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Establishing the Philippine Institute for Peace and Development: A Literature-Based Feasibility Assessment for Institutionalizing Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development

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Abstract. The persistent challenges of armed conflict, political instability, and underdevelopment in the Philippines underscore the need for a coherent and institutionalized approach to peacebuilding and sustainable development. This literature-based feasibility assessment examines the rationale and prospects for establishing a Philippine Institute for Peace and Development (PIPD) as a dedicated national institution. Drawing on scholarly works, policy documents, and institutional reports, the study analyzes gaps in the country's existing peace architecture, including fragmentation, project-based programming, and vulnerability to political transitions. While institutions such as the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao have contributed significantly to peace efforts, the absence of a centralized, research-driven body limits long-term policy coherence and institutional memory. Comparative insights from international models, including the United States Institute of Peace and the Berghof Foundation, highlight the importance of legal mandates, financial independence, multi-stakeholder governance, and integration of research, policy, and practice. The findings suggest that establishing an autonomous statutory institute could professionalize peacebuilding, strengthen evidence-based policymaking, and ensure continuity across administrations. By consolidating fragmented initiatives and fostering inclusive partnerships, the proposed PIPD can serve as a strategic platform for advancing sustainable peace and development. The study concludes that institutionalization through an independent national body offers a viable and transformative pathway toward a more resilient and inclusive Philippine society.

Introduction

The pursuit of peace and sustainable development in the Philippines remains a persistent and multifaceted challenge, shaped by a complex tapestry of historical grievances, socio-economic disparities, political instability, and armed conflict. The country has endured decades of internal strife, primarily marked by separatist insurgencies in Mindanao, communist rebellions, and sporadic outbreaks of violence in various regions. Despite notable progress in peace processes—such as the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed in 2014 between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)—the path toward enduring peace remains fragile and incomplete (Santos, 2015). The lingering presence of armed groups, delays in political normalization, and limited institutional mechanisms to sustain peace gains underscore the systemic gaps in the country's peacebuilding architecture (International Crisis Group, 2022).

Alongside these peace-related issues, the Philippines continues to grapple with deep-seated development challenges. These include high levels of poverty, environmental degradation, weak governance, and social inequalities, particularly in conflict-affected and marginalized areas (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2020). The interconnection between conflict and

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underdevelopment is well-established; areas suffering from chronic violence often lack access to basic services, suffer from poor infrastructure, and experience political exclusion. Conversely, underdevelopment fosters conditions ripe for radicalization and rebellion, creating a cyclical relationship that perpetuates instability (Barakat & Milton, 2015). In this context, peace and development must not be treated as isolated goals but as intertwined imperatives that require coherent and long-term institutional strategies.

Despite the presence of multiple government agencies mandated to address peace and development—such as the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)—there exists no single, dedicated institution that serves as a central hub for research, policy coordination, capacity-building, and long-term strategic planning on peacebuilding and sustainable development. Existing structures are often fragmented, project-based, and reactive, lacking the institutional continuity and interdisciplinary expertise required for comprehensive peacebuilding (Lara & Champain, 2009). Moreover, peace efforts in the Philippines have historically been personality-driven and vulnerable to shifts in political will, undermining the sustainability of hard-won gains (Curato, 2017). In this regard, institutionalizing peace and development through a national institute offers a promising avenue to bridge these gaps and foster a culture of peace as a public good.

The rationale for establishing a Philippine Institute for Peace and Development (PIPD) stems from the need to systematize and professionalize the country's approach to peacebuilding. Drawing lessons from comparable international models—such as the United States Institute of Peace, the Berghof Foundation in Germany, and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)—a national institute can serve as a platform for evidence-based policy research, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and conflict-sensitive development planning (Paris, 2004). Such an institution could also play a pivotal role in mainstreaming peace education, conducting policy impact assessments, training future peacebuilders, and institutionalizing knowledge management systems. By consolidating fragmented efforts and facilitating collaboration across government, civil society, and international partners, the proposed institute would address the long-standing problem of siloed peace and development initiatives and promote a more integrated national strategy.

