

**Researchers**

Maria Isabel Fernandez  
Associate Research Manager

Yuna Liang  
Senior Research Manager

Michael Abrigo  
Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS)

**Staff**

Maria Isabel Fernandez  
Associate Research Manager

Yuna Liang  
Senior Research Manager

Allan Albert Lalisan  
Embedded Labs Coordinator

**Timeline**

2022-2023

**Study Status**

Results

**Study Type**

Quasi-experimental Analysis

**Sample Size**

150 barangays

# Building Community Trust and Conflict Mediation Capacity: Evidence from the Barangay Justice System in the Philippines



Barangay Justice System ©IPA Philippines 2022

**IPA Philippines evaluated the impact of programs designed to increase the capacity of and develop functional community-based justice systems across communities affected by conflict and political instability. Results showed that the programs increased justice system members' knowledge of mediation and conciliation strategies and amicable settlement documentation and enforcement. The programs also increased community awareness of the justice system and its jurisdiction.**

More than 40 years of conflict in Mindanao in the Southern Philippines has led to significant negative social, economic, and political impacts across the country. Following the peace agreement signed in 2019 between the Philippines government and the Moro people, addressing key issues such as governance and increased access to justice continues to be a priority area for the Bangsamoro region.

One of the avenues for access to justice is the Barangay Justice System, a community-based dispute mechanism administered by the basic political unit of the country—the barangay—that generally covers disputes among residents of the same city or municipality. Its purpose is for disputing parties to settle their conflicts peacefully through the intervention of respected members such as traditional or religious leaders. The Synergeia Foundation, Inc.

implemented a series of programs to strengthen the Barangay Justice System in Mindanao. The programs included capacity building through mentoring of barangay leaders and staff on conflict resolution mechanisms, providing a best practices toolkit, and conducting awareness-raising campaigns to community members.

IPA Philippines partnered with Synergeia Foundation, Inc. to evaluate the impact of Synergeia's programs designed to increase the capacity of and develop functional and trusted Barangay Justice Systems in conflict-affected communities. Following the program's implementation, IPA Philippines selected 75 barangays that did not receive the program that were statistically comparable to 75 barangays that received the program. Data collection occurred from November to December 2022. Three different surveys were conducted in each barangay targeting five randomly identified households, three Barangay Justice System mediators, and the Barangay Justice System secretary. The surveys covered topics on socio-economic and demographic characteristics, community conflict and mediation, knowledge and awareness of the Barangay Justice System, and case disposition.

Results showed significant positive increases in the knowledge of Barangay Justice System members on mediation and conciliation strategies and procedures as well as on amicable settlement documentation and enforcement. There were also increases in community awareness on the BJS and its jurisdiction among barangays that received the program. The program did not have an impact on intended usage of the Barangay Justice System. However, because data collection was conducted less than a month after the program concluded, changes in usage were unlikely to be captured as behavioral changes typically manifest over a longer period.

---

## Partner



**Synergeia Foundation, Inc.**