

# **WOMEN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: Resisting Militarism, Asserting Sovereignty**



Center for Women's Resources  
November 2016

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# I. Introduction

Women express their concern on the enhanced interest of the United States (US) in Southeast Asia. They know from experience that US presence in their countries result to intervention and control. They vividly remember Vietnam. Laos. Cambodia. Indonesia. Philippines. And in every intervention, women and children suffer from sexual abuses and violence. As recorded, the US intrusion has spawned and increased militarization as well as armed conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region, where 80% of victims comprise of women and children.<sup>1</sup>

Now, there is the US declaration on pivoting to the region. The strengthened attention to the region has been packaged as a benevolent hand from the self-proclaimed global police, the United States. As representative of US President Barack Obama, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced in 2009 that US is back in the region, signifying its renewed interest with Asian countries.<sup>2</sup> In the same occasion, the US signed the seminal Treaty of Amity and the Cooperation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to be involved in resolving peacefully the regional disputes.<sup>3</sup>

In the Defense Strategic Guidance for the 21st century, US has pronounced its intention to "ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests" in Southeast Asia.<sup>4</sup> The Guidance, which would serve as a blueprint until 2020, further states that "the maintenance of peace, stability, the free flow of commerce, and of US influence in this dynamic region will depend in part on an underlying balance of military capability and presence."<sup>5</sup>

In essence, the policy of pivoting to Asia signifies an attempt of the US to stay in the region for its own political and economic survival. Specifically, Southeast Asia is viewed as a strategic location for its hegemonic presence. And to ensure such survival, it only uses the method it knows best – through militaristic means, directly and indirectly. Thus, the pivot policy denotes the following:

One – peace and stability in the region indicate Southeast Asian governments supporting US framework of democracy, which entails its military presence through bilateral military agreements;

Two – free flow of commerce includes adoption of free trade agreements and neoliberal policies with defense support to abate any resistance; and

Three – US influence in the region means an enhancement of its defense strategy through military-to-military relations with Southeast Asian governments so as to balance the seemingly growing influence of China in the region.

The United States' military-industrial framework is welcomed by repressive governments in Southeast Asia since it continues the colonial tradition of curtailing civil liberties. The militaristic approach is used as a political leverage among the Southeast Asian people who assert their democratic rights. With policies and military agreements in place, political authorities have been given the prerogative to take discretionary actions against their adversaries and against the people, resulting to violation of fundamental rights and freedoms. In essence, militarism is in place. Once again, the security of women and children are at stake.

## II. Peace and Stability through Military Agreements

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) has listed several military-to-military ties of the US with Southeast Asian governments in the name of peace and stability. Some of these are the following:<sup>6</sup>

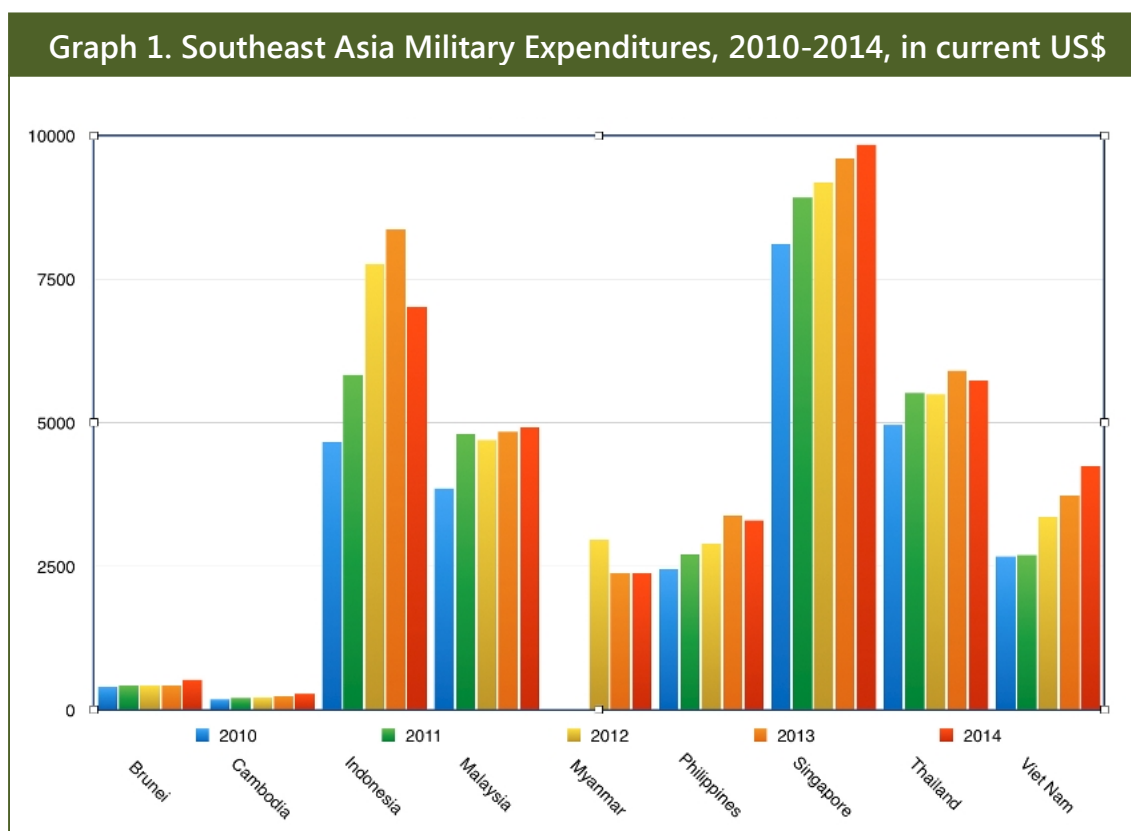
- Myanmar: the Obama administration forged military-to-military ties with the national government through training and the US AID started to re-establish its mission in the country
- Cambodia: started US naval visits to the port of Sihanoukville; conducted small-scale annual joint military exercises called Angkor Sentinel; and US forces provided training to Cambodian forces
- Laos: US exchanged defense attachés with the national government and the US provided military education programs
- Vietnam: both governments signed the US-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership in 2013 that includes US sales of lethal arms to Vietnam
- Malaysia: US invited Malaysia to be part of the Rim of the Pacific multinational naval exercises in Hawaii; US increased its naval port calls in the country, enhanced intelligence cooperation, and expanded military training programs for Malaysian officers
- Thailand: there have been continued major and expanded bilateral joint military exercises; US arms sales to Thailand boomed in the past five years
- Philippines: US-RP strengthened ties with Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA); there has been an increased number of troops in the annual US-Philippine Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) joint exercises
- Indonesia: there has been an agreement signed as US-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership
- Singapore: maintains Sembawang Air Base and Changi Naval Base that are critical to US naval operations

With a push from the US, the Southeast Asian governments share intelligence information and forge cooperation to combat “terrorists’ attacks”. One of the early initiatives of the region is the Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communication Procedures, signed in 2002 by Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines and joined in 2003 by Brunei, Cambodia, and Thailand.<sup>7</sup> This agreement has stipulated the cooperation on anti-terrorism exercises, combined operations to hunt suspected terrorists, and the establishments of hotlines as well as the sharing of airline passenger lists.<sup>8</sup>



Driven by US Pivot to Asia, the region is expected to continue to be a key driver of global defense spending over the next few years, with spending forecast to hit \$533 billion annually in 2020, up from \$435 billion in 2015, according to recent figures released by IHS Jane's last December. The Asia-Pacific is expected to account for one in three dollars spent on defense by the early 2020s, up from one in five in 2010. Within Southeast Asia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam were the three countries that registered the fastest-growing defense budgets for 2015 relative to the previous year.<sup>9</sup>

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Southeast Asia showed robust growth in defense spending. Between 2010 and 2014, there is steady growth in military expenditure, and there were marked increases for all countries, averaging at 37.6 percent. Southeast Asian countries spent \$38.2 billion on defense in 2014.<sup>10</sup>



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Based from the same SIPRI's report, Vietnam was the eighth largest arms importer in the world from 2011 to 2015, up from just 43rd in the previous five-year period. The country's arms imports rose by 699 percent from 2011 to 2015 and accounted for roughly three percent of global purchases from 2011 to 2015.

In May 2016, the US embassy in Vietnam hosted two defense contractor symposiums in Hanoi attended by companies including Boeing and Lockheed Martin. These major defense names - Boeing, BAE, Lockheed Martin, Saab - have all strengthened and established local presences in Southeast Asian markets in the past five years.

