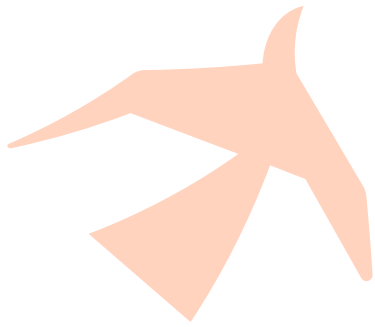




CHILDREN AS AGENTS OF PEACE

Lessons Learned from
Mindanao, the Philippines





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research and Report written by Emma McCarthy

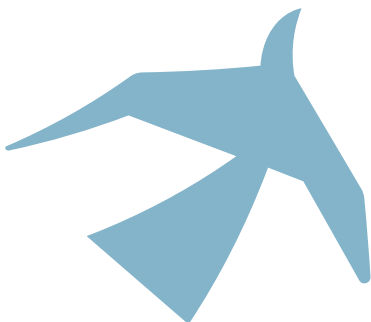
Many thanks to World Vision colleagues for their guidance and contributions to the final report including Robert Basco, Elizabeth A. Delgado, Oliver S. Apud, Alberto Marin, Jayron Romanillos and Sheila Garry.

Design: Diana De León

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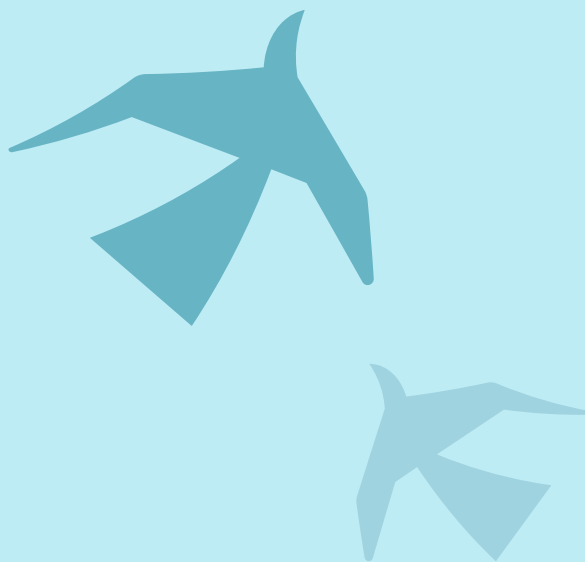
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CONTENTS

Glossary of Terms	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction and Background	7
Context: BARMM conflict history	7
World Vision in the BARMM	8
The PEACE Mindanao project	9
The ECaP model	11
Aim of the Learning Exercise	13
Methodologies	15
Research Approach and method	15
Adapting ECaP for PEACE Mindanao	15
Findings: School Peace Clubs	17
What worked well?	17
Challenges and Lessons Learned	19
Findings: Youth Peace Clubs	22
What Worked Well	22
Challenges and Lessons Learned	25
A Way Forward: Recommendations	27
School Peace Clubs	27
For World Vision and other implementers	27
Local partners: Schools Division Office and Government	27
Donors / External Partners	28
Youth Engagement	28
For World Vision and other implementers	28
For Government (Barangay/LGU)	30
For Donors / External partners	30



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
Barangay	Village-level
BOL	Bangsamoro Organic Law
BTA	Bangsamoro Transition Authority
BYC	Bangsamoro Youth Commission
CAB	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
CBL	Constitutional by-laws (of Peace Clubs)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECaP	Empowering Children as Peacebuilders
Senior ECaP Facilitators	Children and youth ECaP-trained trainers/facilitators, through other WVDF projects such as the Childhood Rescue project
EO 570	Executive Order 570 (2006), which mandates the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education to integrate peace education into basic education and teacher education
FCPA	Fragile Context Programming Approach
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
Kamustahan	Check-in sessions between WVDF team members and PEACE Mindanao participants
LGU	Local Government Unit
MBHTE	Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education; the BARMM's education ministry
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
PEACE Mindanao	Promoting Efforts Addressing Conflict through Education in Mindanao
Re-echoing	ECaP graduates facilitate sessions for other children or youth
Rido	Family or clan-based feuds
SDO	Schools Division Office
SK	Sangguniang Kabataan, the barangay youth council
Training of trainers	This refers to the process whereby young people with experience delivering ECaP training to their peers help train in a new cohort of facilitators
WVDF	World Vision Development Foundation (Philippines)
WV IRE	World Vision Ireland
Youth	This broadly refers to young people aged 18 - 25



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document sets out how a peace-values education model, Empowering Children as Peacebuilders (ECaP) developed by World Vision has been applied with children in schools and youth at the village level in the cities of Cotabato and Marawi in the Philippines as part of the PEACE Mindanao project funded by the European Union. The ECaP model entails a seven-part training, informed and delivered by young people themselves, complemented by the creation of school or barangay-based Peace Clubs. It highlights the distinctive role young people can play as credible messengers, organisers, and bridge-builders.

The model's approach centres on repeated, youth and student-led practice through short creative activities, peer training roll-outs, and exchanges, supported by light, reliable coordination with schools and barangays. In many communities, Peace Clubs offered the only youth-centred space, creating an accessible pathway to civic participation and service. As one Club coordinator reflected "Small things can have a big, big impact".

This work sits within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao context, where peace education must navigate multilingual classrooms, mixed-faith settings, uneven access to schooling, and communities experiencing and recovering from conflict. Within those realities, the ECaP model's strength is its practicality: modular sessions and activity plans adaptable to cultural calendars and norms, peer facilitation that scales, and partnerships that make participation feel legitimate and safe.

A notable innovation of the project was an adaptation of the ECaP model to engage youth at the village-level: team-based facilitation, a "second-liner" pipeline to support new



facilitators, and activity formats that were fun, inclusive and varied, with an emphasis on arts, sport, and culture. Exchanges across barangays and cities nurtured confidence and cultural understanding, while simple recognition and visible outputs, such as murals, showcases and sports days, sustained momentum, enhancing self-expression, peer leadership, and trauma healing.

The primary recommendations of this exercise are to continue supporting what young people enjoy and find effective: creative, youth-led activities; public showcases celebrating cultural pride; and regular exchanges that promote learning and respect. Explore ways of implementing activities on a digestible schedule, such as shorter training sessions with refreshers for younger children. Schools could have a dedicated time slot for club activities and train additional teachers in the ECaP model, given its strong alignment with peace education policy in the Philippines. Continue to localise by design, with faith/

dialect-sensitive variants for trainings, and add new youth modules on topics such as the environment or social media/AI. There is significant interest in the creation of dedicated youth hubs, as well as incorporating digital technologies to project design.

Overall, the ECaP model's potential lies in how it is delivered, prioritising predictability, participatory approaches, and localised content. When young people lead often, in formats they enjoy, with visible backing from schools and barangays, the work travels further and lasts longer, reaching both students and those outside formal schooling to build confidence, forge connections and nurture peace at multiple levels, from the personal to the community.