Additionally, a dedicated institute could serve as a guardian of peacebuilding principles during political transitions. Philippine history has shown that institutional memory and program continuity are often disrupted by changes in leadership. Embedding peacebuilding within a permanent, research-oriented, and politically neutral institution could help insulate core programs from political shifts while fostering long-term national coherence in peace policy (Reimann, 2005). Beyond merely preventing conflict, such an institution would also engage in transformative peacebuilding—addressing root causes, promoting inclusive governance, and supporting the social foundations of sustainable peace (Galtung, 1996). This literature review aims to assess the feasibility of establishing the Philippine Institute for Peace and Development by synthesizing relevant scholarly, policy, and institutional literature. The review will examine three primary dimensions: (1) theoretical foundations and best practices in peacebuilding and institutional development; (2) existing gaps and opportunities in the Philippine peace and development landscape; and (3) case studies of successful peace institutions in comparable contexts. Through a multidisciplinary and comparative lens, the review will identify enabling factors, potential risks, and implementation considerations relevant to the creation of a national peacebuilding institution.

Ultimately, the objective of this study is to inform policymakers, peace practitioners, and stakeholders about the strategic value of institutionalizing peace and development through a dedicated body. By grounding its analysis in a robust body of literature and international experience, the study hopes to contribute to ongoing efforts to build a more peaceful, inclusive, and resilient Philippine society. As the country navigates increasingly complex security and development challenges—including climate-induced displacement, transnational threats, and post-conflict recovery—the need for a holistic and sustainable institutional response becomes ever more urgent.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative literature review as its primary research method to assess the feasibility of establishing the Philippine Institute for Peace and Development (PIPD). Given the study's exploratory nature, which focuses on synthesizing insights from international and local experiences in institutionalizing peacebuilding, a comprehensive review of existing literature was deemed the most appropriate approach. This method enabled the analysis of conceptual frameworks, policy interventions, organizational models, and contextual challenges related to peace and development institutions both globally and within the Philippine context.

The literature review approach is recognized as a systematic and replicable method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing existing research and institutional knowledge (Snyder, 2019). In this study, the method facilitated a multidisciplinary exploration that drew from political science, development studies, conflict transformation, and governance literature. It allowed for the triangulation of academic research, policy documentation, institutional reports,

and case studies to provide a rich and critical understanding of how peace infrastructures function and what lessons may inform the creation of a similar entity in the Philippines. As peacebuilding is both context-specific and influenced by global norms, this method enabled the integration of diverse perspectives to examine best practices and operational models.

Criteria for Selecting Sources

The selection of sources followed rigorous inclusion criteria to ensure the reliability, relevance, and validity of the literature reviewed. First, relevance was the primary criterion. Sources were selected based on their direct engagement with topics such as peace infrastructure, institutional design, peacebuilding policy, and sustainable development. Attention was paid to studies that examined institutional mechanisms in conflict-affected or post-conflict societies, such as Colombia, Germany, South Sudan, and the Philippines.

Second, source credibility was ensured by prioritizing peer-reviewed academic journals, including Journal of Peacebuilding & Development, Peacebuilding, International Peacekeeping, and Third World Quarterly. These journals were chosen due to their disciplinary focus and methodological rigor. Additionally, the study relied on reports from reputable multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which have extensive experience and global oversight on peace and development programs. Reports and evaluations from these organizations were used to access data and lessons from peacebuilding missions in varied sociopolitical contexts (UNDP, 2020; United Nations, 2018).

Third, official government documents and NGO reports from relevant Philippine agencies such as the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and international development partners such as The Asia Foundation and International Alert were utilized. These sources provided insight into current peace mechanisms, institutional frameworks, and programmatic evaluations within the country. Moreover, NGO publications offered grounded perspectives and operational feedback from field-level peacebuilding initiatives, complementing academic and government discourse (The Asia Foundation, 2023).