In the latest 2016 SIPRI report, Southeast Asian countries show the highest military expenditure in the world, with a percentage increase of 8.8 while other regions have been decreasing.<sup>11</sup>

| Table 1. World Military Spending, 2015   |                    |            |
|--|--------------------|------------|
| Region   | Spending (US\$ b.) | Change (%) |
| Africa   | (37.0)             | -5.3       |
| North Africa   | (17.9)             | 2.1        |
| Sub-Saharan Africa   | (19.1)             | -11        |
| Americas   | 678                | -2.5       |
| Central America & Caribbean  | 9.5                | 3.7        |
| North America  | 611                | -2.4       |
| South America  | 57.6               | -4.0       |
| Asia and Oceania   | 436                | 5.4        |
| Central and South Asia   | 68                 | 0.9        |
| East Asia  | 302                | 5.7        |
| Oceania  | 25.8               | 7.7        |
| South East Asia  | 39.7               | 8.8        |
| Europe   | 328                | 1.7        |
| Eastern Europe   | 74.4               | 7.5        |
| Western and Central  | 253                | -0.2       |
| Middle East  | ..                 | ..         |
| World Total  | 1676               | 1.0        |
| ( ) = uncertain estimate; .. = data unavailable<br>Spending figures are in current (2015) US\$<br>All changes are in real terms for the period 2014-15 |                    |            |

Interestingly, the sales of weapons from military services companies reportedly declined for the fourth consecutive year in 2014 and this was attributed to the “wake of 2008 financial crisis and the end of major US-led military operations in the Middle East.”<sup>12</sup> The top arms-producing companies are mostly from the US. The US and other arms-producing countries in Europe thrive and prosper with war.

On the other hand, the US security assistance to Southeast Asian countries decreased from 2010 to 2015. Overall security aid to Southeast Asia fell by 19 percent since 2010 according

to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Assistance to allies such as Thailand and the Philippines fell by 79.9 percent and 8.8 percent, respectively. Assistance to Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, which are important partners of the US in intelligence sharing, counterterrorism, anti-piracy patrols and other programs, had also decreased. Only Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos showed increase in security aid.

| Table 2. Top 10 Largest Arms-producing Companies, 2014   |                      |                  |
|--|----------------------|------------------|
| Company  | Arms Sales (US\$ m.) | Profit (US\$ m.) |
| Lockheed Martin  | 37,470               | 3,614            |
| Boeing   | 28,300               | 5,466            |
| BAE Systems  | 25,730               | 1,238            |
| Raytheon   | 21,370               | 2,258            |
| Northrop Grumman   | 19,660               | 2,069            |
| General Dynamics   | 18,600               | 2,819            |
| Airbus Group   | 14,490               | 3,117            |
| United Technologies  | 13,020               | 6,220            |
| Finmeccanica   | 10,540               | 27               |
| L-3 Communications   | 9,810                | ..               |
| .. = data unavailable. Companies are US-based, except BAE Systems (UK), Airbus Group (trans-Europe) and Finmeccanica (Italy) |                      |                  |
| Source: Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)   |                      |                  |

| Table 3. US Security Assistance to Southeast Asia (in million US dollars) |      |      |  |             |      |      |
|---|------|------|--|-------------|------|------|
| Country   | 2010 | 2015 |  | Country     | 2010 | 2015 |
| Brunei  | 0.1  | 0    |  | Myanmar     | 0    | 5    |
| Cambodia  | 7    | 6.2  |  | Philippines | 73.9 | 67.4 |
| Indonesia   | 66.5 | 32.1 |  | Singapore   | 0.7  | 0.2  |
| Laos  | 5.7  | 13.6 |  | Thailand    | 19.9 | 3.2  |
| Malaysia  | 5.5  | 2.3  |  | Viet Nam    | 6.8  | 17.7 |
| Source: Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)                                |      |      |  |             |      |      |

This could be attributed to the US focusing more on encouraging its allied governments to craft laws, programs or enter into bilateral/ multilateral security pacts where partner countries are inclined to spend on their military programs. The US also dominates the ASEAN-US Defense Minister's Meetings held regularly which talks about cooperation and coordination of militaries in the region.

Further, Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, to name a few, have already passed laws on human security or anti-terrorism acts in response to the campaign of the US-led war on terror. However, the laws forged by the national governments target activists whom they think are threats to the status quo. In essence, the US props up repressive regimes in the region and helps in the escalation of military operations against locales who assert their democratic rights.

Violence becomes severe in times of conflict, as documented in the different parts of the Southeast Asian region. All of which have been characterized by the disproportionate victimization of women and children and mostly, the violence reported is state-instigated.

For instance, the Laos government detained Sivanxai Phommalath for three months when she protested the illegal seizure of her family's property.<sup>13</sup> In Myanmar, Zin Mar Aung was detained for 11 years – where nine in solitary confinement – merely because of her active involvement in human rights work.<sup>14</sup> Myanmar's armed conflict in ethnic areas caused displacement of tens of thousands of people, arbitrary arrest, torture, extrajudicial killings, and systematic sexual abuses. Women's League for Burma documented at least 118 cases of sexual violence committed by army soldiers from 2010 to 2014.<sup>15</sup> The perpetrators enjoyed the impunity indicated in the country's 2008 constitution.

### III. Militarism to facilitate free flow of commerce

Every capitalist views the resource-rich Asia with rapacious eyes. Particularly in Southeast Asia, agricultural products such as rubber, palm oil, tropical fruits, coconuts, sugar cane, and all other raw materials that highly industrialized countries need for their production are cheaply available. Multinational corporations take interest in the gemstones of Burma, Laos, and Cambodia; coal of Laos and Vietnam; natural gas of Indonesia, Laos and Burma; oil in Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Burma, Vietnam and Thailand; gold of Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines; copper of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.<sup>16</sup> The Southeast Asia region has variety of fishes that is in demand in the global market.

The United States is most interested to remain as a main trader in Southeast Asia. During the term of George Bush, Obama's predecessor, Council on Foreign Relations issued a report, stating: "It is in the U.S. national interest to prudently commit a larger share of our national attention and our national resources to Southeast Asia."<sup>17</sup> Then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Scott Marciel, who was responsible for relations with Southeast Asia, also articulated the interest of strengthening cooperation since the region is the fourth largest market for the United States.<sup>18</sup>

The US is the most interested country among the Capitalist West to maintain its hegemonic control in Asia-Pacific, especially that it has experienced a very slow growth in its real economy since the mid-90s. To date, the US could hardly contain its recession with a standing national debt of more than \$19 trillion (Jan 2016). To solve its economic crisis, regain hegemony, and acquire profits, US neo-imperial invasion pushes through with a military-industrial framework.

Control over resources always leads to war and militarism. The imperialist powers, especially the United States, forge alliances with like-minded states so as to maintain the status quo. Repressive governments in Southeast Asia support such military-industrial framework because they themselves are gaining from it. The militaristic approach paves the way to plunder a nation's resources and its economic benefits accrue for both the government elites and the foreign investors. As the pillage results to resource scarcity, the socio-economic divide between the rich and the poor gets wider. Violence reaches its height where women and children become more vulnerable.

In another study conducted in 2001, about a quarter of the roughly 50 wars and armed conflicts have strong resource dimension – in the sense that legal or illegal resource exploitation helped trigger or exacerbate violent conflict or financed its continuation.<sup>19</sup>

The human toll of these resource-related conflicts is simply atrocious: rough estimates suggest that more than five million people were killed during the 1990s; close to six million fled to neighboring countries, and anywhere from 11 to 15 million people were displaced inside the borders of their home countries.<sup>20</sup>

In Cambodia, 10 women including Kong Chantha were arrested in November 2014 while they were demanding about their land rights and protesting about the flooding problem in their community, Boeung Kak. The government arrested and charged them of obstruction of traffic. They were granted royal pardon and were freed on April 11, 2015.

The security cooperation goes hand-in-hand with the push for free trade agreements. In this aspect, the US hegemony is challenged by China. While US attempts to get the commitment of all the Southeast Asian countries to adopt the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), China has already invited all ASEAN member states plus India, among others to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Both agreements fortify corporate rights over national interests, covering trade in goods, services, agriculture, tariffs and trade subsidies. In other words, these agreements bolster neoliberal globalization once more.

Yet recent economic scenario reveals that neoliberal globalization intensifies inequality with the top percentile of wealth holders now owning 50.4% of all household wealth<sup>21</sup> while more than 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty.

As poverty worsens while corporations enjoy liberalization of trade and plunder of resources, sovereign people of Southeast Asia struggle to protect their land and resources. Although Southeast Asian nations have been noted with authoritarian regimes, they have also produced the most patriotic, militant, revolutionary people. Remember Vietnam, a tiny country that defeated the US in the 60s. Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines have liberation movements with fervor stronger than the sophisticated weapons of the US. And always, women take part in the resistance movement. In the different countries of the region, there are various civil libertarian groups, non-governmental organizations, and service institutions that advocate the right to sovereignty and call for peace and social justice.

In Indonesia, militant peasant organizations resist land grabbing of government in the name of development and public interest to use the lands for massive plantation, mining sites, and military facility and real estates projects of foreign corporations.

In Cambodia, garments workers who are mostly women, hold strikes in record numbers since 2013 to fight against poor working conditions and low wages. Despite violent attacks in the workers' protests, they fight this repression and assert for their right to association.<sup>22</sup>

## IV. US influence to counter China's rising authority

Southeast Asia is strategically positioned in the sea links tying South and East Asia and it is near Western Asia. These regions are matter of interest to the United States. Particularly, China's rising authority in the region invokes attention from a global police like the US.

