Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders (Volume I)
The TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership would like to thank all the academic partners (past and current), the management team and faculty of the Asian Institute of Management and the AIM-Scientific Research Foundation, Inc., as well as all those on-the-ground who have dedicated themselves to peace-building in Mindanao and the country.

This volume is an initial attempt to share some of the stories of the MBLP Cohort 1 Bridging Leaders and is dedicated to all the bridging leaders who continue to advocate for multi-sectoral collaboration in responding to complex social divides and to those who have passed on and left their work on peace-building for us to continue...
“Bridging Leaders for the Co-Creation of Peace and Development in Mindanao, the Philippines and the World”

by

*Nieves R. Confesor*

Executive Director
TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership

Three years ago, the AIM –Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership embarked on a project to work at making the communities of conflict-affected areas of Mindanao more resilient, even in the absence of, and with the hope for, a peace agreement. The Project aimed to draw upon the experience of other interventions by the Center in areas other than Mindanao to mobilize communities and multi-stakeholder process to face challenges that no one sector, not even government, could claim to respond to. The bridging leadership technology, focusing on the intervenor and the social divides that must be understood and faced by communities as well as the processes for ownership and co-creation of new institutional arrangements for an empowered citizenry and transparent and accountable governance, could benefit these communities to generate enough confidence on the ground that peace could be achieved and brings more benefits than conflict.

A framework agreement has been signed recently. And the work of transition has started. But the work at the community level continues as greater confidence is required as the more painful acts of transition will require deeper ownership, co-ownership and finally, co-creation by an ever-growing number of “owners” of a “compelling” future for Mindanao and the Philippines.

The stories of 44 bridging leaders in Mindanao are good basis of hoping that the challenge can be met. These stories tell how each Fellow focuses on the work of the community and executes it, with their Core Groups, their coalitions, as preparatory for the delivery of assistance and services, for the exercise of rights and responsibilities in a diverse community in a post-conflict area. These projects also serve to show how “prototypes” are created by those “on the ground” to respond to the many challenges in an area whose HDIs are nowhere close to the national average.

These “stories” were woven together by the work of the Fellows with our academic partner institutions in Mindanao. Such institutions provide the “local” content of the interventions and assure that capacity-building outside the four (4) formal workshops is embedded in the daily work and aspirations of the organization of the Fellow. They also assure us of continued utilization of the Framework even after the project ends.

These stories also form part of a research project that looks into the robustness of the bridging leadership framework developed by the Center and its own collaboration with international centers on leadership and leadership development.

Why a public recital? Leaders are great story-tellers as they move to inspire, to mobilize the community to do the difficult work of peace-building. The “glow from within”, not the “glam from without” will co-create the ‘compelling future’ of Mindanao.
I would like to congratulate the twenty-two participants in the first Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM).

This is a significant training program in light of the threat of various conflicts, real and imagined, breaking out in Mindanao anytime because peopled by diverse cultural and religious groups. The renewed hostilities in the Middle East like the exchange of fire between the Israelites and the Palestinians should be a case in point to all of us. Any form of conflict disrupts and destroys peoples’ lives. It is not to be encouraged.

How lucky, therefore, that concerned representatives of the U.S. and other entities still came to the table and talked peace so that this recent conflict ended in a ceasefire celebrated by both sides. But for how long can this tenuous peace be between bitter enemies?

Our neighbor Malaysia once experienced racial and religious riots. But the Malaysians sat down and dealt with these problems starting with the resolve to use the languages spoken by its large diversely-ethnic groups in its schools even as Bahasa Malaysia is also widely spoken by Malaysians. Learning the language of a group of people is also learning its culture.

Today in Mindanao, pockets of rebellion seem to have been contained and there is hope for lasting peace among its diverse groups. With the recent signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB), sustainable peace in Mindanao is possible. Any more moves toward ending conflict are commendable. But such move needs visionary leaders whose attitudes shape strategies that could realize lasting peace and harmony for all. How lucky therefore that, visionary leaders like you talk about peace and find ways in addressing various societal divides by engaging the people and giving back to them the power.

We live in a democratic system of government and every person is given a chance to realize his potentials, his dreams in a free society. Equality and respect for one’s individuality and religious beliefs are what leaders like you must remember so that in the future, life in Mindanao is livable and our beloved island can be the place for progress in our changing times.

DR. SUKARNO TANGGOL
Chancellor
Mindanao State University-General Santos City’s participation to the Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program (MBLP) has not only strengthened our involvement in community development but also brought transformation in our institution. The past years, the University witnessed a peaceful and cohesive academic community inspired to explore the best of the university.

Our leadership journey is anchored on the belief that leadership is aligning our strengths to subdue our weaknesses. In valuing people, we consider their contributions to university growth as essential. Each faculty, student and staff regardless of status can help shape the university’s direction. Our journey has helped us learn that valuing people is affirming their strengths, successes and potentials, prizing and esteeming their uniqueness as individuals.

Letting others see these hopes and this vision is a challenge. The delicate steps we make to bridge the gaps of past hurts and pains; and to help each sector see the potentials of the University are indeed difficult. We have learned to balance each group’s interests seeing to it that, in the end, a shared vision of the University’s future is created.

MBLP has taught us that true leadership is not imposing one’s authority in achieving the goals of the organization but to lead others to desire the same future. We have agreed that our future is a dynamic and proactive world class University where each member in the organization is valuable, contributing, growing, and satisfying his/her personal professional development.

Our steps to institutionalize MBLP have been slow but bold. First, we partnered with MBLP fellows in their visions. Then we trained graduate school and College of Social and Sciences faculty members on Bridging Leadership, with the hope that they will infuse BL concepts and attitudes in their teaching. The visits of AIM’s experts like Prof. Juan Kanapi to personally train our faculty members affirmed the developing bond between AIM and MSU-GSC. The immersion of our staff and faculty members in the community work of our fellows (Fred Basino, Luz Go, and Ernest Casiple) showed that academe and community partnerships could help create better living arrangements of our people.

Our MBLP experience has taught us that discovering the best in people and the innate goodness in them help us to ask positive questions seeking to anticipate and heighten the potentials of individuals in the University. Our management style has slowly evolved into seeking the positive core of people so that, in the end, a shared reality is created.

In this vein, in behalf of MSU-General Santos, I wish to congratulate the graduates of the Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program with the prayer that this would spark stronger and better partnerships in the days ahead.

Good luck and God speed.

ATTY ABDURRAHMAN T. CANACAN
Chancellor
Greetings and felicitations from Western Mindanao State University!

The Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program comes at the proverbial crossroad of the country's history when concerted efforts from various sectors to bring desired peace and reconciliation are finally bearing fruits.

We are privileged to be part of this novel and well-thought of approach to bringing peace and healing and bridging the various societal rifts that have been besetting our beloved Mindanao. Our University draws strength and inspiration from the stories of heroic efforts of the MBLP fellows who have in their own quiet ways been doing their part to reach our shared vision for Mindanao and the entire country.

We shall always welcome opportunities to partner with institutions and individuals to work together for the betterment of our community and the improvement of the life of our people. As President, I commit our University's resources especially the expertise of our faculty and staff for this common vision.

Congratulations to our fellows and the people behind the success of the MBLP!

MILABEL ENRIQUEZ-HO, R.N. ED.D.
President
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT 
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MINDANAO 

Greetings of peace!

Today marks a new milestone for all the graduates. Your quest for exemplary performance and excellence, an imperative for a scholar of AIM-MBLP, goes with painstaking labor, hardship and sacrifices. You have been relentless in your pursuit vis-a-vis the similarly stringent screening and rigorous examinations. And evidently, you have measured up to the test. Congratulations on your achievement!

However, this is not yet the end of the road for you. As you embark on a journey through life, you bring with you the spirit and dynamics as well as the kind of leadership AIM-MBLP has equipped you with to make a difference. Of course it is easier said than done if we take into account the myriads of problems our country confront- poverty, criminality, graft and corruption, injustice, peace and order, social inequity, insurgency/rebellion, political and ideological divisions, unemployment, etc.- all these represent the grim background of our society.

Yet, as graduates of a reputable institution such as AIM which is distinguished for its excellence, social orientation and advocacy, you are headed to become catalysts and prime movers of the social reform agenda of the government. Your graduation paves a way for the emergence of a new breed of citizen leaders imbibed with idealism and ready to make positive changes in the society.

For indeed, we are ultimately measured not by how much we have undertaken but by what we finally accomplish. Wherever you are and whatever you will become, remember that God is always with you in all your endeavours.

Congratulations!

DR. JESUS DERUJE 
President
I am very pleased to greet and congratulate the fellows and partners of the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program. Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan is most privileged to participate in this exceptional program which forms leaders who will engage the frontiers of peace and development in Mindanao.

Now more than ever, there is an urgent need for leaders who will blaze the trails and will boldly implement creative solutions to the complex challenges facing our fellow-Filipinos in Mindanao especially the poor and the marginalized. These innovative leaders are vitally needed to make the most of the new opportunities for peace and sustainable development becoming available with the Bangsamoro Framework Agreement. Courageous leaders will be crucial in bridging the conflicted realities of the present and the peaceful expectations of the future.

We join you in prayers that we will be patient, persistent and persevering in our efforts for peace!

Roberto C Yap SJ
President
Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan
Cagayan de Oro
Congratulations to the first cohort of fellows of the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program!

The stories of your journey are a true testament to what multi-stakeholder collaboration can achieve. You have identified crucial social divides, employed all sorts of tools for analyzing the problems, generated options for responding with care and creativity, and you have even recruited people to share your vision and your mission. And we understand that this is not just a matter of learning new skills, but along the way, you have come to know yourself more deeply and why you are doing everything to make a difference in your peoples’ lives. I salute each one of you!

We at the Ateneo de Zamboanga University (AdZU) are, in fact, in the receiving end. We may have been called ‘mentors’ but we have learned more from your efforts and persistence in pursuing genuine prototypes for peace-building and community development in Mindanao. We thank you and the whole MBLP team for adding another piece of joy in our celebration of ADZU’s 100th anniversary.

We pray that your efforts may be replicated and expanded further to other regions of Mindanao, and serve as examples to many more advocates of peace and development.

_Pro Deo et Patria!

FR. ANTONIO MORENO, S.J.
President
Ateneo de Zamboanga University
# Co-Creating Peace and Development in Mindanao: Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

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INTRODUCTION

Addressing social divides are difficult to address due to socio-economic inequalities that persist as well as the nature of complexities we experience today. Socio-economic inequality does not only refer to income gaps between the rich and the poor, but also to access to education, health, livelihood and employment opportunities. Social issues have also become more complex—old solutions are unable to fix present problems; more and more stakeholders are involved/affected; and uncertainty of short-term and long-term impacts aggravate the search for solutions in this “flat, hot, and crowded” world.

One of the possible approaches that could be adopted to address social divides is Bridging Leadership. Bridging leadership is a systems approach which transforms leaders to become bridging leaders who take ownership of a social issue and motivate then mobilize their communities to develop collaborative actions towards a shared objective (i.e. shared equity). The bridging leadership framework seeks to generate “prototypes and institutionalizes innovative processes and policies to address social problems through collaboration and partnership. It also accounts for the need to change existing institutional arrangements and dynamics to ensure a sustainable approach in solving social and economic issues.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND THE INEQUITABLE SOCIETY

To address the current social problems we face today, it is important to understand the context in which our society seeks to create wealth and deliver a better quality of life for ALL. According to the 2010 European Commission report on Poverty, “societies cannot combat poverty and social exclusion without analysing the inequalities within the society, whether they are economic in nature or social.”

Broadly speaking, inequality refers to the “disparities in the distribution of monetary resources within or between populations.” Inequality is usually focused on the social and economic aspects. Socio-economic inequality refers to the disparities in both economic and social resources, linked to social class and includes earnings, income, education and health that contribute to a sense of well-being.”

This paper looks not only on the economic and social aspect of inequality, but also considers the political aspect. Inequality is also seen at the social level. “In an inequitable society, individuals have varying access to opportunities that are important to pursuing a life that is spared from deprivation in all of its forms (economic, social, cultural & political).”

Income is usually used as a basic indicator in assessing the level of inequality among societies. Today, income gaps between the rich and the poor is increasing. Furthermore, wealth concentration is limited...
to a few. National incomes of countries like Britain, Canada, China and India is taken by the top 1% of their population. Figure 1 presents wealth concentration worldwide.

Figure 1: Inequality Worldwide, 1980-2010

However, it is also important to note that inequality is also a result of pre-existing social conditions that affect the overall welfare of societies and individuals. This is evident in Figure 2 which compared the percentage of the poor and deprived at the national (Philippines) and local level (Mindanao, which is considered to be a violent conflict area).

Figure 2: Percentage of the Population who are MPI poor and deprived in each, PHILIPPINES vs MINDANAO

COMPLEXITIES AND SYSTEMS THINKING

Aside from inequalities, there is a need to address the complexities that have changed the social context where stakeholders interact. In addressing complexities, it is important to note that the traditional/ordinary approach for simple problems may not be sufficient. Stakeholders (including actors and institutions) need to find innovative and/or emergent approaches for resolving complex social problems.  

Kahane (2007) discusses the nature of complexities that affect the dynamics of addressing social problems—Dynamic, Generative and Social.

- **Dynamic Complexity.** Cause and effect are far apart in time and space. “The origins of dynamically complex problems are highly difficult to identify regardless of the gamut of observable effects that are present in reality.” The challenge is to identify the trigger and systematically address the root cause as well as the short term and long term impact simultaneously.

An example of a dynamic problem is the threat faced by the fishing industry based in General Santos in Mindanao. Fishing grounds have been “closed” and the search for alternative grounds have forced the boats to go farther into far areas never before used. The continued decline of global fisheries indicate how temporary this search for other fishing grounds may not be a sustainable solution. For almost 50 years, overfishing, global warming, pollution, and unregulated fishing practices have not only depleted the global fish stock but also led to the collapse of some seafood species. To address the decline of global fisheries, there is a need for a systemic effort from all stakeholders—at the local and international level—to protect the fisheries reserves through sustainable fishing methods.