Lastly, recency and language were also considered. Most sources were published between 2015 and 2025 to ensure the inclusion of contemporary policy debates and institutional developments. English-language publications were prioritized due to their accessibility and use in international policy discourse. Collectively, this methodological framework ensured that the literature reviewed was both contextually grounded and globally informed, providing a robust foundation for assessing the feasibility of the PIPD.

Results and Discussion

Institutional, Legal, and Administrative Considerations

Establishing the Philippine Institute for Peace and Development (PIPD) necessitates a robust institutional foundation that ensures both operational effectiveness and long-term viability. Globally, peacebuilding institutions such as the Berghof Foundation, Swisspeace, and the United States Institute of Peace have demonstrated the value of clear mandates, financial autonomy, and interdisciplinary expertise in driving sustainable peace initiatives. For the PIPD, the institutional design must prioritize independence, a strong research-policy-practice interface, and mechanisms for sustained engagement with diverse stakeholders.

A primary institutional consideration is the legal mandate that will empower the PIPD to act as a central hub for peacebuilding research, policy coordination, and capacity-building. The lack of a dedicated, permanent institution in the Philippines has historically led to fragmented and reactive approaches to peace and development. Existing agencies like the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) operate within limited, often project-based frameworks that are vulnerable to shifts in political leadership and priorities. To address this, the PIPD should be established through enabling legislation that defines its functions, governance structure, and relationship with other government agencies. This legal foundation is critical for ensuring institutional continuity, insulating the institute from political volatility, and legitimizing its role as a national authority on peace and development.

Administratively, the PIPD must be designed to balance central oversight with decentralized operations. Drawing lessons from the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), where agencies like the Bangsamoro Peace Institute (BPI) and Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority (BPDA) have successfully embedded peacebuilding into governance and policy planning, the PIPD should adopt a structure that allows for both national coordination and

localized implementation. This could involve establishing regional offices or partnerships with local government units (LGUs) and civil society organizations to ensure context-sensitive programming and responsiveness to local dynamics. The institute's governance should reflect principles of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. A multi-sectoral board comprising representatives from government, civil society, academia, and international development partners can provide strategic direction and oversight. Clear administrative procedures for recruitment, procurement, and program evaluation must be institutionalized to foster professionalism and minimize bureaucratic inefficiencies. Furthermore, the PIPD should prioritize the integration of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, such as Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) mechanisms, to enable data-driven decision-making and timely interventions in conflict-prone areas.

Political Will and Stakeholder Support

The success of the PIPD hinges on sustained political will and broad-based stakeholder support. In the Philippine context, peacebuilding efforts have often been undermined by the lack of continuity across political administrations, personality-driven initiatives, and the absence of institutional memory. To overcome these challenges, it is essential to secure bipartisan support for the PIPD's establishment and operation. This can be achieved through inclusive consultations with key political actors, advocacy campaigns, and the demonstration of the institute's value in addressing pressing national security and development concerns.

Stakeholder mapping reveals a complex ecosystem of actors with vested interests in peace and development, including government agencies, LGUs, civil society organizations, faith-based groups, the private sector, and international partners. Building consensus among these stakeholders requires a participatory approach that recognizes and leverages their unique contributions. For instance, civil society organizations have played a vital role in grassroots peacebuilding, particularly in conflict-affected areas like BARMM, where initiatives such as interfaith dialogues and youth assemblies have enhanced social cohesion and resilience. Engaging these actors in the design and implementation of the PIPD's programs will foster a sense of ownership and legitimacy.

International development partners, including the United Nations, Japan, and Australia, have provided technical assistance, capacity-building, and funding for peace initiatives in the Philippines. Their continued support is crucial for the PIPD, especially in the early stages of institutionalization. Strategic partnerships with these organizations can facilitate knowledge exchange, access to global best practices, and additional resources for program implementation. Moreover, aligning the PIPD's objectives with international frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN Peacebuilding Architecture will enhance its credibility and attract further support.