Further, the region is home to the Spratly Islands, located in the South China Sea, which is rich in oil and natural gas strategically located near large energy-consuming countries. South China Sea is the world's second busiest international sea lane where more than half of the world's supertanker passes through. Though not suitable for habitation, the islands are important for strategic and political reasons because ownership to them can bolster claims to the surrounding sea and its resources. For the past two decades, countries claim ownership of the islands or portion of it: China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

For several years now, China has been asserting ownership and has even built port facilities and airstrips on the Spratly Islands. Vietnam and the Philippines have condemned China's aggression. Even the international body, the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled that China's expansive claims in the South China Sea are without historical basis or legal merit. However, China remains adamant of its claim of ownership.

China's aggressive stance in South China Sea as well as its growing influence in trade agreements with Southeast Asian countries give the US a *raison d'être* to reinforce its foothold in the region. To apparently counter China, its US naval troops have been cruising South China Sea through the Philippine territory, which eventually damaged a portion of the country's Tubbataha Reef. The US has also expanded its military presence in the Philippines through a bilateral military agreement, the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), which gives US access to eight military bases including two near the Spratly Islands: Antonio Bautista Air Base and Carlito Cunanan Naval Station, both located in Palawan.

However, experts in international relations say that China's display of arms or its presence in Southeast Asia will not be a direct threat to US interests in the near future since the former will unlikely impinge on freedom of navigation in the region.<sup>23</sup>

So, the US military escalation in the region raises the question of its motive and carries the real risk of provoking war. While US can argue that its military posturing could help Southeast Asian nations to deter China, a militaristic approach could only harm them in the end. Besides, the solution for peace in the region will not come from an intervention of a superpower. Peace will be guarded by the sovereign people of Southeast Asia.

## V. Focus: the Philippines

For practical purposes, let us focus our attention to the Philippines, described as "a central part" of the Obama administration's pivot to Southeast Asia, particularly in the area of security.<sup>24</sup> For the past six years, the Philippines under Benigno Simeon Aquino III has experienced the height of government's consent of US presence to rule the country economically, politically, and militarily. Although all his predecessors had also been subservient to the US government, President Aquino went beyond belief when a bilateral agreement like EDCA was forged between the US and Philippine governments, which was negotiated in secrecy. EDCA has not only intensified US military presence in the country, it has also permitted US troops, weapons, and materials unimpeded entry and rent-free use of any location in the country.

President Aquino made use of the military, police, paramilitary, and "sugar-coated bullet" humanitarian programs to repress, threaten, or deceive the Filipino people. His militaristic approach had resulted to women and children suffering from different forms of violence and abuse.

This paper looks into the experiences of women and children on militarism in the Philippine context. It discusses a number of cases where threat, force, and deceit have been used to advance neoliberal agenda that undermines women's access to resources and services. The paper covers the term of President Benigno Aquino from 2010 to 2016. It also looks into the role of women and children in resisting militarism and war. Finally, it describes the women's chances under the new Duterte administration.

To gather relevant data for this paper, key informant interviews and group discussions have been conducted with prepared guide questions. Fact finding mission reports, video interviews, and transcripts have also provided substantial information.

### A. Experiences of Women and Children on Militarism in the Philippines

#### A.1. Militarism as a tool for resource grabs

Large-scale exploitation and exploration of the country's resources by foreign and national corporations have resulted to deployment of military forces and paramilitary groups in the countryside. National government data show that the areas with large development projects of multinational mining and agro-corporations are also the areas with massive cases of militarization and high poverty incidence.



| Table 4. Poverty Incidence in Selected Philippine Provinces, 2012 |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Province/Region   | Poverty Incidence |
| Maguindanao   | 63.7              |
| Surigao del Sur   | 36.0              |
| Quezon  | 27.5              |
| Tarlac  | 16.6              |
| Eastern Visayas   | 45.2              |
| Zamboanga del Norte   | 54.4              |
| Bacolod   | 32.3              |
| Cotabato  | 52.4              |
| Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, Poverty Statistics       |                   |

The women and children of these highly militarized areas have a lot to tell on how they are robbed of the much-needed resources and genuine development.

### **Indigenous Manobo Women of Surigao del Sur**

Surigao del Sur is located along the northeastern coast of Mindanao. The 493,200-hectare province is home to the Mananwa and Manobo tribes. The province is not only endowed with aquatic and agricultural crops such as rice, bananas and other tropical fruits, but it is also rich in metallic minerals such as chromite, copper, nickel, cobalt, and gold.

Many large scale mining and logging companies operate in the province including Marc Ventures Mining Development Corporation, Carrascal and Cantilan, CTP Construction and Mining Corporation, and Carac-an Development Corporation. Recent addition to the companies is the Abacus Consolidated Resources & Holdings, Inc., which will set up coal mining in the area.

The large scale operations have brought massive displacement of communities. Peasants and indigenous peoples in the area resist the incursion in their farmlands and ancestral domain. To curb the peoples' resistance, more than 4,500 military troops are deployed in Surigao del Sur. There are five AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) battalions deployed in the seven municipalities within and surrounding the coal rich Andap Valley Complex. Aside from the military troops, paramilitary elements are reportedly organized by the military to do their "dirty work". These bandit groups are also armed for counter-revolutionary operations.<sup>25</sup>

Eufemia Cullamat, a Manobo woman leader, shared that since the 1980s, her people have repeatedly evacuated from their community in Lianga because of massive militarization. In 1984, through organized efforts, the indigenous people were able to kick out the Benguet

Mining Corporation (BMC) in Surigao. After this, more military troops came and more atrocities continued.

She narrated that while the soldiers would say that they are looking for the revolutionary members of the New People's Army (NPA), they are actually targeting civilians. Terrified of the military's threat and harassment, the residents hardly leave their houses to go to their farms, harvest their rootcrops, or even fetch a pail of water.

*"Takot talaga ang mga tao, lalo na ang mga kababaihan. Ayaw nang lumabas ng bahay lalo na kapag may namamatay, kapag may nabalitaang tinorture o sinaktan. Pero alam din namin na kailangang protektahan ang kalikasan, kasi kapag nawala, buhay din namin ang mawawala. Kailangan din naming lumaban."* [The residents, especially the women, are really afraid. No one wants to go out especially when you hear news that someone was tortured or harmed. But we also know that we need to protect our environment. If we lose it, we also lose our lives. We need to fight.]

After the killing of Emok Samarca, Onel Campos, and Datu Bello Sinzo in September 2015, Eufemia and some 3,000 residents evacuated their communities and took refuge at the Surigao del Sur Provincial Sports Complex in Tandag City.

*"Ayaw talaga naming umalis kasi nandoon ang buhay namin. Pero takot na takot na kami, lalo na para sa mga bata. Sa mismong harap ng mga bata may pinatay."* [We really do not want to leave because our life is our community. But we are scared, especially for our children. The killings happened in front of our children.]

*"Para kaming uuod na gumapang sa lupa. Mga bata, matatanda, kababaihan. Di namin alam kung saan pa kami magtatago."* [Just like worms, all of us crawled on the ground - children, the elderly, women. We didn't know where to hide.]

Children's daily activities have been affected. Their own-established school, ALCADDEV (Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development, Inc.), is constantly threatened. A recognized alternative school by the Department of Education, ALCADDEV has been set up by the Manobos themselves because the government fail to build schools in their communities. ALCADDEV provides education to the youth of the indigenous peoples of Manobo, Higaonon, Banwaon, Talaandig and Mamanwa. Instead of appreciating the initiative of the indigenous communities, the military has accused ALCADDEV's teachers and students as NPA members or supporters. The harassment has disrupted the schooling and all other activities in the indigenous communities.

*“Sa komunidad malayang maglaro ang mga bata, may makakain rin kasi mayroon kaming mga tanim.”* [In our community, the children can play, they can eat well because we have planted crops.]

### **Life in the evacuation center**

For almost a year, many families from Lianga and neighboring municipalities take refuge in Tandag City. Living conditions in the evacuation center is difficult because of lack in food, water, and proper sanitation.

*“Syempre ang mga kababaihan ay nalungkot kami sa kalagayan na napaalis kami sa sarili naming komunidad tapos pagdating naming sa evacuation center, napakahirap. Halimbawa yung kakulangan ng tubig. Syempre ang babae kapag maligo, nahihirapan kami sa kalagayan doon kasi hindi kami sanay na maraming nakakakita.”* [The displacement saddens everyone, especially we as women. We find living in the evacuation center harder for women. We hardly get water. We find it difficult to take a bath where so many people can see us.]

*“Lalo na kapag kulang ang tubig, mahirap sa CR, yung kulang sa gamot, syempre ang pagkain namin dito ay palaging noodles, palaging mga canned goods. So ngayon habang kami ay nandito sa evacuation center ay pina-practice namin ang aming pagsasaka.”* [We have inadequate water, poor sanitation, and lack in medicines. Our food here is always instant noodles and canned goods. So while we are here, we try to cultivate the land and plant crops.]

*“Mahirap talaga bilang isang nanay lalo na yung halimbawa yung lutuan hindi nasa plastado, yung bahay di kasya sa maliit na bata. Hindi ganyan kadali ang gawaing bahay, mahirap talaga minsan walang tubig walang mailaba, mailuto. Mahirap talaga, hindi maintindihan ang nararanasan ng mga nanay.”* [Mothers find it difficult (to live in an evacuation center). We do not have a proper place to cook, our makeshift place does not even fit small children. Our chores as mothers are more strenuous with no water: we could not wash our clothes, we could not cook. It is tough, no one can understand how grueling it is for mothers.]