### Table 1: Nature of Complexity

<table>
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<th>Type of Complexity</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Ordinary Approach for Simple Problems</th>
<th>Extraordinary Approach for Complex Problems</th>
<th>Process Requirement for Complex Problems</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>Cause and Effect are far apart in space and time</td>
<td>Piece by piece</td>
<td>System as a whole</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generative</td>
<td>Future is unfamiliar and undetermined</td>
<td>Existing solutions</td>
<td>Emerging solution</td>
<td>Creative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Actors have diverse perspectives and interests</td>
<td>Experts and authorities</td>
<td>Stakeholders and “stickholders”</td>
<td>Participative</td>
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- **Generative Complexity.** The immanent future is difficult to identify or unfamiliar. This may also imply that existing solution may not be able to fully resolve the problem due to the “distinct and
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continuous variable nature of the problem that is unfamiliar to the stakeholders involved." The challenge is for stakeholders to become innovative and creative in identifying solutions to address the complex problem.  

An example of generative problem is the widespread use of internet. When it was first introduced in the 1980’s, IT engineers did not anticipate how the internet would change the way people communicate and interact—particularly through social media. This greatly affected the distribution and customer use of printed media such as newspapers and magazines. The internet has also affected the way businesses are conducted—with business process outsourcing. This business strategy affected employment in developed countries due to high labor costs.

- **Social Complexity.** Various stakeholders have various perspectives and interests—which are influenced by their culture, language, religion, and history. Conflicts arise due to opposing interests and concerns. The challenge is finding a common ground, a shared understanding among all involved parties.  

An example of a social problem is the operation of a foreign mining company in a secluded mine site, where indigenous people live. Aside from various interests and concerns, these two stakeholders have a different view/perspective about life and development. Another component that could complicate the relationship is the different set of language and mindset of the stakeholders involved. Dialogue and participative engagement are key in identifying shared goals in social development.

The Cynefin Framework also provides another perspective on how to understand and address complexities. The Framework is a “sense-making” framework, which help decision makers categorize, analyze and respond to complexities based on their type/classification. The Framework is divided into ordered and un-ordered domains. Table 2 presents the Cynefin Domains in terms of key characteristics, response approach and decision model.

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.
Table 2: Cynefin Domains

<table>
<thead>
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<th>UN-ORDERED DOMAIN</th>
<th>ORDERED DOMAIN</th>
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<td>COMPLEX</td>
<td>CHAOS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cause and effect</td>
<td>No cause and</td>
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<tr>
<td>are only coherent</td>
<td>effect</td>
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<tr>
<td>in retrospect and</td>
<td>relationships</td>
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<td>do not repeat</td>
<td>perceivable</td>
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<td>Focus on</td>
<td>Pattern</td>
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<td></td>
<td>management</td>
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<td>Effective</td>
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BRIDGING LEADERSHIP: AN APPROACH TO ADDRESS SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND COMPLEXITY

The Bridging Leadership framework can help individuals and groups address social inequalities as well as account for the complexities that society faces today.

The Bridging Leadership Framework focuses on the individual as well as the society as a whole—ensuring ownership of the social issue as well as transforming stakeholders to become collaborative partners. It also encourages the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach where parties involved need to convene, dialogue and collaborate. It also calls for changing institutions—formal and informal—that would accommodate new relationships, become more participative, and implement responsive programs. Finally, it emphasizes on the achievement of value and equity in society.12

Bridging Leadership Framework

The Bridging Leadership framework takes into consideration management and leadership principles in identifying potential champions that mobilize communities as well as building collaborative institutions with a shared objective in mind. It also moves beyond the identification of organizational outputs (short term), but looks at the social outcomes (long term).

“The Bridging Leadership Framework is a leadership approach that makes use of multi-stakeholder processes of addressing and ending societal inequalities. It is leading through collaborative action to bring about social change.”13

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12 Confesor, N. C. (n.d.) “Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program: First Fellowship Workshop.”
“The bridging leader\textsuperscript{14} is one whose values and principles\textsuperscript{15} compel him to make a personal response to address inequities and societal divides\textsuperscript{16}, recognizes that the social complexity\textsuperscript{17} of the problem can only be solved by convening the stakeholders to the divide.

Through a process of dialogue\textsuperscript{18} and engagement\textsuperscript{19} that promotes trust and transforms the quality of their relationships\textsuperscript{20} with one another, the stakeholders arrive at a common, if not shared, vision and collective response to the challenge.

The vision becomes the societal outcome—Aspired for by everyone transcending the organizational outputs of each and every stakeholder. A social innovation\textsuperscript{21} that leads to the societal outcome is adopted and carried out through new institutional arrangements.\textsuperscript{22}

The Bridging Leadership framework is divided into three stages: Ownership, Co-Ownership, and Co-Creation.

“Ownership is a process that starts with the leader and focuses on his interior condition. The heart of this phase is self-awareness and the deepening sense of personal ownership of a societal problem to forge response to it.

Co-Ownership is the phase where the bridging leader moves from his personal vision to forging relationships with those who have a stake on the problem. Various stakeholders are convened, regardless of opposing views, and they are provided the space for engaging in a constructive dialogue to arrive at a common understanding of the societal divide.

Co-Creation is the final phase where the leader and the stakeholders identify specific objectives and targets to strive working towards bridging the divide. Innovative programs and collaborative action plans emerge. The partnership is guided by the values of transparency, accountability, participation and resource sharing.”\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{14} Refers to a person who has influence over a group of people, through formal or informal arrangements.
\textsuperscript{15} Implies that the bridging leader must have the capacity for self-awareness, discernment and introspection in order to “connect” to his Self that drives his or her action.
\textsuperscript{16} Are issues/conditions/situations which act as barriers (s) between and among groups of people in society, causing serious disagreement, conflict/tension among them. Examples: uneven/asymmetric power relationships, inequities as defined in this paper, socio-economic gaps, under-representation and disparate impact.
\textsuperscript{17} Refers to the notion of dynamic, generative and social complexity (Kahane,2005) which is arrived at through a process of analysis using systems thinking.
\textsuperscript{18} Generative dialogue allows people who hold opposing views and positions to identify what is common among them – space, aspirations, values, purpose, language – that serves as a platform or basis for understanding collective action.
\textsuperscript{19} Various MSK processes are discussed in another part of this paper. Transparency and clarity of rules and policies help build trust among the MSKs.
\textsuperscript{20} This may include “changing” the balance of power by providing space for engagement by providing space to allow the different voices (including those from “the margin”) to be heard.
\textsuperscript{21} A real solution to the divide identified through that is identified through careful systematic analysis, changes patterns and established structures and can be sustained over a period of time.
\textsuperscript{22} TeA\textsuperscript{M} Energy Center for Bridging Leadership. (n.d.) “Leadership for Societal Transformation.” Internal Document.
Figure 3: Bridging Leadership Framework

** The bridging leadership framework is a prescriptive framework that identifies the most important acts of leadership that have to be done to address inequities. Source: TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership

Ownership: Self Awareness and the Deep Dive

The Bridging Leadership framework starts with the bridging leader. “The bridging leader needs to be more aware of the range of assets (i.e. education, experiences, values, family background) that comprise of the leadership capital.” Understanding the leadership capital is key in assessing which assets and resources could be tapped in addressing social issues.

In addition, the bridging leader needs to understand the context of the social issue that would be addressed. The root cause of the problem must be identified, together with the short-term and long-term impact. At this phase, the bridging leader takes on a personal mission to utilize his leadership capital to address the social issue.

Scharmer’s Theory U presents a framework on how bridging leaders could become self aware. It starts with assessing the patterns of the past, with the objective of acting upon a social issue that influences stakeholder actions and developing new institutional infrastructures. Bridging leaders need to open their mind, heart and will. Opening one’s mind entails seeing the social issue with fresh eyes—should not have a preconceive notions nor assumptions. They should not be biased. Opening one’s heart entails sensing the environment and internalizing the social issue. They should contextualize the social issue in

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relation on how it affects others. It involves opening one’s feelings and being vulnerable to what should be done. Opening one’s will entails letting-go of inhibitions and acting on what is deemed right.

**Figure 4: Theory U**


Although Theory U focuses on the individual, it emphasizes the importance to look at the systemic whole. “Whole-system analysis provides an effective tool for approaching dynamic complexity, but dynamic complexity is often accompanied and made more difficult to address by social complexity.”

Scharmer and Kaeufer (2010) expanded the Theory U to include three important phases to move beyond sensing towards initiating actions.

- **Co-sensing:** Individuals need to sense the issue on their own—and should stop “downloading” or gathering information based on other’s experience. Although “downloading” could help in identifying patterns, it could restrict one’s line of thinking and creativity.

- **Co-presensing:** “It describes the moment of connecting with the source of one’s best future possibility and of bringing this possibility into the now.” Key questions asked are: Who is my Self? and What is my Work? These questions refer to who is the best possible person the individual could become and what is that person’s life task.

- **Co-creating:** The last phase focuses on how one’s idea comes into reality—from vision, mission, intention, prototyping and performing.

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.
Co-Ownership: Stakeholder Identification, Engagement and Building Coalitions

When the bridging leader becomes committed to utilize his assets to address social issue, he/she convenes the stakeholders involved through a process of dialogue and engagement. The objective of this process is for the stakeholders to determine a shared vision and shared response. The vision becomes the societal outcome aspired for by all stakeholders involved. Stakeholders collaboratively act towards the shared objective.

At this stage, the key questions asked are: Who are the stakeholders involved? How to engage them? What is the common objective? How to act upon it?

Stakeholder Identification. Stakeholder identification is key in assessing who are involved or affected by the social issue. Assessment does not stop in mapping stakeholder’s concerns, interests and needs; but also includes the assets, capabilities, and influence of these stakeholders. Consequently, the objective is to identify stakeholders that are critical in pushing the agenda forward as well as those that could oppose the agenda.

“Stakeholders are usually categorized into primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are those that are directly involved in and affected by the company’s actions or operations, such as investors, employees, suppliers, customers, residents of communities, natural environment, non-human species, and future generations. Secondary stakeholders are those that affect company’s actions or operations through regulation (“stickholders”), market competition, or reputation. These are regulators, media and pressure groups, others in the social ecology of the organization and competitors.”

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Figure 5: Where are Stakeholders Located? Who are they?


The impact of social issue varies per stakeholder; this is also true in terms of their ability to influence the issue. More often, stakeholders that have the ability to influence the issue (through policy change or program implementation) are those that are least affected; while stakeholders that are heavily impacted by the issue, have limited capability to address the issue (i.e. indigents, farmers, low income community, women).

Figure 6 presents an illustration of a conflict issue, where children and women are heavily affected by the conflict; but are unable to do something about it; while international NGOs and government forest agency are those that are least affected, but have the power to affect the harvesting of rattan within the protected area.

Stakeholder Engagement. After identifying and assessing the stakeholders, the next step is to engage them.

Stakeholder engagement is the “process of exchanging information, listening and learning from stakeholders with the objective of building understanding and trust on issues of mutual interest.” International Finance Corporation identified five levels of stakeholder engagement-- Communication Strategies, Information Disclosure, Consultation, Participation and Negotiation and Partnerships. Figure 7 presents the five levels of stakeholder engagement in a spectrum, in relation with the number of people engaged and the intensity of engagement.

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Figure 6: Conflict Issue: Harvesting of Wood within a Protected Area


Figure 7: Spectrum of Stakeholder Engagement

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Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

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**Box 1: How to engage Stakeholders?**

To help companies/organizations plan their stakeholder analysis and engagement strategy the following steps may be undertaken:

1. Goals and objectives must be identified. A question that may be asked is, “What is the target in conducting a stakeholder analysis and engagement?” The challenge is to identify these goals and objectives that would be shared by all potential stakeholders—neutrals, adversaries and supporters.

2. Company/organization need to look into its inventory of stakeholders—in the workplace (i.e. executives, employees, contractors, workers on the supply chain), shareholders, community (i.e. those who live in the area where you source, operate and sell), environment (i.e. natural resources and systems) and the marketplace (i.e. suppliers, customers, and consumers).

3. Stakeholders must be categorized based on their power and interest. The power/stakeholder grid helps companies/organization identify which stakeholders needs to be satisfied, monitored, managed closely, and keep informed. It is important to note that stakeholders could move from one quadrant to another, depending on the issue as well as the context of the problem.

4. Each stakeholder must be understood as a single entity/group. It is not enough that their interests and needs are identified, but it must also include an understanding of their culture, mindset as well as their beliefs and traditions. This information will help companies/organizations formulate potential strategies to win stakeholder support or block those who may not agree?

5. After understanding each stakeholder, corporations/organizations should focus on the High Power/High Interest Stakeholders first; and Low Power/Low Interest Stakeholders last. WHY? Stakeholders with high power and high interest need to be managed closely because depending on their position, they could be a strong supporter or critic of specific issue. Stakeholders with low power and low interest need to be monitored with minimum effort because it could be a critical player in community engagement over time.

6. Depending on the type of activities that would be conducted, specific modes of engagement could be adopted. These are non-exclusive and various mode of engagement could be adopted for every stakeholder.

7. Companies/organizations need to identify strategies “to keep the winning coalition engaged, to block the blockers, and win over the fence-sitters and skeptics.”

8. The assignment of roles and responsibilities must be accepted by all parties involved.

9. In planning the approach, the allocation of time and resources will depend on the size and difficulty of the objective and project, time available, and the amount of help needed to achieve the desired results.

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It is important to note that in the course of the community engagement process, complex challenges require an ever-widening circle of owners. From the Core Group, a Guiding Coalition is sequenced.

**Building Coalitions.** Building coalitions are important when addressing social problems. In the Bridging Leadership framework, partnerships and collaborative networks are key in developing an implementation plan to address social issues. These coalitions should be participative in nature, and must share a common objective.

It is important to note that the bridging leader is not managing the stakeholders, but is collaborating with various stakeholders. Table 3 presents the difference between Stakeholder Management and Stakeholder Collaboration.

**Table 3: Stakeholder Management and Stakeholder Collaboration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Approach</th>
<th>Stakeholder Management</th>
<th>Stakeholder Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement Approach</td>
<td>Fragmented: company partners with a specific group</td>
<td>Integrated: focus is on understanding and responding to the interests of all key stakeholders—“listening and acting together”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Focus on managing/controlling relationships to “defend” the company from stakeholder demand</td>
<td>Focus on building and expanding relationships for mutual value creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Emphasis on buffering the organization</td>
<td>Focus on creating opportunities and mutual benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Goals</td>
<td>Linked to short-term business goals</td>
<td>Linked to long-term business goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Idiosyncratic implementation dependent on division</td>
<td>Coherent approach driven by business goals, social mission, and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Player</td>
<td>interests and personal style of manager</td>
<td>Plus “systematic” approach to engaging with all key stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 2: Importance of Listening and Dialogue in Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

In stakeholder engagement and collaboration, all parties involved must learn how to listen, dialogue and converse. It is only when ideas and experiences are exchanged and heard without any preconceived notions will the stakeholders learn from and work with each other.

