 1893, is a tourist attraction of the municipality. It is located near the municipal hall along the national highway. The municipality of Makilala, endowed with natural resources, is one of the province's most popular tourist destinations. The New Israel Eco-tourism Park in Barangay Israel has become a prominent attraction to local and foreign visitors. During the visit, a fun adventure includes a zip line and a scenic view of Mt. Apo. It covers 343.57 square kilometers of land, accounting for 3.69 percent of Cotabato's total area. According to the 2020 Census, the municipality has 87,927 people.

2.3 Research Participants

The following parameters were used in the selection process. Participants came from the municipalities of Aleosan, Pikit, and Makilala. Six participants were interviewed for the Key Informant Interview (KII), comprising the LGU and BLGU Barangay Captain. They currently hold the office and know about current tourism

development and living in times of conflict. For the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), eighteen participants were interviewed, including the owners of the tourist site, the head of BPAT, teachers, vendors, habal-habal drivers, and Brgy. Kagawad. As to their inclusion, they should be barangay residents living in a time of conflict and have some knowledge about tourism development in their area. This study used purposive sampling techniques. Participants were indemnified as key informants in three different localities.

2.4 Research Instrument

The study's instruments used a researcher-made interview guide. Before proceeding to actual data collection, the research tool was subject to validation by Florie Jane Tamon and Rowell Natafan, who checked the necessary probing questions to include. Also, as per their suggestion, a pilot test was conducted to determine the suitability and accuracy of the questions and probes. The Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide questionnaire used the same questions to vouch for their responses, which dealt with discovered processes of transitions from peace to sustainable tourism, which seek to search for the involvement of multi-sectors to offer programs addressing tourism needs and interventions to attain sustainable tourism in their locality.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

This study employed interviews and focus group methods. Environmental scanning was conducted before the interview and focus group to validate and affirm the key informants' participation. The researcher identified the participants using the criteria provided. A letter was sent to the local government unit and barangay captain for approval. After receiving the acceptance letter, the interview was arranged. Interview responses were digitally documented to record the participants' responses.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher maintained and valued the confidentiality of the participants' information. By their willingness, without any force, they shared their experiences according to the purpose of the study. The researcher also used informed consent, which values the participants' interests. All the data obtained during the interview was used mainly for the study. Proper referencing was also observed to credit the authors' ideas during the analysis and further discussion in the study. The researcher ensured that all participants' rights, safety, and -well-being were protected throughout the research process. Informed consent was given. The participants were informed about the risks associated with their involvement in the research and allowed to make a voluntary decision to participate or not participate in the research.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The emerging themes and sub-themes reflect stakeholders' experiences regarding conflict, feelings of years of instability, and displacement.

3.1 Historical Conflicts in Cotabato Province

Table 1 shows the sub-themes of the historical Conflicts in Cotabato Province.

Table 1. *Historical Conflicts in Cotabato Province*

Sub-Themes	Description
Conflict comes in a series.	I experienced a series of conflicts. In 1970, a series of conflicts happened in various areas of Pikit. There was active fighting every month.
War is present	War took place as far as I could remember. War and calamities challenged the government.
There is displacement	People left their farms and preferred to establish or start a new livelihood. Evacuation happens from time to time out of their lands and find refuge in their relatives in Maguindanao, neighboring towns, or go up to the mountains.
Attacks	Recorded incidents of ambush, harassment, and killings. Killings came to be every day and everywhere. Insurgents also blocked Barangay roads. There were records of stealing of carabaos, extortion, and land conflict. There were invasions by the military.
<i>Rido</i>	Prevailing issues of <i>rido</i> introduce conflict in the areas. This conflict is between Muslim families and groups.
Ethnic stereotypes	There were killings among Christians in areas populated by Muslims due to cultural misunderstandings. Muslim and Christian youths feared one another. Through generations, the Bangsamoro thought that Christians were the priorities with more opportunities than them.