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

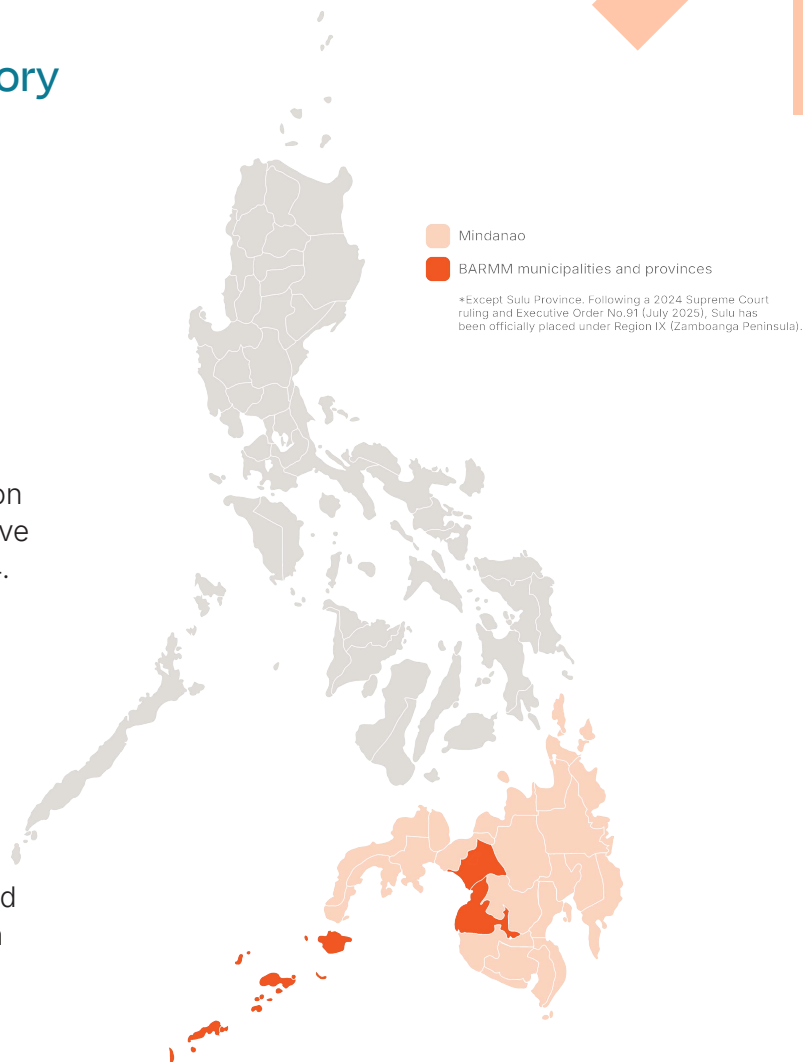
Context: BARMM conflict history

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was formally established in 2019, marking a significant shift in the diverse landscape of southern Philippines, home to various Muslim Moro groups, Christians, and indigenous peoples. The political transition came after decades of armed conflict between the Philippines Government and several autonomy-seeking groups, particularly the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), culminating in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014.

The Bangsamoro peace process aims to build sustainable peace and democracy in the region. It is comprised of two distinct but interrelated tracks: the Normalisation Track, found in the CAB, which entails the transformation of armed struggle to peaceful political participation, citizenship, and livelihood; and the Political Track, as stipulated in the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which outlined steps towards the creation of a new autonomous entity.

The BARMM continues to face numerous challenges, however. Clan-based violence, known as "rido" remains a key issue, with over 120 incidents recorded since 2018. The prevalence of rido demonstrates the strong clan-based dynamics of the region, which long predate the separatist political movements in Mindanao's recent history. In 2025, such conflicts threatened the integrity of the first ever - and often postponed - BARMM parliamentary elections, now scheduled for October 2025.

The continued presence of extremist groups poses further security risks and complicates



peacebuilding efforts. These groups, though smaller in scale, continue to engage in violent activities, undermining the region's stability and heightening the risk of extremist attitudes and behaviour amongst young people. The region's journey toward lasting peace requires continued efforts to address internal conflicts, promote inclusive governance, and ensure security for all its inhabitants.

The interim Bangsamoro government, the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), has initiated programmes aimed at fostering peace and development. Regarding education, the provision of the Bangsamoro government

includes establishing, managing, and supporting an education system for the region that shall be a “subsystem of the national education system”. The Bangsamoro Education Code, signed in 2021, references peace education as the foundation of the educational system. This code is designed to foster a “culture of non-violence, social justice and respect for human rights, freedom, and inclusivity” to be integrated into the curriculum of each educational level.

Access to formal education can be a challenge for children and young people in the BARMM. In 2019, the World Bank reported that only 70% of children were enrolled in elementary school from the beginning of term, with just 30% entering high school on time. Almost 45% of youth aged 16 - 30 were out of school, double the national average, largely due to inter-related factors such as food insecurity and poverty, child labour, and early child marriage practices.

Youth participation in civic and community initiatives remains low, limiting their involvement in decision-making processes. The Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC) identified key areas for youth development, including education, peace and security, governance, and health. However, there is a need for more coordinated efforts to address these issues effectively.

World Vision in the BARMM

In 1994, World Vision Development Foundation (Philippines) (WVDF) started its work in responding to the needs of community in fragile context areas such as the municipalities of Sharif Aguak and Buldon, in Maguindanao Province. The organisation helped the community uplift their economic condition, building their leadership capacity, conflict management, Interfaith engagement, child health care and psychosocial support to children. Through this experience, WVDF took on the challenge of piloting the application of the “Do No Harm Framework” as a context sensitivity tool in development programming. It was implemented in Sarangani Province, a place where there was a history of violent conflict between and among Christian settlers, Maguindanaon Muslim and Indigenous People (B’laan tribe) due to Spanish colonial era. But, worsened during Martial Law of 1972, thus, mistrust, biases and prejudices between groups (Christian migrant settlers, Islamised groups and the Indigenous) continuously manifested up to the present.

From then on, peacebuilding initiatives and capacity building of staff and partners continued not just on the micro level context analysis using Do No Harm tool, but it evolved into a meso and macro level context of conflict using the Integrating Peacebuilding and Context Sensitivity (IPACS) and Making Sense of Turbulent Context (MSTC) tools respectively.

During the siege of Marawi city in 2017, WVDF started an emergency response in Marawi city, it continued interventions for recovery, and when the BARMM was established in 2019,



expanded to Cotabato city and Maguindanao province. It has run development and peacebuilding in other areas of Mindanao for many years before that. WVDF is currently implementing 7 Area Programmes and 9 grant funded projects. All programmes are rooted in WVDF's overarching national strategy (2019-2024). They are being implemented by 55 staff who are based in Mindanao, with the wider support of the National Office in Manila and partners and stakeholders including local government, international and local civil society.

Over the years, WVDF has been active in promoting dialogue and understanding among different religious and ethno-linguistic groups in areas covered by the organisation. Thus, it has considerably raised awareness on the importance of eliminating biases and discrimination for a holistic transformational development process. Currently, three major approaches are employed in programming i.e. Integration of Culture of Peace and Do No Harm approach as conflict-sensitivity tools, Interfaith Dialogue & Engagement, and Children participation in Peace building.

Internally, WVDF built a pool of trained trainers on peacebuilding and context sensitivity tools with complete set of materials ready to be used for micro, meso and macro level analysis of context of conflict. Externally, hundreds of children and youth, religious leaders and community leaders has been trained as trainers on peacebuilding and context sensitivity that can be tapped if needed and the ECaP module is one of the main tool being used for the children and youth – to be an agent or advocate of peace.