*Listening is not the same as Hearing.* During consultations and meetings, stakeholders need to listen to each other. When stakeholder listens, curiosity is aroused. They exert effort to understand the message. Stakeholders remember what is said. And the stakeholders are attentive to the speaker’s message. This is not the same as hearing, where there is no understanding, no effort to learn. Hearing also occurs when the receiving party just hears sound nor anything that is said is easily forgotten.

*Dialogue is not the same as Debating.* When the mind, heart and will of the stakeholders are not open, or when there is tension between them; opportunity for dialogue becomes a debate. In a debate, parties assume that there is a right answer (and he has it). The atmosphere is more combative, where participants try to prove the other party wrong. The objective is to win. In a dialogue, parties assume that stakeholders have various pieces of the answer; and together, they can craft a solution. The atmosphere is collaborative, where participants work together toward common understanding. The objective is to explore common ground.

In maintaining and creating a collaborative coalition, stakeholders involved should move beyond ordinary listening to discussing with each other how to systematically address social issues. Scharmer explains this further by identifying four fields of conversation.

- **Talking Nice:** Downloading, politeness: This field of conversation refers to “rules repeating.” An example of such conversation is “How are you? I am fine.”

- **Talking Tough:** Debate, clash: This field of conversation refers to exchange of information between the actors involved with the objective of winning or making a specific point. “Listening to what confirms or disconfirms our point of view.”

- **Reflective Dialogue:** Inquiry: This field of conversation occurs when actors begin to understand where the other party is coming from as they progress in the conversation. Actors become empathic to others. “Bill Isacs identifies four capacities people exhibit when they engage in this kind of conversation: voicing—speaking the truth of one’s own perspective; listening without resistance; respecting—demonstrating awareness of the impossibility of fully understanding others’ positions; and suspending—letting go of assumptions, judgments, certainty.”

- **Generative Dialogue:** Presencing: This field of conversation focuses on how the actors see the situation as a “whole.” generative dialogue is defined as the “conversation that brings forth creative energy and collective intelligence out of a personal sense of connection to the whole.”

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The dynamics of a coalition should also be participative. Although there is no such thing as win-win scenarios, the objective is to ensure that all parties are heard, opportunities/alternatives are carefully studied, and there is consensus about the action that would be taken. At this point, it is important that stakeholders continuously dialogue and deliberate before final decision is made.
Co-Creating Peace and Development in Mindanao:  
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Figure 9: Dialogue, Deliberation and Decision-making

- Bringing together many voices, stories, perspectives
- Shared inquiry, exploration, discovery
- Shared meaning-making & co-construction of knowledge

Co-Creation: Transforming Power Relationships and New Institutional Arrangements

At the co-creation phase, the new institutional arrangements have set new innovative rules for and ways of doing things. These institutional arrangements promote accountability and transparency, which sought to empower citizens and to be responsive to social issues. The end goal is social equity.  

Creating new Institutional arrangements do not only refer changes in the structures and processes in place but also a transformation of power relationships—between leaders and providers; providers and citizenry; and citizenry and leaders.

- **Changes in the relationship between Citizenry and Leaders.** The citizenry is empowered to make responsive programs and services available. The citizenry engages the leaders to be accountable for results, transparent and inclusive. Leaders are responsive to the articulated needs of the citizenry. Leaders are accountable to the citizenry for providing responsive programs and services.

- **Changes in the relationship between the Leaders and Providers.** Leaders empower the providers within their jurisdiction to deliver responsive programs and services (internal). Leaders partner with other providers to deliver responsive programs and services (external). Coordinating...
mechanisms and clear accountability on the performance and expectations of both leaders and providers must be present.  

- **Changes in the relationship between the Citizenry and Providers.** The citizenry contributes in planning responsive programs and services to best address their needs. The citizenry actively participates in implementing and monitoring the provided programs and services. Providers actively promote citizen participation in planning, implementing and assessing the provision of programs and services.

**Figure 10: Transforming Power Relationships**


The New Institutional Arrangements (i.e. mechanisms and policies) must reflect the governance principles of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability as well as the new power relationships.

- Inclusiveness refers to the involvement and interaction with all stakeholders without regard to individual characteristics.
- Transparency refers to relevant and accessible, as well as timely and accurate disclosure of information.
- Accountability refers to the institutionalized relationship of actors that is based on expected behavior, investigation, answerability, and sanctions.

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
KEY MESSAGES OF THE BRIDGING LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Although the Bridging Leader is key in instituting change, stakeholder’s participation and involvement is key in creating a systemic solution to address social issues. The bridging leader is the primary mover of change. He/She needs to own the social issue and starts to motivate others to follow suit. However, he/she could not do it alone. Stakeholder participation is key. By involving others, they are able to brainstorm new ideas and pool resources. Taking a collaborative approach maximizes the strength of each stakeholder in order to create synergy.

The collaborative engagement is a living organization. Stakeholder’s interests, concerns, positions, needs and resources continue to change. The leaders need to continuously monitor and assess their members and non-members because through time, events could occur that may change the power and influence of stakeholders. This is critical in identifying roles and responsibilities. Keeping the collaborative engagement is also important – members must continuously be informed and updated regarding the status of their initiatives. This keeps them interested and involved.

The development of new institutional arrangements should account for the formal and informal relationships, structures and processes. Changing the processes, mechanisms, and power relationships are key to integrate the governance principles and to keep the institution on track in achieving the desired objective (in this case societal equity). However, it is important to note that culture (i.e. belief systems, values and mindsets) within the institution and among stakeholders needs to change. This is particularly significant when dealing with the government, NGOs, and corporations.
“I learned the importance of the process in engagement that resulted to a collaborative action. I enjoyed the art of journeying with the people who made me a part of them. I gained the confidence to work “out of the box” and the importance of focusing when ideas kept on coming. I have maintained my credibility by being honest in what I say and do. Most of all I realized that programs and projects can be sustained if each person in every sector is made aware that he or she is an integral part of the whole. BRIDGING LEADERSHIP has made all of these possible.”

-- Mayor Sonia

Leadership Capital: As a child, Mayor Sonia was trained to face challenges and do her best in every situation. She married into a known political family based in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. When her husband was elected as a Congressman, representing the 4th district of Nueva Ecija, she was involved in community programs. She was drafted to run as a mayoralty candidate just four days before the local election. Despite this, she won the elections and became the mayor of San Isidro Nueva Ecija.

Societal Divide: The Municipality of San Isidro is a 5th class municipality, where 80% of its land area is agricultural land. There was a very low standard of living. Only nine of the 50 estimated cooperatives (farming/agricultural) are active and operational.

The local government unit of San Isidro also faced challenges: low employee morale, no programs on basic services, and the municipal hall is under threat of collapse. This was worsened with the “dole-out mentality” of the constituents—who formed lines outside the mayor’s office waiting for alms or money.

For two terms, Mayor Sonia “labored to form programs that would address the needs of her constituents and bring them down to the local level for implementation, but these did not successfully materialize.”

Analysis of the Divide: Mayor Sonia identified two main causes of the failure of program implementation:

1. no ownership of the projects implemented on the ground as there were no consultations done with the people in the community; and
2. the people who implemented the programs had no skills with which to view the problem and address it from a systemic point of view.

Personal Response: Mayor Sonia knew that she was unprepared for the task ahead—not familiar with public administration, but she was familiar with the basic concepts of management strategy. “[Mayor] Sonia’s vision was to ensure a better quality of life for the people of San Isidro.” She believed that her role is to “to capacitate the local government of San Isidro in implementing and sustaining socio-economic development...through collaborative programs involving the residents.”

She realized that the traditional LGU-management style of “taking care” of the people by giving money is not working. She believed that these are “harmful practices often push the mayors to appropriate public funds to sustain and reinforce the ties of dependency.” Her response was to reorganize the bureaucracy.

Collective Response: Mayor Sonia realizes the need to share her knowledge about Bridging Leadership with others by promoting collaboration among different groups and sectors in her municipality—in turn transforming these stakeholders into Bridging Leaders themselves. The first step was to invite the AIM-Mirant Center (currently known as TeaM Energy Center) to give a seminar on Bridging Leadership. The

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audience of the seminar were selected based on their leadership position in an organization that are open to working with others. These are farmers, women, youth, educators, local Gawad Kalinga team, municipal line agencies from agriculture, health, social development, human resource development, and members of the Sangguniang Bayan.

The seminar resulted in the formation of the Critical Coalition of San Isidro—with a vision of a “better quality of life for the people of San Isidro through the collaborative efforts of different sectors.” Members of CCSI was divided into committees that focused on formulating and implementing programs on education, health, livelihood, Housing, peace and order, environment, and values. A monthly meeting was conducted which focused on the sharing of experiences by the partners. Mayor Sonia also made sure that there is “an atmosphere of openness and dialogue throughout the session.” Members of CCSI also became bridging leaders in their respective sectors. The BL framework transcended beyond Sonia’s target audience (leaders of local community) and into the grassroot level (members of the community).

Moving Towards Co-Creation: The people became participative and involved in the programs with the formation of CCSI. The Committee Members also took the initiative to identify community programs even without the instructions of Mayor Sonia. They also learned how to prioritize programs, as well as identify key result areas and performance indicators for each program.

The culture that was promoted within CCSI was complementary and collaborative relationship—driven by friendly competition among committees.

New Institutional Arrangements: According to Mayor Sonia, “We had to do things differently. We had to revise the old things that had to be done. People were now involved, we looked for actual results, we needed partnerships, programs had to be new innovations.”

Achievements under the new institutional arrangement include:

- Annual net income for farmers increased from PhP69,174 in 2001 to PhP 151,768 in 2005.
- Annual LGU budget increased from PhP 18 million in 1998 to PhP 55 million in 2007.
- San Isidro has the second highest business tax collection of the 28 municipalities in Nueva Ecija. They experienced 186.65% growth as of March 2006.
- From a 5th class municipality, San Isidro became a 4th class municipality.

Through the leadership of Mayor Sonia, the people of San Isidro received better social services through collaborative partnerships with groups within and outside the municipality.

- Health Programs: “The Rural Health Unit in partnership with PhilHealth addressed the health needs of almost 9000 families in San Isidro. San Isidro is the 77th member municipality of PhilHealth and ranked it as one of the four best performing municipalities in the country for innovation, which is not a small feat considering it is a 4th class municipality. In fact, its health programs are now being replicated in other municipalities in the Philippines”

- Education Programs: “Ateneo Center for Educational Development (ACED) has made the town a pilot area for its countryside undertakings. It worked with all the 15 public schools in San Isidro to strengthen community ownership and participation in schools management.”

- Livelihood Program: “Apart from the increase in the number of cooperatives, the Philippine- Israel Center for Agri Technology (PICAT) has chosen San Isidro as one of the two pilot areas in Central Luzon for technology transfer and improving farming methods using modern technology and giving of post harvest facilities.”
Key Learning: A Bridging Leader understands his/her limitation and is open to new knowledge that could help address the social divide. He/She must also take ownership of the social problem and understand that he/she could not do it alone. An effective leader does not only inspire and manage people; but also believe in their capabilities to address the social divide. The success of the Bridging Leadership Framework does not end in creating a collaborative network nor in addressing the social divide; but in ensuring that the new institutions would sustain the achievement of the shared objective.

In the Mindanao Bridging Leaders’ Fellowship Program are 44 fellows who have attempted to take the deep dive of Mayor Sonia and her community. This time, however, such as attempt must be taken within an environment where violent conflict continues to erupt even as each fellow courageously bring about change and in so doing, generate confidence among the different stakeholders in Mindanao to continue to work for peace and development.
Assurance of Security and Protection of Human Rights

- Musa Sanguila
- Datu Migketay (Vic Saway)
- Bae Rose (Nena Undag)
- Oscar Moreno
A Culture of Peace for Interfaith Leaders and the Security Sector in Tubod, Lanao del Norte

By Myrna Sillero-Mahinay
Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology

“Resilient through thick and thin...[like] the bamboo!”

The leadership journey of Musa Sanguila (a.k.a. Mowkong) started with his parents. At an early age, he was exposed to interfaith leaders and members of the security sector. Both his parents dedicated their lives to peace-building and peace-making. His mother, Hadja Sittie Sahara Paraula Biruar Mohamad Sanguila became one of the conveners of the Muslim-Christian Movement for Justice and Peace which is an assembly of interfaith leaders in Lanao, making a stand against the Marcos dictatorship in the 1970s. His late father, Joseph Tomanong Sanguila, Sr., fought side by side with the Filipino soldiers and Moro Battalion troops as an Army Captain of the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) during the Japanese invasion in the Philippines. It was through these experiences that Mowkong had a strong sense of concern for the Muslim and Christians in conflict-affected areas of Lanao.

A happy-go-lucky person “still searching” for himself, Mowkong joined the 1st Cohort of Bridging Leaders (BL) of the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) of the Asian Institute of Management-Team Energy Center (AIMTEC). “Naintindihan na ako ngayon,” (people understand me now) was Mowkong’s insight when he joined the program. Through the MBLP, Mowkong further developed his skills in peace-building initiatives and solidarity programs while working as director of the Pakigdait, Inc. – an interfaith grassroots peace-building civil society organization (CSO). Pakigdait drove Mowkong’s passion to address peace and conflict-related issues and the organization continues to drive his passion for advocacy towards ending “the cycle of violence.” Mowkong is committed to making his dreams a reality: “na nabuo para mag-work” (that was formed to make it work).

The Kakai Renabor Rido Story

Mowkong’s main consideration for his first BL project was the identification and, later, the conceptualization of a change project on land conflict. The issue of access to basic resources being a clear cause for clan conflict (feud) or rido in Lanao and other parts of Mindanao.