### **Lumad Women of Talaingod**

Central Mindanao includes the Pantaron Range, which has rich biodiversity and contains one of the remaining primary forests in the country. It is the land of the Lumads (indigenous people) called Manobo. The members of the Salugpungan ‘Ta Tanu Igkanugon, an organization of Talaingod-Manobo, believe that the abundance of their ancestral domain is the reason for the massive militarization in the area.

In the 1990's, the Manobos had organized themselves to defend Pantaron from big logging firm Alcantara and Sons (Alson's) through a *pangayaw*, or a tribal declaration of war in defense of their lands. The Manobos used indigenous weapons against the company and its private security. This forced Alson's to leave the area, thus preserving the flora and fauna of the Pantaron Range.

According to Manobo Datu Dawsay, the recent military occupation in their communities indicates another intrusion of government forces to once again open Talaingod to large scale mining, logging, and agricultural plantation. Mining applications for operations in Pantaron Range have been listed. Banana plantations of agro-corporation and contract farms of foreign Del Monte and DOLE are already operating in the Bukidnon side of Pantaron Range.

In April 2015, more than 1,300 Talaingod Manobo, including about 500 children, evacuated to Davao City after intensified aerial bombings in their area. During their exodus in the midst of the summer heat, a 12-day old infant died of pulmonary aspiration. A seven-month pregnant woman suffered miscarriage due to intense fright and trauma caused by the bombing operations.

In May 2015, hundreds of Lumads were displaced after state forces and paramilitary group called Alamara occupied communities in Talaingod and Kapalong. The Lumads were forced to stay inside their houses due to harassment, indiscriminate firing, and bombing. The incidents caused massive terror and fear in Lumad communities. It disrupted economic activities and threatened the lives of women and children. Students were also deprived of attending their classes in the schools established by the Lumads themselves because these were shut down by the military and para-military forces. Teachers were threatened to be killed. The 24 primary and secondary schools operated by the Salugpungan Ta Tanu Igkanugon Community Learning Center (STTICLC) and Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation Incorporated Academy (MISFIA) were all closed down.

Even at the evacuation center at UCCP-Haran in Davao City, the military and police continued to harass and threaten the Manobos. In February 24, 2016, the tents set up by the evacuees were set aflame by suspected paramilitary elements. Five makeshift houses were already consumed by the fire when it was put out. Five were hurt, including two children.

According to Bai Bibyaon Bingcayan, one of the few female chieftains of the Manobo tribe, the Lumads never wanted to leave their lands. She said they would not have gone to the city if not for the soldiers and Alamara camping out in their communities and threatening them with knives, guns, and bombs.

## **Never Losing Hope**

Despite threats and harassment, women, children, and the rest of the indigenous communities in the evacuations centers continue to resist development aggression and militarism. Women are also at the forefront of the struggle to save the land of the Lumads. Bai Bibyaon Ligkayan Bigkay and Eufemia Cullamat are examples of indigenous women who relentlessly fight development aggression and militarization in their communities.

Even in evacuation centers, women participate in educational discussions to further understand their situation. They also take the campaigns like “Save Our Schools”, “Defend Pantaron Range” in urban centers to gather support for their plight. Women and children actively help in raising awareness through street plays, songs and dance.

### ***A.2. Militarism as a tool to muffle peasant voices***

During the early quarter of 2015, the country suffered dry spells. With absence of government agricultural plan and no efficient public irrigation, the dry period resulted to drought, killing the staple crops of farmers. The Department of Agriculture (DA) officially reported that the prevailing El Nino incurred agricultural losses of more than Php5.32-billion since February 2015.

Farmers from all parts of the country asked for help and support from the government. However, their demands were considered rebellious that should be quelled.

### **No backing, just bullets: violent dispersal of farmers in Kidapawan, Cotabato**

Women farmers in Mindanao joined their husbands and families in marching to Kidapawan City last April, 2016. They had no choice but to demand for support from the government. They suffered great agricultural losses due to drought.

In North Cotabato province, agriculture losses reached Php1-billion. In Kidapawan City, at least 11, 000 families became hungry because of drought. The extreme drought in the rural areas of North Cotabato was aggravated by cheap prices of the farmers' products like rubber, rice, corn, and coconut. The farmers of North Cotabato experienced their deplorable condition for 10 months. As they suffered from hunger, the farmers decided to march to the provincial center and demand for government support, particularly subsidy for rice.

However, while they were barricading the national highway in Kidapawan City on April 1, 2016, they were sprayed with bullets by the police. Three died and at least 10 were wounded.

Seventy-nine (79) were illegally arrested and detained. Among those who were detained were 25 women, including three pregnant women and three elderly.

Eliza, 22 and six-month pregnant narrated: *“Ang sabi sa amin ng mga pulis, sumama daw kami sa kanila i-check up daw kami, pakakainin daw kami tapos pauwiin na. Hindi daw kami matakot kasi wala daw gagawin.... Mga 2:00 ng hapon yun dinala ako sa opsital para magcheck up. Pagkatapos dinala na ako dito.”* [The police commanded us to go with them to have our check up in the hospital, to give us food, and then we can go home. They assured us that no harm will be inflicted to us so we should not be afraid.... It was around 2:00 pm when I was taken to hospital for a check-up. And then they brought me here (at convention center that serves a detention area).]

Arlene, 25 and five-month pregnant said: *“Tinanong ako kung anong naramdaman ko, meron nga nararamdaman sa tyan ko pero di ko sinasabi sa kanila. Kasi galit ako sa kanila. Sinabihan ko sarili ko na di ako natatakot. Pagdating ko sa gym, na-check up ako, tapos dinala ako sa convention center. Di ko kinakain ang pagkain na binigay kasi naiisip ko yung anak ko sa bahay, kung kumain na ba sila.”* [The police asked me how I felt. Although my stomach upset me, I refused to answer because I was furious at the police. I kept telling myself that I should not be scared. When I arrived at the gym, they had me checked, and then they brought me to the convention center. I did not eat the food they gave me because I was thinking about my child back home, wondering if those left behind have already eaten.]

The arrest was just at random since some of the detained women were arrested while taking a bath in the nearby river: *“Naliligo kami sa ilog, wala kaming kaalam-alam may nangyayari na pala. Dun kami inabutan ng mga pulis.”* [We were just taking a bath in the river and we didn't know what was happening until the police arrived and arrested us.]

A report from the medical mission revealed that stress-related symptoms had worsened the condition of women and children who were camping out after the dispersal. Hypertension, headaches, muscle/body pains, stress ulcers, coughs and colds were prevalent. They lacked amenities since the police confiscated their belongings and many lost their clothes and toiletries in the camp.

Among the detained women, 17 out of the 25 women showed acute traumatic stress reactions related to their detention. This included anxiety, insomnia, re-experiencing the event (flashbacks), and heightened alertness, and hyper vigilance. Six of them were found to have suicidal ideation.

## Hunger in Murcia, Negros Occidental

Lani, a farmworker received only Php43.42 for 15 days of work during the harvest and milling season. Her measly wage was due to the deductions of her debts from the hacienda's "cooperative store" for rice and other supplies. She would be deep in debt especially during *tiempo muerto* (dead season) or *tigkiriwi* as termed by the locals when work would be scarce. She could no longer take home any cash during this *tiggulutom* (season of hunger)<sup>26</sup> since her wage would all be paid to the creditor.

Lani's plight exemplifies the general situation of farmworkers in Negros, known as the "sugar bowl" of the country and a bastion of haciendas. Land grabbing and land conversions are rampant in the island. Big landlords and multinational corporations collaborate to seize vast tracts of land to build plantations of palm oil, rubber tree, pineapple and banana plantations.

One landgrabbing case was recorded in Murcia, Negros Occidental where Dole Philippines had started to survey the land to open a banana plantation. The surveyed land, owned by the Arguelles family, covered 55 hectares of two haciendas -- Hacienda Arloc and Hacienda Ilimnan. According to the farmers, the local politico, Governor Alfredo Marañon collaborated with Dole Philippines to convert the land into a banana plantation. The local government-owned Negros First Ranch would then be rented out to Dole.

In Hacienda Ilimnan, farmers embarked on land cultivation for food crops of around 12 hectares to ease their extreme hunger during *tiempo muerto* and drought. However, the provincial government sent soldiers and local police to bulldoze their crops. Since then, the farmers were constantly disturbed by massive military operations.

Claring Singson, a human rights workers in the province shared, *"Ang epekto talaga nito ay trauma at fear. Minsan, alas-dos ng madaling araw, nagpapatok ang mga hired goons...siyempre nagugulantang, natatakot ang mga residente, ang mga magsasakang nakatira doon."* [The effect is trauma and fear. Sometimes, at two o'clock in the morning, the hired goons would fire shots... the residents, the farmers are shocked and scared.]