The historical evidence of conflicts in Cotabato Province can be described in a series of contested conflicts and devastation. This prevailing conflict is supported by (Ochiai, 2016), showing that the Mindanao conflict, in general, is often portrayed as a simple fight between Christians and Muslims. Cases of violence are also scattered in

different towns and provinces. According to Özerdem & Podder (2012), violence in North Cotabato is considerably bigger than an armed conflict with the Philippine military or Christian settlers. Due to its conditions, the province is feared by individuals (tourists and investors). It further resulted in a massive challenge towards safety and economic immobility. As a result, underdevelopment and security are challenged. Furthermore, the accounts of deadly armed clashes between government forces and rebel/terrorist groups further attest to the viciousness of hostilities in the province (Capuno, 2020). This shows that war is present. This result is supported by the study of Neumann (2010), who claims that the wars of 1997 and 2000 caused substantial evacuation efforts and vast devastation of land and buildings. This means that war creates an atmosphere of fear and destruction of infrastructure.

Aside from this occurrence, historical conflicts have caused displacement in the community. From Paul Hutchcroft's description, people have been killed in armed conflict, and millions have been displaced (South, 2017). The rapid increase of conflicts in the area made people move to safe places and near relatives. Artificial evacuation centers were overpopulated. In response, the LGU, in support, focused its resources on providing evacuation shelter, medicines, and any aid. For example, for women in Pagangan, North Cotabato, the armed war makes their lives more difficult. The children suffer in silence for a long time, from the terror of gunfire to the problematic life conditions they face while in the relocation facilities (Daylusan - Fiesta, 2019). Women and children face the challenges brought by conflicts in their areas.

To advance their security forces in the conflicted areas, the GRP and local government military strengthen their alliance and patrol areas with a high presence of armed conflict. The government assembles its defense and prevents larger conflicts from escalating. The victims of conflict received assistance through support from DSWD and other NGOs (Weder et al., 2010). The humanitarian sectors invest to support the victims. The province is in a state of despair. Tantamount to conflicts and attacks emerged to contribute in Mindanao, particularly in Cotabato, Rido, or clan conflicts have instigated state-insurgent violence (Adriano & Parks, 2013), intermittent skirmishes staged by warring families (Cagoco- Guiam, 2015), and practically happened among Muslims (Mendoza, 2020). This again adds to the severity of the situation. Ochiai also insists that what causes ongoing rido in the locality can be concentrated through elites' land resources, local politics, and local inhabitants. However, the emphasis of this violence, somehow complicated, is mostly determined by a complex interaction of local political elites. (Neumann, 2010).

Further, for Espesor, these local political elites governed the areas with their vision through their power (wealth, family identity, and resources). Some use power to employ threats and intimidation (Espesor, 2017). Power was able to bring misdirection of development and control the movements. In inappropriate situations, this political power escalates the ethnic stereotype among tri-people with fewer opportunities. As a result, the dramatic socioeconomic and political marginalization of the Muslims and Indigenous peoples prevents peace and security (Neumann, 2010). These historical conflicts continue to expand their dysfunctional effects on the locals. Political and economic factors worsen the conflict situation in the province.

3.2 Origins of Conflict in Cotabato Province

Table 2 shows the years of origin of Conflict in Cotabato Province.

Table 2. *Origins of Conflict in Cotabato Province*

Year	Description
1968	In 1968, conflict emerged in the area.
1970	In 1970, Conflict was already present. There is a misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians. This year marked the birth of an organized Christian group, ILAGA, a counterinsurgent group.
1971	In 1971, the Conflict between Moro and ILAGA escalated and recorded the killings and evacuation of the locals to neighboring towns.
1985	In 1985, conflicts escalated, and prevailing killings were present.
1986	Confrontation between the government and the <i>black shirt</i> . The declaration of martial law escalated the Conflict this year.
Sometime between 1980s to 1990s	The conflict occurred in Carmen, Aleosan, and New Panay between the 1980s and 1990s. During this time, people used artificial wagons and carriages to transport their belongings.
2000	The declaration of an <i>all-out war</i> created massive confusion among the people.
2008	Aborted MOA on Ancestral Domain between the government and the MILF, resulting in the intensification of the conflict situation. MILF's goals and sentiments for autonomy and recognition were not realized.

