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**“FROM ARMS TO FARMS: COMMUNICATION TRIGGERS TOWARDS  
TRANSFORMATION OF FORMER MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT  
COMBATANTS”**

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FRONT COMBATANTS**

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**Acceptance Page:**

This paper prepared by **LOU ELLEN L. ANTONIO** with the title: "**From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants**" is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Program.

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## **Biographical Sketch**

Lou Ellen Antonio is a dedicated information officer of the Philippine national government. She currently serves as the information center manager at the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) in Iligan City - Lanao del Norte. Originally from Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat, she moved to Iligan City in 2013 to pursue her college education and has remained there for work ever since.

Her interest in government programs and their impact on marginalized groups started during her college years. Her college experience enlightened her about becoming significant in society by contributing valuable input, which deepened through her work in the government. She graduated with flying colors in 2017 with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT), where she also received the Institute's Journalism Award.

In 2016, during her internship at Pakigdait Inc., an interfaith grassroots peacebuilding civil society organization, she witnessed the unveiling of a peace monument and the turnover of government livelihood support and farming tools to Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) communities. She also volunteered as a documenter for the evacuation of displaced students of MSU-Main Campus during the Marawi siege in 2017, where they sought refuge in their college building. These experiences solidified her commitment to public service through media and communications.

After graduating, Lou joined the PIA Northern Mindanao as a production assistant and worked her way up to become an information officer. She played a vital role in disseminating information and in crafting information, education, and communication materials of the national government through the Task Force Bangon

Marawi's (TFBM) rehabilitation programs, and documented government efforts for internally displaced persons and former violent extremists. From 2017 to 2022, she was actively involved in the rehabilitation of Marawi City and dedicated her time under the TFBM's Information Management and Strategic Communications Support Group led by PIA.

In 2022, Lou was assigned to Lanao del Norte, where she continues her work as an information officer to disseminate information about government programs and services to the people. Her responsibilities include writing news and feature stories, creating digital content, and submitting reports broadcasted through state-run media: PTV-4, PTV News Mindanao, and the Philippine News Agency.

Lou's passion for understanding how government initiatives support the transformation of former rebels and combatants drives her current research interests. She aims to explore the communication strategies utilized in government initiatives focused on human and community transformation.

She is also an alumna of the OurMindaNOW Tech Camp, organized by Equal Access International Philippines, where she gained skills and knowledge in promoting positive messaging and in creating alternative narratives against violent extremism. In 2019, she represented the Philippines, along with 19 other youths, at the JENESYS 2019 Youth Exchange for the Media Industry in Tokyo, Japan. Moreover, she was one of six delegates from the Philippines who participated in the YSEALI Creating Positive Online Spaces Regional Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand, in May 2024, alongside other youth from Southeast Asia. After receiving grants through the workshop, she led a project, dubbed Amihan: Young Peace Weavers, to promote digital storytelling by highlighting friendship as a tool for peace.

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To the people of Kauswagan, your town's transformational journey has truly inspired me and made me believe that through dedicated leadership and strong political will, along with the cooperation of the community, progress can be achieved.

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## **Dedication**

Para sa Kapayapaan at Kaunlaran

Para sa Mahal kong Mindanao

Para sa Mahal kong Pilipinas

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## **Abstract**

### **“From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants”**

After years of getting involved in armed conflict, former combatants often face challenges in changing their roles and identities as they transition to civilian life. Various programs had been implemented to support their transformation. In Lanao del Norte, Philippines, the former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) transitioned to becoming organic farmers through the “From Arms to Farms” program implemented by the local government of Kauswagan. However, the program’s economic opportunities were not just the motivations that pushed them to join the program. Different communication strategies and triggers influenced their decision to transform their lives. Despite existing studies on the transition of former combatants to civilian life, little is known about how communication shapes their decisions toward starting anew. This study filled this gap by exploring how communication facilitated the transformation of former MILF combatants into organic farmers. This study used narrative inquiry and Bruner’s “subjunctivization” concept to examine the narratives of five former MILF combatants and the views of the Municipal Agriculture Officer of Kauswagan town. The results of this study showed the communication triggers that influenced the former combatants to transform their lives such as (a) personal motivations, such as their desire to have financial security and a better future for their families; (b) sincere engagement of the local authorities; (c) peer support and influence; (d) key messaging of the program’s benefits, and (e) consistent communication and regular visits. The local government of Kauswagan also established an online group chat to sustain communication with the former combatants which provided practical and real-time communication to keep them updated and engaged about the program and other activities in the town. The use of this communication channel hastened their transformation process. Moreover, this study highlighted the importance of building trust and providing resources, community-based training, and support in marketing their harvests. Constant dialogue and institutional support were also vital in their transformation.

*Keywords: transformation; conflict, peace, successful transition, engagement*

## **Chapter I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Rationale and Background of the Study**

As former combatants transition to civilian life, they encounter numerous challenges, given that they have been involved in armed conflict for years. For the members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines, changing their identities and roles became challenging as they also needed to adopt a new way of life different from their past experiences as combatants. Some former MILF combatants in conflict-affected municipalities of Lanao del Norte in Northern Mindanao had become farmers through an organic farming program dubbed “From Arms to Farms”. Through this program, they acquired skills and knowledge in organic farming which eventually became their source of living. The program transformed into productive and peaceful citizens. By building trust among former combatants, the stakeholders supported their transformation process and also promoted sustainable peace.

The MILF is a breakaway group of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which was a Moro separatist movement in Mindanao, in the southern Philippines. The MILF formally adopted its name in 1984 to emphasize its Islamic orientation, which is different from the more secular MNLF (OPAPP, 2014). The MILF viewed that the autonomy granted in the peace agreements signed between the MNLF and the Philippine government in 1996 was not enough to address the root causes of the conflict (Bacani, 2006). This perspective pushed them to start an armed struggle against the Philippine government to seek autonomy, which caused about 120,000

deaths and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of individuals (Herbolzheimer, 2015).

The Philippine government and the MILF signed a peace agreement called the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) on March 27, 2014 to finally resolve the longstanding armed conflict in Mindanao, particularly in the Bangsamoro region (Official Gazette, 2014). With the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) on July 26, 2018, by the Philippine Congress, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was created to replace the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Official Gazette, 2018). Through this, the Bangsamoro people have control over their resources as they were granted self-governance and autonomy. The CAB has two tracks: (a) the political track that ratified BOL and established BARMM, and (b) the normalization track that facilitates the transformation of MILF combatants into peaceful and productive citizens through decommissioning (Mahinay et al., 2022; OPAPP, 2020).

Former MILF combatants have received various support and assistance from the Philippine government as they transitioned to civilian life. Farmers in six former MILF camps received agricultural equipment, livestock, and seedlings worth Php25 million from the Department of Agriculture (DA) (The Philippine Star, 2016). Moreover, the DA and BARMM's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR) provided organic vegetable farming to the MILF members in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao (Punzalan, 2020). Through the government's socio-economic program, the members of the MILF and their families also received various assistance, such as social protection and health insurance, livelihood and educational opportunities, and other development support (Punzalan & Fernandez, 2019). Decommissioned MILF combatants received Php100,000 each from the

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to support their basic needs and start livelihoods (DSWD, 2022). Moreover, decommissioned MILF combatants received their birth certificates to address their legal identity concerns through the "Access to Legal Identity and Social Services for Decommissioned Combatants" project (OPAPRU, 2023). This initiative is part of the Philippine government's commitment under the normalization track of CAB to support the transformation of MILF combatants in specific camps across the provinces of Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte, Maguindanao, and Cotabato. The Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services implemented the project with funding from the European Union, the embassies of Australia and Japan in the Philippines, and The Asia Foundation. Notably, 52 MILF members became part of the police force in August 2023 through the National Police Commission's Special Qualifying Eligibility Examination (Sadongdong, 2023). Moreover, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. issued Proclamation 405 in November 2023 to grant amnesty to former MILF members who committed crimes under the Revised Penal Code and Special Penal Laws in pursuit of their political beliefs (Official Gazette, 2023).

According to the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU, 2024), 26,145 out of 40,000 MILF combatants have been decommissioned, along with 4,625 weapons, while 24 Joint Peace and Security Teams have been deployed. The decommissioned combatants also received Php3.5 billion worth of support from the government in the form of transitional cash assistance, social protection, livelihood assistance, and community-based infrastructure. An additional Php750 million has been allocated for these socio-economic programs. Moreover, the 33 core barangays in six MILF camps received

Php602 million worth of projects. Through the Technical Vocational Education and Training Program, 6,231 decommissioned combatants and their families gained skills and knowledge that helped them transition into productive citizens. The approved Camps Transformation Plan (CTP) is also being implemented.

National government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and other stakeholders collaborate for the transformation of the MILF's North-Western Mindanao Front in Munai, Tagoloan, and Tangcal through the Camp Bilal Transformation Plan (Antonio, 2023). In support of the overarching goals of CAB, Localized Normalization Implementation has also been adopted to fast-track the implementation of programs and interventions for former MILF combatants by which the LGUs will lead the implementation of the projects under the Normalization and Transformation Programs to address specific needs in their areas (OPAPRU, 2024). This is also being implemented in Lanao del Norte after the provincial government and the OPAPRU signed a memorandum of agreement for its implementation, which gives the local government direct involvement in this transformation process (Nepomuceno,2024). However, with all these programs being implemented to transform former MILF combatants, there is still a need to understand and explore the role of communication in influencing them to start a productive and peaceful life.

Kauswagan, a town in Lanao del Norte, has suffered severe devastation due to various armed conflicts, including clashes between the Blackshirts (Maranao militants) and the Ilagas (Christian militants) in the early 1970s, as well as the conflict between the MILF and government forces (Galing Pook Organization, 2014). On March 21, 2000, then-President Joseph Estrada ordered an "all-out war" against the MILF following their invasion of Kauswagan, where they held hundreds of residents

hostage (Melican, 2015). In 2008, MILF forces launched attacks on the towns of Kolambugan and Kauswagan that caused widespread destruction, with hostages being used as human shields during their retreat to the mountains (Gallardo, 2019). As a result of these conflicts, Kauswagan was referred to as a "ghost municipality" with a poverty rate of over 79% (Tagupa, 2020).

However, Kauswagan town underwent transformative changes in 2010 with the leadership of Mayor Rommel Arnado, wherein the "From Arms to Farms" program was launched with the support of various stakeholders to address the root causes of conflict such as poverty, food insecurity, and inequality. This program is part of the local government's Sustainable and Integrated Kauswagan Area Development and Peace Agenda framework. The program aimed to transform the lives of former combatants by equipping them with skills and knowledge in organic farming and, at the same time, address food security concerns (UCLG, n.d.) Notably, the program, which was implemented before the Philippine government and the MILF signed the final peace agreement, had assisted over 600 former combatants and their families to have a new life through organic farming (Heindorf, 2019). The 15th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army and the Agricultural Training Institute facilitated meetings and workshops for ex-combatants, their families, and local farmers, while the local government and the Assisi Development Foundation established an agricultural school to promote organic farming (Future Policy Organization, n.d.). The local government also formed them into cooperatives for better access to credit and government support and assisted them with mechanized farming equipment (Clavite & Lucman, 2023). The Department of Agriculture, private sector partners, and other organizations also provided technical and financial support, while the Armed Forces of the Philippines contributed to maintaining peace

and security. Expanding beyond Kauswagan, the program also helped former combatants in Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod towns (Umel & Rosauro, 2023; Clavite & Lucman, 2023).

The “From Arms to Farms” program adopted a “no disarming” approach that focused on community empowerment and self-reliance, which is different from the traditional Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation (DDR) models (Majorenos-Taruc, 2023). Instead of requiring the former combatants to surrender their weapons, the local government only required their commitment and willingness to embrace peace (Umel, 2014). This approach encouraged them to participate in the program as they were not pressured to give up their firearms.

The “From Arms to Farms” program significantly reduced the town’s poverty rates from 79.08 percent in 2010 to 9.1 percent by November 2019 (Manos, 2023). The entire municipality of Kauswagan was declared an “organic culture activity” pursuant to the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 (Bagumbaran, 2021). The Municipal Council also passed an ordinance declaring the municipality as a completely organic town and prohibiting the use and sale of chemical fertilizers and pesticides on farms (Department of Agriculture, 2023). Moreover, the town has been acknowledged as the top recipient of the “Gawad Galing Pook Award” for its sustainable peace and development initiatives through the program (Umel, 2014). The town received the Gold Award for International Peace and Development Innovations from the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in 2016 for its transformation efforts in addressing the root causes of violent conflict through a socio-economic approach that integrates peace and development (UCLG, 2016). Additionally, the town received an honorable mention in the 2018 Future Policy Award for Agroecology

from the World Future Council, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, and IFOAM-Organics International (Peoples Domain, 2019).

Kauswagan town hosted the 6th Organic Asia Congress (OAC) from June 4 to 9, 2023, a prominent international event for organic agriculture that gathered local governments and the organic sector from various countries and areas to highlight the significance of organic agriculture in achieving sustainable peace and development (Antonio, 2023). Over 1,200 delegates, including 253 foreigners from 31 countries and areas, convened to witness the town's progress through the "From Arms to Farms" program that aimed to secure food and combat hunger through peace-building initiatives (Ermac, 2023). The town was selected to host the event without a bidding process due to its significant advancements in organic agriculture and peacebuilding (Rosete, 2023). Moreover, the town received the Gawad Kapayapaan 2024 award for its "From Arms to Farms" initiative, which effectively transformed former MILF and MNLF members and decreased poverty rates (OPAPRU, 2024).

Considering that the "From Arms to Farms" program played a crucial role in the transition to civilian life of former combatants, it is important to look into the communication process that facilitated their transformation and adoption of organic farming practices. This research explored the communication triggers and strategies for their transformation process. This study aimed to understand the experiences of former MILF combatants in Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod towns who have adopted organic farming as a way of transformation. Moreover, this study aimed to address the research gap in understanding the role of communication in the transformation process. Although there is existing literature on various programs for ex-combatants, there is a limited understanding of the communication dynamics

involved in their transformation process. Therefore, this study aimed to bridge this knowledge gap by understanding transformation as a communication process.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Little is known about the communication process that facilitated the transformation of MILF former combatants. Effective communication is vital for the success of programs intended for their transformation and for attaining lasting peace. Hence, there is a need to have a comprehensive understanding of the transformation process to facilitate their smooth transition to civilian life and to see to it that the programs align with the needs, desires, and aspirations of the former combatants.

Moreover, understanding how former combatants perceive their transition to civilian life and the factors that influenced their decision to start a better life is also important to ensure that the programs are implemented effectively. Facilitating their transition to civilian life will be challenging if the communication dynamics involved in their transformation process are not examined and understood.

There is a limited understanding of the role of communication, specifically the communication triggers that shape the decisions of former combatants in transitioning to civilian life. Studies have focused more on exploring or evaluating the transformation programs for former combatants than on the important role of communication. Hence, there is a need to determine the communication triggers that influence the decision of the former combatants in their transition to civilian life. Addressing this gap is essential to designing communication strategies and implementing programs to transform them into peaceful and productive citizens. This study aimed to fill this gap by examining the specific communication triggers and by understanding the communication process that facilitated their transformation.

In general, the study sought to answer the question: What communication triggers facilitated the transformation of former MILF combatants in Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod municipalities in the province of Lanao del Norte through their engagement in organic farming?

Specifically, the study answered the following research questions:

1. What are the stories of former combatants towards becoming organic farmers? and
2. How did these stories transform them?

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study explored the communication triggers that facilitated the transformation of former MILF combatants in Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod municipalities in the province of Lanao del Norte through their engagement in organic farming.

Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Describe the narratives of former MILF combatants as they transition to becoming organic farmers; and
2. Explain how the personal stories of former MILF combatants contributed to their transformation through organic farming.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study contributed to the field of development communication as the findings could serve as a guide in crafting communication plans and strategies to shape the decisions of combatants to transform their lives and become peaceful and productive individuals in their communities. This study emphasized that

communication played a crucial role in their transformation, particularly the communication dynamics between former combatants and the stakeholders that supported their transition to productive life. This study can also aid development communication practitioners in shaping the decisions of former combatants or other sectors to adopt organic farming as a new way of life.

The government can also use the results of this study in their Localized Normalization Implementation approach, as it focused on the views and perspectives of former combatants in their transformation process. This study emphasized that communication strategies should be aligned with the local perspectives, which makes it more relevant to the approach of the national government in making local governments lead the transformation programs for former combatants. As this study emphasized that organic farming is an effective way of transforming former combatants, policymakers, development practitioners and local leaders can use this as their guide in designing programs that provide sustainable livelihood to the former combatants.

This study also provided insights for the government and organizations to use in planning and implementing programs for the successful transition of former combatants by highlighting that resources should be consistent and engagement should be sustained.

The findings of this study also contribute to attaining several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely Goal 1: No Poverty, Goal 2: Zero Hunger, Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities, Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and

Production, Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study focused on the perspectives of the former MILF combatants in Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod municipalities who were involved in the armed conflict until 2008 and eventually adopted organic farming through the “From Arms to Farms” program. Insights from the Municipal Agriculture Officer (MAO) of LGU Kauswagan were also acquired to understand the pre- and post-processes and marketing strategies of the program. As some stakeholders, except for the local government, had already completed their projects or initiatives and had already spread across different geographical areas, it became challenging to gather their perspectives and contributions to the study. This study solely focused on the communication processes associated with the program and did not extend to other aspects of the lives of ex-combatants or other programs they might be involved in.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review provided a comprehensive analysis of existing research and scholarly works to synthesize insights and identify gaps in knowledge related to the transformation of former combatants and the adoption of organic farming. This review focused on the potential and challenges of programs for ex-combatants, farming as a means of transformation and livelihood, communication strategies for successful transformation, and adopting organic farming.

#### **Support programs for ex-combatants**

Hazen (n.d.) asserted that there is a challenge in sustaining the transformation of ex-combatants since most of the programs are funded by international donors, which can cause delays or may end abruptly when there is no longer funding. Moreover, she emphasized that funding donors prioritize the disarmament of the ex-combatants more than their transition to civilian life. Similarly, Subedi (2014) found out from a case study of Nepalese ex-combatants that the financial payments alone as a method for facilitating their transition into society was insufficient as it did not address the underlying economic and social issues they encountered. The author emphasized that social stigma, education gaps, and lack of skills hindered their transition into society. For this study, the focus was on exploring the strategy or mechanism of stakeholders in the transformation program for the former MILF combatants, whether they used a similar strategy or not. This study also examined whether there were groups that provided skills training and education on organic farming for ex-combatants.

After reviewing the literature on postwar demobilization programs, Rolston (2007) concluded that political will and the active participation of ex-combatants were crucial factors for successful transition programs. He also examined Ireland's reintegration process, which failed in some areas but succeeded in others as highly politicized ex-prisoners used their political ideas and conflict transformation. In this study, the focus was on understanding how the personal motivations and commitment of former MILF combatants influenced their decisions to transform and embrace the organic farming program.

Using a ground theory approach, Janzen (2014) explored the experiences of the ex-combatants in Guatemala. Based on the interviews, the participants emphasized that staying united and organized was vital in their transition to civilian life. Similarly, through interviews, this study gave the former MILF combatants the opportunity to share their experiences on their transformation.

Through surveys of ex-combatants in Columbia, Kaplan and Nussio (2018) conducted a study to assess the opportunities and challenges of social reintegration related to community and security. Their study underscored how important it is for the community to support the transition of ex-combatants, as this can prevent them from committing crimes in the future. This study examined how the community either positively or negatively impacted the transformation of the former MILF combatants.

Wamocha (2018) examined the role of reintegration in promoting inclusion and equity among former combatants in the Mt. Elgon region of Kenya, and emphasized the government's active involvement in the reintegration process by allocating sufficient resources and completing reintegration programs rather than abandoning them at an early stage of assistance. Macas (2011) analyzed a

government-led initiative for former combatants in Colombia and concluded that an inclusive reintegration approach that considers the entire household and encourages the development of new social connections leads to economic and social reintegration, which is also important in promoting reconciliation in post-conflict situations. These findings were relevant in understanding the approaches of the individuals or groups and whether they employed an inclusive strategy for former MILF combatants.

After interviewing 54 former combatants from Northern Ireland and Colombia about the challenges they faced in their transition, Hart and Gomez (2022) revealed in their study that access to education, participation in the community, and equal treatment played a crucial role in the successful transition process. Similarly, Arango (2020) explored the motivations of ex-combatants in Colombia to enroll in technical education within technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs and how these initiatives affected their social reintegration. The results showed that they pursued education to gain respect and recognition beyond financial gain and work, to set an example for their children, to experience moral development, and to achieve autonomy. The findings highlighted the need to complement educational programs for economic development with approaches that develop social bonds and trust between ex-combatants and their communities. This literature helped in gaining a deeper understanding of the potential challenges and strategies for the successful transformation of former MILF combatants into the local community. This study also explored the motivations of former MILF combatants that shaped their decision to transition into civilian life.

The study of Luna-Amador et al. (2022) recommended that further research should be done to understand the factors that affect the economic transition of former combatants in Colombia. Their study concluded that educational attainment, family income, and gender contributed to the transition process of former combatants in Bolivia, Colombia. This study did not only explore similar factors, but also the communication triggers that shaped the decision of former MILF combatants to embrace organic farming as their new way of life.

Meanwhile, former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) combatants in Colombia faced stigma that affected their economic reintegration (Wilson & Valencia, 2023). To address this, they recommended that inclusivity in the labor market should be practiced, the community should be educated to reduce stigma against ex-combatants, the government should provide incentives, and organizations should collaborate to address the stigma issue. Similarly, this study explored if former MILF combatants also faced stigma or other external barriers in their transition to civilian life.

After conducting a study to explore the economic and social integration of ex-combatants in Burundi, East Africa, Willems and van Leeuwen (2015) emphasized that there should be a deeper understanding of the transition process and implementation of programs that facilitate successful transformation. To bridge this gap, this study examined the specific communication triggers and strategies that were used in shaping the decisions of former MILF combatants to embrace organic farming.

These related studies provided insights in understanding the challenges, success factors, and strategies in the transformation of former MILF combatants. To

bridge the research gap on the limited understanding of communication in the transformation process, this study examined the experiences and narratives of former combatants and explored the strategies implemented by the stakeholders in their transition. Moreover, this study provided insights and recommendations that can be used for future interventions in transforming former combatants not just in Lanao del Norte but in other communities worldwide.

### **Communication strategies in programs for former combatants**

The International Labour Organization (2010) published a material that validated practitioners in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants promoting sustainable reintegration programs such as skills training and education as they transition into civilian life. It was recommended that various communication channels should be used to disseminate information about opportunities for ex-combatants, such as training, employment, services, and education. In this study, the communication strategies of the stakeholders were explored to determine how they informed former MILF combatants about their programs.

