



Philippines community leader after her family moved into the home that CRS built. Photo credit: Jomari Guillermo.

## A Philippines Case study: Uniting Social Cohesion and Homes and Communities.

In alignment with [CRS' Strategic Change Platform 1: Fostering Just and Cohesive Societies](#), [CRS Philippines](#) has undertaken an initiative to integrate Social Cohesion and Justice (SC&J) principles into their ongoing efforts, including the Anibong Resettlement Project and Emergency Preparedness and Response project (ARP project). The ARP project aim was to provide decent housing and essential services to marginalized groups residing in diverse settings, including urban/rural and island communities.

The Bangsamoro region of Philippines faces with deep-seated challenges rooted in historical conflicts and social disparities. Prolonged armed conflicts have led to widespread displacement, stark economic inequalities, and limited access to essential services. Persistent issues, including poverty, housing deficiencies, and critical infrastructure gaps, persistently affect marginalized communities. Besides, international and local organizations and government agencies have historically prioritize the region's infrastructure development,

overshadowing considerations of social cohesion and equitable resource allocation.

In response to these multifaceted challenges, CRS Philippines, together with its partner [Ministry of Human Settlements and Development \(MHSD\)](#)<sup>1</sup> in the Bangsamoro region, implemented a pilot initiative that placed emphasis on the principles of Social Cohesion and Justice (SC&J) under their Homes & Communities (H&C) program. CRS Philippines H&C team began socializing the social mobilization processes under the ARP project and this pilot initiative aimed to support their efforts by cultivating stronger social cohesion, hoping to enhance the overall outcomes for H&C. This approach acknowledges the need to address not only the physical development aspects but also the intangible social bonds to foster holistic and sustainable transformation in the Bangsamoro region. Additionally, integrating SCJ lenses helped support advocacy efforts to government for moral governance, including inclusion, equality, and access to services, among other critical aspects.

<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Human Settlements and Development (MHSD) is a newly established agency within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

## The Social Cohesion and Justice integration process

To commence the integration process, CRS Philippines in collaboration with MHSD, executed a series of essential activities under the Homes and Communities Program.

### ▪ Learning Visits to Resettlement Projects

The CRS Philippines organized learning visits for MHSD, focusing on shelter and settlement experiences. The first visit included diverse resettlement communities, offering insights into shelter construction for displaced communities and the integration of social cohesion into community building and beneficiary selection. The second visit demonstrated practical social cohesion in a Local Government Unit (LGU)-managed holistic resettlement project, emphasizing beneficiary involvement and improved service accessibility. These visits significantly contributed to the integration process, raising awareness and paving the way for SC&J principles in housing and resettlement programs..

### ▪ Development of the Social Mobilization Manual

MHSD and CRS Philippines collaboratively crafted a Social Mobilization Manual in alignment with MHSD's housing programs. This comprehensive manual integrates SC&J principles while emphasizing essential components such as the engagement of shelter beneficiaries in site selection and development planning, the establishment of Homeowners Associations with leadership development at its core, the creation of local inter-agency working groups to offer guidance and supplementary services at resettlement sites, the incorporation of additional social structures linked with host LGUs to enhance accountability and participation, and the provision of maintenance training, all facilitating a smooth turnover process.

### ▪ Frameworks for SC&J Integration

MHSD utilized two essential frameworks for integrating SC&J principles into their operations. Firstly, they adopted the Social Cohesion Barometer (SCB)<sup>2</sup> as one of the tools in the social mobilization process. This helped to facilitate community mapping with a comprehensive approach that considered socio-cultural, political, and economic dimensions. Secondly, they used the 3Bs framework<sup>3</sup>, beyond other tools, as a guide to define collaboration and coordination with relevant ministries and agencies. This framework also delineated key elements of the participatory and consultative process: the reconstruction of internal processes of the Ministry

(binding), empowering local government units (bonding), and fostering community consultations (bridging).

### ▪ Institutional Strengthening for the SC&J Integration

MHSD's commitment to infusing social cohesion into all facets of housing and settlement programs led to a significant transformation in its internal structures and policies. Notably, the establishment of a dedicated Social Mobilization/Community Support Services Division, coupled with budget allocation for FY 2023, signified a crucial turning point. This structural enhancement facilitated a more consultative approach, engaging beneficiaries, LGUs, and NGOs. MHSD's vision of nurturing the "ummah" (community) underscored the significance of robust partnerships with LGUs, context-sensitive beneficiary designs, cross-ministry collaboration, and an inclusive, consultative process during housing design and allocation. Furthermore, it encompassed policy formulation for housing standardization, spanning BARMM and the National Housing Authority, aligning with a commitment to holistic, community-centered development.

### ▪ Partnership Reflection and Planning: Fostering Local Leadership and Sustainability

The CRS-MHSD Partnership, Reflection, and Planning workshop convened key officials and staff from the MHSD and CRS H&C team to reflect on the ongoing integration efforts and outline the comprehensive implementation plan for the partnership. This final pilot phase underscored the importance of integrating SC&J principles within the project, harmonizing procedures, and establishing consistent standards throughout the resettlements project's scope. Also, this phase emphasized the need for continuous monitoring and accompaniment, especially during the execution of social mobilization activities within selected MHSD shelter sites. These strategic and deliberate actions were pivotal in setting the stage for nurturing local leadership, promoting stewardship, and ensuring the project's long-term sustainability.

The integration of SC&J principles within the H&C program has yielded insights and recommendations for similar initiatives in the future:

- Learning visits are crucial for stakeholders to embrace SC&J integration.
- Employ SC&J frameworks to guide the integration process effectively.
- Local leadership strengthens sustainability and government-community linkages.
- Aligning the objective of the integration not only with project goals, but also with the needs/demands of the project stakeholders.
- Support stakeholder formation, capacity building, legal education, and social cohesion knowledge for active community involvement.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/mini-social-cohesion-barometer>

<sup>3</sup> CRS' 3Bs (Binding, Bonding, Bridging) peace-building approach