According to Mowkong, rido is a widespread phenomenon in the province of Lanao del Norte involving “the Moro” (Muslims) and migrant-settlers (Christians). This problem was put center-stage during the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) attack on Kauswagan in the year 2000 that led to the “all-out war” declaration of then President Estrada against the MILF. A key lesson Mowkong learned from this experience was that CSOs and government should work hand-in-hand. This drove him to work with the local government despite the fact that the Mayor of Kauswagan was a political opponent of his family. Over the years, the Sanguilas came to be known as a political family. Despite this, Mowkong continued to work as part of the CSOs and not as part of government.
He realized that “we need government to work.” His initial change project for the MBLP involved ensuring and securing a 24-hectare land in Barangay Inundaran, Kauswagan, where *rido* was predominant and caused strife within Kauswagan and in neighboring areas. After working as Pakigdait Director with the local government, their efforts seemed to have failed to produce the results that they wished: a true collaboration with government of CSOs. A project that was critical in making the 24-hectare land in Kauswagan a peace zone, after having done preparatory activities for the site, eventually was granted to a different NGO. This disheartened Mowkong and tugged at memories of old political issues. The MBLP, however, helped him get his bearings. Through the help of the MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology coaches and the program team, Mowkong was encouraged to pursue multi-sectoral collaboration in another form and in another location that was equally significant.

From land conflict in Brgy. Inundaran, Kauswagan, he chose to pursue and address internal security in Barangay Kakai Renabor. Kakai Renabor was found to best illustrate the issue of conflict and *rido* and serve as a pilot site for his change initiative.

Kakai Renabor is one of the largest barangays in the Municipality of Tubod in terms of land area home to about 997 residents. It is the capital town of Lanao del Norte and is an outlying barangay just one kilometers away from the national highway and 1.5 kilometers from the town center. It remains a rural area while some other barangays have urbanized.

Mowkong has a personal link to Kakai Renabor. In his childhood years as a boy scout, he would always daydream of climbing Mt. Torong-Torong, the highest peak in LDN, located at Barangay Kakai-Renabor. The place was popular to nearby provinces and regions in Mindanao as the host and site of the Boy Scouts Jamboree in the region. In the 1970s, it was a window not only of Tubod but to the entire province of Lanao del Norte. But its grandeur started to diminish due to *rido* in the area that resulted to killings, vendetta, displacements, and economic loss.

One *rido* that was significant to Mowkong was the case of two very close family friends – Ibra Salic, Alim and Kuliling Macadaag whose houses were very near each other. The *rido* started with a mere piece of rope of the horse of Ibra Salic that was chopped into pieces by the son of Alim and Kuliling Macadaag as a sign of disgust due to the alleged destruction of the *farm garden* of the latter. The two children went back home and reported the incident to their respective parents. As a reaction to Ibra Salic, Kuliling Macadaag bad-mouthed Ibra Salic, resulting to Ibra Salic accusing Kuliling Macadaag of an “illicit affair” with someone in the community. The fuming wife, being a Hajji (a Muslim who had gone through Pilgrimage to Makkah) went to gather all her relatives and filed a complaint directly before the Barangay Council and at the same time filed a case before the Prosecutor’s Office. Both family relatives and friends intervened for an amicable settlement of the *rido*. The case was almost resolved during the settlement. Both parties agreed to the withdraw the case filed against Ibra Salic for oral defamatio and the restoration of the destroyed crops of the Macadaag Family.

Unfortunately, Ibra Salic received a summons from the Fiscal’s Office ordering him to appear before the court to answer charges on oral defamation filed by Kuliling Macadaag. Ibra Salic felt the betrayal and distrust of what was agreed upon by both parties. Ibra Salic cast the first stone and killed

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1 2007 barangay data.
Iyak Buale, a close relative of the Macadaag Family. After two months, the Macadaag Family retaliated and killed the “hatchet man” of Ibra Salic. The tension continued. The family of the Macadaag had planned to launch another attack to kill Ibra Salic that caused them to seek out a “gun for hire” group called Santisima Trinidad Movement (STM) – a religious cult from the Christian groups in the area. But the plan was divulged to Ibra and this made him launch a counter-attack leading to the deaths of three would-be assailants. Retaliation and evacuation continued. One of the casualties named Ityok has yet to be found since 2009 and is believed to be dead. One of the most terrifying incidents was the murder of Kuliling Macadaag by Ibra Salic. This made Ibra Salic and Alim Macadaag come face-to-face in a duel in May 2011 where both of them died. All these conflict and bloodshed over a horse-garden issue between once very close friends and neighbors.

In August 2011, Bridging Leadership was introduced to the community. Since then, no more violence erupted in the area. Kakai-Renabor has become a haven or an area where violence may not occur. This would have been a success had it not pushed the conflict outside of Kakai-Renabor. Two incidents occurred as part of the vendetta between the clans, one in November 2011 in Piagapo Lanao del Sur, and another in January 2012 in Manila.

**The Bridging of Rido**

Having no recourse in the justice system, the only way to reach out to both clans was through their religious beliefs. However, Mowkong realized that complementing this would be a security system or sector that would be responsive to local culture (*rido* and its causes).

As an interfaith grassroots peace builder, Mowkong saw the need to strengthen and revitalize how interfaith leaders and members of the security sector worked together. There were efforts through existing peace and order councils but, he realized that values enhancement had to be incorporated in the process. Both sectors who had some level of influence on how the clans could interact had a role in building a culture of peace.

Engaging the security sector and interfaith leaders in piloting a culture of peace seemed to be effective in heterogeneous communities especially in the case of Lanao del Norte where most of the “bloody conflicts” in the past were viewed as a Muslim- Christian issue.

Mowkong believes that the interfaith sector is a *vehicle for change* especially in using their respective platforms in espousing peace building activities even in their pulpits and *minbar*. The security sector is a potential sector in peace-building and an opportunity to reverse the stigma they gained during the martial law years (where the security sector was prone to abuse and violations of human rights). Having these two groups, the interfaith sector, would greatly help in the transformation of government. Mowkong compares this to what has been seen in the EDSA 1 and EDSA 2 “People Power” revolutions where grassroots communities, the military and other members of various sectors came together to address conflict.

Mowkong realized that engaging the military makes a lot of sense in grassroots peace building. They are one of the biggest institutions in the government in terms of resources, facilities, personnel, networks and are present in every community, especially in conflict affected areas. If enlightened,
empowered and mobilized in the peace building paradigm, this sector would have a huge impact on peace-building.

All this was considered as Mowkong continued to strategize on how to address *rido*. Mowkong realized he needed to help build an “empire of good people”. He formed his Core Group of individuals who trusted and had confidence in his work on the ground. He called his Core Group his “Nurture Group” since they would always be with him until the end. One of them is Gov. Mohamad Khalid Dimaporo, a fellow of the AIM-TEC’s third cohort of its Bridging Leadership Fellows Program (BLFP). Gov. Dimaporo, being familiar with the process of bridging leadership, understood and extended his support to the Mowkong’s project. Other members of his Core Group who ad contributed to the province of Lanao del Norte and Mowkong’s vision and initiatives are the following: Mayor Nelieta Noval, mayor of Tubod; Sr. Inspector Gerry Ligan, Chief of Police of Tubod; Col. Romulo Manuel, 35th IB Battalion Commander; Dante Batingolo, LDN MNLF State Chairman; Lito Quibranza, Provincial Administrator; and Board Member Tawantawan Cauntongan, Sangguniang Panlalawigan.

He also has a strong Guiding Coalition that assisted him on gathering data, particularly the articulation of the divide to the pilot barangay: The Barangay Chairman of Kakai Renabor, The Barangay Council, Bishop Stephen Villaester of the Interfaith Council in Lanao, Grecille I. Matalines, who is a Board Member, Sanggunian Panlalawigan and Chair of the Interfaith Council in the province, Ariel Hernandez who is a Trustee of Balay Mindanao Foundation, Inc, Robert N. Quijano of the Partnership for Peace and Development in Lanao del Norte and the Pakigdait Inc (Abel Moya, Jenny Sanguila and Sheila Operio), the MBLP/AIM-TEC team and the MBLP academic partner, MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT). Having formed a strong Core Group and Guiding Coalition, Mowkong says, “If I talk to them [about] what I feel and what I see and what I think, we always speak on what we refer to as on-the-level”.

Piloting a culture of peace at Kakai Renabor had its milestones because of a woman striving to rule her constituency in accordance with the rule of law accompanied with compassion. She is the barangay chairman of Kakai Renabor, Brgy Capt. Casana P. Batalo. The Brigade commanders also contributed to the milestone despite the succession of the brigade commanders or change of command. The concept has been handed down for the continuity of support in the development of the community. The interfaith leaders have also continuously guided him on the Koranic and biblical passages on peace building. By following the bridging leadership framework, Mowkong found improvements in his
approaches in handling peace-building efforts and his ability to engage critical stakeholders in the peace development process. “It is more systematic under the MBLP.” Mowkong considered the presence of his core group and guiding coalition as key to leading to more dynamic multi-stakeholder engagement for peace and development.

In fact, Mowkong first addressed his divide by working together with multi-sectoral groups from the barangay up to the provincial level. The primary actors that played vital roles in his engagements were the following: Barangay Captain and his Council; the 35th Infantry Brigade assigned in the area together with the tactical operations on the ground; the interfaith council in Lanao; the interfaith Farmers Association; the interfaith community of Kakai Renabor. The municipal and provincial actors are only of secondary levels. The different stakeholders meet at the same time as the activities facilitated by Sanguila to save on cost and allow members to participate in project activities. The agenda of their meetings normally focus on the progress of the change project particularly on peace and development in the area including news on armed conflicts and possible interventions to address the issues.

To build the relationship through participation in peace process activities, he initiated several action plans with his core group and guiding coalition. A conflict-mapping activity was conducted where the people of Kakai Renabor actively participated. This resulted in a Rido Conflict Map of Kakai Renabor. The map was then presented to the mayor of Tubod aiding the local government in having a clear profile and analysis of key players and root causes of *rido* in the area.

There were also activities with multi-sectoral participation on Culture of Peace Workshops, *Bayanihan* Festival, Building the Peace Center, Kapamagogopa and Kasasla-ay, Panagtagbo sa Kalinaw (Convergence for Peace) and Bantay Kalilintad (Peace Watch). These activities motivated and ensured greater participation of grassroots communities and multi-stakeholders to take part in the resolution of conflicts at the community level towards the development of the community. Having conducted these, slowly, the group had helped remove the stigma of Kakai Renabor as a “terrifying” barangay.

“I experienced the stigma I went with my group and hired a tricycle to go to Kakai Renabor. The drivers refused to drive us to the barangay because they were very afraid of the place, it being of bad repute. But now, slowly, it has become a venue for people to dialogue and work together...especially through the building of the Peace Center…”

The values of *Bayanihan* (cooperative undertaking) and peaceful relationship within the community towards co-ownership in the attainment of peace were incorporated in all activities in some form as part of values enhancement. The Peace Center, though not yet complete, was built by the joint efforts of the farmers, army, police, interfaith leaders and the people of Kakai Renabor. It has become an avenue for people to communicate, dialogue, negotiate, and bring them together to work together to promote unity and peaceful relationships. Livelihood activities such as organic farming, training on sustainable agriculture, and community planning have taken place to improve the economic status of the families. These are seen to further help promote unity and peaceful relationships among the farmers.
Co-creation happened through the passage of resolutions and ordinances institutionalizing the Peace and Order Councils (MPOC) and the Provincial Peace and Order Council (PPOC) to take part in local conflict resolution such as rido. Rido is now appropriately monitored and such initiatives and coordination have served to reduce the incidence or cease rido occurrence in Kakai Renabor. Mowkong firmly believes that these partnerships (between the security sector and interfaith leaders) must be sustained. For Mowkong, lasting peace is through interfaith collaboration to intensify peace efforts of the different stakeholders: the military, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Philippine National Police (PNP), line agencies, Provincial Local Government Unit (PLGU), Municipal Local Government Units (MLGUs), Barangay Local Government Units (BLGUs), etc.

Through the efforts of the guiding coalition, the support of the Provincial Government was sealed by the passage of a provincial ordinance declaring the month of March of every year as Month of Peace. This ordinance also helped jumpstart the conduct of other peace-related activities like interfaith visitation to different churches/mosque of various religious sects and gathering of different sectors and stakeholders resulting in stronger and vigorous advocacy for peace and development in the province.

Continuing Challenges

One of the challenges that Mowkong had met was on the perceived role of the NGO which is “just to lobby”. NGOs still very much rely on the mandate of the law, and in Mowkong’s case, this was true for the peace and order councils to meet twice a year. The meetings were upon the discretion of the local chief executive (LCE). To ensure sustainability and continuity, Mowkong tried to advocate for the creation of the Technical Working Group (TWG) in every LGU they worked with. The TWG would handle clear agenda to be deliberated on at peace and order council meetings with defined venues for said meetings. The TWG should be ideally co-chaired by civil society and private sectors.

Another challenge was the availability of time of the LCEs to convene immediate peace and order meetings. To respond to the challenges, co-ownership was Mowkong’s solution: “The collective response should be clear, clear vision, and clear goals, as they have their interest on it, that is why they do it. I think that is basic. This is what we are here for, no man is an island.”

Personal Realizations and Triumphs of the BL Fellow

One thing in the interfaith community that has been articulated is that nowadays, all faiths are working for peace building. He is happy that they are also doing it as well. Recently, Mowkong worked side by side with the council of interfaith leaders in Lanao del Norte doing peace building. “Nakakatabang ng puso (It makes me feel good)”, says Mowkong. “Now, I could leave as is and people would still do it,

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2 Co-creation being the third stage in the Bridging Leadership Framework involving citizen empowerment and new institutional arrangements.
because they own it. Unlike before, I had uncertainties whether people would come. Now, bishops would come so they see to it that their followers come. Also the Ulama. They feel na nakakahiya pag dili nila ginawa (that it is shameful if they don’t do it). Deep inside, they sensed that it is their role in society.”

As the stigma of the rido in Kakai Renabor fade, Mowkong is convinced to replicate his experience in Kakai Renabor in other areas affected by rido. He is looking at continuous sustainable peaceful activities, development projects, and the institutionalization of the Peace and Order councils from the barangay up to the provincial levels, with the hope that such efforts will contribute to the Mindanao 2020 goals of securing lasting peace and security, integrating the economy while safeguarding the environment through sustainable farming, and uplifting human beings through social cohesion initiatives. This would also complement the program of a past BL Fellow who is now the Governor of the province of Lanao del Norte (Gov. Dimaporo) and also complement the change initiative of a BL fellow under the second cohort of the MBLP (Abdul Gaffur Alonto).