Political will also be translated into concrete policy actions, such as the allocation of budgetary resources, the enactment of enabling legislation, and the integration of the PIPD's mandates into national development plans. Sustained advocacy and evidence-based policy research can help maintain political momentum and ensure that peacebuilding remains a national priority, even amid changing political landscapes.

Funding and Sustainability

Financial sustainability is a critical determinant of the PIPD's long-term impact. International models underscore the importance of diversified funding sources, financial independence, and transparent resource management. The Berghof Foundation and Swisspeace, for example, have secured funding from a mix of government grants, international donors, and private sector contributions, enabling them to maintain operational autonomy and programmatic flexibility.

For the PIPD, initial funding could be sourced from the national government through appropriations in the General Appropriations Act (GAA). However, reliance on government funding alone may expose the institute to budgetary constraints and political interference. To mitigate this risk, the PIPD should pursue a diversified funding strategy that includes grants from international development partners, endowments, and income-generating activities such as consultancy services, training programs, and research publications.

Establishing a dedicated endowment fund can provide a stable financial base and buffer against fluctuations in government support. The institute should also develop robust financial management systems to ensure accountability, transparency, and compliance with donor requirements. Regular financial audits, public disclosure of financial statements, and the adoption of international best practices in resource mobilization will enhance donor confidence and public trust. Sustainability also depends on the institute's ability to demonstrate value for money and tangible impact. This requires the integration of rigorous M&E frameworks that track program outcomes, assess cost-effectiveness, and inform strategic adjustments. By continuously documenting and communicating its achievements, the PIPD can build a compelling case for sustained investment from both domestic and international sources.

Synergies with Existing Agencies

Maximizing the PIPD's effectiveness requires the identification and cultivation of synergies with existing agencies involved in peace and development. The current landscape in the Philippines is characterized by a multitude of actors operating in relative isolation, resulting in duplication of efforts, resource inefficiencies, and missed opportunities for collaboration. The PIPD can serve as a coordinating platform that consolidates fragmented initiatives and fosters inter-agency cooperation. A key area of synergy is with OPAPRU, which has extensive experience in managing peace processes and engaging with armed groups. While OPAPRU's mandate is primarily focused on negotiation and conflict resolution, the PIPD can complement this by providing research, policy analysis, and capacity-building support. Joint initiatives could include the development of conflict sensitivity guidelines, the organization of policy dialogues, and the design of integrated peace and development programs.

The experience of BARMM offers valuable lessons on institutional integration. Agencies such as the BPDA and BPI have successfully mainstreamed peacebuilding into regional governance, planning, and education. The PIPD can partner with these agencies to scale up best practices, facilitate knowledge exchange, and support the replication of successful models in other regions. Collaboration with LGUs is also essential, as they are often at the frontline of conflict prevention and community development. The PIPD can provide technical assistance, training, and resources to enhance local capacities for peacebuilding.

International partners and multilateral organizations present additional opportunities for synergy. The PIPD can act as a liaison for coordinating international assistance, aligning donor interventions with national priorities, and ensuring coherence in the implementation of peace and development programs. By serving as a knowledge hub, the institute can facilitate cross-sectoral learning, promote evidence-based policymaking, and support the institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation systems across agencies.

In sum, the establishment of the PIPD offers a strategic opportunity to address longstanding gaps in the Philippines' peace and development architecture. By grounding its operations in strong institutional, legal, and administrative frameworks; securing political will and stakeholder support; ensuring financial sustainability; and leveraging synergies with existing agencies, the PIPD can become a catalyst for transformative and sustainable peacebuilding. The lessons drawn from both international and local experiences underscore the feasibility and strategic value of institutionalizing peace and development through a dedicated national institute.