The children's schooling is also interrupted as they fear walking in the fields where the goons often linger. *"Ang mga bata di makapasok sa eskwela kasi ang layo-layo noon, maglalakad sila papuntang school sa town center. Kapag binu-bulldoze at may struggle nandyan ang mga sundalo at pulis, ang mga bata di na sila pumapasok sa eskwelahan."* [The children can't go to school in the town center because it is too far from their community. Especially when the police and military are present to protect those who bulldoze their community from the resisting residents, the children could not go to school.]

## Militarism in Bondoc Peninsula

Bondoc Peninsula, is known as the “hacienda belt” in Quezon province and one of the areas rich with natural resources in the Southern Tagalog region. It has a total land area of 870,660 hectares, 59 percent of which is agricultural but vast tracts of lands are owned by a few families. Eight out of ten families rely on production of coconuts, rice, corn and other agricultural products. It is also rich in mineral deposits such as gold.

Its rich natural and mineral resources make Bondoc Peninsula a target of foreign investors and corporations. The government in partnership with corporations have planned to start projects such as bio-diesel plant in Gumaca, Mirant Powerplant Extension in Pagbilao, Ogdol Bechtel Coal Fire Thermal Powerplant Extension in Atimonan, and the construction of a big dam in Macalelon.

Women and the rest of the Bondoc Peninsula communities have resisted the incursion of foreign investors since these would further result to displacement and dispossession of farmers in their area. The government answers such resistance with militaristic means.

At the height of military operations in 2012, eight battalions of the Philippine Army were deployed in 22 towns of South Quezon and Bondoc Peninsula. The huge number of deployed soldiers in Bondoc Peninsula resulted to more women experiencing violence.

Nelia (not her real name), 46, recalled how soldiers came to her house one night and asked for her husband. When she told them that her husband was out, the soldiers threw invectives at her and accused her husband of being an NPA. For four nights, soldiers took turns guarding their house, waiting for her husband. Her daughter also saw a soldier poked a hole in their nipa wall using the tip of an armalite.

*“Yung dingding namin, nagbutas sila doon sinisilip kami, nilulusot yung dulo ng baril.”* [They poked a hole in our wall so they could peek at us, they would insert the gun’s muzzle in the hole.]

Ria (not real name), recounted how elements of military barged into their house looking for her parents. The military accused her parents as members of NPA. However, Ria asserted that her parents were leaders of Anakpawis, a local organization in their community. Ria was also made to watch with other children a violent video of combat by the soldiers.



### **A.3. Militarism as the way to curb "terrorism"**

Imperialist powers like the US and repressive national governments like the Aquino government use the campaign against terrorism to advance their political and economic interests. The campaign against terrorism becomes a virtual license for unrestrained human rights violations.

#### **Zamboanga siege**

In September 9, 2013, an armed conflict erupted between the Philippine armed forces and factions of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The crisis lasted for three weeks, which resulted to the death of more than 200 people and wounded more than 500.

The Zamboanga communities in the coastal towns of Rio Hondo, Sta. Barbara, and Sta. Catalina experienced aerial bombings, mortar shelling, and machine gun-strafting. Due to extensive military operations, 23,794 families evacuated. Houses were destroyed with strafing, burning and aerial bombing. Twelve civilians died, while more than 70 were wounded. Families were forced to take shelter in evacuation centers.

The US troops were spotted during the operations. In the US Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines in June 2014, former US Secretary of State Philip Goldberg, admitted that the US provided vital information and communications assets to the military in the midst of the siege.<sup>27</sup>

After the siege, some of the residents went back to their war-torn communities. Their houses were beyond repair. Linda, 65, with her children, set up a temporary room made of tarpaulin and scrap woods and metal sheets. *"Di namin makalimutan kapag nakikita mo yung butas sa dingding, sunog ang kusina."* [I cannot forget whenever we see the holes in the walls and the burnt kitchen.]

Thousands chose to remain in evacuation centers out of fear that another armed clash might erupt. More than 200 have died of diarrhea, pneumonia, or dehydration in evacuation centers and transitory sites, according to the City Health Office of Zamboaga.

Because of extreme poverty and hunger in evacuation centers, women and girls fell prey to trafficking and sexual abuse. In April 2014, seven months after the siege, reports of prostitution circulated in the media. According to Shallom Allian, of Nisa Ul Haqq fi Bangsamoro, "women are forced to engage in prostitution for Php25, Php50 to as high as Php300 just to address their immediate needs like food and medicines."<sup>28</sup>

According to Dr. Rodelin Agbulos, the city's health officer, there was rampant prostitution inside the sports complex during the first three months that followed the siege. "It was really rampant and there was even a joke about the '*bagsak presyo* (price drop)' then," Agbulos said, adding that prostitution went on inside even when a curfew was imposed within the sports complex.<sup>29</sup>

Sexual assaults also occurred in the evacuation center's common toilet. Evacuee Saadia Alfad said she needed to accompany and watch her three children everytime they went to use the toilet to keep them safe from harm.

## **Mamasapano**

The Oplan Exodus in Tukanalipao, Mamasapano, Maguindanao displayed US' interference in a Philippine military operation. In the guise of getting a terrorist, a police operation with reportedly three Americans clashed with Moro rebels Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on January 25, 2015. The operation happened in the midst of a signing of a law, the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), between the Philippine government and the MILF rebels.

Based from the Senate's investigation, the Americans provided surveillance in the area through their Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance (ISR) and TV monitors. They were part of the commanding operation unit.

The operation caught women and children in the crossfire. Some 5,000 civilians were distressed and disrupted. A five-year old girl, Sarah Panangulon, was killed and her parents were wounded when Special Armed Forces unit strafed their home. An 18-year old farmer, Badrudin Langan, was found hogtied and dead.

Students in 13 public elementary and high schools like the Linantangan Elementary School in Tukanalipao proper had cancelled classes for two weeks. Classes for the 300 Mahad or Arabic students were also disrupted.<sup>30</sup> Even when the schools resumed classes, hundreds of students refused to go back to school.

The military operation inflicted trauma among the residents. Thirty-seven-year old Bai Puti Kusain, a mother of 10, could not go outside her home to work in the farm for fear of dormant grenades, which would suddenly explode.<sup>31</sup>

#### ***A.4. Militarism in the guise of humanitarian aid***

Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the Philippines in November 2013, opened up opportunities for foreign troops especially US soldiers to legitimize its presence in the country. More than 13,000 US servicemen were deployed in Eastern Visayas and were stationed in airports and seaports, purportedly to render humanitarian aid.

This US assistance, with an image of benevolence and aid, justified the heightened US military intervention in the country. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) emphasized the need of US presence to deliver immediate relief assistance to the typhoon-stricken areas. Further, both the US and Philippine governments rationalized the need for a strengthened HADR (High Availability Disaster Recovery) through prepositioned materials and closer cooperation with the US. Barely five months after the huge show of force in post-disaster areas, EDCA was signed in April 2014.

In essence, disaster militarism justified the increase of US troop deployment. It also naturalized the call for military action in times of environmental catastrophes.<sup>32</sup> This happened when tsunamis hit Japan and Indonesia, and a deadly earthquake destroyed Haiti. Disaster militarism added to the strategy of "winning the hearts and minds" of the people where soldiers could be portrayed as kind and humane.

#### ***A.5. Institutionalizing Militarism and US intervention***

##### ***Through forging agreements: EDCA and VFA***

The Philippine government proved to be a loyal supporter of the call of the United States on "war against terrorism". The US hand in local military operations was rationalized as a riposte to the "borderless operation of terrorist" that America should watch and destroy. The government showed its dependence on US "protection" by forging additional bilateral agreements, which were detrimental to the nation's sovereignty.

Thus, aside from the existing Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), the Philippines signed EDCA, another agreement with the US last April 2014. As mentioned in the earlier pages, the agreement had been negotiated in secrecy for nearly two years. The agreement put in writing the blanket access and authority of US troops to conduct limitless activities all over the country. This showed a step backward from the display of patriotism in 1991 when the people, through the Senate, rejected the extension of US bases in the country.

The signing of EDCA by the Aquino administration opened the country to be part of US pivot to Asia-Pacific. The agreement granted US a nationwide access to resources in the Philippines and a strategic passage to other Asian countries.

### **Through Social Protection Programs: PAMANA and 4Ps**

In terms of programs, the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan or PAMANA (Resilient Communities in Conflict- Affected Communities) is a flagship program being implemented in more than 5,000 conflict areas nationwide for peace-building, reconstruction and development. Activities included addressing the needs of internally displaced people and reintegrating former combatants. The military was always at the forefront in the implementation of the project, boosting its image as humanitarian and benevolent.

Another program, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), a conditional cash transfer program scheme and the central poverty alleviation project of the Aquino administration, was immensely implemented in conflict areas, simultaneous with PAMANA. 4Ps, a cash dole out program for women and children, had reportedly been used to prevent women from joining organizations like GABRIELA. Women reported that some of the beneficiaries refused to join organizations for fear of being delisted from the program. Observably, 4Ps activities would always be scheduled during mobilizations and meetings of progressive organizations. Reportedly, the presence of soldiers could be seen during the distribution of cash grants in some rural communities to “ensure the safe conduct of grants”.