Former combatants in Mozambique transitioned to becoming farmers through the agriculture program of the United Nations that engaged local communities in the decision-making process (2022). This approach ensured that the needs of the ex-combatants were heard, which made them feel prioritized. This literature provided insights for understanding how support for former MILF combatants was communicated.

Jayatilaka (2017) emphasized the impact of agricultural projects and technical skills development for former combatants and underscored the importance of

developing social skills through effective communication and negotiation, which played a vital role in transforming the ex-combatants. This literature contributed to this study by highlighting the important role of communication strategies in the transition of former MILF combatants into productive citizens.

When providing support for the transition of former combatants, Geenen (2007) emphasized that the local situation and the needs of the people should be prioritized to avoid mistrust and frustration from the community. It was recommended that the community should be involved in decision-making. In line with these insights, this study examined how former combatants were engaged in their transformation through the organic farming program.

Meanwhile, Quie (2012) emphasized that insufficient communication between international and local actors and the lack of sincere reconciliation efforts hindered the success of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program initiative in achieving democracy and peace in Afghanistan. Similarly, this study examined the approach of the stakeholders in engaging with the former MILF combatants as they transition to civilian life.

After surveying ex-combatants in Colombia, Kaplan and Nussio (2018) found out in their study that the engagement of former combatants with their communities prevented them from returning to illegal activities as it also provided them with a supportive environment in their transition. These findings were important in this study in exploring whether the community of former MILF combatants played a crucial role in their transformation.

Through a case study, Leff (2008) examined the experiences of the ex-combatants in Sierra Leone in West Africa and emphasized the critical role of the

collaborative efforts between the government, non-governmental organizations, community organizations, and donors. It was also highlighted that establishing informal networks helped former combatants engage with their communities. These findings provided ideas for this study to explore similar approaches implemented in the transformation process of former MILF combatants.

Despite the existing literature on communication strategies in the various programs for former combatants, there is a research gap in understanding the specific communication strategies employed by groups that provided support in facilitating the transition of former MILF combatants into organic farming. The related literature emphasized the importance of effective communication, community involvement, and participatory approaches in successful transformation programs for ex-combatants. However, little is known about the communication triggers and strategies used to engage with former combatants through organic farming. Hence, there is a need to bridge this research gap to gain insights on the strategies needed for the successful transformation of former combatants.

### **Farming as a means for transitioning former combatants to civilian life**

While research shows that agriculture supports demobilized combatants, more is needed to know about the agriculture-based strategies best suited for sustaining peace, promoting cooperation, and integrating former combatants into rural economies (Birner et al., 2011). This is the gap that this study aimed to address by examining the communication strategies used to influence former MILF combatants to embrace organic farming as their new way of life.

Former combatants in Colombia have shipped large amounts of organic coffee for sale in Europe and the United States, with the support of the Agency for

Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN), the Building Peace Agricultural and Agroindustrial Association, and Lohas Beans Company (ARN Colombia, 2021). They also received specialized training in the cultivation and production of coffee and gained certifications in organic production methods and best practices. A global company also granted their cooperative an organic coffee certification. Similarly, a former member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerillas in Colombia have found a new way of life through avocado farming and have begun to fertilize some of their fruit crops using a fertilizer made from trout manure (Abé, 2021). In this study, I explored how agencies or groups assisted former MILF combatants in marketing their organically produced vegetables and crops.

Through a case study, Birner et al. (2011) concluded in their study that effective agricultural strategies in Northern Uganda should be determined to sustain peace, promote cooperation, involve former combatants in rebuilding rural economies, and support displaced individuals in restoring livelihoods. These findings contributed to this study by providing a better understanding of the challenges encountered and solutions implemented for the transformation of the former MILF combatants through organic farming.

Meanwhile, the evaluation of the World Bank (2014) on the effectiveness of the program for former combatants in Liberia underscored the importance of providing start-up capital and not just training. This policy note provided insights for this study to explore whether training and resources were provided to the former MILF combatants in their transformation into organic farmers.

The International Fertilizer Development Center, in partnership with other organizations, implemented the Transfer Efficient Agricultural Technologies through the Market Systems program to assist 590 ex-combatants (2022). This literature highlighted the crucial role of agriculture in the transformation of former combatants, which this study has also examined.

Meanwhile, 187 former combatants and their families in Colombia benefitted from the training in poultry and fish farming of the Training and Reincorporation Center with support from the World Food Programme (Peña, 2020). The former combatants were educated about diverse food production and consumption, and were assisted in marketing their local products. This literature contributed to a better understanding of how stakeholders used organic farming in transforming and empowering former MILF combatants.

Moreover, ex-combatants in Santa Anita, Guatemala faced challenges despite their success in coffee cultivation because of the debt incurred on the land they acquired for coffee farming (Hauge, 2022). These findings provided insights in this study to explore similar challenges encountered by the former MILF combatants in their adoption of organic farming and the support provided by the stakeholders in their transformation.

Meanwhile, Majorenos-Taruc (2023) engaged 28 key informants and various stakeholders through case studies, interviews, and focus group discussions to evaluate the impact of the "From Arms to Farms" program on former MNLF and MILF combatants in Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte. Her study revealed that the program successfully transformed the ex-combatants into self-sufficient leaders with positive attitudes towards the betterment of their communities. Her research served

as a resource for this study by also using interviews in exploring the narratives of the former MILF combatants and the insights of the Municipal Agriculture Officer of Kauswagan.

### **Organic farming as means of livelihood**

Organic farming uses natural methods such as crop rotation and organic fertilizers to nurture soil quality and manage pests (Singh, 2021). Additionally, organic farming focuses on natural and sustainable practices to produce healthy food without chemicals like pesticides, artificial fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, growth hormones, or antibiotics (Das et al., 2020). Moreover, organic farming prioritizes environmental preservation and human well-being while cultivating crops and raising animals (Dey et al., 2021). Organic farming also offers environmental benefits as it preserves biodiversity and reduces pollution in the air, water, and soil (Meena, 2014).

Using a multiple-case research methodology, Udin (2014) examined the effects of organic farming on marginal farmers in Shimoga District, Karnataka, India, and determined that organic farming lowers cultivation expenses, promotes the sustainability of agroecosystems, and provides food for family use and income. The study also highlighted that the government and non-government groups should support the capacity development of the farmers. While the study highlighted the benefits of organic farming, it did not discuss the challenges farmers face in implementing organic practices. Thus, this study aimed to fill this gap by examining the problems and experiences encountered by the former MILF combatants in their adoption of organic farming as a new way of life.

A case study conducted by Qiao et al. (2018) revealed that the organic food industry in Wanzai County, China, has grown since 2000 because of the support of the local government in promoting organic farming. They emphasized that organic agriculture provides a stable and sustainable livelihood. Hence, this study examined how the local governments and other stakeholders provided support to the former MILF combatants in their transformation journey as organic farmers.

By examining the impact of organic farming on small-scale farmers in developing countries, Jouzi et al. (2017) revealed that organic farming improved food security, increased income, reduced input costs, enhanced social capacity, increased resilience to environmental changes, and strengthened environmental protection. Their study also determined the challenges in organic farming, which include difficulties in soil nutrient management, lower yields, certification, market barriers, and small farmers' educational and research requirements. However, their study emphasized that organic farming is a viable way to enhance the livelihood of small-scale farmers despite such challenges. For this study, former MILF combatants shared their challenges as they transitioned to organic farming.

Using primary data from structured interviews and secondary data from various sources, Naika et al. (2020) conducted a study to examine the impact of organic farming on farmers. Their study revealed that using organic fertilizers like compost manure improves soil quality and the sustainability of organic farming as a livelihood. Similarly, this study used primary and secondary data to explore the potential benefits of organic farming to the former MILF combatants.

Through interviews, Altenbuchner et al. (2018) discovered that using organic fertilizers improved soil quality, which helped organic farmers in Odisha, India, to

have increased income, reduced input costs, and reduced their dependence on money lenders. In this study, interviews were also conducted to examine the potential impact of organic farming on the former MILF combatants as a source of livelihood.

Meanwhile, after examining 15 organic and 15 conventional agricultural fields in Puducherry, India, Padmavathy and Poyyamoli (2012) highlighted that organic agriculture offered positive outcomes such as improved livelihood, enhanced soil fertility, biodiversity conservation, and reduced poverty. These findings were relevant in this study to better understand whether former MILF combatants experienced similar positive outcomes as they embraced organic farming.

### **Communication strategies for promoting organic farming**

Using survey and focus group discussions, Joson (2017) concluded that three farmers' associations in Central Luzon, Philippines used face-to-face interaction, mobile phones, and the Internet as communication channels. It also highlighted the strong engagement with the local and national government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other farmers' groups. Moreover, these farmer associations practiced knowledge-sharing, attended various organic culture events, used different communication channels, among others. Meanwhile, effective communication and knowledge transfer were vital factors in developing and sustaining the organic industry in Canada (Savard et al., 2014). These findings were relevant to this study in determining whether similar communication strategies also helped in the transformation of former MILF combatants through organic farming.

Beban (2014) asserted that organic agriculture enhanced the livelihoods and promoted sustainable land-based activities in Cambodia. However, the study

emphasized that the applications of Western concepts affected the implementation of organic farming. This literature served as a resource for this study in exploring whether the same effect has been experienced in the organic farming of former MILF combatants.

After surveying 262 Polish organic farmers, Luczka and Kalinowski (2020) revealed that these farmers were affected by market conditions, regulatory issues, and institutional factors. In their study, the farmers shared that they need financial support to sustain their organic production. Their study also emphasized that the farmers faced challenges because of the instability of organic farming laws. These findings were vital in this study to understand the experiences of the former MILF combatants in their pursuit of organic farming as their new way of living.

In Germany, it was found out that interpersonal communication played a vital role in influencing farmers to adopt agri-environmental measures (Unay Gailhard et al.). Their study also highlighted the impact of disseminating information about organic farming through extension services. These findings were vital in understanding how stakeholders communicated with former MILF combatants and influenced them to adopt organic farming as their way of transformation.

Using a case study, Joshi et al. (2012) concluded that farmers in the Hilly State of India understood and embraced organic farming through a participatory communication approach. They also recommended to craft communication plans using mass media, personal engagements, and the involvement of peers or farmers. These insights were vital in exploring the communication strategies used in shaping the decisions of former MILF combatants to adopt organic farming.

After examining the factors that influenced the Chinese apple farmers to adopt organic farming, Ma et al. (2017) concluded that those farmers who had access to credit and information and were environmentally aware were more likely to get information about organic farming. This literature served as a guide for this study to explore how communication and information dissemination played a role in the transformation of former MILF combatants through organic farming.

Meanwhile, Niemeyer and Lombard (2003) emphasized that marketing infrastructure, networking opportunities, and information exchange were important in influencing farmers to adopt organic farming. They also asserted that providing support is more effective than offering financial assistance to farmers. These findings were relevant in this study in exploring the strategies used by the stakeholders to communicate various opportunities to the former combatants.

Sushmita and Yadav (2020) examined the communication and behavior patterns of farmers in Haryana state, India and highlighted that local friends, "melas" (traditional fairs or gatherings), and television were top sources of information on organic farming. These findings provided reference and inspiration in exploring and understanding similar themes in this study. This study sought to examine the role of communication and information in facilitating the transformation of former MILF combatants.

Through interviews with 23 organic farmers from North Carolina in the United States of America, Crawford et al. (2015) concluded that networking with other farmers helped organic farmers learn more about organic farming practices. They also recommended that knowledge-sharing among peers and allocating more resources for training extension agents should be prioritized. These findings were

relevant in this study in exploring the social connections of former combatants and the resources they received during their transition into organic farmers.

In Samsun province of Turkey, organic hazelnut producers faced various challenges in accessing resources for projects, receiving assistance, and getting information (Demiryurek, 2010). These producers also relied more on local knowledge or traditional practices in their communities than scientific knowledge. These findings were relevant to this study in exploring whether the former MILF combatants had access to resources and information as they adopted organic farming.

### **Adoption of organic farming**

Eyhorn (2007) emphasized that adopting organic farming involved having dedication and changing mindsets aside from acquiring knowledge and skills. Similarly, this study looked into the motivations behind the transformation of former MILF combatants through organic farming.

Hall and Emily (201) highlighted in their study that interpersonal communication played a vital role in influencing Midwestern grain farmers to adopt organic farming practices. They also recommended that organizations, specifically communicators, should emphasize their key message and communication method in encouraging people to embrace organic farming. Moreover, in Machakos, Kenya, it was discovered that interpersonal communication, such as meetings, interactions, and seeking advice also motivated farmers to adopt organic farming practices (Njeri & Mberia, 2019). Similarly, this study looked into how the key message of the "From Arms to Farms" program and other communication strategies shaped the decisions of former MILF combatants to adopt organic farming.

Through a case study on wine regions in Germany, Siepmann and Nicholas (2018) emphasized that farmers who believed in the positive impact of organic farming and received support were motivated to adopt it. However, they also identified barriers in this transition, such as skepticism, doubts about environmental benefits, financial risks, and personal beliefs. To address these barriers, they recommended conducting storytelling that will change the negative beliefs of the farmers and provide financial assistance. Similarly, in this study, I examined the challenges and barriers that may have affected the former MILF combatants in their journey to becoming organic farmers.

Sapbamrer and Thammachai (2021) revealed in their systematic review that personal factors shaped the decisions of farmers to adopt organic farming practices. They also recommended that positive attitudes towards organic farming should be imparted to farmers and that the government and farm associations play a vital role in promoting organic farming. These findings were relevant to this study in examining the motivations and challenges that former MILF combatants encountered in their shift to organic farming.

Azam and Shaheen (2018) emphasized in their study the important role of government support in the sustainability of organic farming as the livelihood of farmers. They also highlighted the need for establishing separate market facilities for organic products and the importance of consumer awareness, training, research, and addressing the certification concerns of farmers. These findings contributed to the understanding of how stakeholders provided support to the former MILF combatants in their journey towards organic farming.

In Iowa, United States of America, it was discovered that profitability, personal safety, honor, tradition, consumers and public health, and natural resources stewardship were the key motivations of farmers in adopting organic grain farming (Han et al., 2021). It was also found out that through this adoption, farmers gained economic, social, and environmental benefits. These findings were relevant to this study in examining if former MILF combatants also gained such benefits as they transitioned to organic farming.

Cakirli Akyüz and Theuvsen (2020) used the Theory of Planned Behavior and the technology acceptance model to understand the behavior of Turkish sultana raisin producers as they adopted organic farming practices. The findings of their study revealed that while conventional farmers viewed organic agriculture as an affordable innovation of livelihood, they faced challenges in inspection and certification fees. They also recommended improving the understanding of farmers in organic farming, implementing long-term policies, providing subsidies, and following effective management practices to promote the sustainability of organic farming. These findings were vital to this study in exploring the challenges faced by former MILF combatants and how stakeholders addressed these concerns.

Bui and Nguyen (2021) examined the factors that influenced the decisions of farmers in Northern Vietnam to shift from conventional to organic tea production. The findings of their study showed that participation in training, access to credit and markets, extension services, farm size, and technology support motivated the farmers to adopt organic farming. They also underscored that to promote the expansion of organic tea production, the knowledge of farmers should be enhanced, long-term economic benefits should be provided, and the government should

implement policies. These findings provided insights in examining the factors that motivated former MILF combatants to adopt organic farming practices.

Through a case study in Ibadan, Oyo State in Nigeria, Adebisi et al. (2020) revealed that farmers were influenced to adopt organic leafy vegetable production through their livelihood assets, livelihood activities, institutional support, and gender-related variables. Meanwhile, the economic, health, and environmental benefits motivated Iranian farmers to convert to organic farming. However, they faced challenges such as insufficient support, negative pressure, market access, and limited resources (Veisi et al., 2017). These findings were relevant to this study in examining if former MILF combatants faced similar motivations and challenges as they embraced organic farming as a new way of life.

### **Theoretical Lens**

This study is grounded on narrative inquiry, a qualitative research method that collects and organizes the personal stories of individuals, highlighting their reflection and expression in various periods (Breton, 2020). In narrative research, the experiences of the participants and insights of the researcher are synthesized and presented in a narrative form (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry focuses on the experiences of individuals through their stories (Riessman, 2008). It is also important to have diverse perspectives when constructing meaning from personal experiences (Jha, 2018). Moreover, through narrative inquiry, readers are engaged personally and intellectually as it provides a deeper understanding and connection to the research subject (Kutsyuruba & Stasel, 2023).

Following Bruner's concept of subjunctivization, this study analyzed the transformation journey of former MILF combatants from being involved in armed

conflict for years to imagining a new future as organic farmers and peaceful citizens. Narratives are also important in shaping identities, organizing experiences, and facilitating communication to help individuals create meaning and make people understand why others think and behave the way they do (Bruner, 1991). Moreover, stories can be examined from various perspectives, interpretations, and meanings with the subjunctive nature of narratives that focus more on personal views rather than the facts (Bruner, 2004).

Thus, narrative inquiry was used in this study to explore the narratives of former MILF combatants and understand how their stories shaped their decision to transition into organic farmers. This study also determined the communication triggers and examined the communication process that reshaped their identity from combatants to farmers. I played an active role in interpreting their narratives subjectively to understand better how the ex-combatants transformed and reconstructed their identity and roles.

Through Bruner's concept of subjunctivization, this study described the narratives of former MILF combatants as they transitioned to becoming organic farmers, explored the communication triggers and stories that contributed to their transformation, and examined their vision towards their new life as organic farmers. This theoretical lens guided me in analyzing their personal stories and identifying common themes in their transformation journey. To understand their transformation journey, it is important to examine the triggers and motivations that influenced them to start a peaceful and productive life through organic farming. Using this concept, I explored their lived experiences and interpreted the meanings behind their stories on how they transitioned from combatants to farmers. This concept helped me

understand how their stories and previous experiences shaped their decisions and views in their new life.

## **Chapter III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This research utilized narrative inquiry that provided an in-depth exploration of the former MILF combatants' lived experiences and perspectives about their transformation journey. Narrative inquiry documents the experiences of individuals or small groups that reveal their lived experiences or unique perspectives through interviews that are recorded and arranged in a chronological narrative (Deakin University Library).

I used narrative inquiry to collect and analyze the narratives of the former MILF combatants on their transformation after their involvement in armed conflicts. The study aimed to uncover the reasons behind their decision to transition into civilian life and to understand the transformative power of organic farming as a new way of life. Using narrative inquiry, I examined their personal narratives to gain a deeper understanding of their transformation journey.

Moreover, Bruner stated that stories are about problems, dilemmas, contradictions, and imbalances that connect past, present, and future, a process he termed "subjunctivization" (cited by Monteagudo, 2011). Sharing life stories creates new understandings of reality based on personal experiences (Bruner, 1991). Through this concept, I explored the motivations, challenges, and reasons of former MILF combatants for adopting organic farming as their new way of life. Their personal stories helped me understand their transformation journey from combatants to farmers.

## Locale of the Study

The local government of Kauswagan implements the “From Arms to Farms” program. The beneficiaries of this program are former MILF and MNLF combatants who are based in Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod municipalities located in the province of Lanao del Norte, Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Most of the former MILF combatants who have benefited from the program are based in these towns. Notably, these towns are not part of BARMM.

**Figure 1.**  
*The Geographical Map of Lanao del Norte, Highlighting the Research Locale*



Kauswagan, a 5th-class coastal municipality in Lanao del Norte, spans 60.37 square kilometers with a population of 24,193, according to the 2020 Census (PhilAtlas, n.d.). It has 13 barangays, six of which are home to Maranaos. Its economy is supported by agriculture, fishing, trade, and services, with fertile lands producing rice, corn, coconut, and vegetables, while its coastal areas are home to thriving fishing communities (Diklap, 2023)

Bacolod, a coastal municipality in Lanao del Norte, spans 104.10 square kilometers, constituting 3.10% of the province's area (Diklap, 2024). The 2020 Census recorded a population of 24,367.

Munai, a landlocked 4th-class municipality in Lanao del Norte, spans 197.50 square kilometers with a population of 35,020 based on the 2020 Census and is politically subdivided into 26 barangays (PhilAtlas, n.d.). It is also the location of Camp Bilal, among the previously government-recognized MILF camps, where commanders, combatants, auxiliary forces, supporters, and civilians reside (People in Need, n.d.). The camp is also undergoing a positive transformation as part of the Camps Transformation Program between the government and the MILF (OPAPP, 2020).

The municipality of Tangcal has a land area of 178.62 square kilometers. According to the 2020 Census, its population was 16,075, with most of the residents being Maranaos.

During the 2019 plebiscite, Munai and Tangcal towns were among the six predominantly Muslim towns in Lanao del Norte that were proposed for inclusion in the BARMM. However, the majority of the 22 towns in Lanao del Norte opposed their inclusion (Arguillas, 2019). These towns are mostly inhabited by Maranaos and supporters of both the MILF and MNLF (Diklap, 2023).

### **Participants of the Study**

The study involved former MILF combatants from Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod municipalities in the province of Lanao del Norte who were previously engaged in armed conflicts until 2008 and have now transitioned to

civilian life through the “From Arms to Farms” program. They shared their narratives and lived experiences as the primary data source for the research. They are Maranao people, a predominantly Muslim Filipino ethnic group, but they can speak and understand the Filipino and Cebuano languages.

These individuals have transitioned from armed conflict to a peaceful and productive life through organic farming. Their stories were vital in understanding the role of organic farming in their transformation journey. They reconstructed their identities and roles from combatants to farmers to contribute to peace and development in their communities. Their participation in this study provided a better understanding of the communication triggers, personal motivations, or external influences that shaped their decision to transition to productive and peaceful living. Their personal stories also highlighted how organic farming improved their lives and empowered them.

Moreover, the Municipal Agriculture Officer of Kauswagan has been involved in this study, given that he has played a vital role from the inception of the "From Arms to Farms" program and continues to be involved in its implementation. His participation in this study provided a better understanding of the transformation journey of the former MILF combatants as organic farmers.

### **Selection of Participants**

Participants were selected based on a set of inclusion criteria that involves characteristics relevant to the research questions without requiring underlying theories or a predefined number of informants (Tongco, n.d.).