The PEACE Mindanao project

Promoting Efforts Addressing Conflict through Education in Mindanao, or PEACE Mindanao, is a three-year initiative implemented by World Vision Ireland (WV IRE) and World Vision Philippines (WVDF) and funded by the European Union from 2023 - 2025. Underpinned by World Vision's Fragile Context Programming Approach (FCPA), the project built upon previous projects, such as the Childhood Rescue project, to promote a culture of peace, tolerance and greater social inclusion in the cities of Marawi and Cotabato, Mindanao.



The primary objectives of the PEACE Mindanao project were to:



Increase the capacity and confidence of **children and young people** to act as ambassadors of peace within their communities.



Enhance the capacity of **government entities and civil society organisations (CSOs)** to prevent conflicts, respond to crises and build peace

The project focused on the involvement of children and young people first and foremost. Formal education and informal community structures were developed to strengthen their capacity and confidence as role models for peace in their communities.

Education is central to lasting reconciliation and nation-building and can address the disaffection and alienation experienced by entire generations after conflict. Where formal education once influenced the development of radical views among insurgency leaders in Mindanao, developing understanding attitudes towards people of different identities and beliefs is an important pillar of peacebuilding, enabling students to develop their own identities.

Acknowledging issues of discrimination and exclusion in many of the target schools, the project worked to support an education system that promotes tolerance and respect. Child and youth-empowerment was fostered through the creation of **15 school peace clubs**, covering elementary and secondary levels,

and **19 youth peace clubs**, across Cotabato and Marawi.

The PEACE Mindanao project also engaged different community actors, pursuing a whole-of-society approach by strengthening the capacity of government entities and CSOs to better support peace processes. PEACE Mindanao initially worked with key stakeholders, such as traditional law makers, faith leaders and CSOs, to enhance their capacity to facilitate inter-community peace dialogues and respond to a crisis, should conflict reoccur. These stakeholders also helped adapt the ECaP model, ensuring it was culturally appropriate before being rolled out across the BARMM.

The project's principal target groups were children and young people, schoolteachers, CSOs, women leaders, faith and traditional leaders, staff of Local Government Units (LGUs) and community members. Children and young people were not only beneficiaries but significantly influenced project priorities and actions over the three years.



Key numbers



1,562

School student completion of ECaP training



1,101

Youth completion of ECaP training



15

School Peace Clubs



19

Youth Peace Clubs



30

Average club membership

The ECaP model

In relation to conflict, children and youth are often perceived as either victims or perpetrators of violence. Despite being seen as young adults in many cultures, their unique wants and perspectives are often overlooked, failing to recognise their near or immediate potential as agents of positive change. 2025 marks the 10th anniversary of the first UN Security Council Resolution (2250) on Youth, Peace and Security, a global call to recognise and support the key role of youth as peacebuilders at the community, national and international levels.

Empowering Children as Peacebuilders is a World Vision project model centred around peace education and value-based life skills as a means of addressing conflict-related issues. ECaP is based on five practices to promote peace in an engaging and expressive way: **art, music, dance, drama, and storytelling.**

The model aims to support children and youth as engaged peace actors, leading to the transformation of individuals, relationships, systems and structures and enhancing the community's resilience to conflict-related crises. ECaP can also catalyse a healing process for young people who have witnessed and/or have

been traumatised by violence and can help prevent the radicalisation of youth in certain environments, including schools.



ECaP implementation is guided by the following principles:



Respond to the contextual nature of conflict and violence, particularly as experienced in the lives of children and young people and help create a culture of peace.



Engage schools, families, and other actors in the lives of children and young people in order to provide appropriate support, and to transform environments that hinder the empowerment and participation of children and young people as peacebuilders.



Equip children and young people with **knowledge, skills, attitudes, and tools** to protect themselves and others from violent conflict, and to constructively and safely engage in addressing issues of conflict and violence.



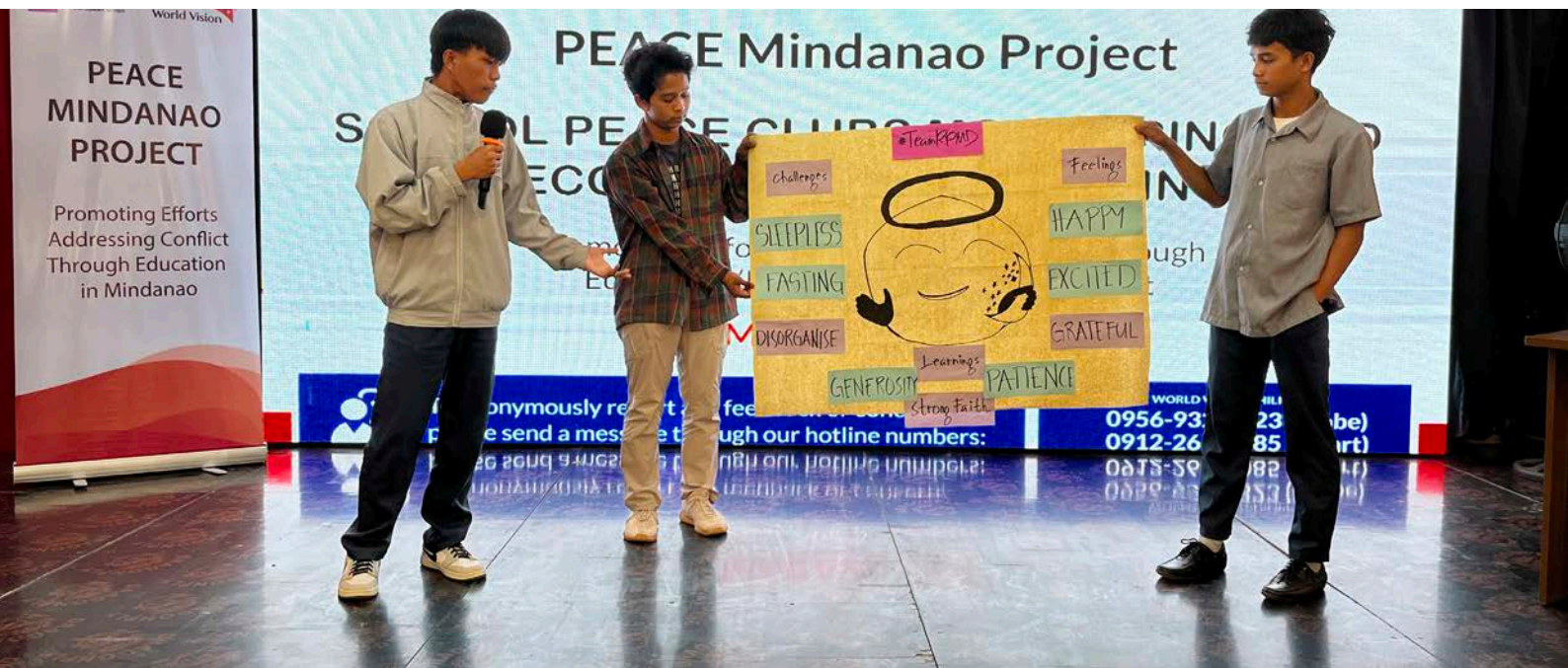
Respect children and young people as agents of transformation, enabling their participation in social analysis and action.



Strengthen relationships of care, mutuality, and trust.



Build inner and spiritual resources for living in harmony and hope.