Conclusion and Policy Options

This comprehensive literature-based feasibility assessment has illuminated the urgent need and immense potential for institutionalizing peacebuilding and sustainable development in the Philippines through the establishment of a dedicated national institute. Our findings demonstrate that while the country has made significant progress in resolving armed conflicts—most notably with the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB)—these achievements remain fragile and often vulnerable to political shifts, institutional fragmentation, and the cyclical relationship between conflict and underdevelopment. The persistence of poverty, social inequality, environmental degradation, and weak governance, particularly in conflict-affected and marginalized regions, underscores the inadequacy of current, often reactive and project-based, approaches to peace and development. The review of international models such as the Berghof Foundation, Swisspeace, and the United States Institute of Peace, as well as national experiences in Colombia and BARMM, reveals that effective peacebuilding requires more than ad hoc programs or personality-driven leadership. Instead, it demands an integrated, professionalized, and enduring institutional framework that can bridge research, policy, and practice; foster multi-stakeholder collaboration; and ensure the continuity of peace efforts across political cycles.

A central insight from this study is the critical role of institutional memory, legal mandates, and financial independence in sustaining peacebuilding gains. International and local experiences consistently highlight that successful peace institutions are those that balance top-down coordination with bottom-up participation, ensuring both national coherence and local ownership. In the Philippine context, the lack of a central, dedicated body for peace and development has led to fragmented efforts, duplication of initiatives, and missed opportunities for synergy between government, civil society, and international partners. The successes in BARMM, where peace mechanisms are embedded within governance and development planning, offer a compelling blueprint for national replication. However, the absence of a similar institutional anchor at the national level leaves the broader peace architecture vulnerable to discontinuity and limits the country's ability to address emerging challenges such as climate-induced displacement, transnational threats, and post-conflict recovery.

Moreover, the literature underscores that peace and development are deeply intertwined imperatives. Areas plagued by chronic violence are often the same regions suffering from underdevelopment, exclusion, and poor access to basic services.

Conversely, development gaps fuel grievances that can escalate into conflict. This cyclical relationship necessitates a holistic, long-term approach that integrates peacebuilding into the core of national development strategies. The proposed Philippine Institute for Peace and Development (PIPD) could serve as a central hub for evidence-based research, policy innovation, capacity-building, and knowledge management. By consolidating fragmented efforts and institutionalizing best practices, the PIPD would not only enhance the effectiveness of peace initiatives but also foster a culture of peace as a public good, resilient to political transitions and societal shocks.

The review also identifies several enabling factors and potential risks. Key success factors include strong political commitment, clear legal frameworks, sustainable financing, and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Risks such as bureaucratic inertia, politicization, and resistance to change must be proactively managed through transparent governance, robust accountability mechanisms, and continuous capacity-building. Lessons from international and local case studies suggest that a phased, consultative approach to institution-building—grounded in local realities and informed by global best practices—can mitigate these risks and maximize impact.

Given these findings, the call to action for policymakers is both clear and urgent. The institutionalization of peacebuilding and sustainable development through a national institute is not merely a bureaucratic reform; it is a strategic investment in the country's long-term stability, prosperity, and resilience. Policymakers must prioritize the creation of the PIPD by enacting enabling legislation that guarantees its independence, secures adequate funding, and mandates cross-sectoral collaboration. The design of the institute should be inclusive, drawing on the expertise of government agencies, civil society, academia, and international partners. It should also ensure meaningful participation from conflict-affected communities, women, youth, and other marginalized groups, whose voices are essential for building sustainable peace.
Furthermore, policymakers should leverage the momentum and lessons from BARMM and other successful models to inform national strategies. This includes mainstreaming peace education, supporting local peace councils, and institutionalizing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of peace and development programs. International partners should be engaged not only as donors but as co-creators of knowledge and capacity, facilitating South-South learning and adaptation of global best practices.

