

Philippines

FSD teams survey UXO-impacted villages in remote Mindanao and provide explosive risk education directly or by training MRE volunteers.

Since 1968, Central and South-western Mindanao has been the scene of fighting between Muslim autonomists and the Philippines government, with intermittent periods of peace and conflict. Each round of battle leads to unexploded ordnance and explosive hazards, posing risks to civilians, refugees and returnees in particular.

In 2005, the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and the Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities (CCH) asked FSD to provide technical assistance in support of the Peace Process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). FSD was encouraged to develop a "joint" survey and clearance proposal in Muslim Mindanao working with staff from both sides of the conflict. FSD also provided risk education to independent international ceasefire monitors.

FSD's programme in the Philippines aims to assist the parties to remove this obstacle to Peace Process by:

- finding out where the UXO problem is through systematic non-technical survey and maintaining this information on a GIS database
- warning communities of the dangers of explosive education and how to live safely through risk education;
- and mobilising UXO clearance resources to remove the problem permanently.

FSD is also working with the Joint Normalisation Committee, formed of both Parties to the peace process; the central Federal, and regional Bangsamoro, authorities in the Philippines, and other stakeholders to advise on how to organise a sustainable, locally owned response to the programme. For some years this has been seen as including the formation some form of Mine Action Centre (MAC) to oversee the work in Muslim Mindanao. The envisaged MAC will coordinate the work, and task operators to undertake mine action activities (survey, clearance, risk education, and victims' assistance) and perhaps weapons and ammunition management as well.

Since its inception, FSD's programme in the Philippines has trained over nearly 300 professional Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) volunteers, carried out over 3,300 Risk Education sessions, reaching over 250,000 beneficiaries. Over 500 villages have been surveyed, in which 234 explosive hazardous areas have been identified. Of these, 81 tasks have been cleared in joint GPH-MILF UXO clearance operations. 231 UXO victims (91% young males) have been reported on and, where possible, FSD coordinates victims' assistance through organisations such as the ICRC.

FSD implements this programme in close cooperation with Association FSD France <https://fsdfrance.fr>