

## **Improving acceptability, access and coverage of key health services in ARMM through the “Tumpukan Na!” sessions**

**By Leonardo Alcantara**

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is a regional *aggrupation* (group) of five provinces and one city populated by 13 ethno-linguistic groups with its own distinct language and culture and health care mechanisms. The region in terms of health indices has one of the highest reported maternal and neonatal deaths in the country. Taking these issues onboard, the SHIELD project introduced a package of intervention methods that cut across boundaries and take into consideration the language of and understanding by each cultural group.

The “Tumpukan Na!” session is a health action session among target groups that focuses on specific health topics such as vitamin A supplementation, immunization, breastfeeding and maternal care. It involves the conduct of a focus group discussion to determine the level of understanding about specific health interventions and identifying key words that are acceptable and understandable by the community. “Tumpukan Na!” aims to change the client’s behaviour by identifying their own health care needs and pro-actively demanding and accessing health services.

“Tumpukan Na!” has been the standard communication for behaviour change intervention within the project during the biannual national “Garantisadong Pambata” nutrition campaign.

It has been instrumental in reducing unmet need by increasing acceptors in LAPM in the municipality of Lamitan, province of Basilan. Out of 37 with unmet need for BTL who participated in the “Tumpukan Na” initiative, 28 sought information from a provider and 21 received the service.