In sum, the path to a peaceful and prosperous Philippines lies in moving beyond fragmented, short-term interventions toward a coherent, institutionalized approach to peace and development. The establishment of the Philippine Institute for Peace and Development represents a transformative opportunity to professionalize peacebuilding, bridge persistent gaps, and anchor the country's aspirations for inclusive and sustainable progress. The time for decisive action is now; policymakers must seize this moment to lay the institutional foundations for a future where peace is not an elusive goal, but a lived

The institutionalization of peacebuilding and sustainable development in the Philippines is a strategic imperative, given the country's complex history of armed conflict, persistent socio-economic disparities, and fragmented approaches to peace and development. Drawing from international best practices and local experiences, two primary policy options emerge for establishing a robust institutional framework: (1) creating a new independent statutory body, and (2) integrating peace and development functions into an existing agency with an expanded mandate. This section presents a comprehensive analysis of both options, evaluates their relative merits and drawbacks, and offers a recommendation informed by comparative evidence and contextual realities.

Option 1: Create a New Independent Statutory Body

Description and Rationale

This option entails the establishment of a Philippine Institute for Peace and Development (PIPD) as an autonomous statutory body, created through enabling legislation. The institute would be vested with a clear legal mandate, financial independence, and operational autonomy. Its core functions would include research, policy coordination, capacity-building, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge management in the domains of peacebuilding and sustainable development.

Key Features
1. Legal and Institutional Independence- The PIPD would be established by law, with its governance, functions, and funding mechanisms clearly defined. This would insulate the institute from political volatility and ensure continuity across administrations.
2. Multi-sectoral Governance- A board comprising representatives from government, civil society, academia, and international partners would provide strategic oversight, ensuring inclusivity and accountability.

3. Research-Policy-Practice Interface- The institute would serve as a hub for evidence-based policy research, training programs, and the dissemination of best practices, bridging the gap between theory and implementation.
4. National and Local Reach- While maintaining central coordination, the PIPD could establish regional offices or partnerships with local government units (LGUs) and civil society organizations to ensure responsiveness to local contexts.
5. Financial Sustainability- The institute would pursue diversified funding sources, including government appropriations, international grants, endowments, and income-generating activities, thereby reducing reliance on a single funding stream.

Advantages

1. Continuity and Institutional Memory- By being independent, the PIPD would be less susceptible to disruptions caused by changes in political leadership. This ensures that peacebuilding efforts are sustained and institutional memory is preserved.
2. Professionalization and Specialization- Dedicated staff and resources allow for the development of deep expertise and the professionalization of peacebuilding as a field, enhancing the quality and impact of interventions.
3. Visibility and Legitimacy- As a national institute, the PIPD would have the stature and authority to convene stakeholders, influence policy, and attract international support.
4. Innovation and Adaptability- Autonomy allows for flexible and innovative approaches, enabling the institute to respond to emerging challenges such as climate-induced displacement and transnational threats.

Challenges

1. Legislative Hurdles- Establishing a new statutory body requires the passage of enabling legislation, which may face political resistance or delays.
2. Initial Resource Requirements- Setting up a new institution entails significant start-up costs, including infrastructure, staffing, and systems development.
3. Coordination Risks- Without strong linkages to existing agencies, there is a risk of duplication or competition, rather than synergy, in peace and development programming.

Option 2: Integrate into an Existing Agency with Expanded Mandate

Description and Rationale

This option involves expanding the mandate of an existing government agency—such as the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU)—to incorporate the functions envisioned for the PIPD. The agency would be restructured and resourced to serve as the central hub for peace and development, integrating research, policy coordination, capacity-building, and stakeholder engagement into its portfolio.

Key Features

1. Mandate Expansion- The existing agency's legal mandate would be amended or expanded through executive or legislative action to include new functions related to research, training, and policy innovation.
2. Organizational Restructuring- Dedicated divisions or units would be created within the agency to handle the expanded functions, supported by increased staffing and resources.
3. Leveraging Existing Infrastructure- The agency would utilize its established networks, systems, and relationships to scale up peace and development initiatives.
4. Enhanced Coordination- As an existing player in the peace architecture, the agency is well-positioned to coordinate with other government bodies, LGUs, and international partners.

