

Multi Nation Program



Ariel Hernandez | Cagayan de Oro, PHILIPPINES
Senior Director for Program Development
Balay Mindanaw – International Center for Peace in Mindanaw

Ariel Hernandez brings his lifelong passion for combating rural poverty and promoting peace to his position at the International Center for Peace, where he leads a team developing social enterprise programs for poverty alleviation. The Center offers a range of activities which bring the people and communities of Mindanao and the Armed Forces of the Philippines together to work toward joint solutions for regional peace and development. The Center has also served as a venue for ongoing talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Revolutionary Workers' Party-Mindanao.

Mr. Hernandez addressed the following three questions during his fellowship travels:

What is the level of modernizing the United States Armed Forces' approach to and perspectives on conflict management and conflict resolution? As in the Philippines, Mr. Hernandez concludes there still does not appear to be a sufficient degree of teaching conflict management and peace-building in the premier military schools across the U.S. There are some exceptions to this, as the small number of professors and military officers who recognize that it is far more difficult to wage peace in a post-conflict environment than it is to win the conflict itself are starting to introduce these changes. Likewise, both the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of State have issued reports on conflict management and peace-building, but these have yet to be adopted into the organizational mainstream.

What is the extent of U.S. and international government, NGO, academic, and military involvement with security and justice sector reform work, particularly with respect to the Philippines? Mr. Hernandez concluded that there are not many institutions in the U.S. involved in this sector. The situation globally is similar. The International Institute for Peace Educators confirmed that worldwide, only a handful of their peace educators are involved in partnering with the Armed Forces to work toward creative approaches to resolving conflict and building peace. Mr. Hernandez is encouraged to keep pursuing the program he started five years ago with the Philippines Armed Forces, to contribute to the discourse on this topic globally.

What are the missing links in the justice and security sector reform efforts? Why have these efforts not reached the level of popularity of other global causes, such as gender or environmental issues? Security and justice issues are interlinked, but in fact the connection is not always recognized. Are you secure when your rights are tampered with, or when government fails to provide basic services? Mr. Hernandez concludes that the justice and security sector has not taken off as a global issue because of its limited foundation, and because the actual groundwork is found at the community level in certain areas of the world. Entities such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the U.S. Department of State, and the United Nations have conducted studies and written documents about security sector reform, but they remain largely untested by practitioners on the ground in the communities affected by violent conflict.

When he returns to the Philippines, Mr. Hernandez plans to collaborate with a number of organizations he visited while on fellowship travels, including establishing a partnership with Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice & Peacebuilding to set up a global working group for peace-building between civil society and armed forces.

Leaders bettering the world around them.