Module Content

There is an ECaP module guide to support project implementers, such as School Peace Coordinators or ECaP training facilitators, to organise, train and empower children and youth as effective peacebuilders. This material is a product of WVDF's experience implementing the ECaP model where children and youth who completed ECaP training were not only trained as trainers themselves, but as

model leaders and mentors for their peers and in other communities. Children and youth were closely involved in refining this curriculum to reflect the interests, needs and expectations of young participants.

The ECaP training curriculum has seven modules (initially four), each of which has different interactive sessions and activities.

ECaP modules:

1. Getting Started
2. Understanding Self
3. Understanding Conflict
4. Psychological First Aid for Children
5. Understanding the Culture of Peace
6. Moving Forward
7. Enhancing Facilitation Skills

WVDF has been a leader in developing the ECaP model, adapting its content and approach since it was first implemented in the Philippines in 2005. Initially, ECaP typically targeted young people aged 10-17 in both formal and non-formal environments to be informed, resourceful and self-reliant in their promotion of peaceful societies.

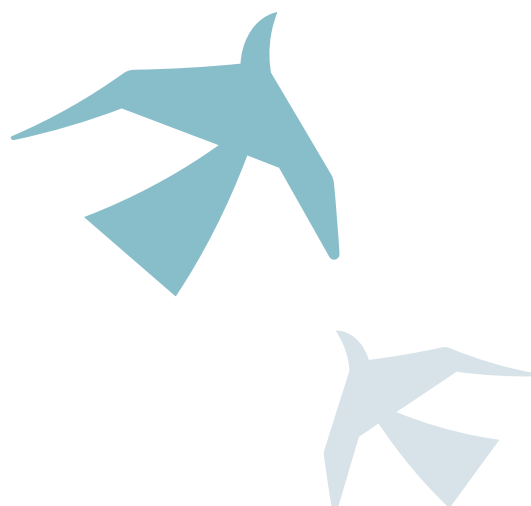
Aim of the Learning Exercise

The ECaP training curriculum was adapted for the PEACE Mindanao project both to suit the BARMM context and to encompass a new target group, with youth cohorts (ages 18 - 25) also undergoing ECaP training, as well as leading activities at the community level. Youth actions, an innovation of PEACE Mindanao, were in addition to the project's school-based work with younger children, the more traditional implementation of the model.

This report reflects key learnings emerging from the application of the ECaP model. Its findings are intended to inform an understanding of peace education, as well as engagement with children and youth more broadly. This exercise aimed to document the specific experiences of project structures and actors, record key learnings in relation



to ECaP adaptation, identify the strengths and gaps of the approach taken, and to make recommendations to guide future peacebuilding actions, particularly for children and youth.



CASE STUDY: THE JOURNEY OF ECAP PARTICIPANTS

I. Marouf, 12 years old (former School Peace Club member and ECaP facilitator, Cotabato)

"I first joined an ECaP seminar three years ago, where we learned the different modules and about sharing ECaP with other students. We helped facilitate the re-echoing of ECaP in my school with the support of our coordinator. I felt mixed emotions; happy, excited, and of course, nervous. It was hard to facilitate the first time because some of the students wouldn't listen to us. With time, we figured out how to engage with them, how to teach properly."

Through his Peace Club, Marouf visited many different places in the Philippines, such as Cagayan de Oro, Iligan and Marawi, and participated in the BARMM Children's Congress.

"I learned a lot about leadership and the rights of children during the activities. I also travelled to many new places and met Peace Club members from different places. I enjoyed cultural activities the most. Our club performed a cultural dance in the Bangsamoro Government Complex. I was nervous but enjoyed it.

I learned so much from the training, like being patient with those who cause trouble, and having a good attitude, especially if you are a leader. That is the most important thing that I have learned; a good leader has a good attitude and is patient. In Arabic, we call it sabr.

I want to teach the new Peace Club members so that the next leaders will know what to do if there are quarrels or conflicts among students. For example, there was an argument amongst other students one day and we tried to resolve it. It went beyond our control, so we called our coordinator to help. We felt like we were a part of the process of resolving conflict at that time. We were so proud."



METHODOLOGIES

Research Approach and method

This learning exercise took a qualitative approach, premised on a two-week field visit to the two project locations, Cotabato and Marawi. Specifically, data and information were drawn from relevant project documentation, in addition to over 26 focus group discussions (FGDs), visits, and semi-structured interviews with elementary and secondary school students, youth, Peace Coordinators (teachers), School Division representatives, Barangay officials and local civil society leaders, as well as discussions with WVDF staff. The participant sample was relatively balanced in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion and age, particularly for child and youth engagement.

All interviews and FGDs were digitally recorded and materials produced throughout the field visit, such as timelines, diagrams and posters, were carefully documented. Participants were briefed on the purpose of their engagement and signed a consent form prior to each exercise. A translator was present for each interaction to facilitate exchanges through English, Filipino (Tagalog), Maranao and Maguindanao dialects, subject to participants' preferences.

Limitations to this exercise include the anecdotal nature of certain findings, language barriers, the relatively short period of time

spent conducting fieldwork, in addition to the challenge of truly capturing the potential impact of such interventions on the personal wellbeing and trajectories of youth participants in the longer term.

PEACE Mindanao Approach to adapting ECaP

Senior ECaP facilitators (alumni of previous trainings) and youth leaders played a key role in adapting the ECaP training model to make it lighter, more age-appropriate and easier to run at scale. Their feedback from earlier cycles led to concrete adjustments in **content, delivery format, methods, and cultural/language adaptations.**

Content

Senior ECaP facilitators proposed trimming "history-heavy" material and merging overlapping topics so that module sessions each had a clear focus, whilst remaining of interest to the participants. They selected one strong activity where two existed and simplified potentially abstract concepts, especially around conflict resolution. The aim was to reduce the topics covered, focusing more on comprehension. As one alumnus put it: "we revised down to one appropriate



"Peacebuilding has no shortcut. It can be difficult to measure social behavioural change; no metric can truly capture the impact of peacebuilding efforts, unless there is a willingness to journey with people from Day 1 – Day 1000. You can measure outputs, but it is difficult to capture the true impact."

– WVDF team member

and applicable activity. Children could relate to it better.” Identity-building activities were elevated, as they were often quite popular: **“Who Am I?”** and **“Honouring Each Other”** promoted a sense of belonging and voice; story-driven elements like **“Singing to the Lions”** were added to capture participants’ attention without needing a long explanation.

Centring culture and language

Teams adapted religious references to the audience, balancing texts across traditions, and simplifying language where dialects varied, sometimes with translation support from World Vision. They also built **culture-sharing** moments into agendas over time, such as songs, languages, short showcases. Identity-based pride was an effective entry point for exploring values and respect. These adaptations improved the relatability of content, made examples stick, and helped quieter groups engage on their own terms.



Delivery format

Week-long courses were shortened to **2–3-day** trainings that fit school calendars and budgets, with many former participants cautioning that shorter inputs work best when paired with follow-ups. Teams of **around five facilitators**



“Previously, it was only adults who were empowered or given the authority to lead something. Through ECaP, the children are happy because, aside from being empowered, they know their place in the community, the classroom, and the whole school. They feel important, safe in school, and empowered to lead their classrooms to create a peaceful space. These efforts are helpful not only for children, but also for teacher coordinators” – SDO representative, Cotabato

worked well - pairs were “too hard” - spreading the primary training roles (such as lead, co-facilitate, timekeeper, documentation) and keeping energy levels high in active rooms. The “training of trainers” practice helped prepare the next cohort of ECaP facilitators, so expansion didn’t depend on a few star trainers. The mix of different age groups amongst facilitators allowed younger elementary or secondary students to learn from their older peers.

