

Terms of Reference (ToR): Authoring a Biography on Life and Leadership of a Traditional Mediator in Caraga

1. Context

Indigenous governance systems and customary justice mechanisms continue to sustain forms of social cohesion that often go unrecognized in the discourse on formal peacebuilding and formal legal mechanisms. Tribal justice systems do not only function as mechanisms for resolving inter- and intra-community disputes, but also as moral and relational processes through which small but potentially escalating contentions are addressed and social harmony is restored.

Strengthening and advancing non-violent conflict transformation (NVCT) has enhanced Indigenous leaders' influence and role in customary justice in Caraga region. Indigenous leaders' relevance as community mediators extends beyond individual cases. It is rooted in community's trust, moral authority, and a lived understanding of conflict, responsibility, and peaceful coexistence under conditions of uncertainty.

The book on the life and stories of leadership seeks to document the life and work of an indigenous leader not as an isolated biography, but as a lens into how Indigenous peace practice operates within a broader landscape of conflict, marginalization, and vulnerability. It aims to enhance the visibility of forms of leadership that are relational, have been sustained over time but are less commonly known. This biographical book and its publication are entirely for non-commercial, social and educational purpose.

2. Objectives

- To produce a biographical account of life, leadership, and peace practice of an Indigenous mediator from Caraga region.
- To critically reflect the conditions in which indigenous leadership emerges, the tensions it navigates, knowledge it embodies, practices of non-violent conflict transformation, Indigenous systems of justice and leadership.
- To author lived experience and reflections while seeking to understand how conflict transformation unfolds in real-world contexts, demonstrating examples of leadership in local peacebuilding.

3. Scope of Work

The consultant will serve as lead writer and researcher for this assignment, responsible for compiling, narrating, and presenting the stories of leadership from initial engagement with the selected IP leader to a publication-ready manuscript. The work will entail proper consent, FPIC, and compliance with relevant legal requirements.

Initiation

- Develop a plan and approach to research and writing.
- Building a relationship of trust with the Indigenous leader selected for this purpose and communities. forumZFD and consultant will work together to secure necessary clearances, permits, or Field-Based Investigation (FBI)/FPIC documentation before commencing field research and data collection.

Research and inquiry

- Primary and secondary research, interviews and observations.
- Sustained engagement with the life and experiences of the Indigenous leader, through a series of in-depth conversations. Trace the leader's life history, including formative years, learning and inspirations, influences, moments of crisis, and the gradual shaping of their roles as mediators, including conversations with community members, elders.

Developing manuscript

- Craft a narrative that is attentive to detail and structure, weaving personal story with broader analysis of the dynamics.
- Capture culture, rituals, significant life events, emotions, and different stages of life from different thematic perspectives such as leadership as a form of service, justice as restoration, mediation under conditions of insecurity, fear and political pressure, and the tension between customary and formal systems.

Validation of manuscript

- Review and validation through iterative feedback process.

Finalization

- Turning the manuscript into a coherent and publication-ready book.

4. Expected Voice and Orientation

The book is expected to be written in a style that is clear, reflective, and grounded, avoiding both overly technical language and superficial storytelling. The narrative demonstrates Indigenous leader's and the community's lived experience with care; sensitivity to context, culture, and power relationships; analytical depth with narrative clarity.

5. Deliverables and Timeline

The consultancy will run for approximately 4-6 months with limited number of days of engagement.

Deliverable / Milestone	Indicative Deadline
Necessary clearance / approvals / consent	15 Oct 2026
Inception report (outlines approach, methodology, and workplan)	15 Oct 2026
First manuscript in Bisaya language (tentatively 100 pages, A4 size, Times New Roman, font size 12, single space)	10 Dec 2026
Second manuscript (after verification from leader and community and feedback from forumZFD)	15 Jan 2027
Translation of the second manuscript into English	15 Feb 2027
Revised final copies both in Bisaya and English (incorporates feedback to the English version and both versions are updated)	25 Feb 2027

6. Role of forumZFD

forumZFD will coordinate and facilitate, support getting a context-specific understanding of conflict sensitivity, enter trustful relationships with the Indigenous leaders and their communities, and will facilitate or support the consultant's field engagements as necessary.

forumZFD will work closely with the consultant and will coordinate with the concerned agencies to ensure legal compliance as required.

7. Legal Compliance, Ethics, Protocols, and Conflict Sensitivity

The research, publication and data protection shall fully comply with the applicable laws and guidelines and standard community practices. Customary knowledge, oral histories, and cultural traditions documented remain the intellectual property of the Indigenous Cultural Community (ICC). Indigenous leader's consent to the content will be essential and their agency over how their story is being framed and presented. The principle of conflict sensitivity will be applied throughout the assignment. Respect for Indigenous knowledge systems, leadership structures, and cultural norms will be essential.

8. Reporting and Coordination

The consultant will report to the designated project officer and project manager of forumZFD based in Butuan City and will work in close coordination with the team.

9. Required Qualifications and Experience

- Master in anthropology, social sciences, cultural studies, political science, literature and other relevant subjects.
- More than five years of experience in writing /authoring books, narrative non-fiction, ethnographic writing. Commitment to ethical and responsible narratives.
- Familiarity with peacebuilding, non-violent conflict transformation, Indigenous cultural practices, and ability to engage thoughtfully with complex human experiences.
- Fluent in English and Bisaya; and preferably in Manobo language as well.
- Experience working in remote or conflict-affected environments will be an asset.

10. Application Process

Interested applicants are invited to submit an application letter along with a technical proposal outlining their approach, a financial proposal, a curriculum vitae, and relevant writing samples.

Applications should be emailed to abayon@forumzfd.de with the subject "Application – Authoring a book on Life, Leadership and Nonviolent Conflict Transformation in Caraga".

Format for CV

Picture, anagraphics (name, surname, date of birth, place of birth and current place of residence), educational background, work experience. We recommend to keep it simple and clear, evidencing your experience, especially according to the requirements. It will be processed by international staff that might be not familiar with all local institutions, include appropriate clarification needed for a foreign reader.