To reduce researcher bias, the study focused on former MILF combatants in the towns of Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod, Lanao del Norte, who met the following criteria:

1. Former MILF combatant involved in armed conflicts until 2008
2. Direct beneficiaries of the “From Arms to Farms” program
3. Demonstrated successful transition to civilian life through sustained employment or entrepreneurial activities
4. Active engagement in organic farming
5. Ability to communicate in the Cebuano or Filipino language
6. Willing to be a participant in this study

This targeted approach helped me to explore the motivations, challenges, and outcomes of the transformation process of the former MILF combatants with their diverse perspectives.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, procedures, and their rights as participants before the data gathering. They signified their willingness to participate voluntarily in the study by signing an informed consent form. Interviews (Annexes A and B) were conducted as the primary data collection method that helped them express their own experiences, perspectives, and personal stories related to the study. They also gave their consent for the interviews to be recorded to accurately capture their stories and ensure a thorough understanding of their experiences. Moreover, I also gathered information from reliable online sources, such as scholarly articles, books, reports, and journals about the program, which

were used as secondary sources. I also interviewed the Municipal Agriculture Officer of Kauswagan to acquire additional information.

### **Data Analysis**

I used narrative analysis to understand the data gathered from the narratives of the former MILF combatants. Riessman (2008) asserted that narrative analysis focuses on the substance of the story rather than its storytelling techniques to reveal underlying themes and experiences expressed by the storyteller. In narrative analysis, there are two ways of interpretation: research participants use storytelling to explain their experiences, and researchers examine how these narratives are constructed (Delve & Limpaecher, 2020b).

For this study, I collected narratives from former MILF combatants who have transitioned to civilian life. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated from Filipino to English. I used an inductive approach to examine the narratives of former MILF combatants to understand their perspectives on their transformation through organic farming. I used inductive coding, where codes were derived directly from the data, which allowed new theories and concepts to emerge. (Delve, n.d.).

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase coding framework, I used thematic analysis to analyze the transcribed interview data systematically. First, the data were thoroughly familiarized through repeated readings to gain an initial understanding. Significant data features were identified and labeled with initial codes by highlighting notable statements relevant to the research objectives. These codes were then reviewed and organized into more general themes. The identified themes

were subsequently refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. Finally, each theme's relevance was determined.

The themes and their implications were presented through a comprehensive narrative. These narratives integrated the findings into a cohesive story that provided insights and interpretations aligned with the research objectives.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In narrative research, it is important to follow ethical considerations such as ensuring confidentiality, securing informed consent from participants, adhering to university guidelines, and actively engaging participants in the research process while being aware of power dynamics and possible impacts on participants and communities involved (Frost, 2011).

I followed several ethical measures to pursue this study. I secured informed consent from participants through a signed agreement; explained the voluntary nature of the study and its potential risks and benefits; provided information on the accessibility and usage of data; gave the participants the freedom to choose when and where the interviews would be conducted; ensured collaborative partnership; and emphasized the importance of the stories and the purpose of the study.

Comprehensive information about the study, such as the research questions, objectives, and participants' rights to safeguard their rights and privacy study, were provided in the informed consent. I communicated the information about the study to the research participants. I used the Informed Consent Form Template of the UP Open University Institutional Research Ethics Committee (Annex C). Before conducting interviews, I secured informed consent from each participant. They were also assured of their anonymity and confidentiality. These measures were

implemented to protect their privacy. Additionally, this study adhered to the ethical standards of Republic Act 10173, the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which emphasized the protection of individual's personal data and privacy rights.

Additionally, I communicated to the participants that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary, and they were free to decline or withdraw their participation at any time without facing any consequences. Respecting the participants' autonomy is essential, as their insights and experiences are valuable in the research.

Moreover, I assured them that their personal information and data were protected. Personal identifiers were removed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. To protect their identities, primarily since some reside in towns where remaining anonymous could be challenging, the profiles of the former combatants were not extensively detailed. This precaution is essential since the participants have been previously involved in armed conflict. Furthermore, participants may also have access to the transcripts and analysis.

To create a safe and supportive environment where participants could openly share their experiences and journeys, I followed the ethical principles outlined by Mack et al. (2005). These guidelines emphasized (1) respect of persons, where participants were treated with dignity and their autonomy was acknowledged; (2) beneficence, where the well-being of the participants was prioritized to avoid harm or discomfort; and (3) justice, where the participants were treated equally and fairly and giving them the same opportunity to contribute to the study.

By upholding these ethical principles, a respectful and trustworthy environment was established that encouraged participants to openly and honestly share their experiences and journeys.

Moreover, I observed cultural sensitivity concerning the religion, beliefs, and values of the former MILF combatants. It is important to be mindful of the cultural norms and values of the research participants to avoid causing harm or offense. Their narratives were gathered and analyzed in a rigorous and respectful manner.

## Chapter IV

### NARRATIVES OF TRANSFORMATION

This chapter presents the personal stories of five former MILF combatants who have transitioned to organic farming. Each former combatant shared their journey and the challenges they experienced as they started a new life through organic farming. The stories are presented chronologically to highlight how they transitioned from fighting on battlefields to cultivating their farms. These narratives provided an understanding of the communication process, particularly the triggers, motivations, and reflections that shaped their decisions to transform and rebuild new identities as productive and peaceful individuals through organic farming.

#### **Story 1: Former Combatant A's journey towards becoming an organic farmer**

Former Combatant A joined the MILF at the age of 19. After he graduated from high school, he underwent basic commando training. After that training, he was sent to Camp Abubakar in Maguindanao, where he underwent various training for almost seven years. The "all-out war" began when he returned to Lanao del Norte,

His views on life changed when he started a family. He struggled financially to provide the needs of his wife and newborn daughter. One day, he realized that his life as a combatant for the past years did not help him gain skills, especially in supporting a family. This realization was the turning point in his life and became his wake-up call to change his life for the better and find a source of income to support his family.

*"Noong nagkapamilya ako, bigla akong natulala, kasi walang income. 'Di ko alam paano maghanap-buhay kasi ang alam ko lang ang pagdala ng armas ng*

*giyera. ‘Yun ang nakatransform sa akin kung bakit ako umavail sa mga programa.’  
(When I had a family, I was suddenly overwhelmed because there was no income.  
I did not know how to make a living since my experience had been with carrying  
firearms in the war. This realization motivated me to take advantage of the  
programs.)*

His father's advice also had an impact on his transformation. He was told that he had to elevate the education of every generation in their family. His father told him that if he had just finished Grade 5, his child should reach Grade 6, and so on, until someone from their family got into college and became a professional. He dreamed of fulfilling his father's wish, not just to provide a better future for his family but also to help himself transition from a combatant to a civilian with new skills and opportunities.

While adjusting to civilian life with his new family, the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) of Kauswagan visited their barangay to introduce backyard gardening to their community. Initially, the MAO introduced the idea of backyard gardening project and taught them how to prepare the soil, measure out planting spaces, and organize the gardens. The MAO then organized the women and men in the community into groups and assigned areas to garden. A friendly competition was conducted to challenge those who could create cleaner and more productive gardens.

*“So doon, unti-unti, nagkaroon kami ng idea ba. Ito pala ang gagawin. Kasi as a civilian, doon sa bukid, hindi naman lahat ng tao doon is aware sa mga strategies.  
(So there, little by little, we started getting an idea of what to do. Not everyone in the rural area, including civilians, was aware of these strategies.)*

Although the “From Arms to Farms” program had not yet been introduced to them, his experience with backyard gardening ignited his interest in organic farming.

Another significant turning point for him was his first encounter with Mayor Rommel Arnado of Kauswagan. The mayor was initially hesitant to visit the hinterland barangays due to historical tensions between Christian and Muslim communities brought about by the armed conflicts. One day, the mayor attempted to enter a barangay near Former Combatant A's residence. By chance, he was nearby and noticed the mayor standing with police officers, with no residents daring to approach him. Encouraged by a relative, he decided to approach the mayor. Despite not knowing each other, he volunteered to escort the mayor into the barangay he wanted to visit. This interaction then helped establish trust between them. From then on, he became a regular companion of the mayor on his visits to hinterland barangays. Recognizing his willingness to help without payment expectations, the mayor invited him to join the “From Arms to Farms” program. This encounter opened opportunities for him to improve his life and family.

*"Yun nga dahil gusto ko na magka-income, syempre lumalaki na 'yung anak ko. Nong tiningnan ko kung saan ako kukuha ng income, kung 'di ako mag-initiative...nong magkakilala kami ni mayor, doon ko narealize na meron mga opportunities." (Because I wanted to earn an income, of course, my child was growing up. When I considered where I could earn an income if I didn't take the initiative, it was only when I met the mayor that I realized there were opportunities.)*

He also observed that the local government of Kauswagan has a balanced treatment and opportunity for both Maranaos and Christians.

*"Yung nakita namin ang opportunity na balanced, ang treat sa Christian is*

*50% sa Maranao 50%, so doon kami nagkaroon ng idea na pwede pala makavail sa program ni mayor." (We saw the opportunity as balanced because it treated Christians 50% and Maranaos 50%. That's when we realized we could avail ourselves of the mayor's program.)*

Moreover, his trust in the program grew because the mayor's approach differed from the national government's. Instead of mandating them to surrender their firearms before they receive assistance, the mayor prioritized their willingness and commitment over weapons.

*"Actually kaya dumami ang commanders na pumunta kay mayor kasi iba ang diskarte nya, iba ang process nya. Ang process kasi ng national government is i-surrender ang firearms. Pero si mayor, 'di niya need ang firearms eh. Ang sa kanya is willingness at commitment. Wala na yung baril-baril. 'Yung talagang galing mismo sa puso. Doon kami dumami kasi 'di na kailangan ng armas, syempre umavail kami sa programa nya." (Actually, the reason many commanders turned to the mayor is that his approach and process were different. Unlike the national government's requirement to surrender firearms, the mayor did not need firearms. What mattered to him was willingness and commitment. It was all about genuine intention from the heart. That's why those interested in joining the program increased in number because firearms were no longer necessary; so we availed ourselves of his program.)*

The MAO of Kauswagan also provided them with hands-on training about organic farming and made regular visits to monitor their progress. While they were just introduced to backyard gardening at first, he was eager to learn more and volunteered to join a study tour, known as "Lakbay-Aral," in Bukidnon, despite not

being on the original list of participants. The Bukidnon trip exposed him to successful farms and advanced agricultural practices. When he returned home, he applied the lessons he had gained from the exposure trip to his farm he named "Salam Farm." He also started planting fruit-bearing trees like lanzones, rambutan, durian, and cacao and transformed his half-hectare farm into a diverse "5-in-1" farm.

*“So ang nangyari, before kami mag-land sa Bukidnon, pinadaan kami sa area na may malaking farm, na ang tanim doon is puro pechay, grabe kalawak. Doon nabuksan ang isipan ko, sabi ko, doon sa amin maliit, kuko lang’. Doon pumasok kami, in-orient muna kami, kung ano ‘yung mga procedure, ‘yung pag-apak sa mga lupa. Kasi yung napuntahan namin na farm, sila nagsusupply sa Cagayan de Oro City. Nung makita namin, imagine, yung tubig nila hindi nila tinatapon? ‘Yung sa mga isda. Sabi ko sayang nga, [kasi] yung sa bukid, tinatapon lang namin doon, kasi yun nga wala kaming kaalam-alam. Noong makita ko doon, nagkaroon ako ng idea, parang ‘yun ang tumulak sa akin ba na ‘Okay, pagbalik ko gagawin ko ‘to.’ So yun, nagtanim din ako ng mani. Parang lumawak yung kaalaman ba, at least may kaunting naibigay yung paglakbay-aral sa Bukidnon. So yun yung ginagamit namin na tools [bilang] armas namin, yung nakuha namin na knowledge.” (So what happened was, before we landed in Bukidnon, we were taken to an area with a large farm, and all they grew there was pechay, it was incredibly big. That opened my mind; I thought, back home, our pechay in our farms were tiny in comparison. When we entered there, they oriented us first on the procedures, like how to cultivate the soil. The farm we visited supplies pechay in Cagayan de Oro City. When we saw it, imagine, they don't waste their water? The water for their fish, they don't throw it away. It was a waste because, in our fields, we just throw it away since we didn't know any better. When I saw that, I got the idea, and it pushed me. 'Okay, when I*

*get back, I'll do this.' So I planted peanuts as well. My knowledge expanded, at least the educational tour in Bukidnon gave us some knowledge. We used the knowledge we gained as our tools.)*

Following their Lakbay Aral in Bukidnon, they underwent training in Kauswagan at a school specializing in organic farming. He learned about making bokashi and vermicast and using worms to create organic fertilizers. He was inspired by the knowledge he gained at the Lakbay Aral and training, which he immediately applied to his farm. He bought hollow blocks to create a compost pit on their farm, specifically for gathering organic waste like chicken and goat manure and fallen leaves. This pit became the foundation of his new farming practices, as he composted all waste instead of burning it.

*“Pumunta ako sa bukid, bumili ako ng hollow blocks, gumawa ako ng paglalagyan ng mga basura. Kasi ang inintroduce samin, ang mga basura, ‘wag sunugin. Ipon lang doon, iti ng manok, yung dumi ng kanding, iniipon namin kasi kasama yun sa mga nakita namin sa paglakbay-aral. So ang ginagawa namin ngayon, hinuhukay namin yung parang box na basurahan, tapos itong mga nalata namin, kinukuha namin, ayun yung nilalagay namin sa mga kaang, sa mga tray. So nakita namin na maganda yung tubo, nakita namin yung epekto ng organic fertilizer.”*  
*(I went to the farm, bought some hollow blocks, and made a place for the waste. We were taught that we shouldn't burn the waste. We just gather it there, the manure of chicken and goat, we collect them because that's part of what we learned during our study tour. So what we do now is dig a box-like pit for the waste, and then we collect these scraps and put them in the trays. We observed that the plants grew well, and we saw the positive effect of using organic fertilizer.)*

One day, he asked for seeds from MAO for planting. The MAO then gave him three sacks of rice seeds. Initially, the MAO doubted his success as he was new to farming. He was determined and confident that he would be successful in this. He planted the rice, documented the process, and managed to return the borrowed seeds in surplus. This success impressed the MAO and inspired other local farmers.

He was also generous in sharing his knowledge about organic farming with other former combatants. He also visited the thriving farms of his fellow combatants and learned new strategies, such as fishpond techniques and livestock management. During his visits, he acquired plant varieties from his peers to cultivate on his farm.

*“Ayun nagkaroon kami ng series of engagement sa mga ibang commanders. Ang objective namin doon, para makita namin kung ano yung ginamit na strategy, ‘yung fishpond nya anong ginamit. Kumuha pa kami doon ng variety, yung cassava. Nagtanim ako ng falcata, most of my comrades nagtanim din ng falcata. Nagtanim ako ng durian, nangopya din sila nag tanim din sila ng durian.” (We had a series of engagements with other commanders. Our objective was to see what strategy was used, like what they used for their fishpond. We also took a variety of cassava from there. I planted falcata, and most of my comrades also planted falcata. I planted durian, and they copied me and planted durian as well.)*

He also faced several challenges during his transition to organic farming. However, despite facing skepticism and discouragement from those around him, he was determined to pursue farming as he saw it as a great opportunity to support his family and improve their life.

*“Actually, mayroon din mga discourage na dumating sabi nila na ‘Bakit ka naniwala jan. Hala baka traydorin ka, pakainin ka ng lason’. Sabi ko iisa naman ang objectives namin. Ako di na ako natakot sa rumors na yan. Sabi ko gagamble na ako dito kasi this is my opportunity. ‘Pag nakalapas na ito wala na akong mapupuntahan. Kasi no’ng time na ‘yun kumbaga, nasa oras ako na no need to return. Gusto ko na magmove-forward. Kasi ‘pag bumalik pa ako, yung edad ko medyo mataas na. Ang ginawa ko move forward nalang wala na sa akin yung takot-takot.” (Some discouragements were saying, ‘Why do you believe in this? They might betray you or poison you.’ I responded that our objectives were the same. I stopped fearing those rumors and decided to take the risk because this was my opportunity. Once this is over, I won’t have other options. At that time, I felt it was crucial to move forward because returning in armed conflict wasn’t an option due to my age. So, I chose to move forward and set aside my fears.)*

At that time, he remained active in the MILF and had not yet been cleared. This restricted his ability to move around freely, unlike other former combatants who had already received clearance from the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Initially, he was hesitant and cautious about moving freely. He would visit the town secretly because he feared potential encounters with authorities. For instance, he would even advise his group to retreat if they saw police, though they were not actually at risk of arrest. He was cautious because of his experiences as a combatant and since the peace agreement at that time between MILF and the government had yet to be finalized. However, the local government implemented confidence-building measures to assure them that they are safe from harm. Trust and confidence were built among former MILF combatants and the local government.

*"Eh kami nga, 50-50 yung safety namin, pero sumugal kami kasi wala na kaming option eh. Ako kung di ako sumugal wala akong registered Social Worker na anak ngayon. So nagkaroon ng confidence-building mission. (We were actually 50-50 [uncertain] about our safety, but we took the risk because we had no other option. If I hadn't taken that risk, I wouldn't have a registered Social Worker child now. So, we had a confidence-building mission.)"*

He also shared that he did not finish his formal education due to various struggles, but the Alternative Learning System of the program helped him and other former combatants to continue their education and improve their communication skills.

Whenever he visited the MAO in Kauswagan, he felt prioritized and welcomed. The local officials, including the mayor, were proactive in assisting them by facilitating access to necessary resources like seeds and equipment.

*"Nakikita namin parang binibigyan kami ng priority, 'O sige tuloy kayo, tuloy kayo'. So sila pa yung nag-oopen, 'ano ba yung gusto nyo?'. Actually yun ang nakapag-push. Kasi parang 'totoo ito, totoo ito, hindi ito parang plastikan'. Totoong tutulong sila. Tapos 'pag pumunta kami diyan sa MAO, 'pwede ba kaming makahingi ng seeds?', automatic yan, binubuksan nila yung ano nila." (We see that we are being given priority, 'Alright, you are welcome here.' They are the ones who open up, 'What do you need?' Actually, that's what pushed us. Because it felt like 'this is real, this is real, it's not fake.' They truly help us. Then, when we go to the MAO and ask, 'Can we get some seeds?', it's automatic, they open up their resources.)"*

He also shared that the mayor personally provided him with a carabao and a cow to support his farming efforts, as no tractors were available then. He, in turn,

gave the cow to his fellow combatants as he wanted them to thrive like him. This generosity and mutual trust among them helped others to have their own farms.

Moreover, they remained focused on planting crops without worrying about how to sell their harvests because the local government in Kauswagan buys and sells them at a post-harvest facility called the Organic Trading Post.

*“Actually, iyan ang unique sa Kauswagan. Kasi, ito ngayon ang failure ng mga farming, pina-farm ka nga dyan, marami ka ngang naharvest na let’s say kamatis, e saan mo naman idedeliver? E syempre ang tiga-bukid, ‘di naman yan expert sa market. Ito naman si MAO, pagpinatanim ka, nagpa-promise sila na, ito kasi sila meron silang post harvest facility, yung tinatawag nating food terminal. Diyan namin binabagsak, mga saging, kung ano pa yan.” (Actually, that’s what makes Kauswagan unique. The common failure in farming is that even if you are encouraged to farm and you harvest a lot, like tomatoes, where do you deliver them? Farmers in the mountains aren’t experts in marketing. However, in Kauswagan, the MAO promises that when you plant, they have a post-harvest facility. We call it the food terminal. That’s where we deliver our produce, like bananas, and whatever else we harvest.)*

Moreover, the communication between them and the MAO has improved. The MAO closely monitored their journey in organic farming to ensure that their concerns would be addressed immediately. He also appreciated the practical and real-time communication that the online group chat provides. The group chat helped them stay updated and engaged in the progress of the program and other activities in Kauswagan town.

*“Dahil sa medyo na-upgrade ang mga knowledge namin nagkaroon pa kami ng group chat. May GC kami '[From] Arms to Farms'. So madali lang kami i-*

*communicate.” (Because our knowledge was somewhat upgraded, a group chat has been created. We have a GC called '[From] Arms to Farms.' So it became easy to communicate with us.)*

Adopting organic farming practices helped improve his source of living as it boosted his profit. Before he transitioned to organic farming practices, his coconut harvests were minimal. However, he harvested more than before when he started using organic fertilizers. With this, he observed that using organic fertilizer was better than expensive chemical fertilizer.

*“Kasi nakita namin doon sa mga niyog. Kasi dati ang mga niyog ko, with my wife, hindi ganon kalaki ang harvest namin. Kasi nag-undergrafting kami e, let’s say “ito yung distance ng niyog, nagtanim kami dito sa gitna”, so ang ginamit namin organic, nakita namin yung mga puno ng niyog, nakapag-benefit doon sa inilagay namin. So lumaki yun. Kasi before pa, ang nakukuha namin parang di umaabot ng thousands, so ngayon parang tumaas yung figure. Napansin namin, may makukuha pala dito sa kuwan [organic farming]. So ‘yon di na kami gumagamit ng 16-20, 14-14 [chemical fertilizers], kasi mahal eh. Php2000 plus ang bags, e di doon na lang kami sa mas mura. Actually, kasi ako naghaharvest ng niyog, naghaharvest ng abaka, ng durian, kahit di malaki basta may pambili ng bigas, may pangaraw-araw doon sa mga baon ng mga bata.” (Because we saw it in our coconut trees. Before, my wife and I didn't get a large harvest. We did under grafting, for example, “this is the distance of the coconut trees, we planted in between,” and we used organic methods. We saw that the coconut trees benefited from what we applied. So, they grew. Before, we would get a yield that didn't reach thousands, but now the figure has increased. We realized that organic farming has its benefits. So, we no longer use 16-20, 14-14 [chemical fertilizers], because it's expensive. It costs over*

*PhP2000.00 per bag, so we switched to something cheaper. Actually, I harvest coconuts, abaca, and durian; even if the yield isn't huge, we still have enough to buy rice and for our daily needs and the kids' necessities for their school.)*

He also shared that her children became professionals with the opportunities that the “From Arms to Farms” program provided.

*“So ako, hindi sa pagmamayabang, nagkaroon din ako ng mga propesyonal [na mga anak]. Kahit ako hindi ako propesyonal, meron akong propesyonal, after nabigyan kami ni Mayor Arnado ng opportunity. Kasi sa umpisa kasi, tinulungan kami ni mayor. [May] dalawa na akong propesyonal, may coming [graduating] pa ako na pulis. Yung isang elder registered Social Work [Worker]. Imagine? Doon yan nanggaling sa tulong ni mayor, kaya pumasok na kami sa “[From] Arms to Farms”, lumaki na [ang group].” (So, not to boast, I also have professional children. Even though I'm not a professional, I have children who became professionals after Mayor Arnado gave us an opportunity. Since the beginning, the mayor has helped us. I already have two professionals, and I have one more coming who is about to graduate as a police officer. My eldest is a registered social worker. Imagine that? This all came from the mayor's help, and that's why we joined the “From Arms to Farms” program which has grown.)*

Moreover, planting falcata trees helped him support the education of his children. He planted these trees as his child grew. Years later, the trees had already grown when his child pursued engineering studies. They harvested these trees and sold them. He also mentioned that he is saving up for his other child, whom he hopes will become a doctor. He reminisced that he used to collect only PhP100.00 bills, but now he collects PhP1,000.00 bills.

