Country Update

Philippines

As of April 14, 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases crossed 5000 and the death toll moved 350.[1] In response, the Philippine government instated a partial lockdown of Metro Manila, prohibiting flights in and out, meetings, events, gatherings, and travel for non-essential purposes, and enhanced community quarantine in many provinces across the country. Although only a few cases have been confirmed in GNWP project’s implementation sites: North Cotabato, Surigao del Sur, and Agusan del Norte, GNWP’s local partner, Balaí Mindanaw, fears that this information does not indicate these communities’ insulation from the outbreak of COVID-19. A lack of infrastructure for and capacity to conduct COVID-19 testing is a more likely explanation for the lower numbers of reported cases in these communities. GNWP’s local partner reported limited supplies of surgical masks and hand sanitizer, along with significant misinformation and fake news in the project implementation sites.

Impact on women and peace and security:
The government’s militaristic response to the health emergency and resulting police clampdowns have raised concerns amongst civil society about human rights violations.[2]

The travel and mobility restrictions have severely inhibited the delivery of essential services and humanitarian aid to vulnerable groups, including women, young women and girls, indigenous persons, religious minorities, people with disabilities, and IDPs.[3] For example, in the southern region of Mindanao, where more than 300,000 people are displaced due to ongoing armed conflict or natural disaster, local aid groups are attempting to continue implementing cash aid programs, despite staff being quarantined or isolated as COVID-19 cases rise.[4]

Response by women peacebuilders:
In response, women and youth peacebuilders in the project implementation sites are acting as first responders, delivering food, protective gear, hygiene kits, and other relief goods. With guidance from GNWP, young women peacebuilders have begun developing a crisis and risk management communications strategy to counter fake news/misinformation and dissemination information and hygiene tips. They are supporting and upholding the call of the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for an immediate global ceasefire which will allow humanitarian actors to reach local populations in the conflict-affected countries who are most vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. On March 26th, the Community Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) responded to this call and declared a nationwide ceasefire until April 15th, 2020.[5]

References: