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Document

The Visit of Moro Islamic Community Leaders to Indonesia

This programme consisted of a visit by Moro leaders to Indonesia and was organized by PPIM UIN Jakarta in cooperation with the Australian Embassy. The duration of visit was ten days, from 17-26 November 2008. The visit was intended to strengthen relations between the Muslim communities in the Southern Philippines and Indonesia in the area of conflict resolution and the constructive role Islamic institutions can play in a pluralist, democratic state. It also aimed to enhance public awareness through the media, thereby reinforcing these values among the general public. The visit was also aimed to develop options for further cooperation between these communities.

The visit of Bangsamoro delegates to Indonesia was organized to enlighten them to the ideas, strategies and models of the ways Indonesia successfully resolved the conflicts that occurred in Aceh and in Poso. However, we realize that the nature of the conflict in the southern Philippines is much more complicated, and differs significantly from the conflicts in Indonesia in terms of characteristics, backgrounds, social political contexts and negotiation. The first understanding we gained of the accounts of the conflict in the Philippines was that they concerned loss of trust in the central government, distrust of the ways the government implemented the democratic system, and doubts about the sincerity behind the agreement that was made up between the Bangsamoro and the gov-

ernment. Our investigation into the Bangsamoro found that they continue to seek solutions through the implementation of an Islamic education system. Since Indonesia has gained wide experience in this matter it was quite relevant to introduce the various Islamic education systems prevalent in Indonesia to the Bangsamoro delegates as a system that is not only intended to be part of human resources development but also as an effort to modernize the Islamic education model as a tool in the peace process.

Therefore, the programme of the visit of the Philippine delegates was formulated in two parts: first, the development and models of the Islamic education system which ranges from traditional to modern systems of schooling such as those used in Hidayatullah and Madania schools; secondly, the role of education in peace processes such as those initiated in Poso by the local and central governments. Education is unable to resolve immediate problems caused by the conflict, but it will be able to help to contribute to solving long-term generational problems in the country.

In the Philippines, the Bangsamoro has turned Muslim education into a cultural buffer zone in their fight against the central government in Manila and against the Christian majority whom the Bangsamoro fear to have the intension to assimilate them into the non-Islamic Philippine cultural mainstream. Therefore, historically, Muslim education disregards and resists demands from the Philippine government since they fear that these demands will influence their cultural identity. Because the Bangsamoro developed their own Islamic education system, it often causes disputes with the government particularly on recognition issues. The Bangsamoro are even considered to fight for separation and independence, while the government does not recognize many *madrasahs*, as they are seen as not to comply with national education regulations. This situation of mutual distrust leads to a worsening of the relations between the government and the Bangsamoro.

The Bangsamoro visit to Islamic education institutions in Indonesia was indeed relevant since religious schools are integrated into national education system in Indonesia. All *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* have adopted the government curriculum, and the students are required to pass minimum scores of national examination standards. The *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* we visited included the Madrasah Pembangunan and Madania in Jakarta, Pesantren Darul Arqam, Pesantren Al-Musaddadiyah, and Pesantren PERSIS in

Bandung, and two Pesantrens Hidayatullah and a Pesantren Model Gontor in Poso, Sulawesi.

In addition, the participants were also introduced to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Nahdhatul Ulama, and the Muhammadiyah in the hope that they would gain the necessary knowledge and experience to be able to improve the quality of Muslim education in the Philippines. The various schools and Islamic educational features that were part of the programme included management systems, multiculturalism education as implemented in Madania schools, as well as boarding schools.

Upon the completion of the visit, it was recommended that linkages and networks between Philippine Muslims and in general between Southeast Asian and Australian Muslims could be strengthened primarily through the improvement of the quality of Muslim education. Many parties like the government and civil societies would benefit from executing comparative studies for the betterment of education and political policies.

Education plays a strategic role as agent of community modernization and development by teaching children to work hard, to love knowledge, to live healthier, to be more competitive and more productive, and to live together peacefully. This is the big challenge Muslim education in Southeast Asian countries faces, more especially so in the Bangsamoro region of the Philippines.

Bangsamoro education is pre-modern and badly in need of re-examination and re-evaluation to enhance its suitability in meeting future development and challenges.

One way that can help to re-examine and re-assess Muslim education is the creation of a forum for Muslim education where representatives of each country (Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Brunei Darussalam) can share experiences for improving the quality of Muslim education and where they can learn from each other about their best practices in Muslim education. The forum proposed will be designed to have the following objectives:

- To promote exchanges between representatives of the countries participating in the forum to share the best practices in Muslim education in light of future Southeast Asian development, challenges, and needs;

- To disseminate the results of the forum's meetings through the publication of books, journals, and videos benefiting all participating countries; and
- To establish a variety of institutional networks and linkages pertaining to Muslim education ranging from scholarships to the establishment of associations of Muslim educators.

In addition, the forum proposed that participants should be encouraged to present research-based paper & video presentations drawn from their studies of the best practices in Muslim education. It should also offer visits to institutions of excellent Muslim education, public education, and non-Muslim education in the hosting country in order to enrich participants with experiences of respect for others, including non-Muslims and the government.