As he embraced organic farming practices, he collected various materials like vermicast, coconut dust, and rice husks instead of burning agricultural waste. He learned to repurpose these wastes into organic fertilizer instead of throwing or burning them away. On his farm, he has a cement box where he stores plant residues, such as jackfruit leaves, instead of burning them. According to him, using organic fertilizer has improved soil quality and avoided the harmful effects of chemicals.

He became a role model in their community as he inspired them with his success in organic farming. After he planted falcata and durian trees, his fellow combatants followed him and started planting the same. His journey inspired others and encouraged them to adopt similar farming practices.

*“Ngayon sa [redacted], most especially sa barangay namin, nong nagtanim ako, parang ako yung tinitingnan ba, para akong naging model, [parang] idol. So marami nang nagtanim.” (Now in [redacted], especially in our barangay, when I started planting, it seemed like people looked up to me, as if I became a role model or an idol. So, many have started planting.)*

He now lives his life with his motto: "We build people who will build the nation." With his transformed life, he became instrumental in bridging the gap between the MILF and the national government as he is actively involved in transforming an MILF camp into a peaceful and productive community. Moreover, he oversees various projects and engages with international partners from the European Union, Australia, and Canada.

## **Story 2: Former Combatant B's journey towards becoming an organic farmer**

Former Combatant B first joined the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the 1970s before he transitioned to the MILF. However, the devastating impact of the conflict on his family eventually led him to change his path.

With the armed conflict, his family and relatives lived in the evacuation centers for almost a year. He was motivated to reevaluate his life after witnessing how his family struggled and cried for help with their situation. His family's hardships during the armed conflict pushed him to find a stable income and transform his life. This realization became a turning point for him as he hoped to give them a new and better life.

One day, Colonel Barandon, battalion commander of the 15th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army, visited him. Col. Barandon then invited him to meet Mayor Rommel Arnado of Kauswagan and introduced him to key officials from the Department of Agriculture.

*"Pinuntahan ako ni Col. Barandon, battalion commander sa 15th Infantry Battalion ng Philippine Army. Wala kaming kinabukasan. Wala kaming kaalam-alam kung ano pambuhay namin. Dinala ako ni Col. Barandon kay Mayor Rommel Arnado, mayor sa Kauswagan. Tapos nandoon din si Director sa ATI, si Dir. Saliot at Dr. Quirog sa Agriculture. So, nag-usap sila kay Mayor Rommel para matulungan ang mga MILF, mga commander sa MILF." (Col. Barandon, battalion commander of the 15th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army, approached me. We had no future. We had no idea how we could make a living. Col. Barandon brought me to Mayor Rommel Arnado, the mayor of Kauswagan. Then the Director of ATI, Dir. Saliot, and*

*Dr. Quirog from Agriculture were there. So they talked to Mayor Rommel to help the MILF, the commanders in the MILF.)*

He shared that they did not know about farming. The Agriculture team then organized a study tour or Lakbay-aral to Bukidnon. During their trip, they learned various farming practices in the area. After the study tour, they underwent hands-on training on organic farming techniques. The six-month training session was held at the Doña Laureana High School in Kauswagan. They learned to cultivate various crops such as upland rice, lowland rice, and corn.

*“Ayun nga, pinatayo ni Mayor Arnado ang “[From] Arms to Farms”.*  
*Pagkatapos tinuruan nila yung kuwan, paggawa ng timpla, mga timpla na walang kemikal, organic. Hanggang ngayon nagkaka-tanim kami, ang gagamitin namin na timpla [ay] organic. Hindi kami gumagamit ng timpla na may kemikal. Hanggang ngayon organic lang ang ginagamit namin. (So, Mayor Arnado established the “[From] Arms to Farms” program. After that, they taught us how to make mixtures, mixtures without chemicals, organic mixtures. Up until now, we are still farming, and the mixtures we use are organic. We don't use any chemical mixtures. Even now, we only use organic mixtures.)*

After completing their hands-on training, Former Combatant B and his fellow former combatants applied their newfound skills and knowledge in their established farms. They started growing vegetables and rice and even managed fish ponds and poultry. Looking back, he realized that the war defined his life since the 1970s. For decades, he lived through conflict until 2008, which left him clueless about making a living or providing for his family.

*“Nong una, mula sa 1976, wala kaming kaalam-alam sa farming. Doon kami lumaki sa paggyera, sa time ng Martial Law, sa time ni Marcos, doon kami nagsimula. Gyera! Gyera! Hanggang sa 2008, nag-gyera, pagkatapos wala kaming kaalam-alam ano nang pambuhay sa pamilya. So, yun nga, first time, nahirapan kami sa pag-aral sa organic, kapag tumagal, di na mahirap. Madaling gawin yung organic. Lahat na doon sa lugar na yung paggawa ng organic.” (At first, since 1976, we did not know about farming. We grew up during the war, during the time of Martial Law, and during Marcos' time, that's where we started. War! War! Until 2008, there was war, and after that, we didn't know how to provide for our families. So, at first, we struggled to learn about organic farming, but as time went on, it wasn't difficult. Doing organic farming became easy. Everyone in the area was doing organic farming.)*

He recalled how the initial support, such as hand tractors, carabaos, and cows, helped them start their farming activities. However, these were damaged by Typhoon Vinta in 2017. But this did not stop them from continuing organic farming. The local government of Kauswagan continued to provide them with support, which helped them recover and continue their farming endeavors.

*"Nung una, binigyan ako ng mga hand tractor, mga kalabaw at saka baka, dumaaan ang bagyong Vinta, nako, naanod naman, lahat naanod. So ngayon, basta magtanim kami, kung rice, makahiram kami ng parmor dito sa LGU sa Kauswagan." (At first, I was given hand tractors, carabaos, and cows. Then Typhoon Vinta came, and everything was washed away. So now, whenever we plant, if it's rice, we can borrow farming equipment from the LGU in Kauswagan.)*

Moreover, he shared that the local government regularly monitored them and addressed their problems in their organic farming journey. The local government consistently visited them and conducted training sessions at their farms.

*“Salamat, kay lagi kaming binibisita sa aming mga farm, sa aming mga lugar. Hanggang ngayon, tuwang-tuwa kami dahil yung mga tiga-LGU Kauswagan, binibisita kami nila sa aming mga farm. Kahit anong mga problema namin sa aming mga farm, farming, tumutulong sila.” (Thank you, because they always visit us in our farms, in our areas. Until now, we are very happy because the people from the LGU of Kauswagan still visit us in our farms. Whatever problems we have with our farms and farming, they help us.)*

He also appreciated how the local authorities, particularly the mayor of Kauswagan, were responsive to their needs and problems. They felt the presence of the local government in times of challenge.

*“Kung anong problema namin, reresolbahin niya [Mayor of Kauswagan]. Kahit anong mga problema namin sa aming mga farm, farming, tumutulong sila.” (Whatever problems we have, he [Mayor of Kauswagan] resolves them. Whatever issues we have with our farms and farming, they help us.)*

He also shared how adopting organic farming practices changed their lives. Previously, his family had to go to the market to buy their food. It was challenging for them since the market was far from their home. But since they could grow their own food at their farm, they no longer have to worry about their daily consumption.

*“Nong una, problema kami pumunta sa market, mag-bili ng pang gamit (pagkain) sa bahay, pero ngayon naman, wala na kami problema pumunta sa*

*market, doon na sa aming farm. Kumpleto na. Wala kaming problema, dahil tinuruan kami sa pagtatanim ng kahit anong, pagtanim ng durian, abaca, falcata, upland rice, lowland rice at saka mais, mga garden. Wala kaming problema sa pagpunta sa market, mga pagbili ng para sa pamilya. So, salamat. Doon namin nakikita kay [Mayor] Rommel Arnado, ang kita [paraan] namin sa kabuhayan, [upang] mabuhay ang mga pamilya namin.” (Initially, we had problems going to the market to buy household needs (food), but now, we don't have any problems going to the market because we have everything on our farm. We have no issues because we were taught to plant anything, like durian, abaca, falcata, upland rice, lowland rice, and corn, and we have gardens. We don't have any problems going to the market to buy things for our family. So, thank you to [Mayor] Rommel Arnado, we found our source of livelihood to support our families.)*

He also shared that adopting organic farming practices was beneficial for them as they did not need to spend so much. He said that chemical fertilizers are expensive, costing around PhP2,000.00. On the other hand, organic farming does not require such expenses.

*"Talagang malaking naitutulong ng organic. Kaya yung makakabili ka ng timpla sa farm, talagang mahal, pinaka menos (maliit) mga dos mil (PhP 2,000.00). Yung organic, wala kang gastos sa organic. Wala kang iaabono sa mga tanim mo. Talagang nakaa-ano [nakatutulong] ang organic." (Organic farming is really a big help. Buying chemical mixtures for the farm is very expensive, costing at least PhP 2,000.00. With organic farming, there are no expenses. You don't need to buy fertilizers for your crops. Organic farming is truly beneficial.)*

He believed that organic farming offers more benefits. When he learned about the harmful effects of using chemical fertilizer, he stopped using it. He preferred to use organic fertilizers than chemical fertilizers that can cause illness.

*“Tinigilan na namin yung mga timpla na may kemikal, kay makakakuha ka ng mga sakit. ‘Yung organic, walang kemikal. Magpasalamat po ako, kaya yung mga pamilya ko nabubuhay sa organic. Wala silang nakakaing kemikal. Yung mga tao namin, puro sila marunong maggawa ng timpla na organic.” (We stopped using chemical mixtures because they can cause illness. Organic fertilizer has no chemicals. I’m thankful that my family now lives on organic produce. They don’t consume any chemicals. Our people have all learned how to make organic mixtures.)*

He also shared how organic farming enhanced their family life. In the past, as combatants, they struggled to send their children to school due to financial constraints. However, with his engagement with organic farming, he was able to support his children’s education, and they have now become professionals. For him, being part of the “From Arms to Farm” program has transformed their lives as it provided him with a stable income and supported his children’s professional development.

*“Yung mga anak ko, nakapag-eskwela sila, nakatapos sila sa pag-eskwela. Yung isa nars, yung isa maestra yung isa criminology, nag-PRC sila dahil sa tulong ni Mayor Arnado. Kung hindi kami, kuwan [natulungan] ni [Mayor] Arnado, ‘yung mga anak ko, wala silang pinag-aralan. So, salamat sa tulong ni [Mayor] Arnado, yung mga anak ko puro propesyonal dahil sa tulong ni [Mayor] Arnado, dahil sa “[From] Arms to Farms”, miyembro ako ng “[From] Arms to Farms”. (My children were able to*

*go to school and finish their education. One became a nurse, a teacher, and another in criminology, and they passed the Professional Regulation Commission exams thanks to Mayor Arnado. If it weren't for Mayor Arnado's help, my children wouldn't have been educated. So, I'm grateful for Mayor Arnado's help; my children are all professionals because of Mayor Arnado's help and because I am a member of "[From] Arms to Farms".)*

He recounted how the program started small. Over time, as people saw their transformation, more former combatants were inspired to join the program. He said that even those still in the mountains began to join the program as they saw the truth behind the promises that have provided a genuine and impactful livelihood.

*"So ayun nga, mga kasama natin, mga kapatid natin na di pa sumali sa "[From] Arms to Farms", kitang kita nila, ang tabang ng LGU [ng] Kauswagan. Yun nga, kaunti-unti, sumasali sila dahil kita nila ang kalagayan namin. Palagi kaming binibisita ng LGU ng Kauswagan, anong problema namin, nireresolba ng LGU. Kitang-kita nila, yung mga gaya namin, kita nila nabubuhay kami, yung mga anak namin napagtatapos namin sa pag-aaral." (So, our companions, our brothers who have not yet joined the "From Arms to Farms" program, clearly saw the support from the LGU of Kauswagan. Gradually, they joined the program because they saw our progress. The LGU of Kauswagan regularly visits us, addressing any problems we have. They can see that people like us are now able to live better, and our children have completed their education).*

He also emphasized his deep connection to his farm. He passionately visited their crops every day to ensure their well-being.

*“Araw-araw doon kami sa tanim namin, titignan namin kung may mga peste ba na [nakasira]. Palagi kami don sa tanim namin, tinitingan namin kung may peste ba, love na love namin ang farm namin. Doon ang buhay namin.” (Everyday, we visit our crops, checking if there are pests [causing damage]. We are always there on our farm, looking to see if there are pests. We love our farm. That's where our life is.)*

For him, organic farming has become a way of life for his family, and the farm has become their sanctuary and livelihood.

### **Story 3: Former Combatant C’s journey towards becoming an organic farmer**

Former Combatant C already had a family before he joined the MILF. His views on life changed after reflecting that he did not want his children to experience not completing education like him, who only finished sixth grade. His eight children became his inspiration to transform his life.

*“Kinumpara ko ang kabuhayan ko sa kabuhayan ng kapatid ko na nakapagtapos ng pag-aaral parang iba. (I compared my livelihood to that of my sibling who completed their education, and it seemed very different.)*

This realization became his wake-up call. He decided to return to the folds of the law and aspired for a better future for his family. As a former combatant, he surrendered his firearms to the national government but did not receive the promised compensation. He was frustrated when the government did not fulfill its promise. With this, he considered returning to rebellion. Fortunately, a former MNLF combatant learned about his situation and talked to Kauswagan Mayor Arnado. He then introduced him to the mayor. His opportunity to speak to the mayor renewed his hope for a new life.

*"Iyon, nalaman ni [former MNLF combatant], kinausap nya si Mayor Arnado na 'kung maaari tulungan natin yung mga rebel returnees [kasi] baka bumalik sila sa ano [pagrerebelde] [at] gumawa sila ng hindi magagandang gagawin'. So kinausap nila kami, sinabi ni mayor na 'tutulungan ka namin, bibigyan ka ng kung ano-ano, yung mga kalabaw, baka, tractor', pumayag din ako. Nagpapasalamat ako sa kanila, kung iyan ang gagawin ninyo, talagang sasama ako sa inyo nang lubos." (Then, [former MNLF combatant] found out, and he talked to Mayor Arnado, and asked if they could help the rebel returnees because they might return to rebellion and do bad things. So they talked to us, and the mayor said, 'We will help you, we will give you various support, like carabaos, cows, tractors,' and I agreed. I am grateful to them, if that's what you will do, I will fully join you.)*

The MAO of Kauswagan and the Philippine Army then approached him and introduced the "From Arms to Farms" program and the principles of organic farming. From then on, he was able to observe how the program was implemented. Despite his initial skepticism, he was impressed by the program's potential to help him have a stable income and decided to commit fully. He also appreciated how the program fulfilled its promises by giving them tractors, livestock, and other resources. He compared this to his previous experiences where promises were unfulfilled.

*"Marami ang promise nila dito sa "From Arms to Farms". Natupad talaga. Importante yung promise na natupad. Sabi ni mayor, tulad na magkuan kami ng negosyo sa kopra. Yung mga anak namin ikuwan nila sa scholarship. Sabi ko 'napakaganda naman yan kasi ang problema ko yung gasto sa mga anak ko'. Natupad talaga. Importante ang trust." (They made many promises here in the "From Arms to Farms" program. They fulfilled them. The promises must be fulfilled. The mayor said that we would also have a livelihood in copra [dried kernel of the coconut]*

*and that our children would be given scholarships. I said ‘that’s really great because my problem was the expenses for my children’. They really fulfilled their promises. Trust is important.)*

He joined the program to start a new life and show his children he was doing something good.

*“Sumali ako sa program para makita ng mga anak ko na hindi na ako gumagawa ng masama. Para makita nila na dito ako sa “From Arms to Farms”, na maganda ang ginagawa ko. Yan ang ginagawa ko ngayon, kabaitan naman para yun din ang gawin ng mga anak ko.”(I joined the program so my children could see that I am no longer doing wrong things. I want them to know that I am here in the “From Arms to Farms” program, doing something good. This is what I am doing now, to be a good example so that my children will not follow my path before.)*

He participated in a study tour or Lakbay Aral in Bukidnon as part of the program. He was also impressed with the Philippine Army's commitment to ensure their safety during their trip.

*“Si Col. Barandon nameet ko yung military. Kapag sinabi nya tutuparin nya. Di tulad ng ibang nameet ko na hanggang salita lang. Tulad ng pag sali ko sa “From Arms to Farms”, nagpunta kami ng Bukidnon, sinama ni Col. Barandon yung deputy nya sa kampo para may proteksyon kami kasi 7 days mission namin, may gwardya kami na sundalo.” (I met Col. Barandon, a military officer, and when he says something, he delivers on his promises. Unlike others I have met, who only make empty promises, Col. Barandon is different. For example, during my participation in the “From Arms to Farms” program, we went to Bukidnon, and Col. Barandon*

*brought his deputy [commander] with us for protection. They guarded us for our security throughout our 7-day activity.)*

Moreover, he was happy to learn about the different farming practices at the study tour. When he returned to Kauswagan, he learned various organic farming techniques and their benefits through hands-on training. They also participated in activities like plowing, collecting waste materials, and making organic fertilizers.

*"Dati marunong din ako magfarmer [farming], pero hindi ako marunong ng mga technique kung paano ang mga kuwan. So nadevelop ang kaalaman ko na maganda pala ang pagpafarming. Hindi pala paghahawak ng arm [armas] ang maganda. Mas maganda pala yung pagpafarming." (I used to know how to farm, but I wasn't familiar with the techniques and methods. Over time, I developed an understanding that farming is actually a good thing. I realized that holding firearms is not as good as farming. Farming is much better.)*

He said they can seek help from the MAO in Kauswagan whenever they have problems at their farm. Additionally, selling their produce had been convenient for them as the local government buys and sells their harvest at the Organic Trading Post.

*"Kung ano ang problema namin, sa mga kanding namin, 'pag magtatae ba yung kanding namin, pwede kaming pumunta dito sa MAO, hingi kami ng tulong. Tutulungan nila kami. At saka kung may maharvest ka dadalhin mo dito sa Kauswagan, sila ang bibili." (When we have a problem, like if our goats have diarrhea, we can go to the MAO and ask for help. They will assist us. Also, if we have a harvest, we can bring it here to Kauswagan, and they will buy it.)*

For him, joining the “From Arms to Farms” program helped him understand and appreciate the advantages of organic farming.

*“Yung fertilizer na kemikal, napakamahal. ‘Yung magtanim ka, kailangan makakuha ka ng malaking kapital. Kung ma-failure ka, madaanan ng bagyo, malaki ang mawawala sayo. Sa organic farming, ikaw yung maggawa ng [pataba], kung sakaling madaanan ng bagyo, hindi malulugi yung sa iyo. ‘Pag matagal ang pagfarming mo ng organic, lalong tumataba ang lupa. Sa hindi organic, habang tumatagal parang masisira ang lupa.” (Chemical fertilizers are very expensive. When you plant, you need a large capital. If you experience a failure, such as a storm hitting your crops, you could lose a lot. In organic farming, you produce your own fertilizer, so even if a storm occurs, you won’t lose much. Over time, organic farming improves the soil, whereas with non-organic methods, the soil tends to degrade.)*

Moreover, he believed that organic farming offers health benefits as it avoids chemical use, which can cause health problems.

*“Napakaganda talaga ng organic farming kasi di ka makakakain ng kemikal. Maraming makukuha sa kemikal na sakit. Sa organic, walang makukuhang ano, healthy yung hinaharvest mo.” (Organic farming is truly wonderful because you don’t consume chemicals. Chemicals can lead to various health problems. In organic farming, there are no such issues; the harvests are healthy.)*

The program provided educational scholarships to his children. This support helped his children pursue their education and become professionals.

*“Yung unang anak ko, iskolar yan, sponsor dito Kauswagan, nakatapos na. Yung isa naman nakatapos na dito sa MSU, maestra, hindi pa nakakuha ng trabaho*

*kasi mag attend pa sya ng review. Dalawa ‘yung napagtapos ko, may college ako ngayon, may dalawang high school, may tatlong elementary.” (My first child is a scholar, sponsored here in Kauswagan, already graduated. Another one who graduated from Mindanao State University, is a teacher but hasn't found a job yet because she still has to attend a review. I have two who have graduated, one in college now, two in high school, and three in elementary.)*

His children’s educational success was a testament to his commitment to providing his children with opportunities he never had.

#### **Story 4: Former Combatant D’s journey towards becoming an organic farmer**

Former Combatant D grew up amidst conflict. His father was part of the MNLF and later became a commander in the MILF in Lanao del Norte. He started his journey with the MILF at an early age. He was able to pursue education in a neighboring city and graduated from elementary school. The war broke out in 2000 when he was about to graduate high school. He returned home to get money for his graduation and did not expect this to happen. Instead of wearing a toga for his graduation ceremony, he wore a different outfit, the uniform of the MILF. Instead of walking the stage at his graduation, he was on the battlefield with a firearm. He missed his milestone as his school became an evacuation center for the displaced families of the armed conflict.

*“Pag-uwi ko, may gyera na. Di ako makadaan. Ayaw ko ng gyera eh, gusto ko umuwi ng [redacted] para maggraduate at makita mga kaklase ko. Pero andon ako sa field with my gun. Tapos sabi ko sana matapos na ang gyera para makapag-[redacted] na ako.” (When I went home, there was already a war. I couldn’t get through. I don’t want war. I wanted to go back to [redacted] to graduate and see my*

*classmates. But I was out in the field with my gun. Then I hope the war ends soon so I can go back to [redacted]."*

However, he remained determined to pursue his education despite his struggles. He enrolled in a state university to pursue college but was interrupted by the armed conflict in 2003. Balancing his life became difficult, so he transferred to a private school and pursued another course. After earning his college degree, he entered local politics in 2007. When another conflict broke out in 2008, he returned to being part of MILF. However, he stopped carrying weapons this time and chose to evacuate with his family instead. His desire for a peaceful life and love for his family pushed him to leave his life as a combatant. He dreamed of living a harmonious and normal life with his family. He would also gladly be involved in peace negotiations with the government at that time as he desired a peaceful life. His previous experiences shaped this mindset as he spent most of his years surrounded by Christians, his classmates from grade school up to college.

His turning point came years later when his peer, also a former combatant, introduced him to the "From Arms to Farms" program.

*"Sinabihan ako ni brother [redacted] na 'Sumama ka sakin pumunta kay mayor. Join ka ng "From Arms to Farms" kasi marami kang makuha na idea na how to use our land, magtanim.' Sabi ko 'ok naman. Napakaganda nito, baka ito ang daan, mashare natin ang problema natin, pangangailangan natin'. Kasi sabi nila more on agriculture ang ano ni mayor." (Brother [redacted] told me, 'Come with me to see the mayor. Join the "From Arms to Farms" program because you'll gain a lot of ideas on how to use our land and how to plant.' I said, 'this is okay. This is really*

*great, maybe this is the way for us to share our problems and needs'. Because they said the mayor is more focused on agriculture.)*

At first, he was hesitant to join the program. But when he realized that organic farming had the potential to be his source of income, he decided to join the program. He believed that this was a great opportunity for him to start a new life. He realized that weapons, unlike farming tools, yield nothing. This realization was the starting point of his transformation, where he shifted his mindset from conflict to farming.

*"Para sa akin, ang baril walang tinutubo 'di tulad na kung mag-daro ka, pwede kang mag-ani jan. 'Yung armas, wala namang ibibigay sayo. 'Yun ang nasa isip ko. Ang pag-aarmas, itransform natin into farming. Itong ginagawa na camp, itransform din natin into farmland. (For me, I see the gun as something that doesn't yield anything, unlike a plow, which allows you to harvest something. A firearm won't give you anything. That's what I thought. Let's transform weapons into farming tools. Let's also turn this camp into farmland.)*

He was motivated to pursue organic farming with the support of his fellow former combatants. With his dream to provide a better life for his family, he was determined to transform his life. He then had the opportunity to join the study tour or Lakbay Aral in Bukidnon with other former combatants. This exposure trip opened his eyes to the benefits and opportunities of organic farming. He then applied what he learned to his farm. For him, transforming their land would help them overcome their past experiences and struggles. Before joining the "From Arms to Farms" program, he was afraid of encountering men in uniform, but with the confidence-building measures of the local government, he experienced what true social life meant. He also appreciated the hands-on approach of the training provided by the

MAO of Kauswagan, which gave them the necessary skills to transform their land into productive farmland.

*“Di lang salita, aktwal talaga. ‘Ah ganito pala yung ginagawa nila na vermicast?’ Kasi iba talaga yung nakikita mo sa tinuruan ka talaga na ‘ito’ yung gawin mo. Mag-germinate ka ng seeds, after one week itanim mo.” (It wasn't just talk, it was actual practice. ‘Oh, so this is how they do vermicomposting?’ Because it's different when you actually see and are taught to do it. You germinate the seeds, and after one week, you plant them.)*

He also visited the farms of his fellow former combatants to gain new ideas about organic farming practices and techniques. These visits helped him appreciate and understand organic farming more. Seeing how his peers successfully cultivated their land also inspired him.

Moreover, through the training and exposure trips, he learned the benefits of organic farming, especially regarding health and the environment. During their training, it was explained to them that organic farming avoids using chemicals, which can harm both health and the environment. He also learned that chemical fertilizers can damage the soil over time.

*"Ang lupa, ‘pag sinanay mo sa mga binibili nating fertilizer, at the end of the day pwedeng masira ang lupa mo. So inintroduce sa’min yung organic fertilizer. ‘Yung mga vermicast, tsaka yung kung ano-anong pinaghalo na ano. Ayun yung nagpalago sa mga tanim. Nakaless din ng gastos. Biruin mo ngayon magkano lang ang abono.” (If you keep using chemical fertilizers on your soil, it can eventually damage the soil. So, we were introduced to organic fertilizers, like vermicast and*

*various natural mixed solutions. This helped our plants grow and also reduced our costs. Just imagine we only spend less on organic fertilizer.)*

His conversations with fellow former combatants and direct communication with the mayor motivated him to fully commit to the organic farming program. Learning proper organic farming techniques from the MAO pushed him to pursue his transformation. He felt valued as the local government listened to their concerns and addressed their problems. The local government also made them part of community development as they meet every Sunday to discuss peace and order concerns. During this time, they can raise concerns or problems about their farms.

*"Nakikinig din sila sa amin. Ako, so far, kung may kailangan, ako, may kailangan sa fish pond, ang sabi ko kay mayor, 'mayor, baka matulungan mo ako na mailakad sa Agriculture itong fish pond ko na hindi talaga kaya ang pagfi-feeds sa mga isda.'" (They also listen to us. So far, if I need something for my fish pond, I tell the mayor, 'mayor, can you help me coordinate with Agriculture [Office] because I can't really afford the feed for the fish.)*

Like other former combatants, he also faced challenges during his transformation journey. He received discouragement from his community, who warned him that they were just being used for politics. However, this did not distract him as he was determined to transform his life. For him, they cannot be used for any political agenda since they do not live in Kauswagan.

His life also thrived like his farm. He gained a stable income from selling vegetables weekly, such as ampalaya, okra, and native chili. They were also assured about marketing their produce since the local government purchases their harvest directly and sells them at the Organic Trading Post. This approach ensured

that they gained profit from their produce as they no longer needed to transport or sell their crops to other towns.

*"At saka meron ding market kasi yung tinanim namin 'yung talagang pangangailangan ng mga tao. Di mo na kailangan pumunta ng Iligan para ibagsak yung ano [produkto] mo. Yun ang naging benefit namin sa "From Arms to Farms" program." (And also, there is a market for what we planted because we grew crops that people really need. You don't have to go to Iligan to sell your products. That's the benefit we got from the "From Arms to Farms" program.)*

He became fully dedicated to organic farming and aspired to expand his land to cultivate more crops. He hopes that more people in his community will embrace farming like him. Since their home is near the highway, people passing by would easily see their crops. He hoped that making their farming efforts visible to the public would spark curiosity and interest in others. He is also willing to share his knowledge and experiences about organic farming to teach and motivate others in the community to start farming.

### **Story 5: Former Combatant E's journey towards becoming an organic farmer**

Former Combatant E joined the MNLF when he was 20. He shifted to the MILF at around 44 or 50. As he got older, he realized that his life was focused solely on armed conflict, where he was not able to pursue education. This became his wake-up call to transform his life. With this reflection, he did not want his children to be like him. He then decided to return to the folds of the law and start a new life. Determined to give his children a better future, he looked for opportunities and transitioned to civilian life.

He had the opportunity to meet the key officials from LGU of Kauswagan and the Agricultural Training Institute when the spouse of their MAO in their town invited him to join a meeting.

*“Sabi nya sa akin na ‘Commander, si Director ng ATI national, at Director sa Region 10 sa ATI, meron silang meeting kay Mayor Arnado sa Kauswagan, pwede ka bang sumama sa akin?’, sabi ko naman: ‘Maraming salamat na kayo’y magtuturo sa akin ng maganda.’ (Commander, the Director of ATI National and the Director of ATI Region 10 are having a meeting with Mayor Arnado in Kauswagan. Can you come with me?” I replied, “Thank you very much for the opportunity to learn from.)*

During the meeting, he quietly stood on the sidelines. The agriculture officials and Mayor Arnado did not know who he was. However, when it was time for a group photo, the spouse of the MAO approached the officials and said, *“Sir, Sir, merong Commander, gusto niya mag-usap kayo.” (Sir, a Commander here wants to speak with you.) Curious, they asked, “Asan? (Where is he?)”* Former Combatant E was then called over for the photo. After it was taken, Mayor Arnado talked to him, and invited him to the municipal hall, and told him to speak with the agriculture officials before they left.

This interaction with the mayor and agriculture officials became a turning point for Former Combatant E, as he was invited to join the study tour or Lakbay Aral in Bukidnon and General Santos City.

*“So nag-istorya mi didto at sabi nila na magtulong sila sa akin, na maka-attend ako sa training sa Bukidnon at Gensan. Duha ko ka semana sa Gensan, sa Bukidnon upat ko ka bulan. Ang amo training didto, tuturuan namin anong gagawin sa magtanum, iba’t-iba na [halaman], mais, humay, mga gulay.” (So we talked*

*there, and they said they would help me attend training in Bukidnon and General Santos City. I was in General Santos City for two weeks and four months in Bukidnon. The training taught us how to plant various crops such as corn, rice, and vegetables.)*

These exposure trips taught him how to various crops. After this, they underwent hands-on training in Kauswagan to learn more about organic farming techniques, such as using natural resources like plant materials and animal manure, to produce organic fertilizers.

*"Tae sa kabaw, kanding, kabayo, pwede mo nang organic fertilizer. Walay gasto." (Manure from cows, goats, and horses can be used as organic fertilizer. There's no cost.)*

He recalled that the national government did not fulfill its promise to them after they surrendered their firearms. However, he said that the local government of Kauswagan fulfilled its commitments and successfully provided the support promised to them.

*"Didto na ako magdagan kay Brother Mayor Rommel Arnado. Siya ang nagpatupad ng mga promises. (I turned to Brother Mayor Rommel Arnado because he was the one who fulfilled the promises.)*

The "From Arms to Farms" program changed his life in many ways. His children pursued their studies, and some completed their higher education. He could hardly dream of this opportunity during his life as a combatant. Although he faced challenges, like not knowing much about farming and language barriers, the trainers, who spoke Tagalog helped him overcome these issues.

*"Ang problema, kaming mga combatant, eh walang grado, 'di kami makaintindi sa English. Pero kung Tagalog lang, meron namang makaintindi sa Tagalog." (The problem is that we, the combatants, don't have formal education and can't understand English. However, we can understand Tagalog.)*

He believed that the program could help them live a better life. They built trust in the local government when they felt valued and prioritized.

*"Maniniwala kami sa LGU sa Kauswagan, sa "[From] Arms to Farms", kay Mayor Arnado. [Kung] Hindi kami maniniwala, hindi kami makakarating dito. So ngayon, sabi ko kanina, maniniwala kami. So, sa akin, automatic makarating kami dito 'pag pinapunta kami. Maganda 'yon. (We believe in the LGU of Kauswagan, in the "[From] Arms to Farms" program, and in Mayor Arnado. If we didn't believe, we wouldn't have reached this point. So now, as I said earlier, we believe. So for me, it's automatic that we got here if they invited us to come. That's a good thing.)*

Visiting other farms of his fellow former combatants and learning from others also improved his skills in organic farming. He also imparted the knowledge and skills he gained from the training to his children and his community.

## Chapter V

### THE COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY OF FIVE FORMER MILF COMBATANTS

This chapter synthesized the narratives of five former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) combatants who have undergone significant transformations from armed conflict to organic farming. The study aimed to examine the communication triggers that facilitated their transformation. This study sought answers to two research questions: (1) What are the stories of former combatants towards becoming organic farmers? and (2) How did these stories transform them?

Through narrative inquiry, I examined the personal stories of these former combatants and identified common themes and sub-themes that showed their transformation based on the research questions. These were summarized in the table below:

**Table 1.**

*Themes Emerged from the Narratives of Former MILF Combatants in Adopting Organic Farming Practices*

<b>Research Question #1: What are the stories of former combatants towards becoming organic farmers?</b>	
<b>THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>
Personal motivations for transformation	Desire for better future Family commitment Educational aspiration for children
Commitment-driven engagement	Dialogue with authorities Peer encouragement
Triggers to join the program	Financial needs Fairness and inclusivity Promises and trust in the program Peer influence

Challenges and barriers	Discouragement Historical barriers Psychological barriers Educational barriers Lack of knowledge
<b>Research Question #2: How did these stories transform them?</b>	
Commitment and faithfulness	Trust Emotional commitment Fulfillment of promises
Community-based learning and training	Hands-on training Experiential learning through Exposure trips Peer learning Educational opportunities
Responsive support and engagement	Regular communication and engagement Problem resolution Active listening
Resource provision	Access to inputs and equipment Market support systems
Benefits of organic farming	Health benefits Environmental benefit Economic benefits Social benefits Enhanced family life Better future for children Personal growth

The five former combatants shared similar backgrounds, as most had been involved in armed conflict at a young age. Former Combatant A joined the MILF at 19 after high school and underwent extensive training at Camp Abubakar in Maguindanao. When he returned to Lanao del Norte, the "all-out war" broke out. Former Combatant B initially joined the MNLF in the 1970s, then transitioned to the MILF. Former Combatant C already had a family before joining the MILF. Former Combatant D, whose father was part of the MNLF and MILF, grew up in conflict.

While preparing for his high school graduation, he was forced to join the MILF during the 2000 war and missed this important milestone as his school became an evacuation center. Former Combatant E joined the MNLF at 20 and later shifted to the MILF in his mid-40s or 50s.

## **Stories of former combatants towards becoming organic farmers**

### ***Personal motivations for transformation***

The desire to provide a better future for their families through stable income and educational opportunities for their children were the main personal motivations of former MILF combatants to transition to a productive and peaceful life. They realized that being part of the armed conflict for years did not help them gain skills or knowledge for making a living that could support their families. With this reflection, they decided to change and looked for opportunities that could improve their lives.

Their family has become the driving force for them to change for the better. When Former Combatant A welcomed his first daughter into the world, his priorities and perspectives in life changed. Looking ahead, he desired to provide his daughter with a brighter future through education. His father's dream also pushed him to strive hard until a family member completed their education. Fulfilling his father's dream and a better future for his family pushed him to start anew.

For Former Combatant B, deep communication with his family made him decide to end his life as a combatant and look for opportunities to live a better life. Since the war had been ongoing for a year, his family lived in the evacuation center and was struggling. Seeing his family's hardship became the wake-up call that pushed him to return to the fold of the law. Former Combatant C also had the same

motivation to have a better life. He compared his life to his sibling, who had completed his education and provided his family with a better life. He was not able to complete his education. With this, he dreamed that his children would have a brighter future, and he believed that he could achieve it when he had a peaceful and productive life.

Former Combatant E decided to change his life when he reached 40 or 50. He realized that he had grown old as a combatant. With this, he dreamed of living his remaining years not as a combatant but as a productive and peaceful individual. He also aspired to give his children a better future through education. He looked for opportunities to improve his life because he did not want his children to be like him, who did not complete his education. With his commitment and determination to give his children a brighter future, he decided to return to the folds of the law and start a new life.

Former Combatant D had a touching story on how he persevered to pursue his education despite the armed conflict. Listening to his story, I could really feel that he did not like getting involved in the conflict. He had dreams, but he had no choice but to get involved in the armed conflict. He was disheartened when he was supposed to graduate from high school, but the war broke out. He went home to get money for graduation fees. He did not have a choice but to join in the armed struggle. However, it is worth noting that the war and his involvement in armed conflict did not stop him from pursuing his dream of finishing college. Despite challenges, he earned his college degree. When he started a family, he decided to abandon his combatant life and live a productive and peaceful life with his family. Like many former combatants, his responsibility to his family and desire for economic

stability motivated him to have a better life. His interactions with Christians when he was still studying from grade school to college also played a vital role in shaping his value for peaceful living.

The narratives of former combatants showed how intrapersonal communication shaped their decisions to start a better life. With their self-reflection, they evaluated their situation, which helped them realize that they did not want their family to suffer from the impacts of armed conflict. They aspired to have a peaceful, stable, and better life for their families. And they could not achieve it if they remained as combatants. Their families, education, and stable income were more important for them. Hence, they sought opportunities and took risks for a better life.

The direct communication between Former Combatant B and his family pushed him to put an end to his combatant life. Hearing the cries for help from his family made him realize and remember his responsibility as a father, who is a provider, and a protector of their family. This realization prompted him to look for livelihood opportunities that could give his family a better life. His decision showed that he valued his family more than anything else.

Moreover, the conversation between Former Combatant A and his father highlighted how intergenerational communication played a vital role in shifting his mindset to abandon his life as a combatant and pursue livelihood opportunities to give his family a better future. His father emphasized the importance of advancing the educational status of their family members. Their interaction showed that communication between a parent and a child could become a powerful tool in motivating someone to change views and aspire for a better life.

The narratives of the former combatants highlighted their desire to provide a

better future for their families, which influenced them to transition to a peaceful and productive life. Their stories showed how they valued their family more than anything else. They also underscored the importance of education for their children, which they believed was an instrument for a brighter future. The struggles of their family during the armed conflict became the turning point in their lives that helped them reflect on their current situation and think about their future.

Through the lens of Bruner's concept of subjunctivization, their narratives showed how they imagined alternative realities, like a better future for their families, when they transitioned from conflict to civilian life. Their stories highlighted elements of reflection regarding what could have been and what could still be, whether in the context of family responsibilities, education for their children, or embracing a peaceful life. Their transformation journey was influenced by their past actions and experiences and their vision of having a brighter future where they and their families can live better than their previous lives of conflict. Moreover, their stories emphasized the possibilities that could happen when they decided to stay away from conflict and live a peaceful life as organic farmers.

### ***Commitment-Driven Engagement***

When former combatants decided to end their involvement in armed conflict, opportunities came to them. Influential persons and authorities reached out to them and introduced opportunities for productive and peaceful living. There were some champions who played a significant role in influencing them to embrace such opportunities. These persons connected the former combatants through personal engagements, continuous dialogues, and consultations throughout their transformation journey through organic farming.

Former Combatant A became interested in organic farming when the MAO of Kauswagan initially introduced the concept of backyard gardening in their community. The approach of MAO in introducing the concepts of organic farming helped him gain an idea of how to start anew. The initial training in organic farming boosted his confidence as he developed skills and knowledge in cultivating his land. Before he joined the "From Arms to Farms" program, he already gained enough knowledge and skills about organic farming. His exposure to backyard gardening shaped his new identity as a productive farmer. The garden became his haven, where he started dreaming of a brighter future for his family.

Moreover, the conversation between Former Combatant A and the mayor of Kauswagan showed how a short interaction could start a lasting connection. It could be seen that he was willing to help the mayor when he first approached him and offered to guide him into the barangay that he wanted to visit. This connection led him to be invited to join the "From Arms to Farms" program. He felt valued when the mayor trusted him. He just then reciprocated it. Their connection highlighted the importance of trust in building relationships. The way he volunteered to help the mayor showed that he had control over his own decisions and choices. It emphasized that a combatant could change his identity to someone who helps in the community with free will.

Meanwhile, the narrative of Former Combatant B highlighted the support of key persons in his transformation journey. Col. Barandon of the Philippine Army connected him to Mayor Rommel Arnado of Kauswagan and key agricultural officials. This opportunity came when he was uncertain on how to provide for his family after deciding to leave his combatant life. His connection to the key persons gave him hope to start anew, which directed him to a life of opportunities. His

interactions with Col. Barandon, Mayor Arnado, and agricultural officials highlighted the importance of establishing strong support systems in facilitating the smooth transition of former combatants towards a productive and peaceful life. Thus, external actors played a vital role in leading the former combatants to a path with renewed purpose.

After being frustrated that the national government did not fulfill its promise after surrendering his firearms, Former Combatant C considered returning to rebellion. However, with his fellow combatant's intervention, he was not able to pursue it. His peer connected him to Mayor Rommel Arnado, who assured him of farming resources like livestock and equipment. He felt the sincerity of the mayor in helping them start a new life. With this, he fully committed to join the "From Arms to Farms" program. His narrative showed how support and resources influenced him to embrace opportunities to improve his life and family. His story emphasized the importance of peers and leaders' roles in shaping their decisions to change their lives.

Similarly, Former Combatant D's peer played a vital role in his transformation journey. His fellow combatant invited him to also join the "From Arms to Farms" program. This invitation helped him gain a new perspective in life wherein he could support his family through organic farming. Learning the experience of his peers with the program, he became interested in farming. His story showed that peer support was important in influencing his life decisions and connecting to opportunities. His journey highlighted how social networks and peer encouragement could facilitate their transformation.

For Former Combatant E, the spouse of the MAO in their town connected him

to the mayor of Kauswagan and agricultural officials. He was invited to join their meeting. While waiting for the meeting to end, he patiently waited on the sidelines. He was then introduced to the key officials and had the opportunity to talk to them. The mayor then invited him to the municipal hall to discuss opportunities. He felt valued when he had this opportunity to speak with them. His interaction with these officials gave him a new beginning as he had the opportunity to start a new life with organic farming.

With Bruner's concept of subjunctivization, it can be analyzed that Former Combatant A's story showed how his experience with backyard gardening helped him appreciate organic farming. His interaction with the mayor also allowed him to join the program. The story of Former Combatant B highlighted how his uncertainty in supporting his family shifted to livelihood opportunities. Meanwhile, Former Combatant C's story showed that other stakeholders could still fulfill his frustrations from the unfulfilled promises of the national government. This became possible because he felt the sincerity of the local government in supporting them. With the encouragement of his peers, Former Combatant D had the opportunity to live a better life despite his uncertainty about supporting his family. Moreover, how Former Combatant E agreed to meet the key officials showed his openness and willingness to grab opportunities to improve his life and family. With their interaction with their peers and key officials, they could imagine a productive and peaceful future.

The MAO of Kauswagan shared in an interview that a series of consultations were done to assess and identify the needs of the former MILF combatants. This bottom-up participatory approach helped the local government and other stakeholders better understand the former combatants' needs.

Overall, their narratives showed that the commitment-driven engagement of the local government, Philippine Army, and Agricultural Training Institute, peer encouragement, and personal interactions motivated the former combatants to embrace a peaceful and productive life through organic farming. These key persons, who introduced them to opportunities and trained them, influenced them to improve their lives. Their stories also emphasized the importance of interaction with key figures to make them feel valued and prioritized.

The transformation of former MILF combatants was greatly influenced by the strategic and trust-building communication that fostered engagement, personal connection, and peer support. Key figures, authorities, and peers played significant roles in reaching out and introducing opportunities for the former combatants to adopt organic farming as a way of transformation. The consistent and personal engagement with key figures like the MAO, mayor, agricultural officials, and the Philippine Army helped former combatants to trust them, which eventually boosted their commitment to the organic farming program. Learning the success stories of their fellow combatants also influenced them to also adopt organic farming. Their stories emphasized that inclusive communication, trust-building, and peer networks played a vital role in facilitating the transformation of former combatants.

### ***Triggers to join the program***

The former combatants believed that they could start an improved life with the “From Arms to Farms” program. They decided to join the program because they need a stable income to support their family and give them a brighter future.