The participants' memories of the origins of the conflicts remain clear. Conflicts started in late 1968 when an alternative Muslim elite started organizing with the intent of seceding from the Philippines (Adam, 2013). This is evident in the Municipality of Matalam, province of North Cotabato, where massive open clashes occurred. According to Loesch (2017b), the historical background of the Moro conflict emerges due to socio-economic marginalization, ethnoreligious discrimination, and lack of political representation. Certain dates to remember how the conflict affected the peace situation of the community reminded them of their struggles and experiences. The contested memories of the origin of conflicts mark the crucial situation and fighting between GRP and other combatants.

In 1968, the province has experienced emerging conflicts. The participants claim that it is the MILF caused destabilizing the locality. The community was alarmed and eventually feared, so they evacuated from Aleosan. This is supported by the study that of the same year, the unforgivable Muslim massacre called the Jabidah massacre in Corregidor on March 17, 1968, killed 46 young Muslim trainees under the Philippine Army (Macasalong, 2013). This incident resulted in massive rallies against the GRP for the inhumane death of their comrades. War takes place and devastates the villages. War advocates violent deaths and displacements.

Two years after the Jabidah massacre in 1970, MNLF enjoins movements to accelerate their power and alliances against the GRP. However, this movement also affected the settlement of the residents, both Christians and MNLF. Land conflicts are another conflict that emerged between Muslims and Christians and became a pivotal issue due to Christians' coming into the province. This result is supported by Adriano & Parks (2013) That tension escalates between communities of Muslims and Christian settlers. The land grabbing of ILAGA and Blackshirt of Moro has appeared.

Year after the tension, 1971 characterized the evacuation and transport of the residents because of the ongoing war in the locality. This also sparks the killings of sixty-one- Muslims by Christians in North Cotabato. In the same year, the Libyan government shows support to MNLF in the form of financial and military assistance. This claim is supported by UCA (n.d.) when Marcos's administration called for ceasefires between two groups. The experience of increasing conflicts makes the community find a peaceful place to live. While GRP and MNLF/MILF continued to form chaos, the GRP administration faced the people power movements aiming to oust Marcos's dictatorship. The battle prolonged and developed the invisibility of peace among them. This year is a significant year for the killings of 61 Muslims and its long-term impact on the community.

Moreover, according to Asia Report (2011), in the year 1985, deaths continued to increase caused by conflicts. As per the report, 1,282 military or police were killed, as well as 2,134 NPA fighters and 1,362 civilians. The severity of conflicts suggests that Mindanao is not a safe place to visit. The national government in 1986 welcomed the new democratic leader, Corazon Aquino, through people's power. However, the condition of conflicts hinders the plan for MILF representation to the democratic government. This is supported by Asuna & Wataru (2020), failure to channel the leadership of armed rebels into representative democracy. Even if this is a reform to the government, conflicts do not stop, and more incidents will occur in the coming years. The provincial armed conflict in Aleosan could be traced back in the year 1995 when the 64th IB was based in the area in search of the MILF commanders in Dongguan, Aleosan. (Daylusan - Fiesta, 2019). Government military forces extend the search and distort MILF troops.

The next president captures the mother camp of MILF. Estrada's administration marks the historical war between MILF and GRP. In 2000, Estrada declared an all-out war in Camp Abubakar on March 21, 2000, where hundreds were killed and wounded (Franco, 2019). The bloody war weakens the MILF troops, and GRP claims the camps as new military residents. In the last year of the historical conflicts of the participants in 2008, disgruntled factions of the MILF expressed their disgust over the non-signing of the MOA-AD (Ilagan, 2014). The dismay of the MILF further reflects the historical conflict in Mindanao. The increase in fighting between GRP and MILF is on the record. Further, the origins of conflicts in the Cotabato province show how conflict creates division and economic losses to the people while safeguarding themselves from the effects of misunderstanding, confrontations, declaration of all-out-war, and aborted MOA signing.

3.3 Parties Involved in Conflict

Table 3 shows the sub-themes of the parties involved in Conflict.

Table 3. *Parties Involved in Conflict*

Sub-Themes	Description
Government vs. Black Shirt	Blackshirt appeared as a combatant group of Bangsamoro.
Government vs. MILF	The government declared an <i>all-out war</i> and commenced the brutal and unending killings and threats between GPH and MILF.
Government vs. Umbra Kato of BIFF	: The founder of BIFF, Umbra Kato, hoped to promote Moro Islamic State against the government.
Government vs. NPA	The NPA created scenes in neighboring barangays, becoming insurgents against the government. This armed group asked for revolutionary taxes from businesses.
ILAGA vs. Moro	The ILAGA, headed by Commander Toothpick, killed Muslims in the area. ILAGA are associated with Christians who grabbed land areas of Muslims. Some accounts also say that Muslims stole carabao from Christians, as the latter tagged as killers and robbers.

The Philippines, in general, is in an organized conflict that involves different parties. Regarding the history of conflicts and their origin, the province of Cotabato has three contested parties and localized conflicts in selected Municipalities that conflict with GRP. The longest Maoist-inspired disputant in Asia that GRP struggled to hand over the peace agreement is the CPP-NPA- NDFP or the leftist. The GRP and CPP-NPA-NDFP ceasefires have not been a salient engagement feature until today (Åkebo, 2020). This means that it tries to revolutionize the entire government and radically end colonial bondage, bureaucratic corruption, and state repression. (Imbong, 2019) . The controversial warfare between GRP and CPP-NPA-NDF in the municipality of Makilala has severely suffered from threats and killings. NPA has remained strong in some areas and financially resilient through domestic funding sources, including revolutionary tax (Åkebo, 2020). The participants during the FGD interview in Barangay New Israel claimed that while they were on their Banana plantation, the NPA member left a note containing a threat that if they did not pay the revolutionary tax, they would be killed. Soon after, the husband was ambushed and killed. The harassment continues to infuse fear into the community.

However, the GRP intensified its military resources and broke the NPA's chain of alliances (Imbong, 2019), these bloody battles between the NPA and GRP resulted in killings, illegal arrests, abductions, and torture among activists alleged to be sympathizers of the NPA. As a result, the participants felt the presence of safety. To maintain this ambiance, they insisted the CAFGU be installed in their military camps to sustain the presence of security. Each CAFGU member is assigned to a particular AFP commander and attached to a maneuver battalion in that geographic area (Özerdem & Podder, 2012). The community believed that as long as the military camps remained erected in their location, it was a clear indication that peace and security were at stake.

The other party involved in the conflict between GRP is the MILF. The MILF headquarters remained covered and working in Maguindanao province. Due to its location, scattered conflicts evolved among other provinces of Sultan Kudarat and Cotabato in Region XII. In Municipality of Aleosan of the province has contested frequent battles between MILF and GRP. According to the participants, they kept transferring and left their farms uncultivated because of war in their area. Military forces continued to provide transport vehicles for the evacuees. MNLF (Moro rebels) and ILAGA (para-military support of GRP) conflicts became a prevailing problem in the province that resulted in long-term discrimination. This coincided with the study of Adam (2013) and Verbrugge et al. (2014), Who stated that in a period of intense communal warfare in Cotabato province between Christian militias (known as Ilaga or rats) and Muslim armed militias. Land grabbing was the root cause of unending conflict between Christians and Muslims. The ILAGA group headed by Norberto “Kumander Bucay” Manero elicited fear, and his role was to terrify supporters of Muslim and communist rebels in Cotabato province. (Gutierrez, 2012). In an interview with Barangay Fort Pikit, the captain shared his experience with Muslims and Christians. The participant called Christians the “Pulahan,” where Muslims feared their groups. In response to the growing fear, the Bangsamoro in the province named themselves Black Shirt in Central Mindanao to counter against ILAGA. However, ILAGA remained in power due to the support of the AFP under the Marcos administration—the memoir of conflicts molded in the history between ILAGA and Moro rebels.