Mowkong believes that the MBLP has helped further articulate the clamor towards the self-determination of the Bangsamoro. He has seen it in his change initiative…the process of bridging leadership impacts positively on the promotion of peace and development; understanding and respect of different cultures and traditions; unity and peaceful relationship through livelihood development, sustainable agriculture and concern for environment; and partnership among stakeholders.

“I have felt that doing a thing which is very close to your heart and sharing them to others and then both of you will work on it and strive to work towards the attainment of your goal, that is what you call co-ownership. It starts with a vision and you share that to a friend, and that person believes in your vision, and he shares it to someone else, and at the end of the day, the three of you start to work on it. The collaboration of different stakeholders is very important in attaining peace and development in Lanao. There should be concerted efforts from every sector.”
Pillar of a Vanishing Culture

by Estrella E Taco – Borja
Xavier University

“. . . . we will commit the greatest crime by letting the culture, which our ancestors have painstakingly preserved for generations, die in our hands without passing it to the children and children of the future generation!”

- Datu Migketay

The Talaandig indigenous people (IP) is led by a datu (chief). He earns his position through a blood lineage of ancestors, parents and elders whose authority is affirmed and confirmed by other elders and datus of other IP villages or communities.

Victorino “Vic” Saway was installed by the elders as Datu Migketay. He had been tamed as a keeper of an ancient culture that has lived intact for thousands of years. Similar to the other thirty major tribes in Mindanao, the Talaandigs have kept alive their rituals and songs, which have been handed down from generation to generation.

Datu Kinulintang, his father and patriarch of the tribe, taught Migketay the peace pacts honored by all the tribes in Mindanao at the turn of the 20th century. Nestled between the cleavage of Mount Kalatungan and Mount Kitanglad of Bukidnon, the tribe takes pride in being the caretaker of the latest peace pact that was made sometime in the 17th century among Talaandigs, Higaonons, Maguindanaos and Maranaos at Pusod ta Dagat (navel of the sea). The marker of the old accord is presently located at Barangay Tikalaan in Talakag, Bukidnon.

Migketay’s education and long relationship with the Jesuit fathers at Xavier University, where he finished his Bachelor of Arts degree, and his subsequent studies in Anthropology at a Protestant university in Dumaguete City, have not changed his native belief of Magbabaya, which is widely practiced by different tribes in Mindanao.

His reverence for Datu Kinulintang has developed into a firm commitment to continue the mission of strengthening the relationships among various tribes, in harmony with the higher spirits way before the coming of foreign religions and invaders. The arrival of Islam from the south during the 13th century converted a number of the villages. Later, more than half was also Christianized by invaders from the north. A few tribes were left to maintain their beliefs and practices. This commitment brought Migketay to various places and regional gatherings in his previous capacities as municipal councilor of Lantapan, Bukidnon where he served as chair of the committee in cultural
communities, secretary general of the Panagtagbo (a forum among Mindanao tribes), and commissioner of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). He also served as a delegate to several international conferences among indigenous leaders all over the world.

Ancestral claim

His advocacy for IP rights was tested when the tribe clashed with government agencies and local government units (LGUs). To preserve the vast Mount Kitanglad Range as an ancestral domain, he had to grapple with the split of several tribes on the unified claim of the whole range, which covers eight municipalities of Bukidnon. His effort to keep the unified claim was run down by the desire of the municipal mayors and national agencies to allow local ancestral claims, and for the tribe to obey the law that declared the mountain as a protected area under government supervision. According to Migketay, all datus in the area have entered into a covenant for a unified claim, and disrespect of that pact will be met with a penalty of sala.

Migketay holds his ground to this day, despite the awarding of a few local ancestral domain titles that he considers not binding. In many of his meetings and consultations with tribal leaders in Mindanao, he advocated the primacy of the native titles, an underlay of the Torrens and other doctrines of land ownership prescribed by the government. Despite his tense relations with government and with agencies and offices to pursue IP interest, he holds firm to his belief that dealing with government is a peaceful pursuit towards change. Espoused by his father, the government has an important role in IP development and should ensure that such a role would embrace the participation of the stakeholders and meaningful development of the natives, founded on respect and deep understanding of their culture, especially in resolving inter-tribal conflicts.

Tribal rights

His struggle to protect the Mindanao tribes earned him national and international prominence. It also earned him the ire of the military and multi-national companies. The establishment of an export banana plantation in the Talaandig area signaled the beginning of an emotional struggle. The tribe had to prepare for the battle against those who tried to encroach into the area, even with proper permits and compliances. Since there were bases to levy the company in its use of local resources, the tribal council demanded compliance. Migketay lobbied for meaningful agreement. Since the company needed abundant water supply to grow their crops, it collaborated with the local government to tap into a big water source at Kitanglad, which resulted in further
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... to receive a passive response from the contemporary young members of the tribes, particularly those who have very
little knowledge about peace pacts and have gained knowledge and experience mostly from foreign influence. This situation is more complex due to lack of government support and the “peripheral” attitude of big companies.

Today, the struggle for recognition of territories is hampered by the jurisdiction rights of the local governments supplanting the original native title claimed by the IPs. This concern overlaps the claim of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) for an autonomous region.

Opportunities

From the above challenges, Migketay sees the living descendants as important opportunities, especially those assigned as heir holders and keepers, who can re-tell the stories and pass on the evidence to several generations. Migketay, for one, can tell the stories of Apu Mamalu and Apu Tabunaway, the two ancient brothers who continued their close-knit blood relationship but decided to separate ways due to religion. While Mamalu stuck to his tribal beliefs, Tabunaway embraced Islam. This story is honored by several tribes in central Mindanao, from Bukidnon to Cotabato, along the rivers of Pulangi, Muleta, Aroman up to the mouth of Rio Grande de Mindanao.

According to Migketay, the story of Apu Agbibilin in the mountains of Kitanglad and Kalatungan is shared by Higaonons, Talaandigs, Manobos, Maranaos, Iranuns and Maguindanaos,. These stories reinforced his contention that there is a legal and international basis for the government to support the indigenous and Moro people’s aspirations to self-determination. According to him, “If this is our right, then the attainment of our vision is everybody’s duty, regardless if one is an IP, a Moro or a plain settler from the north.” For Migketay, the massive effort to build peace in Mindanao is an impetus that will accelerate the fulfilment of their dream of “peaceful and progressive indigenous communities in Mindanao living in the spirit of kinship, unity, cooperation and equality.”.

Sense of Pride

His crusade for IP rights and cultural preservation did not go unnoticed. He earned the support of like-minded individuals and institutions, among them the Join Together Society (JTS), an international volunteer organization led by a Magsaysay peace awardee. JTS offered him assistance to build his dream of a capitol building not only for the Talaandig tribe but also for the other tribes in Mindanao. JTS provided building materials but did not provide wages. The tribal members provided volunteer work as sweat equity for the construction. At the start, the villagers were
doubtful that they could build a two-storey building, an endeavour they did not have experience in. The burning desire of the visionary in Migketay provided the impetus for his people to complete the task. A community that was accustomed to a simple one-storey house slowly dug the holes and pulled the big cut logs from the nearby mountain, using carabaos and sheer human strength. When doubt crept in, Migketay was there to inspire them and save the situation. For a year, he pinned his hopes on the building that would soon be finished and give pride to the IPs.

Today, leaders come and discuss the future of the tribes in Mindanao as well as the other tribes in the country in that great hall. Other leaders who saw the edifice not only dreamed of the same for their village but also felt a sense of pride in being an IP.

The Fellowship Journey

The success of the peace center construction and the pride that it generated within his people renewed Migketay’s desire to work for all the tribes in Mindanao. He was hesitant when he was nominated and interviewed for the Asian Institute of Management-Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (AIM-MBLP) fellowship. His reluctance sprang from the prospect of working on something that he thought would take him away from his roots. He was disturbed, yet the desire to look for opportunities to continue his quest for peace, prevailed. He saw the fellowship as another chance for his people.

His continuing advocacy for peace and securing IP rights encouraged him to accept the nomination as fellow of the AIM-MBLP. Despite his busy schedule moving around the indigenous villages, Migketay found the challenge as an opportunity to interact with other leaders in the country and to learn new tools to enrich his ongoing crusade for the IPs.

The fellowship started mid-2011. He went through the rigors of framework planning outlining his development perspective, after careful understanding of the challenges using the causal loop.

“Mura ko ug student, nag-balik aral. Na-anad naman gud ko ug oral sa community para sa mga practical responses.” (I am like a student who has gone back to school. I have become used to discussing [oral tradition] with the community practical responses to [situations that are of concern to us]). He considers BL as a vehicle to establish a time frame for what he intends to do. “Instrumento siya sa pagpamalandong,” (It is an instrument for contemplation) says Migketay.
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He looked at potential solutions to societal divides, from a personal outlook to a wider participation of other stakeholders; from individual ownership moving to the participation of his immediate group and towards a wider involvement of other IP and Moro leaders, particularly the descendants of the peace pact holders. Key to this plan was the organization of the core group that served as his inner circle of supporters and the formation of the guiding coalition that served as his alliance to relate to the peace pact holders and tribe descendants. His core group included Bae Liza, who is also regarded as another pillar of the tribe, youth representatives, and other datus within the Talaandig territory. While the datu may be perceived by an outsider as a leader with absolute authority — internally, he consults a council of elders, especially on matters of defense and tribe survival. This consultation extends to their relatives living in nearby villages. The value of consensus is a time-honored democratic process among ancient villages. Migketay’s guiding coalition (GC) includes tribal and Moro leaders from other parts of Mindanao who help him organize communities and activities related to the realization of his change project.

Propelled by his broad interest, his first framework plan, using indicative data, dwelt on building a peace pact among the IP and Moro groups. He realized later that it was not very focused on realistic and achievable actions. His commitment to reach out and for a more inclusive pact to cover a wider number of tribes distracted him somewhat from what could be achieved for the fellowship in a given time frame. After a series of reviews and revisions, Migketay came up with a more contrived plan that identified what could be achieved in the short term and what could be accomplished in the long run, beyond the fellowship.

Migketay considered the descendants of the ancient peace pact holders as well as representing their respective tribes and genealogy very important to continue the lineage and affirmation of the first agreement. The second consideration was the transfer of these affirmation peace pacts to the next generation —the youth. There was a need to identify these descendants who will attend the major gathering to perform the ritual of affirmation and testimony of kinship. In the same assembly, the gathering of youth will also be held as an opportunity to organize the various levels of tribal councils (local, regional and island-wide) to prepare the way for the next activities after the said gathering. It would also attempt to bring together the various supporters and partners, including the MILF, who has been negotiating with the government on its territorial claims for the Moro, which is crucial to the future efforts for peace between and among Indigenous and Moro people.

There were three attempts in 2011 to hold the reaffirmation of the traditional peace pact. These were on October 14, November 7-8, and December 6-10. Migketay decided it was time to shelve it and downsize his original plan from organizing a peace pact between the IP and the Moro people, to the holding of a reaffirmation ceremony of their kinship; he realized that a peace pact is
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achieved only after the resolution of conflict. Also, in the earlier meetings, some IP leaders insinuated that they had difficulty participating due to the lack of resources. They also suggested that the process of consultation should be strengthened first. Several leaders of the IP and the Moro people, including the leadership of the MILF, refused to give up on the mission. They insisted on forging ahead and employing a systematic approach.

Migketay conducted the following activities to prepare the groundwork for the reaffirmation ceremony:

- Advocacy on traditional peace pacts
- Sharing of traditional history, information and experiences
- Defining traditional peace pact as indigenous culture of peace
- Proposal for reaffirmation and lobbying for support

In August 2011, a meeting was held among the elders of the indigenous peoples and the Bangsa Moro to outline the initial agreement on the conduct of the reaffirmation ceremony. A month later, a three-day gathering among the traditional peace pact holders from different parts of Mindanao was held to come to an agreement on the processes of the peace pact ceremony. IP representatives from Damulog, with the support of another fellow, Mayor Romy Tiongco, also came. In February 2012, the Chairperson of the MILF Peace Panel gave an encouraging statement to support the holding of the Moro-IP peace pact and kinship ceremony.

Gains

The momentous event happened on March 7-8, 2012. The reaffirmation ceremony of the IP-Moro Kinship was held at Sungko, Lantapan, Bukidnon and was attended by leaders of different tribes in Mindanao.
The activity achieved the following:

a. Reaffirmation of IP-Moro kinship
b. Formation of the IP-Moro Kinship Council
c. Participation of youth leaders in the ceremony
d. Installation of the IP-Moro kinship monument
e. Signing of IP-Moro kinship covenant

The following covenants were declared during the ceremony:

a. Leaders agreed to observe mutual recognition of and respect (Kilalaha Ha Batasan) for each other as brothers and sisters and descendants of the early inhabitants of Mindanao
b. Leaders agreed to observe transparency and mutual sharing of information (Sayuda Ha Batasan) to bolster confidence in each other
c. Leaders agreed to help each other (Buliga Ha Batasan) to attain collective, common, and diverse interests as peoples
d. Participants agreed to observe mutual protection of life (Uyaga Ha Batasan) as brothers and sisters and descendants of the early inhabitants of Mindanao; a law on mutual protection of life
e. Leaders agreed to provide the necessary support to anyone of them (Pabatunbatuna Ha Batasan) who needed critical assistance; a law on mutual responsibility to provide assistance to the needy

“The fellowship has given me a boost in the sense that there are changes in the way people see me because I have been with the program of AIM,” Migketay says. From the tools that he had learned in the workshops, he was able to expand his network of influence to include kindred but diversified spirits working for peace. His stakeholders are not only the peace pact holders, expanded members of the civil society groups, and government and private individuals; in his reformatted structure, his stakeholders include historians and representatives from the military.

Other outcomes

Several IP-Moro communities expressed plans to hold their own local IP-Moro Kinship activities, particularly along the Aromanon river in North Cotabato and Damulog in Bukidnon. There are also discussions about pursuing the same activities along the boundary of Bukidnon and North Cotabato. The IPs in Caraga region (Surigao and Agusan) conveyed their interest in learning the doctrine of the kinship.