Methods

The model focused on **activities, rather than lecture-style sessions**: role-plays, movement, and art were central to this approach. Structured moments of affirmation, such as “naming each other’s strengths” boosted the morale of participants and set a positive tone for training sessions. **Youth-to-youth facilitation** remained the overarching principle of ECaP implementation, making sessions more relatable for participants and empowering for those leading ECaP rollouts.

FINDINGS: SCHOOL PEACE CLUBS

Over three years, the ECaP model generated visible change within schools across Cotabato and Marawi. The impact of ECaP training for elementary and secondary students is evident in the individual transformation of students, the development of Peace Clubs as safe spaces for team building and expression, and greater capacity of schoolteachers to integrate peace and values education to the curriculum. Overall, ECaP helps create safe, engaging, and sustainable platforms for personal development and school peace education.

What worked well?

Individual transformation: Leadership, growth and opportunity

Repeated, student-led practice is highly effective in building confidence and leadership skills in students. ECaP rollouts, or 're-echoing sessions' allow students to try their hand at group facilitation and leadership. Secondary students described how they gradually overcame a fear of public speaking via the ECaP training sessions, where they got the chance to speak openly in front of groups. As one Peace Club President shared: "At first I was nervous and afraid but through the ECaP workshops, I learned how to speak from my heart."

Short **grounding moments** helped set the tone at ECaP sessions. Two-minute exercises, such as the "treasure tree", helped learners settle before engaging in group discussion on various topics. Participants described feeling calmer and more reflective.

Selection choices were often highly impactful. Peace Coordinators decided who joined the

School Peace Club, often focusing on those who showed potential. Many teachers also gave opportunities to reserved or troublesome students, which was highly effective in supporting their personal development. These students were given **specific and visible tasks**, such as opening a session or leading a game, fostering a sense of responsibility and recognition.



A disruptive boy in one elementary school asked the Peace Coordinator if he could join the School Peace Club; once given an Officer's vest and clear duties, his behaviour began to improve, and a clear sense of pride developed. Many other teachers cited similar "quiet-to-confident" shifts when greater responsibility was paired with visibility.

Peace Clubs: Self-expression, visibility and exchanges

Sports, art and cultural activities are incredibly fun for students, appeal to various abilities, and motivated many to get involved. Peace Clubs engaged in a wide range of activities, such as poster-making, murals, dance practices, photography, "sports for peace," and school-wide cultural performances. From creative outlets to team building through sports, activity-focused Clubs offered students the chance to express themselves, build rapport with others, and showcase their skills and culture with pride. These are easy to schedule in short blocks and give Club officers clear roles, from choreographing a piece to creating a peace mural at the school or tending to the peace garden.

Exchanges and meeting peers from other schools/cities were popular with students and teachers alike. Students pointed to learning exchanges and out-of-town convenings as moments when confidence "clicked," from presenting to unfamiliar audiences to hearing new accents and stories. Friendships formed across schools, and students relished the opportunity to learn about different places and cultures.

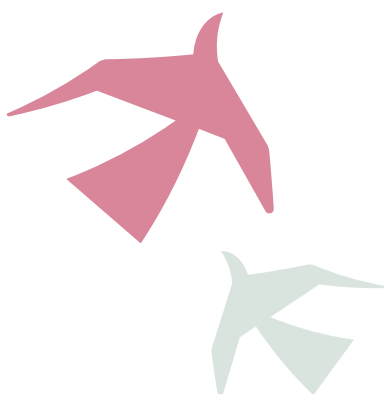
Visibility helped newly formed clubs gain recognition in their schools, raising awareness and boosting student participation. Items such as the orange vests worn by the Club officers, tote bags, dedicated peace corners, peace murals, peace posters, and basic art/sports supplies strengthened the profile of



In Marawi, School Peace Coordinators shared that small material resources, such as bags and books, had an outsized effect. Several school dropouts chose to return after seeing the opportunities provided through Peace Clubs, with parents even accompanying children back to school. "Small things can have a big, big impact," reflected one teacher.

Peace Clubs and pride amongst members. Each Club member received a certificate for their participation and in Cotabato, students proudly participated in the division-wide mass oath-taking for the first time, standing alongside other school organisations

Formal structure supports Club legitimacy and continuity. Draft constitutional by-laws (CBL) and club membership guidelines are under development in one city, led by the SDO. Yearly action plans and alignment with cultural or national events, such as Marawi Week of Peace, give clubs a map for each term and enhance their relevance. In Cotabato, the recognition associated with being in a Peace Club, and, for officers, being seen in that role, worked well; members consistently sought that visibility, and teachers described officers as "like celebrities."





“Peace Club officers are some of the top performing students, and I really see their improvement. They are good leaders, because they are grounded with a sense of values and responsibilities. When given a task, they feel empowered and understand that they can influence others. I hope they can continue this advocacy even after graduating.” – School Principal, Marawi

Embracing Collaboration: Schools and School Division Offices

Authorise before you deliver. Courtesy calls, MoUs, and especially Division memos ensured that activities promoted by World Vision aligned with Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE) priorities and procedures, and reduced friction with “Time on Task”, the policy of conducting activities during school time. SDO presence at ECaP training further boosted status and made school-level cooperation easier.

Policy alignment consolidated the impact of ECaP in schools and strengthened sustainability prospects. Many Peace Coordinators integrated aspects of ECaP modules, from concepts around identity, to team-building activities, into core subjects and regular classroom activities. In the Philippines, Executive Order 570 (EO 570) mandates the promotion of peace education

nationwide. In the absence of dedicated materials for teachers, the ECaP curriculum acted as an insightful and adaptable resource for teachers. Peace coordinators drew from the ECaP curriculum to help fulfil these obligations and often shared their printed ECaP module guide with other teachers.

Finally, a **comprehensive operating framework**, made up of consultations, group chats, monthly check-ins, and quarterly monitoring visits, created open feedback loops and helped address any concerns of Peace Coordinators or SDO officials. Participants appreciated the partnership model of World Vision, whom they found “approachable” and “one call away”. Responsiveness and openness helped build trust and maintain momentum over several years.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Training pace: Some of the concepts covered in ECaP trainings can be overwhelming for younger learners - and even the Peace Coordinators themselves. One to three days of consecutive training is often too short for students, particularly elementary level, to grasp multiple new ideas. As one teacher explained, students “would likely appreciate the modules better over time - less pressure on their learning and reducing the need for quick internalisation”.

Participation: ECaP rollouts, or “re-echoing sessions” were effective for older students, but not all participants engaged equally. Some secondary students reported not speaking





concerned that Club engagement affected their class attendance at times.

Balancing workloads: Peace Coordinators worked to balance their subject teaching, personal responsibilities, and club leadership. Inspired by the impact of ECaP on student behaviour, Coordinators were highly motivated to engage in various activities and roll out ECaP training to more students. Many clubs thrived because of the extraordinary effort of individual teachers, but this was unequal across schools and could be difficult to sustain in the long run.



“I want to give more, I want to do more – I want the Peace Officers to practice what they have learned through ECaP and to share it with other learners in our school. It is difficult though, we have many responsibilities [as teachers], clashing timetables, and I cannot implement all the ideas I have for the Club” – Peace Coordinator, Marawi

during rollouts, leaving their confident peers to lead. Others admitted they “just can’t come” to club activities despite completing training. ECaP created many opportunities, but participation was uneven at times.