Former Combatant A looked for opportunities that would help him support his growing family. Having observed that the local government has equal treatment with

the Christian and Muslim residents in their initiatives, he decided to join the organic farming program. His aspirations for his family also pushed him to join the program. The key messages communicated to them motivated Former Combatant C to join the program. He was told that he would be given tractors and other farm inputs and scholarships for his children if he joined the program. With the desire to become a positive role model for his children, he grabbed the opportunity to embrace organic farming to show them that he had transitioned into a peaceful and productive citizen. He no longer wanted his children to see him doing negative things. Meanwhile, Former Combatant D was hesitant at first to join the program. However, he eventually realized that farming offered more opportunities than engaging in armed conflict. He was also inspired by his fellow combatants, who had successful lives after joining the program and adopted organic farming as a source of living. His peer's success story influenced him to also embrace organic farming and change his life.

Former Combatant A's narrative focused on his aspiration for financial stability for his family and his role as a father. He needed to have a stable income to support his growing family. This was his key motivator to join the "From Arms to Farms" program, as he believed it offered better opportunities. His interaction with the mayor was also a turning point, as he was introduced to livelihood opportunities. The fairness and inclusivity of the local government of Kauswagan for both Christians and Maranaos in their initiatives further encouraged him to join their program. This equal treatment made him trust the local government. He also realized that his experiences as a combatant did not give him the opportunity to have a stable income when he was starting a family. This realization motivated him to grab the livelihood opportunity that the program offered. His story emphasized that it is

important to have an equal and inclusive distribution of resources as it helps build trust among former combatants. It also made them feel valued. His experiences also showed that providing inclusive economic opportunities could be a powerful tool for transforming former combatants.

Former Combatant C decided to join the program because he felt the sincerity and commitment of the stakeholders. He believed that the organic farming program could provide them genuine support, unlike his previous experiences with the national government's unfulfilled promise when they surrendered their firearms. The key messages communicated to them, such as resources for their farming and scholarships for their children, influenced him to commit to the program. Moreover, his desire to become a role model for his children motivated him to change his life. He wanted his children to know that he was committed to transform his life into a peaceful and productive individual. He wanted to change his identity for the sake of his children. Fulfilling promises, whether big or small, mattered to them to gain their trust. Through the organic farming program, they had the opportunity to have better identities and, at the same time, end the cycle of violence for future generations as their children experience a better life. Being part of the program restored his faith in leadership and trust, even though he had experienced broken promises in the past.

At first, First Combatant D was hesitant to join the program. However, he eventually realized that weapons were useless and farming tools were better. This realization showed that he finally valued peace over conflict. For him, weapons produce nothing and only destroy things, while farming tools grow food. After being exposed to organic farming, he believed that it could be a great livelihood opportunity as he could harvest something. This perspective helped him transform from being part of an armed conflict to being interested in farming. His narrative showed his

symbolic transformation from a combatant who holds firearms to a farmer who holds farming tools. This mindset helped him dream of a future of growth and development. Moreover, the support of his fellow former combatants motivated him to join the program, which helped him have a peaceful and productive life. Peer encouragement played an important role in his transformation.

With Bruner's concept of subjunctivization, it could be interpreted that Former Combatant A's journey shifted from being uncertain about how to support his family to being assured of opportunities. The inclusive approach of the local government also made him feel that sincere support was provided to them. He dreamed of a future where he could provide the needs of his family and where both Christians and Muslims live harmoniously and equally. Meanwhile, Former Combatant C's story highlighted how his frustrations in the past with the unfulfilled promise of the national government shifted to a reality where the local government fulfilled its commitments. He was also motivated to change his life because he wanted to be a role model for his children and be a good provider for his family. For him, trust and responsibility were important. Moreover, Former Combatant D redefined his new identity from a combatant to a productive farmer who produces something rather than destroys it. His new reality was based on peace, productivity, and a brighter future for his family and community.

Overall, the transformation journey of the former MILF combatants was influenced by their economic needs, engagement with their peers, and the key messages communicated to them. Effective communication strategies based on trust and inclusivity facilitated their smooth transition to becoming productive and peaceful individuals. They were motivated to join the program because of the key messages,

such as financial stability, farm resources, and educational scholarships for their children. Their stories showed that they valued having a stable income, resources, and opportunities for their children to have a brighter future. Moreover, the equal and inclusive approach of the local government, peer support, and success stories of their fellow former combatants pushed them to embrace organic farming. Their narratives showed that the provision of resources should be complemented by clear messaging, trust-building, and peer encouragement. This approach created a positive environment for the former combatants.

### ***Challenges and Barriers***

Former combatants faced several challenges in their transformation journey. Former Combatant A received discouragement from others about the program. He was told that he might be poisoned or betrayed in the end. However, these rumors did not hinder him from pursuing his transformation. He moved forward, determined to have a better life with organic farming. The discouragement of others did not affect him as he believed that the program was a great opportunity for his family to have a brighter future. He no longer wanted to return as a combatant because he was getting older. He wanted to live his life supporting his family. Unlike other former combatants, he was still an active member of MILF that time. The peace agreement between the national government and MILF was not yet finalized at that time. With this, he feared that he might have encounters with the authorities. This personal fear showed the psychological impact of the armed conflict on his life. However, confidence-building measures were implemented, which helped him gradually to trust the government.

The story of Former Combatant A showed that the discouragement of others was not a hindrance to his transformation journey. Despite the past tensions

between the MILF and government forces, he decided to move forward and take risks for the opportunities that will help him fulfill his duty as the head of their family. Additionally, the reciprocal trust between him and the local government was vital in shaping his decision to move forward. Hence, it is important to establish trust among former combatants for their long-term transformation. The negative comments from others and his past fears were irrelevant to his goals as he was determined to transform his life. He focused more on the program's potential benefits for a better future. He did not allow others to control his choices in life. According to him, if he did not take the risk of joining the program, he would not have a child who became a registered social worker. His story showed that his ownership of his decisions and his family's future were linked to his decision to trust and participate in the program.

Similarly, Former Combatant C experienced discouragement from others who told him that the local government used the program for their political motives. However, he believed politics was irrelevant since they do not live in Kauswagan, so he did not listen to their discouragement. He focused more on the benefits of the program for his family. His story highlighted how he rejected the negativity from external pressures. He was determined to provide his family with a better future. He was committed to move away from conflict. His story highlighted that he could not be controlled or manipulated with negative comments. He could make his own choices in life. With this, he focused more on fulfilling his dreams for his family rather than being affected by external distractions.

Having lived as a combatant since the 1970s, Former Combatant B did not know about farming and how to support his family. Being involved in armed conflict for years did not teach him how to survive life outside combat. At first, learning

organic farming practices was difficult for him. However, with grit and perseverance to have an improved life, it became manageable and easier for him. His story showed that even if he faced challenges in adopting organic farming, his determination to learn helped him develop skills.

Former Combatant D also faced challenges adopting organic farming due to his lack of knowledge and language barriers. However, he overcame these obstacles and acquired knowledge about organic farming since the trainers spoke Tagalog. His story showed that it is important to use familiar language in communication with the former combatants. This approach also made them more engaged with the program, as they would feel understood. His narrative proved that despite his lack of education, he could learn about organic farming with the proper guidance of the trainers.

Through Bruner's concept of subjunctivization, it can be seen how their stories shifted from experiencing doubt, uncertainty, and fear to embracing hope and opportunities through organic farming. Despite experiencing challenges like fear, lack of skills and education, or political skepticism, they managed to move forward with their transformation. They were focused more on having a better future for their family. Problems did not stop them from attaining their aspirations. They adapted to new situations and opportunities as they shifted from armed conflict to peaceful life.

The story of Former Combatant A showed his transition from being distracted by fear to being determined to take chances and risks to pursue his dreams for his family. He did not allow external pressures or negativity to control him. At first, he was worried about his safety since he was still an active member of MILF at the time. However, this did not affect him, as he firmly believed that the program offered better

opportunities. He overcame his fears with the local government's confidence-building measures. His decision to move forward emphasized that he imagined a better life despite the risks or rumors he heard from their community.

Similarly, Former Combatant C was able to transform his life because he ignored the rumors surrounding him. He did not get affected by what others said about the program. He focused more on the program's opportunities that would help him provide a better future for himself and his family. He did not get swayed or influenced by the opinions of others. He was focused on attaining his wants and needs for his family. This mindset showed that he had control over his decisions in life.

Meanwhile, Former Combatant B's story emphasized his transformation from a combatant who only focused on fighting to a provider who prioritized his family over other things. He was unfamiliar with farming at first, but he eventually gained knowledge about organic farming. This exposure helped him imagine a new reality where farming could financially support his family.

Moreover, Former Combatant D's perspective changed when he felt valued by the stakeholders as familiar language was used to communicate with him. Despite his lack of education, he reimagined his future to succeed in organic farming.

Their narratives highlighted how the resilience and determination of former combatants helped them address societal pressures and skepticism about their participation in the program. They focused more on their dream to give their family a better future and were not controlled by external pressures. Additionally, using familiar language and consistent communication during their training enhanced

engagement among former combatants and boosted their commitment to their transformation. Overall, their narratives underscored that communication played a vital role in shaping the decisions of former combatants to transform their lives.

Former combatants overcame the challenges of their transformation with the help of communication and their personal motivations. While Former Combatant A had personal fears of being an active MILF at that time, he trusted the stakeholders with their confidence-building measures. The sincere engagement of the stakeholders also helped him ignore the discouragement of other people about the program. His narrative highlighted the importance of establishing mutual trust between the government and former combatants. Former Combatant C's ability to ignore negative comments from others and focus more on his improvement emphasized his control over his life decisions. Meanwhile, the narratives of Former Combatant B and Former Combatant D showcased how the lack of knowledge in organic farming and education can be bridged through inclusive communication and training. Despite initial struggles, the former combatants persevered in their transformation journey as they were empowered to engage fully with the program. Their stories highlighted the importance of building trust, having perseverance, and using effective communication methods to transform former combatants into productive and peaceful individuals.

### **Stories of transformation**

#### ***Commitment and faithfulness***

The former combatants believed that the commitment and faithfulness of the stakeholders towards them contributed to their transformation.

The unique approach of the local government earned Former Combatant A's trust in their transformation program. The strategy of the local government was different from the national government's requirement to surrender their firearms. The local government focused more on gaining the willingness and commitment of the former combatants towards a peaceful and productive life. This approach motivated him to embrace organic farming, which became his turning point. His story highlighted that it is essential to have sincere and unconditional support for the former combatants. The local government attained this by not forcing the former combatants to surrender their weapons in exchange for support. His narrative also emphasized the importance of building trust and making former combatants feel valued. Moreover, the mayor's approach showed how flexible leadership played a vital role in gaining the willingness and trust of the former combatants.

Meanwhile, Former Combatant C felt valued when the Philippine Army ensured their safety. He emphasized how Col. Barandon ordered his troops to escort them during their exposure trip to Bukidnon to ensure their safety. This moment boosted his trust in the program. For him, Col. Barandon showed genuine concern for their well-being, unlike others who failed to fulfill their promises. The assurance of the Philippine Army made him feel safe and secure as he transitioned to farming. His narrative highlighted the vital role of institutional trust in their transformation process. Moreover, his interactions with Col. Barandon underscored that authorities should make genuine commitments to gain the trust of the former combatants. His story also proved that it is possible for former combatants to develop trust and to feel safe with people they used to fight with in the past. His rapport with Col. Barandon also helped him lessen his worries about transitioning to civilian life. With the commitment of the military, the safety and security of former combatants in their transformation

process were prioritized.

Former Combatant E was disappointed after the national government did not fulfill its promises when he surrendered his firearms. However, the sincerity of the local government in facilitating their smooth transition to civilian life through organic farming renewed his hope and trust that someone was willing to help them. Being valued and prioritized, he eventually built trust in the program. The commitment of the local government also sustained his participation and engagement in the program. His story showed that fulfilling the promises given to former combatants is important as it shows faithfulness and commitment in supporting their transformation.

The former combatants appreciated how the local government did not mandate them to surrender their firearms, as it showed genuine commitment and willingness to help them improve their lives. The local government valued building trust among the former combatants more than their firearms. The national government required them to surrender their weapons but did not fulfill its promise. In contrast, the local government did not demand them to surrender their firearms; it only demanded their commitment and willingness to change for the better. The local government's approach showed its unconditional support towards the transformation of former combatants, as they did not pressure them to surrender something in return. Moreover, the Philippine Army's commitment to ensure the safety of the former combatants during their transformation process strengthened the trust of the former combatants.

The MAO of Kauswagan affirmed their narratives and highlighted the unique approach of the local government in engaging with the former combatants. He stated that the "From Arms to Farms" program focused more on gaining the commitment

and willingness of the former combatants to embrace a peaceful and productive life through organic farming. The program's key message was "surrender of the heart." MAO also highlighted that fulfilling promises, whether big or small, mattered to the former combatants. Since former combatants felt disappointed with the unfulfilled promises of the national government in the past, the local government did its best to earn their trust again by implementing strategic approaches to fulfill even minor promises. Former combatants felt valued and prioritized with the sincerity of the local government in supporting their transformation. The local government was able to rebuild the trust of the former combatants that was once gone because of the unfulfilled promises of the national government. The local government highlighted the importance of establishing trust and fulfilling promises for effective transformation.

Using Bruner's concept of subjunctivation, it can be analyzed that the former combatants shifted their perspective from having uncertainty in life to imagining new possibilities and opportunities. The commitment and faithfulness of the local government and the Philippine Army in supporting their transformation shaped these perspectives. The narratives of the former combatants showed the turning point in their lives where the fear, doubt, or mistrust they felt before were converted to hope and trust. The local government and the Philippine Army helped them reimagine a better future with a meaningful and peaceful life. With their dedication, the former combatants gained trust and believed that there were still institutions that were sincere and true to their promises. This showed that having dedicated and reliable individuals or institutions was important in reshaping the vision of former combatants towards their future. Fulfilling such promises made the former combatants feel valued, as they believed in the program's credibility and reliability.

The narratives of former combatants highlighted how the faithfulness and commitment of the stakeholders facilitated their transition from conflict to civilian life. Their experiences showed how fulfilling promises, whether big or small, mattered to them, which also influenced them to trust the government programs. Their stories also showed that effective communication played a vital role in engaging them as it underscored the commitment and accountability of the stakeholders. This strategy also motivated the former combatants to fully embrace the program and change their identities from combatants to farmers.

Their stories also highlighted the significant role of trust, commitment, and personalized communication in their transformation. The local government had a genuine commitment towards them without preconditions compared to the national government's disarmament strategy. The Philippine Army also played a vital role in gaining the trust of the former combatants with their dedication to ensure their safety throughout their transformation process, especially during their exposure trips. The former combatants felt the sincerity and consistency of the local government and the Philippine Army during their transformation journey. The local government's key message: "surrender of the heart," was powerful in shaping the former combatants' perspectives towards the opportunities offered to them. Local government's trust-building played a vital role in their transformation by having open and honest communication with the former combatants and fulfilling promises to them. This approach fostered trust and commitment in the transformation journey of the former combatants.

### ***Community-based learning and training***

Former combatants gained knowledge and skills in organic farming through

community-based learning and training. The Lakbay Aral or study tour in Bukidnon helped Former Combatant A to transform into an organic farmer. He was determined to learn more about organic farming. His experience with backyard gardening, initially introduced to them by the MAO, helped him gain an interest in organic farming. He became more interested in and dedicated to organic farming when exposed to different farms in Bukidnon. The exposure trip helped him gain new insights about various farming methods and practices. This experience opened his eyes to the opportunities that organic farming offers. He then applied what he had learned from the study tour to his farm, just like planting different fruit trees. The exposure trip in Bukidnon helped him aspire more and dream of having a big and thriving farm. His story showed how exposure trips help former combatants to have new perspectives and realities as they envision a brighter future. This experience also helped him acquire skills and knowledge about organic farming. His interactions with fellow combatants also boosted his learning and interest in organic farming. He learned from the techniques and practices of his peers by visiting them. He learned about fishpond and livestock management and even acquired new plant varieties that he could plant on his farm. Knowledge-sharing also contributed to his growth as a farmer. His story showed the important role of sharing knowledge to attain a collective successful transformation of former combatants as they help each other. He lacked formal education, but participating in the organic farming program helped him continue his education through the Alternative Learning System program. With this opportunity, he overcame his challenges and was determined to have a better life.

Similarly, the Lakbay-Aral, or education trip in Bukidnon, helped Former Combatant B learn different practices in organic farming. After the exposure trip, they

learned how to cultivate different crops and make organic fertilizer through hands-on training in Kauswagan. He then applied the knowledge and skills he gained to his farm. Although he did not know much about farming at first, the study tour and hands-on training helped him realize his potential as an organic farmer.

Former Combatant C also lacked knowledge about basic organic farming. However, the hands-on training helped him gain knowledge and skills in cultivating the land properly and producing organic fertilizer by collecting waste materials. This learning experience shaped his mindset that it was better to hold farming tools than firearms. When he embraced organic farming, his life changed. His story emphasized that organic farming contributed to his personal growth and did not just provide him with livelihood opportunities.

Moreover, the study tour helped Former Combatant D realize the potential benefits of organic farming. With the skills and knowledge he gained from the practical training, he learned how to convert his land into a productive farm. The training taught him the step-by-step process of organic farming practices, which was not just about merely talking. The education trip to Bukidnon inspired him and opened his eyes to organic farming opportunities. The MAO of Kauswagan then complemented the study tour with practical training. His narrative highlighted that exposing him to different farms helped him have new perspectives in life. His story also emphasized the importance of conducting hands-on training to teach about organic farming rather than purely theoretical knowledge. Moreover, learning from his fellow combatants also helped him understand various organic farming techniques. His story showed that experiential and peer learning contributed to his transformation.

The exposure trips to farms in Bukidnon and General Santos City also helped Former Combatant E in his transformation journey. Visiting the farms there helped him realize how organic farming could help him change his life. For him, organic farming was sustainable and cost-effective, as he no longer had to buy chemical fertilizer since natural resources like animal manure were used. His fellow combatants also helped him learn more and improve his skills in organic farming.

The stories of former combatants highlighted how exposure to organic farming through Lakbay-Aral, hands-on training, and peer learning helped their transformation as organic farmers. All of them reached a turning point in their lives when they realized that farming had given them the opportunity to have peaceful and productive lives. The community-based learning and training broadened their knowledge and skills, which inspired them to adopt sustainable farming practices. Their adoption of organic farming showed that they collectively rejected the violence they experienced in the past and accepted farming as a tool for living a better life. Moreover, peer learning and knowledge-sharing also played a vital role in their transformation. Former Combatant A viewed farming as an instrument for growth and sustainability. His story highlighted how he changed his vision from daily survival to dreaming of becoming a successful farmer by having a larger and thriving farm. His journey did not end in just having a backyard garden as he aspired to have a productive farm. While Former Combatant B had prior knowledge about organic farming, the exposure trip and practical training helped him understand more about organic farming. Meanwhile, the community-based learning and training opened Former Combatant C's eyes to the reality that farming is better than holding weapons. His story showed that opportunities such as organic farming helped them change their mindset towards life. Moreover, Former Combatant D's story highlighted

that real-life farming experiences and peer learning contributed to his transformation as an organic farmer. His story showed how his mindset had been transformed with his exposure to different farms in various places. Visiting the farms of his fellow former combatants also helped him learn new techniques about organic farming. Similarly, learning from his peers and exposure to different farms helped Former Combatant E improve his organic farming practices.

The MAO affirmed the narratives of the former combatants and emphasized that they taught them the step-by-step process for organic farming. The former combatants learned about making fertilizer, composting, and fermentation using available resources in their area. They learned organic farming practices through practical demonstrations rather than merely discussions of theories. Moreover, the MAO also had weekly sessions with them that covered everything from land preparation to harvest. The local government also provided equipment, such as tractors, at no cost. The MAO also established a seed banking system to ensure former combatants had seeds available for their farming.

The narratives of former combatants highlighted that their transition to organic farming contributed to their individual and community growth. The different learning techniques helped them gain farming skills, which boosted their self-confidence and social interaction. Hands-on training helped them have a deeper understanding and appreciation of organic farming practices. Organic farming helped former combatants reframe their identities as active contributors to their communities with organic farming. Their shared experiences and collaborative learning helped them imagine a better future. Communication strategies also played a vital role in their learning experience, which changed their practices and behavior.

Moreover, former combatants had continuous learning in organic farming as they had exposure trips to other places and had hands-on training when they returned home. Visiting the farms of their fellow combatants also sustained their learning. Their stories showed how combining study tours, hands-on training, and knowledge-sharing with peers played a vital role in their transformation as organic farmers. Exposing them to other places also helped them have new perspectives in life as they lived as combatants for years. The experiential learning helped them refresh their minds and made them appreciate organic farming. It also inspired them to replicate the organic farming practices on their farm. After acquiring knowledge and skills in organic farming through hands-on training, they dedicated their time and effort to transform their lands into productive farms. Their visits to their fellow combatants' farms helped them gain new ideas and techniques about organic farming, which they applied to their farms. The success stories of their fellow combatants also inspired them. Their narratives highlighted that this kind of communication framework significantly contributed to the transformation of former combatants into productive farmers. Their stories emphasized the power of communication in their sustainable transformation.

### ***Responsive support and engagement***

The local government provided responsive support and engagement to the former combatants in their transformation into productive organic farmers. Regular communication, active listening, and problem-solving were instrumental to their transformation.

Former Combatant A was really determined to pursue organic farming. Even if he was new to farming, he approached the MAO of Kauswagan and asked for rice seeds that he would plant on his land. He promised to return them if he became

successful in his harvest. The MAO thought that he would not succeed. However, the MAO was impressed with his dedication and success when he returned the rice seeds with surplus. His success became a positive example for other former combatants. He also felt valued and important with the responsiveness of local leaders like the MAO and mayor. The local government was committed and sincere in helping them as he received resources like seeds and farming tools. As time passed, the local government created an online group chat to communicate with former combatants easily. The group chat helped former combatants have real-time access to information and answers to their concerns and be aware of various activities in the town. This adaptation to new technology showed an improved communication system for the former combatants. Whenever he had needs for his farm, the local government supported him. The responsive support of the local government boosted his dedication and commitment to his transformation through organic farming. Additionally, his experience showed how information and communication technology played a vital role in their transformation process as it provided accessible and open communication.

According to Former Combatant B, the local government regularly visited them and consistently monitored their farms to check for any problems or issues. He felt valued and prioritized with this approach. Training sessions were conducted at their farms to ensure that continuous guidance and support were given to them. The responsiveness of the local government to their needs and concerns gained the trust of former combatants. His story highlighted the important role of active listening in their transformation as organic farmers. The proactive approach of the local government in addressing the issues and concerns of former combatants also boosted their confidence in their transformation journey. The local authorities

promptly addressed their problems, which fostered their trust and motivation to change. His story also emphasized how the continuous and sincere engagement of the local government with the former combatants contributed to their transformation.