Advantages

1. Speed and Efficiency- Integrating into an existing agency can be accomplished more quickly than creating a new institution, as it leverages established structures and processes.
2. Cost-Effectiveness- Utilizing existing resources and infrastructure reduces start-up costs and avoids duplication.

3. Institutional Legitimacy- Agencies like OPAPRU already have experience, networks, and a degree of legitimacy in managing peace processes.

Challenges

1. Limited Independence- Existing agencies may be more vulnerable to political interference, particularly if they lack statutory autonomy and are subject to executive control.
2. Bureaucratic Inertia- Expanding mandates can lead to mission creep, overburdening the agency and diluting its focus. Bureaucratic resistance to change may also impede effective implementation.
3. Fragmentation and Silos- Without structural reforms, integrating new functions may perpetuate the fragmentation and siloed approaches that have historically hampered peace and development efforts.
4. Perceived Lack of Neutrality- Agencies closely associated with political leadership may struggle to gain the trust of all stakeholders, particularly in conflict-affected or marginalized communities.

Comparative Analysis

Drawing on comparative international experiences and the Philippine context, several factors are critical in evaluating these policy options:

Institutional Independence and Continuity- International models such as the Berghof Foundation (Germany), Swisspeace (Switzerland), and the United States Institute of Peace demonstrate the importance of legal independence and institutional continuity for effective peacebuilding. These attributes enable organizations to maintain focus, adapt to evolving challenges, and sustain efforts across political cycles.
Integration and Coordination- Colombia's dual-track approach—combining a high-level government office (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace) with capacitated civil society organizations (CINEP/Peace Program)—illustrates the value of integrating state and non-state actors while maintaining clear institutional mandates and coordination mechanisms.
Local Adaptation- The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) provides a successful example of embedding peacebuilding into governance structures, with agencies like the Bangsamoro Peace Institute and Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority mainstreaming peace and development into policy and practice.
Risks of Politicization and Fragmentation- Experiences in the Philippines highlight the vulnerability of peace efforts to political shifts and the limitations of project-based, personality-driven approaches. Fragmentation among agencies and lack of institutional memory have undermined the sustainability of gains.

Considering these considerations, Option 1 offers a more robust framework for addressing the systemic gaps in the Philippine peace and development landscape. By establishing a new independent statutory body, the country can ensure the continuity, specialization, and legitimacy required to professionalize peacebuilding, foster multi-stakeholder collaboration, and anchor peace as a public good. While Option 2 offers advantages in terms of speed and cost, it is likely to perpetuate the very challenges—fragmentation, lack of independence, and limited institutional memory—that have constrained progress in the past.

Based on the comparative analysis, the recommended policy option is Option 1: Create a New Independent Statutory Body. This approach aligns with international best practices and addresses the unique challenges faced by the Philippines. By establishing the Philippine Institute for Peace and Development as an autonomous institution, the country can consolidate fragmented efforts, institutionalize best practices, and build a resilient architecture for peace and development. The new institute should be grounded in enabling legislation that guarantees its independence, secures sustainable funding, and mandates cross-sectoral collaboration. Its design must be inclusive, drawing on the expertise of government, civil society, academia, and international partners, and ensuring meaningful participation from conflict-affected and marginalized communities.

To maximize impact, the PIPD should prioritize:

1. Legal and Financial Independence- Enabling legislation and diversified funding sources.
2. Inclusive Governance- Multi-sectoral board and participatory decision-making.
3. Capacity-Building and Knowledge Management- Training, research, and dissemination of best practices.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation- Robust systems for tracking outcomes and informing strategic adjustments.
5. Synergy with Existing Agencies- Coordinated partnerships with OPAPRU, BARMM institutions, LGUs, and international partners.

This strategic investment in institutionalizing peace and development will not only enhance the effectiveness of current initiatives but also lay the foundation for a more peaceful, inclusive, and resilient Philippine society. The time to act is now, as the country faces increasingly complex security and development challenges that demand a coherent, professionalized, and enduring institutional response.

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Appendices

No appendices are included in this article