Demand: Peace Clubs grew popular and visible, especially by the third year. Membership was limited to an average of 30 members, although demand was much higher in certain schools. Yearly turnover - due to graduations - also meant constant induction of new members, which sometimes affected continuity.

Time pressures: Yearly action plans were often ambitious, inspired by the ideas of Club members, but difficult to implement due to time constraints and conflicting schedules. The project’s yearly calendar was not aligned with the school calendar year¹. Teachers described how exams, overlapping activities, and shifting class timetables limited club activity. Coordinators had to write letters excusing students from classes to join peace activities, and students were

¹ In 2025, for instance, the school calendar year began in June. The WVDF project year commenced in January.

Module adaptation: Some stories and activities are less suited to younger learners. Although the same content is used for all age groups, suggestions included slowing the pace, adapting activities to grasp students’ attention, and giving teachers refresher sessions to support them in their roles as Peace Coordinators.

Sustainability was a pressing concern. Peace Clubs were not always formally recognised within school governance, and while SDOs expressed interest in scaling the model or sharing ECaP materials with more schools, dedicated budgets, materials, and training capacity are required to do so effectively.

CASE STUDY: THE JOURNEY OF ECAP PARTICIPANTS

II. School Peace Coordinator (Marawi)

Getting started

"In January 2021, ECaP was first introduced in our school through the Child Protection project. Through this, they selected schools to engage in the PEACE Mindanao project. I was asked to accompany our learners and the youth from our barangay to participate in ECaP training.

So many activities have been conducted over the past three years, such as during the Marawi Week of Peace, the Peace Conference in Cotabato, the rollout of ECaP to other students, and our check-in sessions. There was a project during Ramadan where we conducted an Iftar drive for the less fortunate children in our school, supported by World Vision, and we also went to a cultural presentation at the MSU Convention Centre, alongside seven other schools, where we showcased the different cultures of the Maranao."

Tapping student potential

"I usually select learners that lack confidence but also show potential. I believe that if they get the opportunity to participate in something like Peace Club, they will develop and gain confidence. Last year, I chose one student as Peace Club president who had repeated Grade Six three times. He was bullied and got into school riots. I wanted him to change, to develop, because I knew that he was kind, but lacked support. His parents wanted him to work and support the family instead. I felt that he was capable of more.

I saw him change as a learner and as a person. He led his classmates, and then a whole group of students at school. I felt so fulfilled seeing that transformation; the ECaP training and other Peace Club activities, he learned a lot from all of it. He is now calm, friendly and approachable to other kids and youth. It is one of my achievements as a Peace Coordinator. I am very proud of myself, and of him. Now he's gone to high school."

Sustainability

"I will continue with ECaP - that can be my legacy as a teacher. I am attached to the Peace Club, and I want to apply all that we have learned through ECaP, both myself and the students. I want to do more. But the lack of time, resources, and support is a challenge. We need resources to succeed. Inshallah, we will have a roll-out of the training to some other teachers and schoolteachers, school heads, and division personnel in our division."



FINDINGS: YOUTH PEACE CLUBS

PEACE Mindanao adapted the school-based peace education model for youth at the barangay, or village level. Club membership is guided by barangay-level selection, comprising university-level students and a few out-of-school youths. All club members undergo ECaP training on personal identity, conflict resolution, leadership and civic participation. Clubs meet less regularly than school-based clubs but still run creative and sports activities and engage in exchanges to practice facilitation and build cultural understanding.

Peace Clubs are the only youth-centred peacebuilding space in many communities in Marawi and Cotabato and are highly impactful in areas experiencing or recovering from conflict and violence.

What Worked Well

Individual level: Inclusion, growth and service

Youth peace clubs provide a platform for young people to identify and pursue their own interests, developing organisational skills – such as writing agendas or reports – and engaging in activities not otherwise available to them.

Youth are often overlooked by village programmes, which focus on issues such as security or anti-drugs campaigns. Clubs are mostly made up of school-attending students, but many barangays invite **out-of-school youth** to join also. This mix gave young people outside of formal schooling a structured setting to belong, practice

facilitation and feel valued, as well as earning a certificate for their involvement. Many participants described finding a **sense of purpose**: several young people connected their ECaP experience to new personal ambitions, with many now studying social work at university, and some even working at the barangay level.

Youth also enjoyed learning about themselves through identity and affirmation exercises, which helped them to recognise their own strengths and build confidence:



“Throughout the programme, we encounter different faces: old, young, professional, teachers, students. I can speak clearly in front of them. When I was in high school, I could not speak in front of others because I felt so shy. I'm glad that I joined a Peace Club as it really helped me to boost my confidence” – Youth Club member and ECaP facilitator, Cotabato

A Training-of-Trainers approach also meant that new ECaP facilitators were mentored by “second-liners,” ensuring that leadership skills were passed between different age groups, such as school and university-level students, and to new cohorts each year.



Youth Peace Clubs: Activities and exchanges that resonated

Youth Clubs thrived on **sports, art and culture**. Young people repeatedly highlighted sports festivals, murals, poster-making, dance practices, cultural numbers and *Iftar drives* as the most enjoyable parts of their Peace Club experience. These activities are easy to schedule in short blocks and give officers clear roles, depending on their strengths and interests, such as choreographing a dance or playing sports.

Participants also appreciated the **team-based facilitation model**: instead of solo trainers, youth led ECaP rollout sessions in groups of five. This helped to sustain motivation and keep pressure off individuals, whilst also promoting cooperation and peer-learning, giving each facilitator a chance to lead and support.

Clubs valued the **learning exchanges** with other barangays and cities significantly. Travelling to meet peers exposed them to new dialects and customs, and many youth participants enjoyed discovering shared challenges and learning how others solved conflicts.



“My experience with World Vision has molded me into becoming a peacebuilder in my community. It has been life-changing for me; in my junior year in high school, I was very school-focused. Through ECaP training and Peace Club involvement, I was exposed to other cultures, traditions and people. It has been very rewarding.” – Youth Club member and ECaP facilitator, Cotabato

In Marawi, where fear and anxiety lingered after the 2017 siege, barangay officials reiterated the value of Peace Clubs in providing a **safe, youth-centred space**. By the project's second year, young people were travelling unescorted to ECaP trainings and returning home with fresh ideas for handling minor disputes at the local level.

Processing post-conflict trauma in Marawi



“During our first ECaP training, there were participants from 11 barangay. I really liked the conflict-related sessions, and we each shared a lot about their experiences during the Marawi siege. Rido is also very common in our Maranao communities. Throughout my ECaP training, young people shared their personal stories and experiences in front of lots of people. It was quite emotional at times, but also like an open forum. It was emotional to hear these stories, as most of us could relate” - ECaP senior facilitator, Marawi



“When the Marawi siege happened in 2017, I was displaced to Manila for several months and struggled with bullying and some culture shock. I returned to Marawi, although there have been many recovery issues. I felt challenged when ECaP was first introduced to my school in 2019, as I feared being bullied again. Instead, I grew my confidence and made so many friends. After my week of training, I went back to school, implemented the learnings and shared it with my peers. I learned the importance of facing my fears.” - ECaP senior facilitator, Marawi

Local partnerships: Legitimacy and support

Peace Clubs benefited from the **structuring and resourcing** provided by World Vision, in collaboration with barangay officials and other local structures, such as the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) or barangay youth council. This enhanced the **legitimacy** and reputation of the new clubs, helping them to function smoothly.