Aside from GRP and Moro rebel conflicts in Central Mindanao, rido emerged as contributory disputes that existed among Muslims. In Muslim-populated areas like Pikit, rido sparked devastating incidents that affected the peace situation. The rampant family feuds happened in various barangays. The leaders of each family continuously exposed hatred. According to the Pikit Tourism Officer, this conflict resulted from unresolved issues and remained aggressive. In Poblacion, for instance, this member of the family was killed, and the next day, another member of the suspect was killed. Peace becomes unstable. However, the town's mayor had made a settlement for both families and provided a peace offering.

These parties involved in the Cotabato conflicts marked Mindanao's history as war-torn areas. The evidence of GRP and rebel groups (MILF, MNLF, CPP-NPA-NDF) and the ILAGA battle led to the confinement of massive development instead. This battle causes misery and deaths to Moro, Christians, and other members of the community. Conflict is, therefore, prohibiting good relationships with one other. It divides the people of Mindanao because of unresolved issues of economic injustices, stealing, and inequality.

3.4 Perceived Impacts of Conflict

Table 4 shows the sub-themes of perceived impacts of conflict.

Table 4. *Perceived Impacts of Conflict*

Sub-Themes	Description
Persistence of sporadic conflicts	Pocket conflicts occur irregularly in a few but scattered barangays in the localities.
Massive displacement	Large groups of families leave their residences due to conflicts. The municipal plaza served as an evacuation center.
Infrastructural concerns	The access to market roads is problematic.
Economic failure	Investments failed, businesses closed, job opportunities ran out, there was unemployment, and farmers no longer produced crops and livestock.
Unstable living condition	Because of conflict, people's life conditions were not stable. Transactions were delayed due to armed and rebel groups in the barangay. People struggle to recover. Localities are unsafe.
Starvation	The conflict resulted in starvation. The buying and consumption of food resources were limited.
Fear	Farmers fear growing their crops and tending to animals. They hide behind the bamboo, stay in the attic of the house, and endure sleepless nights for fear of insurgents passing by their town. They often think they are prone to danger. They fear being mistaken as aggressors and turn out to be victims. Muslims fear the <i>pulahan</i> .
Discrimination	The negative impact of the conflict was that Muslim brothers were mostly discriminated against.

Conflict is negative. According to the stakeholders, the perceived impacts of conflicts prevent the status of a good community and development. Instead, fears and displacement are massively characterized by the locality. Sporadic wars have been happening in the areas that demanded massive evacuation that lasted for about three to eight years in Aleosan (Daylusan - Fiesta, 2019). Moreover, in Matalam, in the village of Kibya, all sorts of low-intensity violence, such as harassment, threats, and, in some cases, actual killings, occur regularly (Adam, 2013). The prevalent conflict happens in these places and the neighboring provinces of ARMM, Sultan Kudarat, and Maguindanao. From 2011-2016 in ARMM, this region had more potent effects of violent hostilities than other regions and had the lowest level of socioeconomic development in 2015 (Capuno, 2020). These findings justify the economic failure and displacement. Security has been crucial, and it challenges peace movements. It is supported by Espesor (2017). This reveals that lack of security and instability makes peace operations difficult in Mindanao.

Further, everyone is losing hope for Mindanao. The study of that area supports the claim that there is significant complexity in this multi-faceted conflict involving numerous stakeholders and sub-groups, including within the heterogeneous Moro community (South, 2017). The negative impacts of conflicts become the mask of Mindanao. Even in a song, Mindanao by Freddie Aguilar states that, "*tuloy pa rin ang digmaan, kalat na ang kaguluhan sa Mindanao*". This shows bigger concerns about what is happening in Mindanao. Therefore, the impact of Mindanao conflicts is naturally negative.

3.5 Results of Stakeholders' Initiatives to Address Conflict

Table 5 shows the sub-themes of the results of Stakeholders' initiatives to Address Conflict. The country's primary mission is to suspend all forms of human violence. Undoubtedly, the LGU and other agencies offered strategies and initiatives to realize better peace and security opportunities. The spirit of hospitality is a key factor in why the LGU and other agencies openly spread their support through the initiative (Capuno, 2020). This result is

supported by the Philippine government's adoption of various interventions to control, manage, resolve, or prevent them, including many military operations, economic programs, self-governance and fiscal autonomy measures, and other peacebuilding efforts.