Former Combatant C sought assistance from MAO whenever he faced problems at his farm. When his goats had health issues, he contacted MAO, who immediately provided support. He also did not have to worry about marketing his harvest since the local government buys and sells his produce at the Organic Trading Post. His story showed how the local government's responsive support and solutions to their problems helped them. His narrative showed how an established support system assisted them in communicating with the local government whenever they needed help with their farm. With this approach, operational challenges did not bother him, which helped him to focus more on his transformation as an organic farmer. His story showed how the local government's responsive support sustained the commitment of the former combatants towards their transformation.

Former Combatant D felt valued whenever the MAO provided technical assistance and listened to his needs at his farm. This experience empowered him in his transformation journey through organic farming as he felt his concerns were taken seriously. He approached the mayor to ask for support for his fish pond and received an immediate response. The local government provided open and direct communication with the former combatants to address their needs promptly. The local government also had weekly meetings with them to discuss peace and order concerns in their communities. This made them feel valued since the local government saw them not just as beneficiaries of the program but also as partners in maintaining peace and order. His story highlighted the importance of having

continuous engagement and trust-building between the local government and the former combatants. His narrative also showed how consistent communication contributed to their smooth transformation.

Moreover, the MAO emphasized how they maintained open communication with the former combatants, where they actively understood and addressed their needs. They asked them what they needed as they were committed to resolve their problems. Whatever issues or challenges the former combatants faced, the local government was ready to help them. MAO highlighted how addressing even minor problems mattered to them, which also contributed to their smooth transformation as organic farmers.

Through Bruner's concept of subjunctivization, it can be analyzed that their narratives showed that the responsive support and engagement of the local government greatly contributed to their transformation. When Former Combatant A felt valued and prioritized by the sincerity of the local government in supporting his transformation, he imagined a new reality where he became a productive and peaceful individual with organic farming. The creation of an online group chat showed how the local government improved its communication with the former combatants. This platform helped them raise their concerns and issues and get updates and information about activities or programs. Meanwhile, Former Combatant B perceived a new reality as an organic farmer when he felt the genuine commitment of the local government with their regular visits and consistent support. With the market support of the local government, Former Combatant C imagined his future with organic farming as a sustainable livelihood. They no longer have to worry about marketing their harvest since the local government would purchase and sell their

produce at a post-harvesting facility. Moreover, Former Combatant D, who lacked education, became empowered with the consistent support of MAO and the responsiveness of the local government to address their issues and concerns with their farm.

Their stories showed the importance of responsive support in facilitating the transition of former combatants into organic farmers. The local government used effective communication strategies like regular visits, the creation of online group chat, and marketing assistance. This approach helped former combatants communicate their concerns and challenges in their transformation journey. The consistent engagement of the local government boosted the trust of former combatants. They felt valued as they received genuine support. The support of the local government in marketing their produce eased former combatants in selling their harvest. The responsive support helped them view organic farming as a sustainable livelihood. Their stories highlighted that responsive and inclusive communication and consistent support significantly contributed to their transformation as peaceful and productive individuals.

The local government's responsive support, consistent engagement, and active communication built trust among former combatants. Local leaders, particularly the MAO and the mayor, played a great role in their transformation through resources and technical support. Adopting information and communication technology, like an online group chat, also hastened their transformation process, as it provided them with real-time access to information. The regular visits and training of the local government also strengthened collaboration with the former combatants. The local government created a collaborative and supportive environment for them

by buying their harvests directly and selling them at the post-harvest facility. Their narratives highlighted the vital role of sustaining open and responsive communication with the former combatants to ensure their successful transformation into peaceful and productive individuals.

### ***Resource Provision***

Former combatants received various resources to support their transition to organic farming. Initially, Former Combatant A received seeds and tools from the MAO, which supported him in his new journey as an organic farmer. According to him, the mayor gave him a carabao and a cow for his farming activities. Being mindful of his colleagues, he shared the cow with his other combatants instead of keeping both for himself. This move showed how he perceived success to be achieved collectively and not individually. He was not selfish, as he aspired to have a collective transformation with his peers. He also appreciated the marketing support of the local government for their harvest. He felt relieved that he no longer had to worry about selling his produce since the local government buys and sells their harvest at the Organic Trading Post, a post-harvest facility. Selling produce had been a common challenge for farmers. This marketing support helped him focus more on production than selling their produce. It also prevented the risk of wasted production by former combatants. The provision of resources also boosted his confidence in his organic farming journey. His narrative highlighted how a comprehensive support network, institutional support, and mutual trust significantly contributed to his transformation.

Former Combatant B received hand tractors and livestock when he started his organic farming journey. Losing these resources to Typhoon Vinta saddened him,

but the consistent support of the local government renewed his hope to start again. This assistance helped him recover and sustain his farming activities. He remained resilient and determined to get back on track despite experiencing setbacks posed by the calamity. It may have destroyed the resources he received, but not his dream of having a better life with organic farming. His narrative showed that being consistent in providing support was important. Institutional support should be consistent even during calamities or disasters to sustain the transformation of former combatants. Stakeholders should complement their initial assistance with sustained support. His story also highlighted how the local government's support system greatly contributed to their transformation.

According to the MAO, they guided and supported the former combatants in land preparation, planting, harvesting, and marketing their produce. The local government established the Organic Trading Post, a central marketing hub for their harvests. By introducing them to organic farming practices, the local government prepared them to secure organic certification in the future. The local government supported the former combatants in their farming through subsidized farm tractors, equipment for land preparation, seed distribution, and marketing assistance. This comprehensive support and holistic development strategy improved and sustained the productivity of the former combatants. It also strengthened their commitment to continue their organic farming journey as their new way of life. Guiding former combatants in adopting organic farming practices also reshaped their identities and perspectives from combatants to productive farmers.

With Bruner's concept of subjunctivization, it can be concluded that Former Combatant A viewed success as a collective accomplishment when he shared other resources with his fellow combatants. With their shared struggles and experiences in

the past, they also had a collective aspiration, which was to have better lives. He imagined a brighter future where they would succeed together. By sharing resources with his comrades, he transformed from being a program beneficiary to someone who wanted his peers to experience similar opportunities. With the local government's support in marketing their produce, he imagined organic farming as a sustainable livelihood, which would help him and his peers be successful. This marketing support helped him focus more on cultivating his land, as he was assured that his produce would be bought and sold. Meanwhile, the typhoon did not affect Former Combatant B in his organic farming journey, as he remained resilient. He remained hopeful and determined to move forward, as he was assured of the support of the local government in his recovery. The provision of equipment and other resources provided him security and assurance that he would not be left behind in his transformation journey despite challenges.

Comprehensive and responsive support system contributed to the successful transformation of former combatants into organic farmers. Aside from farming resources like seeds, livestock, and tools, they also received continuous technical support, market access, and disaster recovery support. They underwent hands-on training, had market access through the Organic Trading Post, and received supervision in the entire farming process. This approach built trust and collaboration among former combatants, which helped them change their roles and identities for the better. Former combatants felt valued when they received support, even during calamities. They fully embraced organic farming with a holistic support system and open communication. It also contributed to their growth as an individual and as a group of transformed combatants. Moreover, their narratives highlighted that shared resources, sustained support, and responsive communication empowered them and

significantly contributed to their transformation. The sincere support helped them aspire for a brighter future.

### ***Benefits of Organic Farming***

Organic farming provided various benefits to the lives of former combatants and improved their perspectives. Former Combatant A gained economic, social, health, and other benefits. The training in organic farming and educational trips to different farms inspired him to apply what he had learned to his own farm. He learned to create organic fertilizer by composting animal manure and observed that his plants grew well afterwards. He also realized the value of sustainable practices like composting, as he learned that burning waste is harmful. His story highlighted that his mindset and practices changed because of his exposure to organic farming. With these practices, he had a good harvest of coconut, abaca, and durian. This good harvest helped him gain a stable income to support his family and children's education. His children also became professionals, such as a social worker and a police officer. Using organic fertilizer helped him save up since the resources were available in his area compared to using expensive chemical fertilizers. He became a role model since his fellow former combatants in his community were inspired by his success story. His experiences highlighted the collective transformation of former combatants, wherein his success motivated his peers to follow his journey. Adopting organic farming as his new way of life contributed to his personal growth. It reshaped his identity and role from a combatant to a farmer and a community leader. He has also been involved in international projects for his community.

Meanwhile, organic farming provided economic and health benefits to Former Combatant B. Organic farming provided food security for his family as they no longer had to travel to the market far away from their home to buy food. With organic

farming, they could grow their own crops on their farm. Adopting organic farming practices also helped him protect his family from the potential harm of using chemical fertilizer. For him, the use of chemical fertilizer on crops could cause illness. Organic farming also enhanced their lives. When he was still a combatant, he could not support his children's education. However, when organic farming became his source of income, his children were able to complete their education and pursue professional careers. His daily activities also changed to checking his farm for pests and nurturing crops. His farm symbolized his independence and hope for a brighter future. His story showed that giving importance to children's education could break the cycle of conflict and poverty. Adopting organic farming also redefined his views and purpose in life. His repeated references to Mayor Arnado and the local government of Kauswagan highlighted how leadership and governance contributed to his transformation process.

Organic farming also provided Former Combatant C with various benefits. For him, using organic fertilizer was better than chemical fertilizer, which is costly and risky in times of crop failure. He believed that organic fertilizer is low-cost and resilient during calamities. He emphasized that chemical fertilizer poses harmful effects and health risks, whereas organic fertilizer provides health benefits. For him, organic farming ensures their well-being physically and mentally. His transition to organic farming also contributed to his change in lifestyle and values. For him, organic farming also provides environmental benefits. He observed that using organic fertilizer nourished the soil, which produced healthier crops. Furthermore, his engagement in the program helped him acquire scholarships for his children and have a stable income to support their needs. His story also highlighted that organic farming redefined his identity and role from a combatant to a father who prioritized

his children's future. He emphasized the value of education in success and ending cycles of poverty and violence that would positively impact future generations.

He learned that using organic fertilizer could produce healthier crops and improve soil quality. Using organic fertilizers like vermicast and natural mixtures not only helped him have abundant crops but also reduced his expenses on fertilizers. His story showed that organic farming provided long-term sustainability. With this adoption of organic farming, he also became aware of the harmful effects of chemical fertilizers on the environment. Organic farming also provided economic benefits for his family as it became his source of income, where he sold crops such as ampalaya, okra, and native chili. Selling his crops became hassle-free since the local government buys and sells their produce at the Organic Trading Post. This marketing support ensured profits for his produce. His story highlighted that infrastructure and government support contributed to their transformation. His knowledge-sharing with his fellow former combatants also highlighted his commitment to attain success with them collectively. He was mindful of others to experience a productive and peaceful life with organic farming. In the future, he aspired to expand his farm and inspire his peers that organic farming is a great way of transformation.

Meanwhile, organic farming provided Former Combatant E with opportunities for his family and community. He could not support his children's education when he was still a combatant. However, organic farming provided him with a stable income that helped his children to pursue education. His transition to organic farming helped rebuild his identity and role from a combatant with limited opportunities to a farmer and father who prioritized the brighter future of his children. He believed that

education is key to progress. He also empowered others with the learnings and skills he gained from his exposure to organic farming. This shows that he also wanted others to become successful with organic farming. His story highlighted his transformation from a learner of organic farming to a sharer of knowledge. He looked forward to a future where there is collective growth and success in their community. With organic farming, his purpose in life changed as he aspired to become an agent of peace in his community.

The MAO of Kauswagan affirmed their stories that organic farming enhanced the lives of the former combatants. He shared that former combatants gained communication skills and self-confidence through continuous engagement. He observed that they were silent at first. However, consistent interactions made them more participative, and they even shared jokes during their conversations. With organic farming, the children of former combatants completed their education and secured professional jobs. Former combatants also made their farms their family business. They also learned that organic farming promotes wellness. The MAO emphasized that Allah (God) created humans free from toxins. This key message helped them realize that a healthier lifestyle was essential, especially for those involved in conflict for years. And this could be achieved if they organically grow their food free from chemicals.

The stories of the former combatants showed that their engagement with organic farming facilitated their transformation with various benefits. They created a shared meaning in their life with organic farming. The consistent and meaningful communication of the stakeholders with the former combatants reshaped their experiences and perspectives. Organic farming became more than just a livelihood

for them. It became an avenue for their personal growth. The communication between them and the stakeholders boosted their learning and confidence, which they used to empower others. The key messages of MAO also influenced them to embrace organic farming as their new way of life.

Through Bruner's concept of subjunctivization, it can be analyzed that the former combatants transformed their past struggles into aspirations of having a better future. Their stories highlighted how organic farming helped them reimagine new realities and reshape their identities from combatants who focused on destruction to farmers who prioritized the cultivation of both land and community. Changing their practice of burning waste to composting showed their environmental awareness. Their priorities also changed as they dreamed of providing a better future for their children through education. Their narratives highlighted that communication empowered them in their transformation journey. Their engagement with organic farming also improved their social skills from being silent and passive to being participative and confident. With continuous engagement and peer interactions, they realized that organic farming was not just a source of income but also a tool for reconstructing their identities as peaceful and productive individuals.

The benefits of organic farming influenced former combatants to fully embrace it as their way of transformation. The training and learning about different organic farming practices significantly changed their perspectives, like protecting the environment and promoting healthy lifestyles for their family. Organic farming also enhanced their life as they had stable incomes to support their family and children's education. With organic farming, they also improved their communication and social skills and became role models in their community.

## **Chapter VI**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

This study examined the transformation of former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) combatants as they transitioned to civilian life through organic farming. It aimed to explore the communication triggers that facilitated their transformation process.

Using narrative inquiry, I analyzed the personal stories of five former combatants that revealed their motivations and challenges in adopting organic farming practices. I also acquired statements from the Municipal Agriculture Officer of Kauswagan to understand the role of communication in their transformation process further.

Bruner's (1991) concept of "subjunctivization," which connects past, present, and future through personal narratives, guided me in analyzing the transformation of former combatants into organic farmers. Sharing experiences and stories shaped and reshaped their realities. Their narratives provided a deeper understanding of their transformation journey. The concept of subjunctivization helped me understand how they connected their past experiences to their present situation and future aspirations. Their stories revealed that organic farming was more than just a livelihood for them. It also addressed their previous challenges, reshaped their identities and roles, and redefined their purpose and values in life.

Through narrative inquiry, I examined their personal stories and experiences of their transformation, particularly how they shifted their perspective to become

peaceful and productive individuals through organic farming. Moreover, I provided a comprehensive narrative highlighting how they changed their identities and roles and found a new purpose in life. Their personal stories also revealed their motivations, challenges, and achievements in their transformation journey.

This study also highlighted how effective communication strategies and comprehensive support systems contributed to the successful transformation of former combatants.

The findings of the study revealed that personal motivations, such as their desire for a better future, family stability, and educational aspirations for their children, were the driving force that influenced them to transition to peaceful and productive lives. Intrapersonal reflections, and interpersonal communication with their families, relatives, peers, and influential figures in their communities also contributed to their successful transformation.

Moreover, consistent and personal engagement by the Municipal Agriculture Officer, mayor, military, and agricultural officials who introduced them to opportunities played a vital role in their transformation as it built trust among former combatants. Strategic and trust-building communication influenced them to transition to peaceful and productive individuals. The encouragement of their peers or fellow combatants significantly supported their transformation.

Several triggers influenced them to fully embrace organic farming as their way of transformation. These include financial needs, fairness and inclusivity of the program, promises and clear messaging, and peer influence. Notably, the program did not require the former combatants to surrender their firearms. The key message of the program was to "surrender their hearts." This messaging significantly

contributed to the transformation of former combatants, as the local government only required their willingness and commitment to embrace transformation to have peaceful and productive lives. Peer influence also played a crucial role in their transformation as their success stories inspired their fellow combatants to follow their journey.

Former combatants faced several challenges, such as discouragement from others, historical, psychological, and educational barriers, and their lack of skills and knowledge in farming. However, they remained resilient and determined towards their transformation journey. They were inspired by their motivations and aspirations and the consistent support of stakeholders to address such challenges.

The findings of the study revealed that trust, sincerity, and fulfillment of promises played a crucial role in their transformation journey. Gaining their trust was important to make them feel valued and prioritized. Fulfilling promises, whether big or small, mattered to them. They had a negative experience before when the national government did not fulfill its promises to them after they surrendered their weapons. However, the local government had a different approach. Instead of requiring them to surrender their weapons, they only needed to commit themselves to the program. They also felt valued when the Philippine Army ensured their safety and security during their transformation journey.

Moreover, community-based learning and training, such as hands-on training, exposure trips or *Lakbay Aral*, peer learning, and educational opportunities, equipped them with skills and knowledge in organic farming. These opportunities introduced them to different organic farming practices, which helped them imagine a better future. Knowledge-sharing with their fellow combatants also helped them gain

new ideas, perspectives, and resources to improve their farming. Witnessing the success stories of their peers boosted their commitment to sustain organic farming as their new way of life. Their narratives highlighted that peer learning and their exposure to community-based education and training significantly contributed to their transformation as productive farmers. Their transformation highlighted the important role of experiential learning in giving them new perspectives in life despite the struggles and challenges they encountered in their journey.

The responsive support of the local government, through regular communication and visits, active listening, and efficient problem resolution, significantly contributed to their transformation. Former combatants emphasized that the stakeholders responded to their needs and concerns at their farm. The consistent engagement also strengthened their relationship with the stakeholders and sustained their trust. The creation of an online group chat also improved the communication between them and the local government as it kept them informed about the organic farming program.

The provision of resources, such as essential farming inputs and access to market support systems, influenced the former combatants to fully embrace organic farming as their way of transformation. They received resources like seeds, tools, livestock, technical training, among others. They also did not have to worry about marketing their produce as the local government buys and sells it at the Organic Trading Post, a post-harvest facility. They felt important and prioritized with these resources.

Moreover, organic farming provided the former combatants with health, environmental, economic, and social benefits. It also contributed to their improved

family life, personal growth, and brighter future for their children. They became aware of the harmful effects of chemical fertilizers and the advantages of organic fertilizers. They also adopted a healthier lifestyle by consuming organically-grown food. They believed that using chemical fertilizers could cause illness. They were also enlightened that chemical fertilizer harms the environment, whereas organic fertilizer nurtures the soil. They also observed that using organic fertilizer produced good quality and bountiful harvests.

The adoption of organic farming also ensured food security as they grew their own food. It also became their source of income to support their family and children's education. With their stable income, their children completed their education and became professionals.

Through organic farming, former combatants shifted their roles and identities from combatants to farmers. They also became role models and community leaders. The training and their engagement with peers also boosted their self-confidence and improved their communication skills. Their transformation highlighted how communication was vital in transforming them, particularly in promoting personal growth and collective transformation within their communities. Their engagement with organic farming also enhanced their relationships with fellow combatants as they formed a support system by sharing their experiences and knowledge.

Ultimately, the narratives of the former combatants highlighted their successful transformation from being involved in armed conflict to peaceful and productive individuals. Their stories emphasized the importance of inclusive communication, community and institutional support, knowledge-sharing, and the fulfillment of promises in their transformation.

## Conclusions

### ***What are the stories of former combatants towards becoming organic farmers?***

The consistent support of stakeholders and the personal motivations of the former combatants motivated them to transform into peaceful and productive individuals. Their aspirations to have financial stability and to provide their children with a brighter future through education shaped their decisions to transition to civilian life. Influential figures and their peers motivated them to embrace opportunities for a better life. The key message of the "From Arms to Farms" program, which is "surrender your heart", influenced them since they were not required to surrender their firearms unlike the national government. Communicating the program's benefits, such as farming support and education scholarships for their children, also motivated them to fully embrace organic farming as their new way of life.

Former combatants gained resources, skills, and confidence through consistent engagement with local authorities and peers. They trusted the local government and the Philippine Army when they felt they were being valued and prioritized. Local authorities fulfilled their promises, which was a big deal for them. With inclusive communication and confidence-building measures, former combatants overcame their fear and doubt, which helped them to focus more on their transformation journey. The training and exposure trips also helped them overcome their lack of knowledge and education.

The local government of Kauswagan focused more on getting the willingness and commitment of the former combatants in their transformation over the surrender of firearms. This unique approach highlighted the unconditional support towards

them, which earned their trust in the program. Moreover, they felt valued by the commitment of the Philippine Army in ensuring their safety and security during their transformation. The commitment of the local government and the Philippine Army highlighted how institutional trust significantly contributed to their transformation.

### ***How did these stories transform them?***

The consistent engagement of the local government played a crucial role in boosting the commitment of the former combatants towards their transformation as they received farming resources, training, and market support. This approach transformed them into valued partners rather than just beneficiaries as they adopted sustainable farming practices. They also acquired necessary skills and knowledge through experiential learning and community-based training. These skills helped reshape their identities and roles as farmers, who play an important role in society.

As the former combatants embraced organic farming, they received health, environmental, economic, and social improvements that enhanced their overall quality of life. They became empowered as they gained skills and knowledge, which also boosted personal and collective growth. Their experiences helped them make a positive difference in their communities. Their transformation journey also shifted their past identities and roles associated with armed conflict to becoming peaceful and productive individuals.

Ultimately, the narratives of former MILF combatants underscored the crucial role of effective communication in facilitating their successful transformation. Comprehensive communication frameworks, institutional support, and shared resources significantly contributed to their transformation. With the local government's open communication, active listening, and responsive engagement,

former combatants felt valued and prioritized. Communication served as a powerful tool for their resilience, behavioral change, and community development. Moreover, the “From Arms to Farms” program successfully helped former combatants to reshape their identities and roles as peaceful and productive citizens. This study emphasized that communication played a vital role in their transformation. The findings of this study greatly contribute to future transformation programs for other former combatants.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following points are recommended:

1. Sustain consistent, sincere, and inclusive communication with the former combatants to further strengthen the success of the program.
2. Craft communication strategies to address the specific needs and concerns of former combatants and ensure fulfilment of promises.
3. Increase the frequency and scope of hands-on training and exposure visits to other farms to improve their practical knowledge and application of organic farming practices.
4. Facilitate opportunities for former combatants to share their success stories and challenges through peer-to-peer communication, workshops or community gatherings.
5. Establish a supportive network to encourage more former combatants to transform through organic farming.