Barangay Secretaries helped by drawing up participant lists, issuing formal invitation letters, booking venues and vehicles, and offering small travel allowances where necessary. Their presence during ECaP trainings and other activities showed the **barangay's support** for the initiative. This practical support was valuable - many officials shared that, despite the range of social issues they faced, there were no other youth-focused programmes in their area.

World Vision's light operating system complemented this structure: youth officers and facilitators coordinated through group chats (which included a WVDF representative) and met quarterly with World Vision to plan venues, budgets and urgent issues. At the suggestion of participants,

monitoring sessions were reframed as '*Kamustahan*' or '*check-ins*' shifting the focus from implementation monitoring to a model of mentorship and coaching for Peace Club members.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Training pace and schedules: Three-day ECaP trainings offered young people the chance to truly immerse themselves in the sessions and grow comfortable participating, but this clashed with university and work commitments at times; many suggested weekend sessions, or two-day events with follow-ups.

Participation bottlenecks: Clubs often sent their presidents or vice-presidents to trainings and exchanges; whilst hard to avoid, this limited wider learning and development to a select few.

Organisational learning curves: Club attendance was irregular at times, especially when meetings or activities were announced at the last minute. This often led to no-shows, increasing the responsibilities of certain members.

Resource and budgetary dependence: Clubs relied on World Vision for creative materials, food and snacks, venue identification, quarterly budget allocations² and transport. Even though Clubs have treasurers, they do not necessarily have annual funds to manage and bid for at their discretion,

Enthusiasm for more topics: Participants suggested incorporating new topics to ECaP, covering environmental issues and waste management, digital citizenship and AI, and ensuring that content is updated to meet the demands of the modern age.

Language and faith considerations: Facilitators

² The project allotted 1,000 USD per peace club (in the barangay and schools), with additional funds available. Funding was issued via quarterly installments to maximise support for dedicated peace activities.

delivering outside their own dialect or working with mixed-faith groups needed translation support and culturally balanced examples. Many enjoyed learning about new cultures, but language barriers were challenging for some facilitators. During exchanges, venues were not always perceived as neutral for both Muslim and Christian participants, who wanted to "meet on equal grounds".

Lack of a dedicated youth hub: Youth clubs met in barangay halls or classrooms but sought out a dedicated space where youth clubs could convene more regularly. Many stakeholders proposed creating a youth hub, a reliable space for planning and activities.

Political turnover: Some barangay officials felt that the sustainability of youth clubs hinged on local leadership and whether they would continue to support the clubs' activities. This could depend on how informed local officials were of ECaP and the clubs, cultural alignment, and abiding by the correct authorisation processes.



CASE STUDY: THE JOURNEY OF ECAP PARTICIPANTS

III. Hayla, 20 years old (Youth Peace Club member and senior ECaP facilitator, Cotabato)

"One of the greatest highlights for me personally is that I became more involved in terms of community issues. By participating in ECaP training, and then in my Peace Club, I became more conscious of the ways in which I could contribute and make a change - not just in my family, but in our community.

I come from a community that faces some stigma: people often believe that you cannot enter that community and leave again without being harmed in some way. Growing up, hearing those stereotypes, I wanted to change the perceptions that others had. The biggest change for me after I engaged in ECaP training, aside from improving my own confidence, was my personal involvement in changes and processes related to my community.

Before ECaP, I was apolitical and didn't participate in any community activities. This can be common, sometimes, amongst young people. I didn't worry too much about things happening outside of my own world. After joining the Peace Club, I realised that there's a bigger world outside and that I can have an impact on the place where I live. There could be something beautiful that I could share with other people.

Through my ECaP journey, I was also able to show that our community - our barangay - is not a place to fear, but a place of unity and commitment. We are often judged without anyone truly knowing us. I wanted to change that, so I got more involved. I became more aware of what's happening in my community. Because of ECaP, I was able to express that there is still a lot of beauty there."



A WAY FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS

School Peace Clubs

For World Vision and other implementers

- **Provide pacing guidance:** Publish a light “Peace Club” playbook of micro-modules that could be delivered each month, alongside weekly 30 - 45-minute activities.
- **Promote equitable facilitation:** Make “everyone facilitates once” a design rule; supply rotation sheets and encourage mini roles (opener, timekeeper, story lead, closer).
- **Expand the Peace Coordinator role:** Train at least two teachers per school in ECaP with a new division of labour, such as admin lead/facilitation lead. Run an annual teacher refresher training to gather feedback, allow for staff turnover and promote continuous improvement.
- **Match content to age:** Develop age-specific story alternatives, recognising the different interests and abilities of younger and older students.
- **Incorporate digital tools:** Explore opportunities to incorporate digital activities or resources to the ECaP framework, recognising that most students use phones and social media, and teachers are enthusiastic to update content to modern day realities. From simple app development to the use of video-conferencing to facilitate inter-school exchanges, this could be approached in a variety of ways.
- **Visibility on a budget:** Include a basic branding or identity pack in grants (such as poster design sets, member lanyards/badges, senior officer vests, mural stencil kit) to signal belonging without exclusivity, boosting Club profiles and reputation.
- **Develop a monitoring approach:** Create and integrate a monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) framework for the ECaP model, with dedicated strands for school and youth-based interventions. The framework might consider the potentially different impacts of ECaP on elementary, secondary and university-age youth in the short to medium term, from trauma support to leadership development.

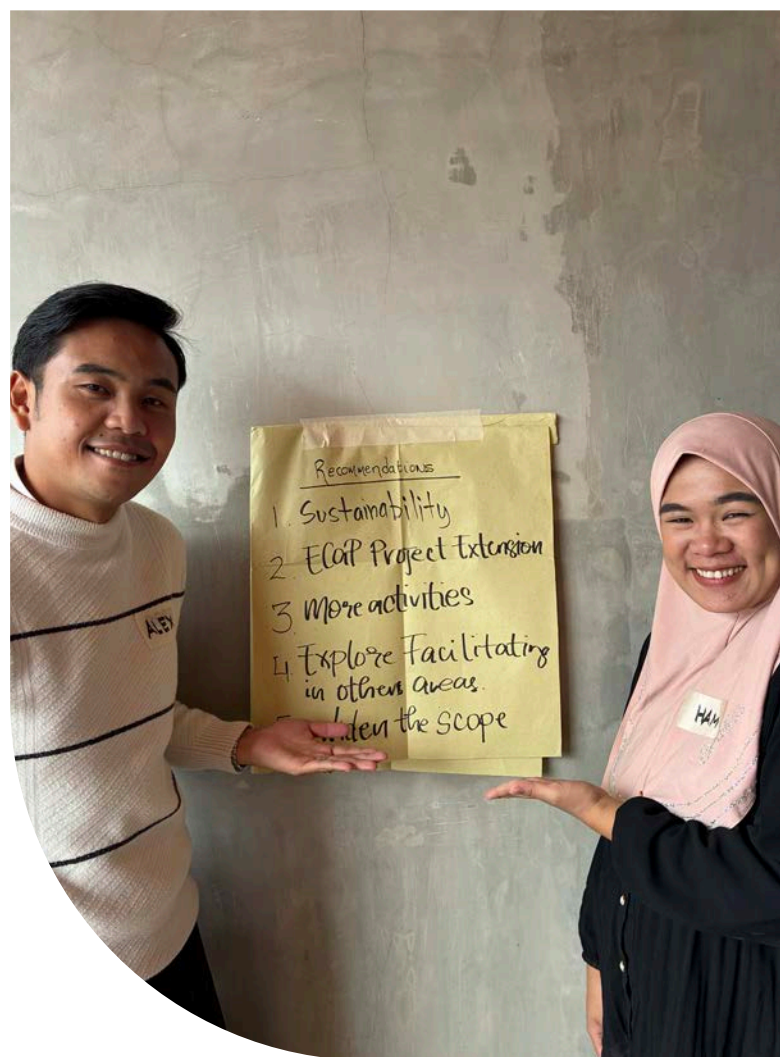
Local partners: Schools Division Office and Government