PAMANA and 4Ps gave the image of uniformed men to be caring soldiers, an approach to “win the hearts and minds” of the people especially in the countryside, which is labeled as red-infested areas.

### **Legitimizing militarism through counter-revolutionary programs: Oplan Bayanihan**

Oplan Bayanihan (OpBay) was the Internal Security Operation (ISO) plan of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) patterned after US counter-insurgency (COIN) program. It was approved by President Aquino in January 2011. OpBay was designed to decimate the New People’s Army (NPA), the armed group of the Communist Party of the Philippines, in the first three years of operation.<sup>33</sup> But just like the other Oplans in the past, its iron hand approach did not succeed.

Basically, it also followed the four stages of military operations, just like the past Oplans: clear-hold-consolidate-develop. Conduct of military operations to “clear” the area of “terrorists” or insurgents, “hold” the area by forming paramilitary groups and an intelligence network, “consolidate” the area by improving relations between the AFP and the civilian

population through civic action operations such as medical and dental missions, “develop” the area by introducing livelihood and development projects.

The program’s pre-emptive strikes and rendition or the abduction, torture, and killings of anyone suspected as “terrorist” or “subversive” received nationwide and international condemnation. Besides, the provision of services like medical and dental missions was palliative and did not provide the people with long-term access to essential services.

## **B. Effects of militarism on women and children**

War and militarism disproportionately affects women and children. The 2009 study by Ormhaug reveals that while men are more likely to die during conflicts, women (and children) die more often of indirect causes after the conflict is over. Several studies that take into consideration the post-conflict period report a high number of female and children deaths after the conflict is officially over.<sup>34</sup> This section discusses the effects of militarism as experienced by women and children in the abovementioned eight communities. This includes economic insecurity, health impacts including physical, sexual and mental, change in social roles and participation, various gender-based and human rights violations.

### ***B.1. Worsening economic insecurity***

War and militarism worsens women’s economic insecurity. While large scale foreign and development aggression threaten the people’s access to resources and genuine development, military operations further rob women and their families’ meager source of living. National data show the already high poverty incidence in provinces/region where communities included in this study are situated. For example, high poverty incidence is reported in many regions in Mindanao where more than half of foreign-dominated agricultural economic zones are located.

Based from the documented experiences, military operations aggravate economic insecurity when women cannot go out of their houses to go to farms, *kaingin*, or look for alternative sources of income. Military operations also result to loss of properties, destruction of shelters, schools, religious places and other important structures in communities.

As in the case of Talaingod people and the peasant families in Murcia, Negros, who made efforts to ease their extreme poverty by initiating collective farming and other source of food and livelihood, military and paramilitary elements destroyed their source of food and livelihood.

At the height of military operations, families who are forced to flee their communities would have to leave their sources of livelihood. Living in an evacuation center, without much State support leave women and children are in further state of economic insecurity since they live there from a month to as long as two years.

There is also the problem of government relocation and rehabilitation plan. President Aquino's administration is known as a government that lacks compassion and sense of urgency in dealing with disasters. In Zamboanga, the state agencies even threatened to stop distributing relief to families if they do not accept the relocation plans, which are in areas far from their native places. As many of the evacuees are indigenous people, peasants, and fisher folks, their knowledge of livelihood are naturally dependent on their land.

The only jobs offered them by the government are food-for-work program, which can only accommodate a few people. Livelihood trainings are also offered but only catered to a few hundred internally displaced families (IDFs) compared to thousands living in evacuation centers. Economic insecurity places women in more vulnerable position to be victims of trafficking, domestic violence and other forms of abuse. Cases of prostitution have been documented among women evacuees.

Children on the other hand are forced to stop from schooling, which would further impede their future as adults.

## **B.2. Health impacts**

Health impacts of war and militarism include physical harm such as mortality during the military operations and increased morbidity as effect of fleeing or living under difficult conditions, spread of diseases, reproductive health issues, and psychological impacts.

**Physical harm and injuries** – When military operation sets in, women and children are vulnerable to be caught in the crossfire. They can be harmed by shrapnel and other weapons and can even be hurt when military soldiers burn down their houses. Being a suspected rebel like Ubunay Botod Manlaon in Talaingod, women experience torture and severe physical injuries. They are also used as human shields during military operations just like during the Zamboanga siege and Mamasapano operations.

**Malnutrition and hunger** – Increased malnutrition and hunger are one of the immediate impacts of militarism and war. Loss of access to food due to displacement, economic insecurity, and loss of properties trigger sickness and hunger. In the evacuation center, the displaced Lumads get sick due to the relief packages that contain mostly instant noodles and canned goods, which do not contain any nutrition at all.

**Reproductive health** – Military operations endanger the lives of pregnant women. These operations trigger a miscarriage like what happened to a 7-month pregnant in Lianga. Evacuation centers have no appropriate health care for pregnant women in delivering babies, or assisting pregnancy-related complications.

Lack of sanitary facilities and toilets in evacuation centers adds difficulty for women and girls especially during their menstrual periods. It also increases the incidence of urinary tract infections (UTI). Studies show that women who are prisoners of war or who are living in areas exposed to bombardment have increased risk of menstrual abnormalities.<sup>35</sup>

**Spread of diseases** – Because food, clean water, sanitation, medicines health services, tents and other necessities are lacking in evacuation centers, diseases such as diarrhea, coughs, colds, eye and skin infections, and pneumonia spread easily. High risk of dengue fever is also present in crowded and unsanitary evacuation places. Sexual abuse and prostitution present in areas with military bases can also result to a spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

**Psychological effects** – Fear, anxiety, and depression are evident to women and children's experiencing trauma. Mothers do not only fear for their own life, but especially fear for their children's welfare. They are constantly stressed by how they are going to protect their families from physical harm, harassment, and threats. They are also constantly anxious, thinking how they are going to survive for the day. The ever-present threats posed by militarization cause serious damage to women's mental health, such as overall stress, phobia, and the emotional distresses. In a psychosocial assessment with detained women in Kidapawan, seven out of ten have shown acute traumatic stress reactions, which includes anxiety, insomnia, re-experiencing the event (flashbacks), heightened alertness, and hyper vigilance. Some have signs of suicidal ideation.

For the children, witnessing violent acts have long term impacts. Seeing death in front of one's eyes at an early age can be traumatic. In a study by Weller, Fristad, and Bowes (1991) of 38 children who experienced or witnessed violent acts, 37% have met diagnostic criteria for major depressive disorder and 61% have suicidal ideation.<sup>36</sup>

In the case of children who were made to watch videos of combat operations such as in Bondoc Peninsula in Quezon province, the act can also desensitize children to the dangerous effects of violent behavior. This could increase the possibility of them imitating the aggressive behaviors they watch, taking these as normal behavior and could have significant impact in their future.

### ***B.3. Burdened roles and minimal social participation***

Women bear the brunt of the social consequences of militarism and war. They are the ones who look for missing family members, trying to keep children safe, making new homes when displaced by conflict, and dealing with day-to-day difficulties.

Militarism not only ties women to their traditional role of childcare and housekeeping, but it also makes these chores harder for them. Displacement makes it difficult for women to prepare food, fetch water, and keeping the children clean and healthy. With the loss of the properties and livelihood, women are the ones who look for alternative sources of living. Children, who lost a parent in armed conflict, are forced to take care of themselves and their younger siblings.

On another plane, psywar (psychological warfare) tactics employed by state forces aims to pacify or deceive the dissenting people. Humanitarian aid, charity, and other development programs, which often targets women and children, are used to suppress resistance. For example, women beneficiaries of conditional cash transfer program are reluctant to participate in organizations for fear that they will be delisted from the program although they are not openly prohibited to join such organizations.

### ***B.4. Sexual abuse: rape as tool of war, prostitution as part of R&R***

Rape and other sexual abuses are used as a tool of war. These heinous acts are used as a form of intimidation tactic against community leaders, as a warning to those thought to be threats or enemies, and as a "prize" for a victorious army.<sup>37</sup> Militarism is misogynic and harms women.