6. Develop communication materials highlighting the benefits of organic farming in health, environment, social, economic and other aspects.
7. Conduct awareness campaigns or craft communication materials based on the personal motivations that triggered former combatants to transform their lives to influence others to embrace organic farming.
8. Develop targeted programs to address communication barriers and other challenges of former combatants.
9. Implement an intensified Information, Education, and Communication campaign to communicate the benefits and opportunities of organic farming.
10. Establish a strengthened feedback mechanism to gather insights from former combatants and stakeholders to assess their needs, challenges, and perceptions towards the program.
11. Utilize various media platforms and digital tools to broaden the program's reach and impact. Develop multimedia content, including videos, social media postings, and online resources, to disseminate information, share success stories, and engage with a wider audience.
12. Implement regular assessments of communication strategies to evaluate their effectiveness in motivating and sustaining the transformation of former combatants.
13. Collaborate with municipal, provincial, or regional peace and order councils to replicate or expand the organic farming program. This strategic coordination will help reach more former combatants.

14. Maximize existing networks and resources to ensure that more former combatants can benefit from the opportunities and support provided.
15. The national government, particularly the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity, in collaboration with local government units (LGUs) and other stakeholders, should look into the successful transformation of former MILF combatants in Lanao del Norte through this organic farming program. This is important as they lead the normalization efforts for MILF. This successful transformation could serve as a great model that could be replicated in other MILF camps, particularly in their initiatives to transform these camps into sustainable communities. The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict could also gain insights from this study in their reintegration efforts for the former rebels into society.
16. Local government units should also replicate the best practices of the “From Arms to Farms” program in transforming former combatants in their area.
17. Future studies should explore the long-term impact of communication strategies in transformation programs, focusing on how trust-building and inclusive communication influenced the transformation of former combatants through organic farming. Research could further examine peer-to-peer communication and identify gaps and barriers to effective communication between stakeholders and former combatants.

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## ANNEXES

### ANNEX A - INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FORMER MILF COMBATANTS

1. Maaari mo bang ibahagi ang iyong karanasan mula sa pagiging isang combatant hanggang sa pagiging isang organic farmer? Ano ang naging inspirasyon mo para gawin ang pagbabagong ito?
2. Anong mga hamon ang iyong hinarap noong una kang nagsimula sa organic farming, at paano mo nalampasan ang mga ito?
3. Paano mo unang nalaman ang tungkol sa programang “From Arms to Farms”, at ano ang nag-udyok sa iyo na lumahok dito?
4. Anong papel ang ginampanan ng iyong pamilya, mga kasamahan, o komunidad sa iyong desisyon na magbago at maging isang organic farmer?
5. Maaari mo bang ilarawan kung paano ka sinuportahan ng mga lokal na awtoridad o organisasyon sa iyong pagbago?
6. Sa anong mga paraan binago ng pagiging isang organic farmer ang iyong buhay?
7. Paano nakaapekto ang iyong pagiging organic farmer sa iyong mga pananaw sa buhay?
8. Anong mga bagong kasanayan o kaalaman ang nakuha mo sa pamamagitan ng organic farming, at paano ito nakapekto sa iyong kumpiyansa o pagkakakilanlan sa sarili?

9. Ano ang pakiramdam mo sa iyong tungkulin sa komunidad ngayon kumpara noong ikaw ay isang combatant?
10. Sa pagbabalik-tanaw, ano ang mga pinakamahalagang pagbabago sa iyong buhay mula nang maging isang organic farmer, at paano mo nakikita ang iyong hinaharap ngayon?

**English Translation:**

1. Can you share your journey from being a combatant to becoming an organic farmer? What inspired you to make this transition?
2. What challenges did you face when you first started organic farming, and how did you overcome them?
3. How did you first hear about the “From Arms to Farms” program, and what motivated you to participate in it?
4. What role did your family, peers, or community play in your decision to become an organic farmer?
5. Can you describe how local authorities or organizations supported you during your transition to organic farming?
6. In what ways has becoming an organic farmer changed your life, both personally and economically?
7. How has your involvement in organic farming affected your views in life?
8. What new skills or knowledge have you gained through organic farming, and how have these impacted your confidence or self-identity?

9. How do you feel about your role in the community now compared to when you were a combatant?
  
10. Looking back, what are the most significant changes in your life since becoming an organic farmer, and how do you see your future now?

## **ANNEX B - INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE MUNICIPAL AGRICULTURE OFFICER**

1. How was the information about the “From Arms to Farms” program initially disseminated to former MILF combatants?
2. Can you elaborate on the key messages or incentives that motivated former combatants to participate in the program?
3. What were the specific communication channels or methods used to inform former combatants about the program?
4. Were there any challenges encountered in communicating the details and benefits of the program to former combatants, and if so, how were these challenges addressed?
5. How did you ensure that the communication of the program was accessible and understandable to former MILF combatants with varying levels of education and background?
6. How were decisions made for the program? How did you engage them? Did you use the top-bottom approach or bottom-top approach?
7. Can you provide examples of successful communication strategies or initiatives that effectively engaged former combatants and encouraged their participation in the program?
8. How did former MILF combatants initially become aware of the concept of organic farming, and what motivated their interest in learning more about it?
9. Who or what were the agencies or organizations involved in educating former combatants about organic farming practices and principles?
10. Were there any specific training programs or workshops organized to teach former combatants about organic farming, and if so, how were they structured and conducted?

11. Can you discuss any challenges or barriers faced by former combatants in acquiring knowledge about organic farming, and how were these challenges addressed?
12. What support or resources were provided to former MILF combatants from the production stage, acquisition of certificate/standards and marketing their organic products?
13. How were they organized? What support did you provide for them?
14. What ordinances or policies were implemented to support organic farming initiatives within the “From Arms to Farms” program, and how were these policies communicated to former MILF combatants?
15. How were organic standards, benefits, and marketing strategies explained to former MILF combatants, and what efforts were made to ensure their understanding and acceptance of these concepts?

## **ANNEX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**(ENGLISH)**

### **PART I: INFORMATION SHEET**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

I am Lou Ellen L. Antonio, currently pursuing a Master's degree in Development Communication at the UP Open University. I am conducting a study titled "From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants". You are invited to participate in this research voluntarily. Please take your time to decide whether you wish to participate or not. If you have any questions or if some terms are unclear, feel free to ask, and I will explain them to you.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

This study aims to explore the communication triggers that facilitated the transformation of former MILF combatants in Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod municipalities in the province of Lanao del Norte through their engagement in organic farming. Specifically, the study aimed to describe the narratives of former MILF combatants as they transition to becoming organic farmers; and explain how their personal stories contributed to their transformation through organic farming.

#### **TYPE OF RESEARCH INTERVENTION**

Your participation in this research involves answering questions during interviews. These interviews will be conducted in a conversational manner to gather your experiences and opinions.

## **PARTICIPANT SELECTION**

(Former MILF combatant)

You have been chosen to participate in this research because of your unique experiences and insights as a former MILF combatant who has now embraced organic farming. Your perspective is also valuable in understanding the effectiveness of the “From Arms to Farms” program.

(Municipal Agriculture Officer)

You have been chosen to participate in this research because of your involvement in the “From Arms to Farms” program, which aimed to transform stakeholders formerly engaged in conflict with the MILF through organic farming. Your firsthand experience and perspective are important in assessing the effectiveness of the program and its impact on transitioning individuals from conflict to sustainable livelihoods.

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You have the right to decline participation or withdraw at any time without consequences. Your decision will not affect any services or benefits you receive from the program.

## **PROCEDURES**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your experiences with the “From Arms to Farms” program and organic farming. These interviews will take place in a location of your choice, and only the researcher will be present. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, the researcher will move on to the next question. Your responses will be recorded for research

purposes and kept confidential. The interview records will be securely stored and destroyed after the study is completed.

## **DURATION**

Your participation will involve one or more interviews, each lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. There may also be a follow-up interview if necessary.

## **RISKS**

There are no significant risks associated with participating in this research. You are not obliged to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

## **BENEFITS**

Participating in this research will contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and successes faced by former combatants in transitioning to organic farming. Your insights may help improve future programs and initiatives for former combatants and also other organic farmers.

## **REIMBURSEMENTS**

You will not receive any payments for participating in this research.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your privacy and confidentiality are of utmost importance. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Your identity will be protected, and no identifying information will be included in any publications or presentations resulting from this research.

## PART II: CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT

I, [Participant's Name], hereby acknowledge that I have been informed about the research study titled “From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants”.

This study seeks to explore the communication triggers that facilitated the transformation of former MILF combatants through organic farming. Additionally, it aims to explore the narratives of former MILF combatants and explain how their personal stories contributed to their transformation through organic farming.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: [MM/DD/YYYY] \_\_\_\_\_

If Illiterate

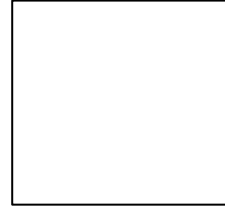
*A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.*

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness \_\_\_\_\_

Thumb print of participant:

Signature of witness \_\_\_\_\_



Date: [MM/DD/YYYY] \_\_\_\_\_

#### STATEMENT BY THE RESEARCHER OR PERSON TAKING CONSENT

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands that the following will be done:

1. The participant will be involved in an interview to gather information about their experiences and perceptions related to organic farming and their transformation from armed conflict.
2. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study, and any personal information shared will be kept strictly confidential.
3. The participant's voluntary participation is highly valued, and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher or person taking the consent

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher or person taking the consent

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: : <MM/DD/YYYY> \_\_\_\_\_

(Taken from UPOU IREC,2021)

## **(BISAYA)**

### **PART I: INFORMATION SHEET**

#### **PASIUNA**

Ako si Lou Ellen L. Antonio, nag-eskwela og Master's degree sa Development Communication sa UP Open University. Kasamtangang naghimo ako og research o pagtuon nga giulohan og “From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants”. Giimbitahan ka sa pag-apil niini nga research nga boluntaryo. Gihangyo ang imong paggahin sa imong oras sa pagdesisyon kung gusto nimo nga moapil o dili. Kung naa kay mga pangutana o kung adunay mga termino nga dili klaro, ayaw pagduhaduha sa pagpangutana, ug akong ipasabut kini kanimo.

#### **KATUYOAN SA PAGSUSI**

Kini nga research nagtumong sa pagsabot sa mga hinungdan nga nagpabag-o sa mga kanhi MILF combatants sa mga lungsod sa Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, ug Bacolod sa probinsiya sa Lanao del Norte pinaagi sa programa nga “From Arms to Farms”. Tumong sa maong research nga masabtan ang mga istorya nila bahin sa pagkahimo nilang mang-uuma ug paunsa kini nakaapekto sa ilang kabag-ohan isip organic farmer.

#### **KLASE SA RESEARCH INTERVENTION**

Ang imong pag-apil niini nga research study naglakip sa pagtubag sa mga pangutana atol sa mga interbyu. Kini nga mga interbyu ipahigayon sa usa ka panag-istoryahanay nga paagi aron makuha ang imong mga kasinatian ug mga opinyon.

## **PAGPILI SA PARTISIPANTE**

(Former MILF combatant)

Gipili ka nga moapil niini nga research study tungod sa imong talagsaon nga mga kasinatian ug mga panabut isip kanhi MILF combatant nga karon mihangop sa organic farming. Bililhon usab ang imong panglantaw sa pagsabot sa pagkaepektibo sa programang From Arms to Farms.

## **BULUNTARYO NGA PARTISIPASYON**

Ang imong pag-apil niini nga research study hingpit nga boluntaryo. Aduna kay katungod sa pagdumili sa pag-apil o pag-atras sa bisan unsang oras nga walay mga sangputanan. Ang imong desisyon dili makaapekto sa bisan unsang mga serbisyo o benepisyo nga imong madawat gikan sa programa.

## **PAMAAGI**

Kung mouyon ka nga moapil, pangutan-on ka bahin sa imong mga kasinatian sa programa nga From Arms to Farms ug organikong pagpanguma. Kini nga mga interbyu mahitabo sa usa ka lokasyon nga imong gipili, ug ang tigsusi o researcher lamang ang anaa. Kung dili nimo gusto nga tubagon ang bisan unsang mga pangutana sa panahon sa interbyu, magpadayon ang researcher sa sunod nga pangutana. Ang imong mga tubag irekord alang sa mga katuyoan sa research ug huptan nga kompidensyal. Ang mga rekord sa interbyu luwas nga tipigan ug gub-on pagkahuman sa research.

## **KADUGAYAN**

Ang imong pag-apil maglakip sa usa o daghan pa nga mga interbyu, ang matag usa molungtad mga 45-60 minuto. Mahimo usab nga adunay usa ka follow-up nga interbyu kung gikinahanglan.

## **MGA RISGO**

Walay mahinungdanon nga mga risiko nga nalangkob sa pag-apil niini nga research. Dili ka obligado sa pagtubag sa bisan unsang mga pangutana nga makapahimo kanimo nga dili komportable.

## **MGA BENEFISYO**

Ang pag-apil niini nga research study makatabang sa mas maayong pagsabot sa mga hagit ug mga kalampusan nga giatubang sa kanhing mga manggugubat sa pagsagop sa organikong pagpanguma. Ang imong mga panabut mahimong makatabang sa pagpauswag sa umaabot nga mga programa ug mga inisyatibo alang sa kanhing mga manggugubat ug uban pang mga organikong mag-uuma.

## **REIMBURSEMENT**

Dili ka makadawat og bisan unsang bayad alang sa pag-apil niini nga research.

## **KUMPIDENSYAL**

Ang imong pribasiya maoy labing importante. Ang tanan nga impormasyon nga imong ihatag hugtanong huptan nga kompidensyal ug gamiton lamang alang sa mga katuyoan sa research. Protektahan ang imong pagkatawo, ug walay impormasyon

sa pag-ila ang iapil sa bisan unsang publikasyon o presentasyon nga resulta niini nga research.

## **PART II: CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT**

Ako si, [Ngalan sa Partisipante], miila nga gipahibalo ko bahin sa research nga giulohan og “From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants”.

Kini nga pagtuon nagtinguha sa pagsabot sa mga hinungdan nga nagpagbag-o sa mga kanhi MILF combatants pinaagi sa organic farming. Dugang pa, kini nagtumong sa pagsabot sa ilang mga istorya sa ilang kabag-ohan isip organic farmer.

Nabasa nako ang mga impormasyon, o gibasa na kini kanako. Nakahigayon ko sa pagpangutana bahin niini ug ang bisan unsang pangutana nga gipangutana nako natubag sa akong katagbawan. Ako boluntaryong mitugot nga mahimong partisipante niini nga pagtuon.

Pangalan sa Partisipante: \_\_\_\_\_

Pirma s Partisipante: \_\_\_\_\_

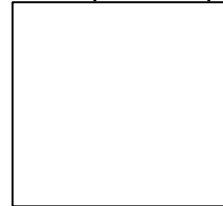
Petsa: [MM/DD/YYYY] \_\_\_\_\_

Kung dili makabasa

*Kinahanglang mopirma ang usa ka saksi nga makabasa (kung mahimo, kini nga tawo kinahanglan nga pilion sa partisipante ug kinahanglan nga walay koneksyon sa grupo sa research). Ang mga partisipante nga dili makamaong mobasa ug mobasa kinahanglan nga maglakip usab sa ilang thumb print.*

Akong nasaksihan ang tukma nga pagbasa sa consent form sa potensyal nga partisipante, ug ang indibidwal adunay higayon sa pagpangutana. Akong gikumpirma nga ang indibidwal naghatag ug pagtugot nga boluntaryo.

Pangalan sa Partisipante: \_\_\_\_\_ Thumb print sa partisipante:



Pirma s Partisipante: \_\_\_\_\_

Petsa: [MM/DD/YYYY] \_\_\_\_\_

#### PAHAYAG SA RESEARCHER O TAWO NGA NAGHATAG SA CONSENT

Sakto nakong gibasa ang information sheet ngadto sa potensyal nga partisipante, ug kutob sa akong mahimo nakasiguro nga ang partisipante nakasabut nga ang mosunod pagabuhaton:

1. Ang partisipante moapil sa usa ka interbyu aron makakuha og impormasyon mahitungod sa ilang mga kasinatian ug mga panglantaw nga may kalabutan sa organikong pagpanguma ug ang ilang pagbag-o gikan sa armadong panagbangi.
2. Ipabilin nga kompidensiyal ang tibuok nga pagtuo, ug ang bisan unsang personal nga impormasyon nga ipaambit.
3. Ang boluntaryo nga pag-apil sa partisipante gipabilhan pag-ayo, ug aduna silay katungod sa pag-atras gikan sa pagtuon bisan unsang orasa nga wala mag-atubang sa bisan unsang sangputanan.

Akong gikumpirma nga gihatagan ug higayon ang partisipante sa pagpangutana bahin sa research, ug ang tanan nga mga pangutana nga gipangutana sa partisipante natubag sa husto ug kutob sa akong mahimo. Akong gikumpirma nga ang indibidwal wala pugsa sa paghatag ug pagtugot, ug ang pagtugot gihatag nga gawasnon ug boluntaryo.

Usa ka kopya niini nga Informed Consent Form gihatag sa partisipante.

Pangalan sa Researcher o tawo nga gihatag sa consent

\_\_\_\_\_

Pirma sa Researcher or o tawo nga gihatag sa consent

\_\_\_\_\_

Petsa: : <MM/DD/YYYY> \_\_\_\_\_

(Gikan sa UPOU IREC, 2021)

## ANNEX D: LETTER TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF KAUSWAGAN

16 April 2024

**MAYOR ROMMEL ARNADO**

Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte

THRU: **ADELINO RICO**  
Municipal Agriculture Officer

Dear Sir,

Greetings of Peace!

I am Lou Ellen Antonio, and I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in Development Communication at the UP Open University. I am writing to seek your assistance with my thesis study, titled "From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants".

My study focuses on exploring how communication triggers facilitated the transformation of former MILF combatants in Kauswagan, Munai, Tangcal, and Bacolod municipalities in the province of Lanao del Norte through their engagement in organic farming. Specifically, the study aims to describe the narratives of former MILF combatants as they transition to becoming organic farmers; and explain how their personal stories contributed to their transformation through organic farming.

With this, I am reaching out to seek your assistance in identifying and connecting with potential participants who meet the criteria for my study.

The criteria needed for my study are as follows:

1. Former MILF combatant involved in armed conflicts until 2008
2. Direct beneficiaries of the "From Arms to Farms" program
3. Demonstrated successful transition to civilian life through sustained employment or entrepreneurial activities
4. Active engagement in organic farming
5. Ability to communicate in the Cebuano or Filipino language
6. Willing to be a participant in this study

Your support and cooperation in this matter would greatly contribute to the success of my research and help promote public understanding of the transformative potential of organic farming initiatives for former combatants in other communities. I assure you that all information shared will be handled with the utmost confidentiality and respect for privacy.

I am looking forward to your favorable response and the opportunity to discuss further details of my research with you. For more details or questions, please contact me at 0955 8069 309.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Lou Ellen L. Antonio

## **ANNEX E: LETTER TO THE FORMER MILF COMBATANTS**

16 April 2024

### **NAME OF PARTICIPANT**

Former MILF combatant

Dear (NAME OF PARTICIPANT)

Greetings of Peace!

I am Lou Ellen Antonio, and I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in Development Communication at the UP Open University. I am writing to request your participation in a research study, titled "From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants".

My study focuses on exploring how communication triggers contribute to the transformation of former MILF combatants through the "From Arms to Farms" program. As a former combatant who has embraced organic farming, your experiences and perspectives are valuable to the study. The interview questions will be based on the following research objectives:

1. To describe the narratives of former MILF combatants as they transition to becoming organic farmers; and
2. To explain how the personal stories of former MILF combatants contributed to their transformation through organic farming.

You will be interviewed at a time convenient for you. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and all information shared will be kept confidential.

Participation is voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without consequences. Your anonymity will be respected, and collected data will be used solely for research.

I am looking forward to your favorable response and the opportunity to discuss further details of my research with you.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Lou Ellen L. Antonio

Abril 16, 2024

NGALAN SA PARTISIPANTE

Kanhi MILF combatant

(NGALAN SA PARTISIPANTE)

Maayong kalinaw!

Ako si Lou Ellen Antonio, estudyante sa Master of Development Communication sa UP Open University. Nagsulat ako aron hangyoon ang imong pag-apil sa usa ka research nga giulohan og “From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants”.

Kini nga research nagtumong sa pagsabot kung giunsa pagtabang sa mga estratehiya sa komunikasyon sa pagbag-o sa mga kanhi MILF combatants pinaagi sa programa nga “From Arms to Farms”.

Isip usa ka kanhi manggugubat nga misagop sa organikong pagpanguma, importante ang imong mga kasinatian ug mga panglantaw sa maong research study. Ang mga pangutana sa interbyu ibase sa mosunod nga mga tumong:

1. Masabtan ang mga hinungdan nga nakapabag-o sa mga kanhi MILF combatants
2. Masabtan ang mga istorya nila bahin sa pagkahimo nilang mang-uuma ug paunsa kini nakaapekto sa ilang kabag-ohan isip organic farmer.

Interbyuhon ka sa oras nga imong gipili. Ang interbyu molungtad og gibana-bana nga 45-60 ka minuto, ug ang tanang impormasyon nga gipaambit pagatagoon nga kompidensyal.

Boluntaryo ang pag-apil niining study nga adunay kapilian sa pag-atras bisan unsang oras nga wala’y mga sangputanan. Respetuhon ang imong pagka-anonymity, ug ang mga nakolekta nga datos gamiton ra alang sa research study.

Gipaabut nako ang imong tubag ug ang higayon nga hisgutan ang dugang nga mga detalye sa akong research study uban kanimo.

Salamat kaayo.

Kinasingkasing,

Lou Ellen L. Antonio

## **ANNEX F: LETTER TO THE MUNICIPAL AGRICULTURE OFFICER OF KAUSWAGAN**

16 April 2024

### **ADELINO RICO**

Municipal Agriculture Officer  
Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte

Dear Sir:

I am Lou Ellen Antonio, and I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in Development Communication at the UP Open University. I am writing to request your participation in a research study, titled "From Arms to Farms: Communication Triggers Towards Transformation of Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants"

My study focuses on exploring how communication strategies contribute to the transformation of former MILF combatants through the From Arms to Farms program. As someone involved in the From Arms to Farms program, your insights are valuable to the study. The interview questions will be based on the following research objectives:

1. To describe the narratives of former MILF combatants as they transition to becoming organic farmers; and
2. To explain how the personal stories of former MILF combatants contributed to their transformation through organic farming.

You will be interviewed at a time convenient for you. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and all information shared will be kept confidential.

Participation is voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without consequences. Your anonymity will be respected, and collected data will be used solely for research.

I am looking forward to your favorable response and the opportunity to discuss further details of my research with you.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Lou Ellen L. Antonio