On June 12, 2012, the Talaandig employed the cultural mechanism to bring back to their fold the supporters and members of the New People’s Army (NPA) by means of a ritual reaffirming their allegiance to the indigenous culture, and serving as guardians and keepers of the Talaandig territory.
The construction of the kinship monument provided the youth with a real encounter during the ceremony and connected them to a past that had previously seemed mythical and too abstract. Many of the youth are now ready to take on the leadership challenge to hand down the important traditions to the future generations. The reaffirmation created ties of unity among IPs and Moros in the midst of division and outside manipulation. The ritual also brought back the trust and confidence among them and strengthened the bonds that had been established by the early leaders. This relationship is expected to be sustained with the creation of the Mindanao IP-Moro Kinship Council — the new pillar of IP-Moro harmony.

After experiencing the reaffirmation rituals in Sungko, the IPs who have been implicated in many conflicts in Mindanao, either as recruits of the rebels or lackeys of interest groups in power within the military or government who oppose the Bangsamoro homeland issue, now recognize the opportunity to cooperate and unite. According to Migketay, “The Mindanao conflict is not the making of the IPs and the Moro; rather, it is the outcome of colonial manipulation, suppression of indigenous rights, and intrusion of foreign interests into the traditional lands of the IP and Moro in Mindanao.” They are victims of oppression, exploitation and neglect. They failed to reinforce cooperation and unity through peaceful and cultural means. He added, “The indigenous culture of peace such as the Tampuda hu Balagen, Diyandi, Pakang or Sapa were hardly explored. The traditional territories of the IPs and Moro people are still determined by them through their systems and processes.

The rights over these traditional territories and ancestral domains are recognized by existing laws of the country.” Migketay is excited for the future. He shares:

Challenges

Despite many efforts, the tribe continues to face many challenges daily, and faces them head-on. Migketay continues to hold on to the guidance of the spirits and to Magbabaya. Together
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with his CG and GC, he continues to discuss how to mobilize resources to sustain their initial gains and to support their other plans.

Among Migketay’s problems is the way government finds solutions to conflict situations, especially among the tribes. According to Migketay, “The government has been exploring external solutions to the Mindanao conflict... that are always from the top, models that are alien and foreign [to the tribe] and have not explored the cultural means to resolve e conflict based on the cultures and identity of the people.”

He also recognizes that among their weaknesses is documenting their history and culture, their stories of victory and even failure. Being used to oral traditions, despite the elders’ ability to pass on their cultures and traditions to the next generations — the youth of this era, having imbibed the influence of modernity in keeping with the times, needs something other than the living traditions. Migketay even sought help from XU. Another challenge is guiding the youth and keeping them on track. The rise of technology, coupled with modernization, is a double-edged sword. There are many influences from all fronts; without proper guidance, it would be easy for the youth to succumb to the convenience and lure of the world especially with the increase of youth migration to urban centers. On the other hand, the youth needs to be exposed to the endless possibilities of an outside reality, where talents can be honed and knowledge can be increased. Another concern that Migketay hopes to address is the economic sustainability of the tribe. Several efforts have been made to create more opportunities for the tribe to increase income.

While many of them have taken advantage of the scientific health methods provided by the government and the private sector, the majority continues to gravitate towards their native mangunguyam (midwife) and baylan (ritualist) for cultural reasons — their healing practices are closely connected to the higher spirits. The tribe offers things to Talabugta, the spirit of the soil. They also pray to Bulalakaw, the spirit of the water. The IPs strongly believe in the role of the spirits in bringing harmony to the families and peace to the village. Although they need health intervention from practitioners, their strong cultural foundation may be harnessed to provide opportunities for the tribe. In fact, the tribe is not short of dreams. They would like to see their community become a health tourism destination in the future for both tribes and migrants, by offering back-to-basic health facilities and a rich cultural heritage that can also earn income for individual families and the tribe as a whole.

Bridging the Past to the Present

Migketay believes that peace does not end the moment it is achieved, but instead is a continuing journey to the future, through several generations. Over time, this journey has become a heritage that must be passed on to the future generations through the involvement of the youth, who will preserve the doctrine of kinship for peace and unity.

Since “the legal recognition of cultural and customary rights of the IPs and the Moro over their cultures and identity are mandated by existing laws and policies of the Philippine
government,” Migketay sees it as an opportunity for his change project to prosper alongside the tools that he has acquired from his BL journey.

Looking back at his work, Migketay knows that the journey will continue and that there is still much work to be done. He describes the role of a bridging leader as “…like crossing to the other side of the river to connect with those outside of your domain.” He is connecting with the other fellows of his batch, in particular Mayor Romy Tiongco, who supports his project by sending representatives to participate in his activities; Bae Rose, who is also a tribal leader and who understands and speaks his language; and Gov Oca Moreno, whose leadership experience Migketay admires. During the several meetings and coaching sessions that they were together, they also developed their own sense of affinity and kinship and learn from each other’s stories of victory and failure. He is grateful for the opportunity of having participated in the fellowship, which provided him with new tools, a different approach, and skills to implement his change project. He believes that more aggressive cultural education is needed if we want more people to understand the cultural divide that brings conflict; he wants to multiply himself to respond to such a demand, and one of the ways to do it is to work with his CG and his GC.

A Maguindanao peace pact holder and MNLF combatant who wishes for the realization of the peace pact before he leaves this world, says: “If we cannot do anything about the conflict in Mindanao, our children in the future will inherit this problem and guilt will certainly haunt all of us for not having done anything about it!”
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A Rose Blossoms for a Tribe
by Luther D Labitad
Xavier University - SEARSOLIN

“Before, I was very dependent on my colleagues. I would tell them to [be the ones to] meet our partners because I was shy. Now, I just ask them if they like to come.”
-- Bae Rose (Nena Undag)

Nena Undag, more popularly known as Bae Rose, is a Higaonon, a descendant of Apo Manlupiagan. Her father is a respected tribal leader while her mother is a Baylan, a religious tribal leader.

She earned some units in Education in one of the colleges in Cagayan de Oro City. Her inability to finish her college degree due to financial constraints did not stop her from exploring other opportunities. She worked under an ex-nun who organized the Catholic Church’s Apostolate on Tribal Filipinos in Cagayan de Oro City. She also worked as a data banking officer under the sponsorship of the Ethnic Studies and Development Center. In 1989, she got a scholarship to join the three-month diploma course on the Asia-Pacific Intercultural Women’s Studies at the Institute for Women Studies at St. Scholastica’s College in Manila.

She described her college days, between 1982 and 1987, as very memorable. She got actively involved with progressive groups. She was a recruit of the League of Filipino Students (LFS), a board member of the Kabataang Makabayan (KM) and an organizer of the Higaonon out-of-school youth and students in Misamis Oriental. Because of these involvements, she was under close surveillance by the military and the police. Together with her husband, Datu Balitengteng, they were accused of being sympathizers of, and worse, as members of the New People’s Army (NPA). Both of them were brought for questioning to the army brigade’s camp in Migbanday, Claveria town. They were able to clear their names with the help of the church and a non-government organization (NGO). Lawyers from the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) and human rights advocates from the Tribal Filipino Apostolate (TFA) came to their defense and vouched for their integrity and innocence.

Bae Rose’s husband, whom she considers her mentor, greatly influenced her. She is able to consult him on matters concerning her advocacy work. According to Bae Rose, if not for him, she could have drifted away from the realm of the indigenous peoples. Datu Balitengteng is the Secretary General and a volunteer worker of the same organization to which she belongs -- Kahiusahan sa mga Higaonon, Inc. (KHI). She volunteered as a consultant with KHI’s Building Bridges for Peace Program (BBP) through the Provincial Offices of Misamis Oriental and Agusan del Norte. As a consultant, she got the opportunity to work with the IP communities in Misamis Oriental and Gingoog City.
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Her skills and experiences as a community organizer and a volunteer were enhanced through the international trainings she had attended. She was a fellow of the Peace-building Seminar in 2008 held at the Queensland University of Technology in Australia through the Australian Leadership Award. She was also able to join a program on Human Rights held in Switzerland through the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. She considers such exposure as very helpful in preparing her for the role of tribal leader and says that, “I am no longer shy as I used to be in my younger years.”

She immersed herself in community work to advocate for IP rights. She regarded her mentors, some of her colleagues in the NGOs, her fellow tribal leaders, and other women advocates, to have strengthened her into becoming the leader she is today. The realities and the plight of the IPs encouraged her to do something about them. She felt the neglect. She saw the deprivation of the needed basic services.

The IPs in Misamis Oriental and Agusan are among the most impoverished and often neglected groups. Aside from being vulnerable to recruitment by insurgency movements that cause the loss of many lives including those of some of her relatives, they are also vulnerable to exploitation.

Bae Rose acknowledges that IPs are faced with many problems and internal struggles. The leadership structure of IP communities is problematic. She knows that they are divided on the issue of leadership. She is aware that some tribal leaders are being used by politicians and businessmen; they have become ‘tribal dealers’ rather than tribal leaders. She argues that these kinds of leaders, who only have personal interests, do not represent the true identity of the IPs.

“The rights of the IPs are not fully protected or given full recognition as stipulated in the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) which remains elusive,” Bae Rose laments. The CADT, according to her, will allow the IPs to set up internal systems that will enhance the management and governance of their ancestral domain. Bae Rose elaborates:

“I really want the tribe to be given the opportunity to establish their own governance system [and] mechanism for their self-determination. I hope there is unity among the tribes and that they are not divided. There should be an aim to unite as there are a number of tribes in Mindanao [to attain peace].”
Bae Rose is certain that if this divide continues, the IPs will always be dependent on outside help such as help from politicians, among others. Their dependence will make them more vulnerable to recruitment of insurgency groups and exploitation; the tribes will become weaker, divided, and will live in a state of un-peace.

While she finds hope in the passage of the Indigenous People Rights Act (IPRA), the IP sector still remains vulnerable and weak. The IPRA provisions are not fully enforced and the implementation is unclear. The IPs in the two regions have not fully taken advantage of the IPRA; neither have the IPs benefited from the programs of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). It takes time for the IP groups to secure their CADT claims since they lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to process their claims according to the rules and regulations set up by the NCIP. For the IP groups that Bae Rose has been trying to help, it has taken them almost a decade to file their claims, to no avail.

**Complexities**

Initially, Bae Rose planned to focus her change project on the application and acquisition of CADT, specifically in the TATRICO-ODLIBA (Taladukan Tribal Council – Odiongan, Linugos and Baliguihan) areas and help them with the processing of their claims. The unified claim covers nine barangays of Misamis Oriental, two barangays of Agusan del Norte and three barangays of Gingoog City. The Higaonon population under the TATRICO-ODLIBA is estimated at 10,300. She realized later that, given the limited time of the fellowship, what she wished for could not be done.

Only sitio Sioan, Malinao has submitted their application for TATRICO CADT at NCIP Gingoog Service Center on September 4, 2004. The coverage of the claim was estimated to be around 5,275 hectares with 753 Higaonon families. The Tribal Communities (TRICOM), an NGO, supported their application. In 2009, the Tatico Council of Elders went to the service center of the NCIP in Gingoog City requesting funds for the titling. The NCIP had insufficient budget for CADT processing and recommended that the said CADT claims be submitted to their partner NGOs (INTER Peoples Exchange -IPEX-ANTHROWATCH and Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc. <BMFI>). BMFI later included ODLIBA citing the testimonies of the tribal elders of their close relationship with the Higaonons from these communities. In 2010, the BBP, through the Provincial Government of Misamis Oriental, expanded its program to TATRICO-ODLIBA covering 29 areas and 22 barangays under the unified claim. IPRA community consultations, conflict resolution and briefing on genealogical census have been conducted while applications for the delineation and titling process of the CADT are still pending with the provincial office of the NCIP.

Aside from the struggle on the bureaucratic procedures, the presence of a cult in one of the areas that has settled since 2005, soon after the CADT claim was filed, complicated the
problem. The *Gintong Araw* cult led by a migrant settler eventually led to a power struggle between the Higaonons and the non-IPs. Worse, its presence split the tribe.

Other than pushing for the CADT of TATRICO-ODLIBA, Bae Rose is also hoping for mandatory representation of the IPs in the local government units. She believes that if the IPs are represented in local special bodies, their concerns will be immediately brought to the attention of the concerned agencies.

Bae Rose wants to use her change project to contribute to peace considering the restlessness of the IPs and the presence of insurgents in the area who are taking advantage of the IPs’ misery and sentiments against the government. “There is a need to pursue the peace process with meaningful discussion especially on root causes of conflict, particularly the Ancestral Domain,” she says. She envisions that the CADT for TATRICO-ODLIBA and the IP sector will allow them to exercise self-governance thereby maximizing their participation in peace building and development. Her mission is to build a Higaonon community where governance is rooted in the culture of the tribe and where the people are enjoying sustainable livelihood.

**Collaboration**

Bae Rose’s advocacy work for the welfare of the IPs took a wider perspective when she later became part of Provincial Peace and Order Council (PPOC) of Misamis Oriental. It was in the council’s regular sessions where she was able to forward immediate concerns of the IPs. She also became acquainted with other stakeholders whom she considers have significant roles in advancing her cause (to help the IP communities). She acknowledges the support that she is getting from the PPOC and is grateful that her advocacy is recognized. She proudly recalls being consulted by the governor of Misamis Oriental Oscar Moreno, her co-fellow in the MBLP fellowship, as regards the members of the NPA who were creating trouble in the communities. She was asked if it was time for the military to pull-out from the area. That incident encouraged her to continue with her work. She said: “I felt useful and important [because] my opinion was sought by a high-ranking local government official.”

Given the kind of acceptance she has gained from the council, Bae Rose considers the PPOC to be part of her guiding coalition (GC). When she presented her change project to them, the council approved, adopted, and committed to fully support it. She saw the opportunity to engage others. She also collaborated with the NCIP and the DILG to ensure that the IPs are properly represented in governance. She also collaborated with the PPOC and the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on matters related to abuses of human rights because she recognized that “It is a big help...because they have ideas that I do not have....so it is like exchanging ideas.” Bae Rose regards those in government as knowledgeable people, and she has this to say on collaboration: “If I don’t tell them my problem, they will not know how to help me. So it is really a must that you meet with them every now and then. You also need to examine [what you’re
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... doing] closely because you might neglect your main objectives...even if I have lots of activities, I do not stray away from my divide and my focus.”