A study by Morris and Burke (2004) shows that even military language reveals the "unabashed hatred of women" all the time. For example in the US military, despite the rules that prohibit drill instructors from using racial epithets and curses, recruits or trainees are still routinely calling them "pussy," "girl," "bitch," "lady" and "dyke." The same study reveals that everyday speech of soldiers is still riddled with sexist insults. The view of women as sexual prey has always been present in military culture. Indeed, civilian women have been seen as sexual booty for conquering soldiers since the beginning of human history.<sup>38</sup>

Several cases of sexual abuse have already been documented in areas of high military deployment:



| Table 5. Cases of Sexual Abuses Perpetrated by the Military |                            |   |
|---|----------------------------|---|
| Date of Incident  | Place of Incident          | Details   |
| January 30, 2010  | Aroroy, Masbate            | Members of the 9th IB Bravo Company namely Alex Briones, Archie Vasquez, Gilbert Quinito and a certain Llagas, gang raped 'Vilma', 21, inside the 9th IB camp in Aroroy, Masbate. After the incident, the soldiers sent messages to "Vilma" threatening to kill if she would tell anyone. Three days later, "Vilma" received a text message from Briones asking for a meeting because he had something important to tell her. Briones picked up "Vilma" and brought her to a lodging house where she was raped again. <sup>39</sup> |
| February 2012   | Mankayan, Benguet          | "Katrina" and "Isabel" (not their real names) from the mining town of Mankayan, Benguet were raped by Captain Danilo Lalin of the 50th Infantry Battalion of the AFP.   |
| June 2012   | Tanay, Rizal               | Valeriano Masaang Jr a.k.a "Striker" an assistant of an officer of the 2nd Infantry Division raped a 12-year-old girl in June 2012. "Nini" (not her real name) was using the washroom when Masaang, who was drunk, went in and punched Nini and started to touch her private parts. He threatened to kill her mother if she said a word. To further intimidate her, Masaang took out a knife and put it on the floor for Nini to see while she was being raped.   |
| May 2013  | Paluan, Mindoro Occidental | A 16-year-old girl accused three soldiers of raping her after the victim and her mother attended an event at a military base in Paluan town. The victim's mother said they didn't report the incident to authorities because the soldiers had threatened them, instead, she focused her attention on taking care of Siena, who was traumatized by the incident. <sup>40</sup>   |
| November 17, 2014   | Sitio Maluos, Kitaotao     | 16-year old "Jessa" identified Private First Class Benjie Blancada 84th Infantry Division of AFP as her alleged rapist <sup>41</sup>  |
| September 2015  | Talaingod, Davao del Norte | 14-year-old indigenous girl was raped by three soldiers. The victim was among some 700 Manobo villagers, who had fled to the Haran House due to abuses committed by soldiers and the paramilitary group Alamara <sup>42</sup>   |
| Source: various news reports                                |                            |   |

On March 10, 2014, Ubunay Botod Manlaon, an elderly Manobo woman, was subjected to humiliating treatment and sexual abuse. The military stripped her of her clothes, bound her hands and feet, and treated her like an animal as they fed her scraps. She was also used as a guide for military operations. At night when they made camp, they left her out in the cold and rain. The brutality only ended when she was able to escape.

As soldiers and police enjoy the culture of impunity, they become bold and shameless perpetrators of sexual abuses. GABRIELA National Office has recorded 136 cases of abuse committed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and 42 by the Philippine National Police (PNP) since 2010 until the third quarter of 2014. These men in uniform are supposed to protect the people but they are one of the primary violators of human and women's rights.

The documented cases in Mindoro, Baguio, Bohol and Quezon reveal soldiers initially befriending and courting women and girls who would later be sexually abused. Soldiers hang around in places like "*sari-sari stores*" where they get to meet women and girls who usually tend to these stores. Many of these women and girls are terrified of men in uniform so they are forced to be sociable to avoid "more danger". Soldiers also target and court the young daughters of known progressive leaders of community organizations.

## **Prostitution**

The heightened military operations and the presence of foreign military troops result to militarized prostitution. This form of prostitution solely caters to the military, as part of its rest and recreation (R&R) and can be seen in places where US bases are located such as in Clark , Pampanga and Subic, Olongapo.

In the Walking Street in Fields Avenue, Angeles City, Pampanga, at least 15,000 women work as waitresses, dancers, and entertainers in bars, karaoke club, and massage parlors located just outside Clark. They are paid Php170.00 per night with some incentives.

Most of those who work in establishments came from impoverished families in Visayas and Mindanao. American soldiers are the main customers especially during Balikatan exercises in April or May every year. The period for Balikatan exercises are considered as the speak season in the red light district. Bars even offer military appreciation discount for US military customers.

According to a GABRIELA chapter in the area, the military has adopted a new practice in their R&R. Instead of directly going to the bars, women are brought inside the camps to service US soldiers so as to avoid being seen in public. The prostituted women deal with the risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases and also face the danger of being raped or beaten by military customers.

Even though the local government and business owners deny that prostitution happens in the area, they have policies and requirements to women who work in entertainment establishments. The local government unit has set up a social hygiene clinic where women

can get serologic screening or smear tests every two weeks, as well as treatment for sexually-transmitted diseases. It even issues “pink cards” to assure military customers that the women are in the pink of health. The local government permits the existence of prostitution because it generates earnings.

### ***B.5. Lack in services due to military spending***

A culture of militarism among state authorities puts premium on military spending than on people’s welfare. Military programs divert the much-needed funds that can be used to provide social services and develop the country’s agriculture and industry. The budget for defense increases every year.

| Table 6. Department of National Defense Budget<br>(in million Philippine peso) |        |         |         |        |        |        |
|--|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| Year   | 2010   | 2011    | 2012    | 2013   | 2014   | 2015   |
| Budget   | 57,670 | 104,504 | 106,905 | 80,420 | 82,265 | 99,924 |
| Source: Department of Budget and Management, 2010-2015                         |        |         |         |        |        |        |

While the budget for defense increased over the years, spending on much needed services remain low. Except for the Department of Education, which is constitutionally mandated to have the highest budgetary priority, other services such as health, social welfare, agriculture and transportation services are lagging behind the defense budget.

| Table 7. Top Ten Departments with the Highest Budget Allocation, 2016<br>(in billion pesos) |   |        |
|---|---|--------|
| Rank  | Department                                      | Budget |
| 1   | Department of Education                         | 435.9  |
| 2   | Department of Public Works and Highways         | 394.5  |
| 3   | Department of National Defense                  | 172.7  |
| 4   | Department of Interior and Local Government     | 154.5  |
| 5   | Department of Health                            | 128.4  |
| 6   | Department of Social Welfare and Development    | 104.2  |
| 7   | Department of Agriculture                       | 93.4   |
| 8   | Department of Finance                           | 55.3   |
| 9   | Department of Transportation and Communications | 49.3   |
| 10  | Department of Environment and Natural Resources | 25.8   |
| Source: Department of Budget and Management, 2016   |   |        |

The government’s share in health expenditure consistently decreased from 26.62% in 2010 to 18.95% in 2013. As a result, out-of-pocket payments increased from 62.79% in 2010 to 68.20% in 2013.

Housing backlog in the country is at its highest at 5.6 million. According to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) and Homeless International (HI), an estimated 22.8 million people live in urban poor communities or slum areas in the country wherein 1.2 million are children. According to an international website List25.com, the Philippines –specifically Metro Manila – has topped the world list of “25 Cities with Extremely High Homeless Populations”. Still, the budget allocated for housing is intended only for demolition and relocation projects.

While education seems to get the biggest share of budget among agencies, the government spends only Php15,131 for each student or Php63 per day for school year 2015-2016. This still does not meet the 6% of GDP recommended spending on education. This is also in stark contrast with the budget for military education amounting to Php2.8 million per graduate in the Philippine Military Academy, which produces the country’s military elite.

Besides, defense program also shares the pie in the education budget as well. A portion of the budget for tertiary education is allocated to the government’s counter-insurgency program. For example, around Php4 million of the Commission on Higher Education budget in 2014 is allocated for college scholarship program under the PAMANA.

## ***B.6. Curtailment of rights: violation of civil and political rights***

Women human rights defenders are constantly vulnerable to attacks from state and paramilitary forces. With OpBay, the military does not only target the armed NPA group but also unarmed activists and civilians who resist the government's neoliberal policies. Women activists face OpBay's violent operations.

| Table 8. Selected Violations of Civil and Political Rights<br>Under the Aquino Administration<br>(July 2010-December 2015) |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Violation  | Number of Victims |
| Extrajudicial killing  | 307               |
| Enforced disappearance   | 30                |
| Torture  | 215               |
| Rape   | 11                |
| Frustrated extrajudicial killing   | 566               |
| Illegal arrest without detention   | 903               |
| Illegal arrest and detention   | 501               |
| Illegal search and seizure   | 272               |
| Physical assault and injury  | 556               |
| Source: Karapatan Human Rights Report, 2016  |                   |

From July 2010 to December 2015, 307 cases of extrajudicial killings were documented by Karapatan, a human rights organization. Of this number, 29 were women and 28 children. Many of the victims were members of progressive people's organizations. Among these were indigenous tribes B'laan leader Juvy Capion and her two sons and Mindanao community leader Cristina Jose.

Further, many human rights defenders are now political prisoners with trumped up charges. To date, there are 557 political prisoners, where 49 are women, 88 are sickly, 8 are minors and 51 are elderly.

Moreta Alegre, 68, mother of 7, a native of Old Sagay village, Sagay, Negros Occidental, has been in prison for almost a decade now. She, her husband Jesus, and their son, Selman, were convicted of murder in 2007 for the death of someone they did not know. They were imprisoned because of a dispute with a landlord who wanted to grab their farm. Moreta's family relied on fishing and planting palay and coconut for a living. The landlord claimed ownership to a 15-hectare land including the 1.12 Moreta's family was tilling. When her family found out that the landlord applied a title to the land, they filed a formal protest and fought for their land. The fight caused the death of her son, Romeo. Despite Romeo's death and the threats and harassments from the landlord, Moreta and her family continued to fight until they were imprisoned on trumped up charges.

