[Women Peacemakers in the Philippines](https://creducation.net/women_peacemakers_in_the_philippines/)

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Like many other countries, the Philippines has all forms of violence present. This includes direct violence, both at micro and macro levels. There are, of course, other forms of violence present in the country such as structural violence (e.g., wide gap between the rich and poor, extreme poverty of a large segment of the population). There is also socio-cultural violence (e.g., deeply-rooted prejudice against Muslims and other minorities); and ecological violence (e.g., mining and their deleterious effects).

Violence against women is reported an average of 20 cases per day. Violence against women includes beating, rape, sexual harassment and other forms of physical abuse. Due to the fact that not all cases are reported, the number is actually higher. There are also ongoing armed conflicts in the country which are between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the other is between the GRP and the Communist Party of the Philippines – New People’s Army (CPP-NPA). The GRP and MILF broke their ceasefire agreement last August 2008 and are currently fighting in Mindanao (in Southern Philippines) with internally displaced people numbering more than 500,000 at the height of the conflict. The economic and social dislocation of communities has been severe like in other countries with armed conflicts; those that are affected and are suffering are non-combatant women and children.

In response, the women of the Philippines have responded as peacemakers. It should be acknowledged that the peace movement in the Philippines is almost equally gender mixed. However, it is heartening to note that the majority of those who are taking leadership roles in the peace movement are women, including those who are young women and those women involved in grassroots. In the many conflict-affected areas, the women of the concerned communities have taken the lead in calling for the cessation of hostilities and have called for the establishment of “peace zones”. This is very understandable given the fact that the women are among the first to be negatively affected and violated when there is war. It is also heartening to mention here that many important peace initiatives and campaigns that have been launched in the Philippines are led or coordinated by women. These women are for example: Bantay Ceasefire (Ceasefire Watch), Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict – Philippines, United Religions Initiative – Philippines, Philippine Action Network on Small Arms, Philippine Campaign against Cluster Munitions, and the Peace Education Network. Surely, there are many challenges for women peacemakers in the Philippines. But our women’s courage, nurturing spirit and persistence will, hopefully, lead us closer to our dream of peace.