Her change project required her to spend more time on the ground to hold meetings and consultations with the tribal leaders to get their commitment in processing their ancestral domain claim. She also makes her presence felt in many government agencies to get their support relative to the CADT and other forms of services for the IPs.

With the welfare of the IP communities as her only agenda, she found the courage to face people of rank. She recalled having been berated by a top local chief executive for not coordinating her activities with the city government. That incident did not deter her from continuing her advocacy, rather, she became more focused and determined. It also taught her key lessons. Among them was the need to coordinate with local officials before doing something on the ground. She also recalled a time when she had an argument with a government agency representative during a forum over the need for IP communities to get a permit when cutting rattan and other forest resources. She reasoned out that the IPs normally do not cut in volume and therefore did not need to get a permit. That incident taught her to be firm and to use reason to persuade others. It also paved the way to earn a new ally.

Another notable effort relative to collaboration was when Typhoon Sendong hit Northern Mindanao in December 2011. Bae Rose busied herself providing relief assistance to IPs communities affected by the flash floods. She kept in touch with an MBLP co-fellow from Iligan City (City Councilor Frederick Siao). She was able to solicit support for the victims from other organizations like Samdhana and Xavier University’s Tabang Sendong Program. Through Samdhana, she was able to access relief funds from the World Food Program, Habitat for Humanity, United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF), Catholic Church’s Commission on Social Action, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the International Organization for Migrants (IOM). She focused on the following IP communities in Cagayan de Oro and Misamis Oriental because they were barely assisted by other NGOs and they lacked media exposure because of the remoteness of their villages: Tumpagon, Pigsag-an, Pagalungan, Tuburan, Tagpangi, Tignapolaoan, San Simon, Lumbia, Bayanga, Dansolihon, Besigan, Dansolihon, Barangay Upper Malubog, Mahayahay of the Municipality of Manticao and Barangay Limunda of Opol.

On her collaboration efforts, Bae Rose said:

“one should not work alone. You need co-ownership .... You engage in partnerships so that you have several ideas apart from those you get from the training......you should inform your different networks, your stakeholders or the members of your core group so that it won’t be a burden to you. It would further strengthen relationships and sustain it.”

Her core group is key to the implementation of her change project and her journey. Her core group (CG) members were chosen based on the fact that she could easily approach them.
for administrative and logistical aspects of her project; they also provide her with moral support and are consulted even at a personal level and beyond their official capacities.

Bae Rose acknowledged them by saying that “they have helped me a lot with their varied ideas, different sharing of experiences.”

Aside from the support of her CG, she also secured the support of the PPOC of Misamis Oriental and considers the PPOC as part of her guiding coalition (GC). The PPOC meets every month where Bae Rose takes the opportunity to discuss her change project with the council. For her, being an IP where oral tradition and dialogue is practiced, the PPOC is the most practical and apt structure for her change project.

With regard to ensuring that the vision-mission of her change project is shared by the other stakeholders, Bae Rose discussed her chosen divide with the council. The council later adopted the project as their own and provided its support. Her vision-mission fit into the PPOC’s – a stable peace and order situation in the whole province. She also secured funding support for her change project. The provincial government allotted Php300,000.00 (US$7,500.00) while the city government of Gingoog pledged P200,000.00 (US$5,000.00). The said amount was partially given to the barangays to fast-track CADT processing.

Bae Rose acknowledges the contribution of Gov. Oscar Moreno to her change project. There was clear complementation of both fellows’ change initiatives. The Governor’s change project involved the IPs. He solicited the support of Bae Rose on social preparation and community mobilization while Bae Rose solicited financial support from him.

Outcomes

Bae Rose’s collaborative approach resulted to the realization of her hope for IP representation at the barangay level. As of this writing, there are now eight IP representatives in eight barangays of Gingoog City and the municipality of Magsaysay in Misamis Oriental.

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<th>Guiding Coalition members:</th>
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<td>Provincial Governor</td>
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<td>Vice-governor</td>
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<td>PPOC’s Chief Executive Officer (at the same time the province’s social welfare officer)</td>
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<td>Provincial Director of the Philippine National Police</td>
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<td>City Mayor</td>
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<td>Provincial Director of the National Commission of Indigenous People</td>
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<td>Representative from the academe (Xavier University)</td>
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<td>Building Bridges for Peace, Rebecca Lozada</td>
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<th>Core Group Members:</th>
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<td>Teddy Sabuga-a, Jr. of the PPOC</td>
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<td>Kaka Dacup of Balaod Mindanaw</td>
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<td>Vic Aleria of the Commission on Human Rights</td>
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<td>Sabpee Garcia of the Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc.</td>
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<td>Milan Sambili of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples</td>
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<td>Joana Jamisolamin of SAMDHANA</td>
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<td>Datu Tony Lumandong of KAGDUMA</td>
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But representation is not enough. She recommends that a continuous capacity-building program for IP representatives be designed so that they can perform their roles responsibly and be able to bring out issues on AD claim and their other needs.

She is also maximizing her presence in the PPOC. She always sees opportunities through the council to engage other stakeholders. The council also serves as a venue for her to have dialogue with other government officials. At the community level, Bae Rose’s constant presence and advocacy work in the communities provide hope and encouragement for greater participation of the IPs on concerns involving their communities. Her presence encourages them to know more of their rights. More importantly, she has gained the trust of the communities. “The government should give priority to IP areas in terms of giving basic services,” she says.

She was able to mobilize resources from the provincial government of Misamis Oriental and the city of Gingoog. She considers this as significant considering that she is not even connected to an organization. She knew all along that implementing her change project would be a challenge.

She was able to facilitate the conduct of a seminar on governance and sustainable agriculture in partnership with Xavier University (XU) for some of her IP representatives. While XU provided the modules (content and resource persons through its Governance and Leadership Institute and Sustainable Agriculture Center) the provincial government of Misamis Oriental provided administrative and logistical support. The governance module was designed for the IP mandatory representatives to have technical knowledge and to enhance their capacity as members of the local special bodies. The sustainable agriculture component of the seminar was designed to support the livelihood initiatives of the IP communities. She insisted that, “the livelihood component should be part of every ancestral domain sustainability and protection plan.”

Through the MBLP, Bae Rose has further developed her self-confidence. Her experiences in reaching out to others, especially the stakeholders, including some key personalities in the provincial office and other government offices, have contributed to this. She has become a regular presence in IP-related gatherings and is being sought by the IPs for guidance and assistance. She thinks that “I no longer wait for the people [to ask or tell me]; rather, I go when I see there is a need.”

The Challenges

Since the start of the fellowship, Bae Rose has been struggling; she lacked the resources that she needed to secure the implementation of her change project. It was difficult for her to go around the different communities doing advocacy work since it required resources. The lessons she learned from the bridging leadership program were put to a test. She realized that
she has a string of networks that she can tap; her personal social capital also includes her rich experience in community organizing and advocacy work. When she looked within and looked at what was out there, she saw where she could ask for help. She was able to generate support from the provincial government of Misamis Oriental and the city government of Gingoog – significantly helping her project along. Yet, there remains many things to be done and more resources are also needed.

Collaborating with the local government units and different government agencies (local and national), especially on some provisions of the IPRA and the National Integrated Protected Areas Systems (NIPAS), remains a challenge. There are some provisions of the IPRA and NIPAS that remain contentious; IP mandatory representation remains limited to a few communities. Bae Rose also sees the need to collaborate with other government agencies that have projects inside the CADT areas, namely: the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

“Jealousy is common among the tribal leaders,” Bae Rose sadly relates. She pointed out the nature of politics among the IP groups. She recalled that she and her husband were accused before by other tribal leaders of depositing millions of pesos from an NGO to their personal account and that they received financial support for their volunteer work. She vehemently denied the allegations and simply ignored them. She believed that other leaders were just out to destroy her and her husband’s credibility. They continued doing their work and increased their presence in the community. Through their perseverance, they wanted to prove to their detractors that they were both sincere in what they were doing. They let their actions speak for their intentions.

More than the leadership struggle, the thing that bothers her more is the existing conflict between the military and the NPA in one area under the claim. While this security concern is being addressed by the provincial government, she is still worried that the NPA might reduce her efforts to naught; the NPAs are anti-CADT so they might prevent the conduct of the survey. Again, Bae Rose has to go back to her list of networks and proposes the following solution:

“We need to identify tribal leaders who have friends inside [the NPA] who could talk to them. This would serve as protection for those who would be doing the survey because this would not take long. ...It would be better for the tribal leaders to accompany the enumerators when they go there. Bringing the military, to provide security, is not advisable as this could lead to chaos.”
Lessons Learned

With the nature of her change project, it is a must to approach public officials because they have the influence and the resources. Bae Rose agrees that “what is critical is for us to use strategies when dealing with them....I [will] start engaging key people during forum and similar activities.”

Bae Rose looks at a leader as somebody who "must strengthen linkage with the provincial government, academe, and other institutions. This linkage is crucial to the sustainability of the project." She also believes that “our dedication and passion to help others can really make a difference.”

Sometimes she assumes other roles when the occasion calls for it. At one time she was asked to play the role of a mediator in a case involving a married tribal woman who wanted to leave her husband to marry a lowlander. Upon the insistence of her sisters, Bae Rose obliged to the request to mediate because, as a member of the IP community, she affirms that such case is not acceptable in their culture. Although Bae Rose suggested to the concerned parties to bring the matter first to the elders in the community, the tribal woman told Bae Rose to facilitate the consultation process instead. In the end, they arrived at an agreement which was sealed through a ritual. Bae Rose thought that it was a test case of her mediation skills which, fortunately, ended in a peaceful settlement. That was just one of the many cases of Bae Rose’s mediation role that was included in the book, Taghusay, published by the Mindanao Commission on Women. It is a compilation of stories of seven women conflict mediators in Mindanao. The book recommends for further strengthening of the traditional system of resolving conflict within a territory and observing due process of justice system in accordance with customary laws.

Her experience as a mediator prepared her for the challenges in her MBLP project. When she encountered resistance from the office of the city mayor, Bae Rose’s skills in conflict management and negotiation led her to holding dialogue for the resolution of the issue. Her persistence and consistency of approach resulted to securing the support of the city mayor and some officials of the local government unit. She was also able to maximize the benefit of engaging the PPOC to forward her agenda on human rights, peace and security.

“For instance, if there is conflict in the community, I raise that during our meeting in the PPOC. Before, we do not mind that. There are instances where you can use the traditional systems of resolving conflicts because that is really the first thing to do. However, there are issues that could not be resolved by just using the traditional ways of resolving conflicts. You need to bring it into the mainstream...it is necessary that you collaborate with those in the [government] because the political and economic system
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is evolving...there is really a need for one to approach other networks. That is somehow an add-on to me, like I now have a road map.”

Being a BL fellow has made her realize that she now has, in her hands, various tools and skills for her advocacy work. The BL experience “has strengthened me... and one’s relationship and coordination with others...relationships become stronger...relationships are sustained through bridging.”

She has gained much confidence in dealing with government officials and leaders of various backgrounds. Her linkage with MBLP co-fellows, namely: Gov. Oscar Moreno, Datu Vic Saway (Datu Migketay) and Mayor Romy Tiongco, has given her a deeper inner strength and the confidence to build an alliance with them. She thinks that her ways and approaches of leadership have become more effective and reliable. She used to be very selective in dealing with the tribe, but since the fellowship, she has made it a point to be more inclusive especially in giving information, seeking assistance and in her linkages. She now includes and consults the other members of the tribal council and values their presence. Her approaches have become more participatory and engaging.

Bae Rose ends by saying that “I find it easier now to work my way in the corridors of power and politics, knowing that I am valued as a woman leader.”

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The Road that Leads to Peace
by Roel R Ravanera
Dean, College of Agriculture
Xavier University

“I believe that to achieve peace, we need to bring government closer to the people.”
- Gov. Oscar Moreno, Misamis Oriental

Sowing peace has never been easy. It entails a lot of sacrifices, resources, teamwork and determination. Partly because of this, peace in Mindanao has remained a dream for many.

In Misamis Oriental, a province in Northern Mindanao, a man dared to build the road to peace. It came to him naturally as he was molded to be a man of service. And as a public servant, what propelled him was his belief that the key to achieve peace is “bringing government closer to the people.”

Relevant life experiences that molded a public servant

Governor Oscar “Oca” Moreno, a native of Balingasag, Misamis Oriental, can be said to be a leader with a heart for service, and a passion for peace and people empowerment.

He is a product of the public education system in Balingasag Central School for elementary education where he graduated Salutatorian. He studied in private schools as well: in Xavier University for his high school and in the University of Manila for his Bachelor of Arts degree. He then proceeded to San Beda College where he finished his degree in Bachelor of Laws with a Silver Medal for Academic Excellence. He took and passed the bar exams in 1975.

He attended international trainings and fellowships in the USA, such as an Executive Program for Leaders in Development and Program on Budgeting and Financial Management in the Public Sector at the Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard University; Program on Fiscal Decentralization and Local Government Financial Management at Duke University, North Carolina; and International Workshop on Privatization, Regulatory Reform and Corporate Governance at Princeton University, New Jersey. With all these and other trainings he has gone through, anyone can say he has learned enough to stop attending them. But Gov. Moreno is eager to learn more because he believes that “learning never stops.”

His belief in teamwork and collaboration instead of a one-man “show” is exemplified both in his personal sports interests and at work. When he plays basketball with his peers, he plays and wins with a team. Likewise, in governing the province and implementing projects, he coordinates with officers in their respective delegations, roles and duties according to their offices’ mandates. He
sees here the value of uniting different roles as a leader and working together with them for accountability, efficient and speedy implementation, and far-reaching impacts. A firm believer of teamwork and collaboration, he reaffirms this by saying, “I am a leader but also a team man.”

In the rural areas, access to functional hospitals and health clinics is a major concern. While some are fortunate to be brought to these hospitals and treated right on time, some critically ill die on the way due to its remoteness. Some, even if they get there, die because the necessary immediate services are limited or non-functional for lack of maintenance and funds. Similar was the heartbreaking experience of Gov. Moreno when his father died in his arms because the needed hospital equipment was not available.