At the moment, Moreta suffers from arthritis, hypertension and a heart ailment.<sup>43</sup>

In June 20, 2014, GABRIELA member Maria Miradel Torres, then 26 years old and four months pregnant was arrested at Barangay (village) Ilayang Iyam, Lucena City, Quezon by joint elements of Philippine National Police Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) and Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, and Southern Luzon Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. She was charged with murder and frustrated murder. After five days in police custody and despite the doctor's order for complete bed rest due to threatened abortion, Miradel was transferred to Taguig City Jail (TCJ) in Camp Bagong Diwa (wherein the travel time from Lucena to this Taguig detention facility would take four hours). The Jail personnel confiscated her medicine and supplements for pregnancy upon admission at the Taguig City Jail. Miradel shared the detention cell with three other inmates. One of the inmates reportedly had tuberculosis. She was assigned to sleep on the third deck of the bed. She gave birth in November 17, 2014 at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH). In January 2015, Miradel was brought back to TCJ with her baby on order of the court.<sup>44</sup>

To date, Miradel and her baby are still in jail.

## Immediate Consequences of VFA and EDCA

One of the playgrounds of Balikatan exercises under VFA is Crow Valley in Camp O'Donnell, a component facility of Clark Air Base spanning in the provinces of Pampanga and Tarlac. This military reservation used to be the home of the indigenous Aeta people but they were displaced when the American forces occupied it as a military base.

With the signing of EDCA, an expansion for US military operation has been proposed and once again, the Aeta people are faced with the threat of dislocation. During the annual Balikatan exercises around April and May, the Aetas could hardly tend their farms.

*"Kapag nag-ooperasyon sila, kung ilang lingo yan, di kami makakababa. Ang epekto, hindi makapunta sa kaingin kasi doon sila mismo sa komunidad ang training",* recalled Minyang, 48, mother of 6. [During weeks of their military operations, we cannot go to our "kaingin" because it's where they do their trainings.]

Even staying inside their houses could be unsafe. Edwin Danan, chair of Central Luzon Aeta Association (CLAA), shared that one of the Aeta women in their village was almost hit by a bullet during one of the exercises. She was cooking rice and preparing for lunch when suddenly, she heard a sharp metallic sound. She then realized that a bullet hit the pot she is using to cook rice.

The Aetas are also concerned of how the cultural image of their women is ruined by the massage parlors and entertainment establishments operating near their communities. Many Aeta women are forced to work in these establishments where foreign and local soldiers are clients. Their "new work" also exposes them to different forms of abuses.

*"Sa kultura namin, dapat yung katawan lang ng asawa mo ang makikita mo. Pero dahil sa ganung trabaho, parang nababago na yung kultura ng mga katutubo."* [In our culture, only the husband or your wife is entitled to see one's body. But because of such work, our culture is undermined.]

In the Moro communities, the Balikatan exercises endanger civilians, according to Bai Ali Indayla of Kawagib, a human rights organization. Using the campaign against the terrorist Abu-Sayyaf group, US troops freely conduct military operations in Moro areas with the Filipino soldiers. According to Bai Ali, Moro communities often see US troops participating in the local military operations, a direct intervention of a rather internal engagement in the country.

## Murder and abuses of US troops

For Filipino women, the presence of US troops spells violence. Recent cases of sexual abuses such as the rape of Zamboangueña Nicole and the murder of Olongapo transwoman Jennifer Laude add to the hundreds of cases committed by the US troops in the country.

Signed in 1999, VFA put aside the protection of the Filipinos in favor of the US troops. Due to the lopsided agreement like VFA which indicates that only the US government can convict its citizen's crimes and the Philippines has no criminal jurisdiction, the country's court could hardly put the American servicemen in jail. The Aquino administration has even considered the Laude murder as an "isolated" case and should not take into account VFA as a factor.

However, the Laude murder is only the recent violation committed by the American troops in Philippine soil. Some of the recent cases since 2002 are the following:

| Table 9. Selected Cases of US Troops Abuse         |  |
|--|--|
| 2014   | Jennifer Laude was murdered by U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Joseph Scott Pemberton in Olongapo City  |
| 2010   | Gregan Cardeño, an interpreter for US soldiers stationed in a military facility mysteriously died in the barracks of the Philippine Army's 103rd Infantry Brigade at Camp Ranao, Brgy. Datu Saber, Marawi City |
| 2008   | Rawina Wahid was shot in a military operation participated in by US Navy soldiers in Sulu where seven other civilians  |
| 2005   | "Nicole" was raped by US soldier Daniel Smith in Olongapo City   |
| 2004   | Arsid Baharon was shot by US soldiers, whose identity was withheld by US authorities during a military operation in Zamboanga City   |
| 2004   | Sardiya Abu Calderon died of a heart attack when a helicopter with two American soldiers landed on their farm  |
| 2002   | Buyong-Buyong Isnijal killed by US soldier Reggie Lane in Basilan  |
| Source: news reports, fact finding mission reports |  |

## C. Filipino women resisting militarism and war

Women's place is in the struggle. Poverty and lack of social justice are concrete conditions for women to dissent. The grief for the loved ones lost during militarism makes women aspire for a just and lasting peace.

Toiling Filipino women carry the Malayan blood of warriors who will not falter to fight against repression and exploitation. Some of them join community-based organizations such as

GABRIELA, SAMAKANA, Amihan, among others, to pursue collective action through mobilizations, campaigns, information, and education.

Others opt to fight by joining liberation movements like MAKIBAKA or armed revolutionary groups like the New People's Army. They believe that the way to peace is to be free from oppression and intervention, which can only be fought through armed struggle.

Whatever course the Filipino women take, they are one in going against the culture of militarism and they are steadfast in fighting against it.

## **D. Women's prospects under the new Duterte administration**

The landslide victory of President Rodrigo Duterte to the presidency in the recent May 2016 national polls signifies the tireless assertion of the Filipino people in clamoring for social transformation. Although the basic tenets of social transformation still need to be realized, women recognize the window of opportunity in the newly installed Duterte administration to put forward their demand for social reforms, which has been sidelined previously by the Aquino administration.

But the Duterte administration is currently marred with issues of drug-related extrajudicial killings. The current drug problem is a manifestation of a long standing problem of poverty, inequality, loss of human dignity, poor law enforcement and lack of proper rehabilitation programs of the past administrations. The unabated killings resulted to hundreds of deaths and stems to other abuses of police and other law enforcers.

On the other hand, President Duterte has assured to address many of the other pressing issues in the country. One significant action of the new administration is the resumption of peace talks with the revolutionary forces of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), the Moro National Liberation Front (MILF), and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Unlike his predecessor, President Duterte is serious in talking peace with the revolutionary groups.

Filipino women are looking forward to the peace talks, especially with the government's ongoing talks with the NDFP, the political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). A positive result of the talks would be defined economic and social reforms of national industrialization, land for the landless, provision of social services, and a patriotic foreign policy. Immediate results of the talks are the final pull out of military troops in the communities of farmers and indigenous peoples and the release of all political prisoners.



Filipino women look forward to the abrogation of all military agreements with the US that compromise the Philippine sovereignty such as VFA and EDCA. The same holds true with the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT), 1947 Military Bases Agreement (MBA), the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) or the Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) where the resources of the country have been made available for daily and future operational requirements of the US.<sup>45</sup>

Women demand the assertion of their rights in the Spratly Islands through diplomatic and bilateral talks with China and disallow the intervention of US politically and militarily. Thus, there is a need for massive information dissemination on the real situation regarding US presence and China's insistence so as to make more people aware of the issues and garner support for the campaign on national sovereignty.<sup>46</sup>

Women look forward for a change that answers the women's agenda: social services, social justice, anti-discrimination and elimination of violence against women and children, national sovereignty, genuine agrarian reform and national industrialization, environmental protection, among others.<sup>47</sup>

So, how will the US, the instigator of the culture of militarism, react to the peace effort of the new administration? As US is also undergoing a transition due to its presidential elections this November 2016, its policy towards the Philippines is expectedly the same as Obama's policy. Its interest to the Philippines as part of the pivot to Asia remains – if not, will intensify – given that the new Philippine President Duterte is vocal about his patriotic stance and vehemence against US intervention.

As far as the Filipino women are concerned, they will consider the objective condition as a challenge that they have to face. And surely, they will handle the challenge as committed as their foremothers did in saving the sovereignty of their beloved Philippines.

## VI. A United Call among Southeast Asian Women

Together with the people's movements around the world, women are building movements and organizations to fight imperialism and its control over the world's resources. Southeast Asian women, comprising half of the poor and struggling peoples who have been deprived of food, resources, and rights, need to have a collective call for action.

Militarism and resource wars widen the gap between the rich and the poor. As more repressive governments embrace the US pivot to Asia, women should react with a unified stand against the policy and expose the abuses caused by the culture of militarism.

Women need to discern the roots of the intervention. They need to question the role and legitimacy of US aggression and the collaboration of the repressive governments. They need to realize that so long as the culture of militarism prevails, more women and children will be victims of violence.

Southeast Asian women will have to rely on their own power to attain genuine security. The potentials of women's power can best be realized when women all over Southeast Asia unite through movements and collective actions. The strength of women's unity can best be achieved when they closely link with other communities of peoples in the world to build a global society free from fear and hunger. ♀♀♀

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