Table 5. Results of Stakeholders' Initiatives to Address Conflict

Sub-Themes	Description
People return home	After negotiations, people are observably returning home little by little. The community welcomed the evacuees and their families coming from neighboring barangays.
Confidence in the peace situation	People became confident that peace, safety, and stability were restored. They could move forward, and students could attend classes with military security.
Developed hopes for peace	We hope for immediate responses to minimize the number of casualties.
Assistance by NGOs	When conflicts arose, NGOs were there to assist. Balay Mindanao is one NGO that shares resources to mediate and study causes of conflict. Balay also provided pumps to meet people's strategic needs. Other NGOs, including the EU and humanitarian and development agencies, also held other activities in 2007, and IMO-Oblates of Mary provided relief for conflict areas.
LGU and NGO collaboration	The LGU signed an agreement with NGOs to implement methods to eliminate and lessen the effects of conflict. These two also meet to plan interventions.
BPAT	The BPAT rendered services, watching over all community activities to maintain peace and order day and night. Boundaries were checked to monitor residents' comings and goings. They also augmented with AFP and PNP to strengthen their workforce.
AFP	Newly established AFP battalions and camps were designated across conflict areas in Aleosan to manage insurgent uprisings. Through them, peace became visible and sustained. A good relationship prospered between the military and locals as they provided goods to the community.
PNP	The presence of the police made them feel secure and safe.
CAFGU	Served as the security force in the barangay.
BLGU	The barangay captain ensured that his constituents were well-monitored and safe. He informed constituents to refrain from associating with NPA. Barangay officials were assisted by AFP and CAFGU. Each barangay appointed individuals to facilitate conflict-related concerns.
DepEd	School teachers collaborated in building artificial camps for the evacuees.
Duyog Ramadhan	This socialization activity promotes peace among the residents in the locality of Pikit.
Religious groups	OMI-ARB and Pikit Pastoral Council (PPCARB) initiated an interior dialogue to promote a culture of peace.

Millions were spent to accommodate the ongoing conflicts. Mindanao become the flagship of financial spending of the country in terms of security and livelihood development of the people. This is supported by Berhe (2017), who believes that donors with the goodwill to assist transformation from war to peace come with substantive funding. The succeeding years become hostile. The emerging initiatives or support systems of LGU and other initiatives prioritize evacuation. This is supported by the study of Daylusan-Fiesta (2019) and Mallo (2024). Local Government Units (LGUs) should ensure the evacuation sites are safe from danger. The DepEd transforms its classroom to temporarily house the residents while security forces (AFP, BPAT, CAFGU, and PNP) look closely at the people's movements and the status of peace. Therefore, the intensifying collaboration of LGUs and other agencies makes initiatives as supporting aid to the situations.

4.0 Conclusion

The historical narratives about Cotabato's conflicts centered its ideas about human security from the past decades. Human security is an essential social aspect that should be secured and valued no matter how difficult it is to achieve. This study shows the valuable and responsible commitment of different inter-agencies and sectors as a form of initiative in response to the problems encountered by stakeholders. The ongoing recovery and rehabilitation of conflicted areas are the leaders' priorities. However, specific evidence claims that support systems from humanitarian agencies failed to provide appropriate aid, which is crucial in defending human security. To preserve the people in conflicted areas, stakeholders should provide continuous surveillance and security. Meanwhile, non-government organizations and other humanitarian agencies must collaborate with the local government to specify the services needed, particularly in remote areas. Local leaders must establish trust and commitment to deviate from conflicts. Lastly, there is never-ending support for the victims and displaced community in a situation where conflict kills innocent people. These promising results of initiatives ascertain the stakeholders' manifestation to collaborate in a more humane intervention.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The researcher declares no conflict of interest in this study.

8.0 Acknowledgment

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