- **Standing authorisation:** Consider replacing one-off approvals with a term-long memo. For example, the last school period on Fridays could act as a dedicated peace slot, reducing friction with ‘Time on Task’ and ensuring obligations under EO 570 are met.
- **Formal recognition:** Add Peace Clubs to the list of official school organisations, boosting student morale, recognising the efforts of Peace Coordinators, and ensuring the continuation of clubs. Request a simple annual action plan, informed by students’ ideas.

- **Integrate, then expand:** Issue short guidance for embedding micro-modules into peace and values-based education, or during dedicated Peace months. Invite all schools within the Division to integrate ECaP content to the curriculum, whilst ensuring teachers receive appropriate training in advance.
- **Resource the basics:** Create a small annual budget line (materials/printing) per participating school; standardise a CBL template of club rules and guidelines.

Donors / External Partners

- **Fund the handover, not just the rollout:** Provide dedicated support to project components that support sustainability, such as expanded teacher training or curriculum inserts.
- **Support a Division learning loop:** Support bi-annual learning workshops (schools discuss what worked), and mini-evaluations focused on pacing, facilitation equity, and authorisation needs.
- **Simple, but guaranteed resourcing:** Budget a minimal identity/resources pack per school, prioritising Club vests, creative materials, sports equipment and music equipment needed for cultural showcases and dance – the most popular, inclusive and effective activities.
- **Recognise monitoring constraints:** Typical reporting timeframes may overlook the longer-term impact of peace and values education on younger children, as well as subtle psychosocial benefits/trauma processing effects.



Youth Engagement

For World Vision and other implementers

- **Refine the training schedule:** Shift to bi-monthly weekend training and activities, with scheduled refreshers, broadly aligned with the school calendar to promote collaboration. Consider providing a simple club calendar of key events, with space to add items identified in the different Peace Club Action Plans based on members' priorities and ideas.
- **Equitable access:** Rotate exchange/training opportunities and continue to promote share-backs to the whole club/barangay. Retain club membership

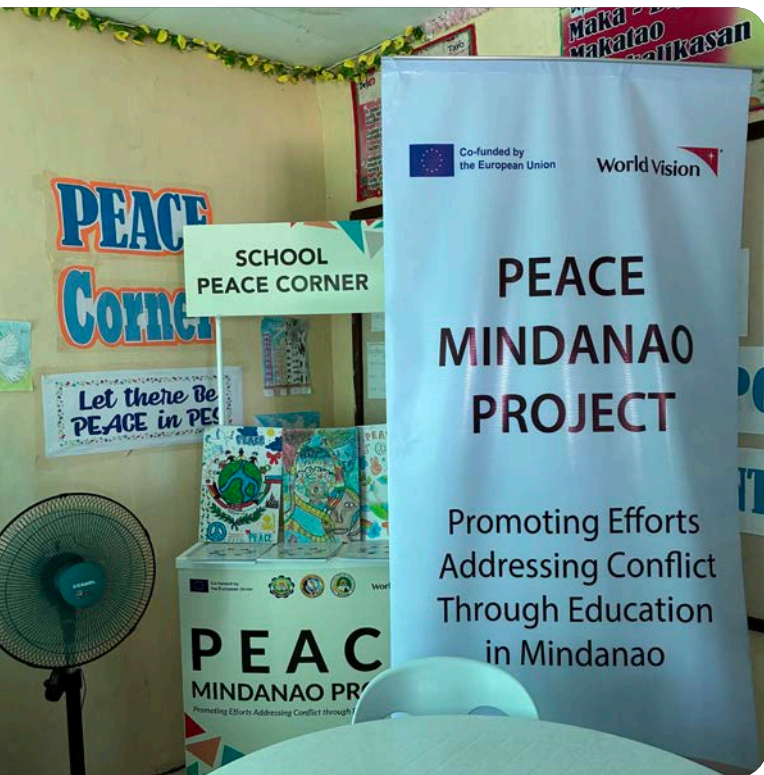
places for out-of-school youth, and consider how to target other demographics, such as young parents or a larger male cohort. Targeted involvement plans could be developed in collaboration with barangay representatives, linking in with the Alternative Learning System (ALS) for school drop-outs, where present.

- **Youth-friendly micro-kits.** Allocate resources such as posters/mural stencils, basic art supplies, sports equipment; pair with **micro-grants** for small events that Clubs can plan and implement themselves.

- **Topic expansion (dedicated youth track):** Add modules on the environment/climate, digital civics, AI and online safety, and livelihood/enterprise basics – each of which were suggested by youth themselves. Create short, innovative project tasks that youth can run locally.

- **Support youth-led governance:** Consider supporting a nimble umbrella organisation to coordinate and guide youth peace clubs across a given city.





For Government (Barangay/LGU)

- **Recognise and resource:** Issue barangay memos recognising Youth Peace Clubs. Designate an appropriate and reliable **venue for club meetings and activities**, and a **small budget line** for materials and local travel.
- **Create a Youth Peace Hub:** In the longer term, establish an accessible, shared space for children and youth peacebuilders to convene and conduct relevant trainings and activities, promoting pro-social behaviour, collaboration and civic engagement.
- **Exchanges and showcases:** Strengthen and continue to support inter-barangay exchanges and sports or culture days, in collaboration with youth clubs.

For Donors / External partners

- **Fund activities proven to boost participation:** Guarantee micro-grants, basic resource kits and local

travel opportunities; light but reliable mechanisms for attracting membership and participation.

- **Create dedicated youth spaces:** Finance accessible **youth hubs or peace centres** suitable for hosting club activities and peace-related training in the absence of an NGO or external partner and reducing transport needs.
- **Continue supporting youth-led initiatives:** The ECaP model was co-designed and led by youth themselves, who facilitated training rollouts, created their own Action Plans and ran events.
- **Support post-conflict contexts:** Opportunities for youth in Cotabato and Marawi are sparse, as NGOs and other agencies prioritise livelihood and health-related interventions. Many organisations have since left the BARMM, at odds with the anxieties and struggles widely reported by youth in the region. Leadership opportunities, conflict resolution strategies, mental health support and activities that nurture a sense of civic duty stand to have powerful long-term impacts at the personal and community level.



“Why not give opportunities to the youth? Being young, you have the enthusiasm to try different things and grow in different ways. The ECaP model gives youth a platform and a voice. I am responsible for my community; I have a role to play.” – Youth Club member and ECaP facilitator, Marawi

Co-funded by
the European Union





This learning report has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of World Vision Ireland and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.'