This and his other significant life experiences reinforced his desire for government services to meet people’s needs. His possession of a servant’s heart and a desire to see people being capacitated to improve their lives—especially in his hometown—became evident when he became the Provincial Governor of Misamis Oriental in 2004. His life experiences are reflected in his eight-point agenda as governor: 1) poverty alleviation; 2) revenue generation; 3) investment in infrastructure; 4) MISORTEL resuscitation; 5) education and environment; 6) hospital and health system upgrading; 7) agricultural productivity; and 8) teamwork and a streamlined bureaucracy. Throughout his years of governance, developments in the above agenda have taken place.

His sincere desire to give the people quality public service has been affirmed by various commendations: Galing Pook Award for pivotal improvements in the hospital system; Gawad Pamana ng Lahi given by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); Seal of Good Housekeeping for good governance; and another Galing Pook Award last January 2012 for its local initiative project on peace and development called “The Lantad Peace-building Experience: Turning Red to Green in Misamis Oriental” (From a ‘No Man’s Land’ to a Land of Hope/Strategic Innovations in Upgrading Misamis Oriental’s Provincial Peace and Order Council). He would replicate the Lantad initiatives for the MBLP.

**Lantad then: Neglected and war-torn**

Lantad is a sitio (zone) in Barangay Kibanban, in the municipality of Balingasag, Misamis Oriental. It sits in a valley with fertile soil and experiences drizzle almost every day, making it conducive for farming. It is also part of the Balatukan Mountain Range, a key biodiversity area which abounds in natural resources and is inhabited by the Philippine Eagle, Mindanao lorikeet, the monitor lizard, the giant fruit bat, the flying lemur and the tarsier. A tribe called the Higaonons, dwells in 95 percent of the approximately 450-hectare sitio. It is enveloped by Gingoog City and three towns, Balingasag, Medina and Lagonglong and is only 25 kilometers away from the highway.

Lantad was once a productive and peaceful community but gradually became desolate when a great number of the inhabitants fled to the lowlands for safety.
In the 1960s, the Vulcan Company conducted logging and mining operations in Lantad but only to their own benefit. Deforestation and exploitation of resources resulted to scarcity of food for Lantad residents, floods, drought, forest fire, and a threatened biodiversity. When these operations ended, the roads they used quickly lost their tracks. Only foot trails through the rugged mountainous landscape remained. Thus, its lack of road access has made the sitio far from the reach of government services and projects.

Cholera broke out in 1978. A great number of people, most of them children, got ill and died. The government was not able to give much help for their medical treatment.

Between the late 70s and early 80s, the rebels from the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) came to the village and, in a short time, were able to establish their governance. Lantad became the first municipal revolutionary government established by the North Central Revolutionary Committee in the mid-80s. This committee was the source of all mandates as it served as the center of revolutionary movement in the region. Moreover, Lantad served as a “safe haven” of their movement because it was remote and difficult for government to have access to.

The rebels did not find any difficulty in establishing their control and influence because the villagers saw neither local government presence nor developmental efforts taking place in Lantad. The villagers gave nearly their whole support to and conceded right away to the rebels’ movement. The rebels even issued land titles to them with a promise that the villagers will in time take ownership lands they tilled. Some of the farmers fought alongside them as well.

The environmental and social landscape in Lantad eventually changed. Self-detonaing landmines replaced the crops planted on the ground. Snipers sat on trees’ branches; forest sounds were overpowered by OV-10 Broncos and MG-520 helicopter gunships that flew over for reconnaissance, strafing and bombing missions.

For about a decade, the rebels continued to govern the village. Military efforts did not take away the control of the rebels on the village. The two opposing forces created violent conflicts in Lantad that the valley turned from a fertile green land to crimson red. People hoped for peace in their community and agricultural fertility.

Moreno’s Peace Journey to Lantad

During the Holy week of 2005, Governor Oscar Moreno asked his staff to go hiking with him. They then decided to go to Lantad as it was a place they had not been to before, and not many people went there. Seeing the dire situation there, they unknowingly brought Gov. Moreno to a community where help was badly needed and opened that door for the opportunity to respond to the need.
“Achieving peace is always a difficult process,” admits Gov. Moreno. This is especially so in cases like Lantad where insurgencies occur due to the neglect of the government in the past.

For Gov. Moreno, peace is achieved when parties come to a point of reciprocal understanding, sharing a common strategy, and building teamwork towards efforts for peace. In the context of insurgencies, peace is “understanding, prosperity and non-interference,” a position for people to have “self-determination.” This was in consonance to Lantad’s need for self-governance and with their customary laws of living with respect and self-dignity.

He further believes that the “overall thrust for peace is bringing government [services] closer to the people,” since most rebel movements and conflicts occur due to a lack of government delivery of service. Government officials should realize that when they don’t give people what they need, in the end they will be the ones who will be caught in between. “We cannot address insurgency unless we address the root causes of insurgency,” he says. Hence, he strives to address insurgency by fighting the real enemies—poverty and inequities—not with force but with peaceful initiatives (people empowerment, roads, and access to best possible social services).

Addressing the Insurgency in Misamis Oriental

Poverty, lack of socio-economic opportunities for development, and lack of education are some of the divides existing in Mindanao. They are caused by government neglect which results in insurgency. These divides are seen through lack of accessible road networks and livelihood opportunities, food insecurity and malnutrition, and many other aspects.

He chose to address this divide because the solution is not simple and is a mistake of the past that he wants to correct. “Lantad symbolizes neglect…the neglect that the government has been guilty of and we have to admit that in order to correct it,” he said. He is not expecting an instant total reversal of the situation but believes that this can be a good start that will get the message across so that other government officials hopefully would want to replicate or improve on.

Lantad became part of implementation of the eight-point agenda after discovering the state of neglect it was in. Gov. Moreno’s first project there in 2006 was to have the solar dryer. He and his workers then carried in sand and cement on foot as a road had to be built as well. Basic services from the government poured in, such as education, health, livelihood and infrastructure. Working closely with concerned government agencies, CSOs, the Lantad residents, indigenous peoples, and the rebels themselves, he saw Lantad metamorphose from being neglected and war-torn to a peaceful, progressive one. The proximity of the case of the divide is a key factor for his addressing it: his hometown is also that of the NPA. Thus, in the later part of his change project revolving around Lantad, he decided to replicate it to four other towns with the same profile as
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Lantad (i.e. having insurgency problems and lack of access to government services): Barangay Alipuaton and Barangay Bunal in the municipality of Salay; Sitio Sioan in Malinao, Gingoog City; and Barangay Mindulao in Magsaysay. He desires to see more of these towns in Misamis Oriental—undeveloped towns that lacked access to basic services being turned to progressive ones through peaceful agreement and cooperation of every sector involved.

Stakeholders share in his quest for peace

Recognizing the insufficiency of sole efforts from him, Gov. Moreno made use of the kurambus scheme—Cebuano term for bayanihan, or the unified efforts or working together to get something done. The Provincial Peace and Order Council (PPOC) was then created with its Executive Director Teodoro Sabugaa, Jr. as the direct emissary to the Higaonon tribe’s council of leaders and to secure a stable network of good communication and mutual respect.

To help him accomplish the project, he had his core group (CG) at the onset from the following provincial and/or regional offices and CSOs: Vice Governor Norris Babiera (legislation); Provincial Social Welfare Development Officer (PSWDO) Teodoro Sabugaa, Jr.; DILG; CHR; Balay Mindanaw; Nena “Bae Rose” Undag of BBP-NCIP; PNP; AFP; Monsignor Rey Monsanto (parish priest of Nazareno church in Cagayan de Oro); and LMP. He also had his Guiding Coalition (GC), which included the above CG (see box 1 for list of members).

The project is implemented collaboratively among the GC members through the PPOC, with its agenda on the peace and order conditions in the hinterlands, bringing updated information on IPs and their land tenure status, access roads and delivery of basic services to conflict areas. Conflict management, social integration program, anti-drug abuse and human development, and security committees have also been created.

While PPOC members all played significant roles in the project, some members had major involvements in the implementation.

Through DAR, land ownership development is made quicker as it allowed Lantad access to an exclusive grant of programs and funds in the interest of social justice. The NCIP also helped in the conduct of a delineation survey for the Higaonon tribe in their Balatukan CADT claim, and eventually in the quick processing of their CADT. The CDA helped to register the Lantad Multi-purpose Cooperative (LMPC).

DTI involvement sustains the growth of enterprises and market. The Vice Governor’s role is also significant for issuing ordinances to bring needed resources to intended areas.

The CSOs from his GC serve as channels of technical support on people empowerment and community organization. The Balay Mindanao conducted peace-building workshops and orientations, while AFP and PNP partnered with PPOC with its peaceful initiatives.
The Interfaith played a critical role in ensuring and reminding stakeholders of their moral obligations in their governance and project implementations.

Moreno recognizes that convergence of not just local government agencies but also with the national ones will help in the successful operation. Partnerships with the private sector are also part of his strategies. Meetings and evaluations regularly conducted to check on problems and progress of the project was significant to sustain it till the end.

**Attaining peace and community development**

Drawing in the key stakeholders to collaborate on the project has showed positive results for the Lantad case, and the same is anticipated for the replicated towns.

The opening of the 25-km road from Lantad to the highway was a highlight in the project as it made it easier for various development projects to come in.

On December 18, 2007, the Kibanban-Lantad Agrarian Reform Community (KLARC) officially came about. Besides the solar dryer being turned over on July 8, 2006, a peanut sheller and a mini corn mill were also opened for use.

The cooperative store of LMPC also became a channel for the socio-economic status of the community to improve. As new livelihood opportunities came in, the Internal Revenue Allocation (IRA) of Barangay Kibanban increased. Homes were powered by individual solar homes lighting systems (32 watts per hh; 128 hh energized with 4 fluorescent bulbs each).

In 2006, the leaders of Lantad were also empowered to come up with a Barangay Peace Development Plan/Sitio Development Plan upon which all their projects will be based. Families who fled in the 90s also came back, increasing the population from 500 in 2005 to about 1,033 in 2011.

In Lantad, the project has so far distributed and provided rice, corn and vegetable seeds to farmers, two solar dryers measuring 400 square meters each, cattle, and a hauling truck for the cooperative. Monthly health services by an assigned midwife and a medical mission have also been provided. Four classrooms have been added and a high school has opened last June 2012.

In the replicated towns, a circumferential farm-to-market road (FMR) in the municipality of Salay was made to loop Barangays Alipuaton, Bunal and Tinagaan. FMRs were also opened to connect Sitio Kapatagan to Barangay Umagos in the municipality of Lagonglong, and Barangays Tama, Abunda, Mindulao and Cabalawan in the municipality of Magsaysay.
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But can peace be sustained?

The GC generally shared the vision that Gov. Moreno has for the replicated towns. The challenge, however, is in getting the SP to partake at this time in that vision the same way the GC will implement it. The lack of cooperation from the SP is the major difficulty in implementing his change project. SP’s cooperation is important as some of these programs can be legislated for sustainability.

In the meantime, he addresses this by implementing it as long as the provincial government is there to support and help him, even if he has to engage them in a debate. Reinforcement from people encourages him to push on. For this political challenge, it is crucial that he face related issues at the proper time because of the risk it entails. It is hoped that the time will come for the SP to be more cooperative in helping implement the change project.

Thoughts on leadership, collaboration, and MBLP

Getting accepted into the MBLP program as a Fellow has not only brought honor to Gov. Moreno and enhanced his leadership skills, but has also created an impact that changed his character, broadened his outlook and network, and deepened his understanding of the divide he is tackling.

The MBLP has given him insights and courage to address various leadership issues. From seeing leadership as stewardship, his view stretched to “being one with people, improving the lives of people, and crafting a better tomorrow.”

For him, Bridging Leadership entails “orchestrating various elements to come up with symphony, [or] produce good music.” A Bridging Leader connects people, communities, and even nations. Being that, however, also means that he has to deal with “difficult problems, deep divides, enormous handicaps, resistance” and other hardships. He says it is not going to be an easy job that is why he must be “committed, undeterred, unafraid and resilient.” It is the kind of leadership that actually matters in today’s socio-economic issues.

In this kind of leadership, collaboration holds much value as it gives better insight and a deliberative process. Every stakeholder’s ownership in success is also felt because of one’s contribution. And with the success of a collaborative work comes the happiness of constituents for expectations met.

In a collaborative work, it is important that each member shares the same vision. A collective response for him is a “critical response to a situation but going towards the same direction”. For Gov. Moreno, a shared vision is teamwork and oneness in the direction that the group is headed for. It is also “getting other people to understand what you want them to do and getting them to commit as if that is also what they want to do.” In seeking the commitment of his stakeholders, his approach became more structured, their road map prepared, and their overall direction defined.
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The leader that he is now has been molded much by MBLP and his personal experiences and background. He has high hopes for the next leader who will continue and improve what he has started and see more Lantad-like communities sprouting in time.

Acknowledgment

I would like to give special thanks to PSWDO Mr. Teodoro Sabugaa, Jr. and Provincial Press Relations Head Ms. Maricel Rivera for their invaluable time and information shared and validated as necessary for the crafting of this paper.
I would also like to thank Casandra Hilary Emata for her assistance.

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List of Abbreviations

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<td>AFP</td>
<td>Armed Forces of the Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBP-NCIP</td>
<td>Building Bridges for Peace-National Commission on Indigenous Peoples</td>
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<td>BL</td>
<td>Bridging Leader</td>
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<td>CADT</td>
<td>Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title</td>
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<td>CDA</td>
<td>Cooperative Development Authority</td>
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<td>CG</td>
<td>Core group</td>
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<td>CHR</td>
<td>Commission on Human Rights</td>
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<td>CPP-NPA</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society organization</td>
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<td>DAR</td>
<td>Department of Agrarian Reform</td>
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<td>DILG</td>
<td>Department of Interior and Local Government</td>
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<td>DTI</td>
<td>Department of Trade and Industry</td>
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<td>FMR</td>
<td>Farm-to-market road</td>
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<td>GC</td>
<td>Guiding Coalition</td>
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<td>IP</td>
<td>Indigenous people</td>
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<td>IRA</td>
<td>Internal Revenue Allocation</td>
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<td>KLARC</td>
<td>Kibanban-Lantad Agrarian Reform Community</td>
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<td>LMP</td>
<td>League of Municipalities of the Philippines</td>
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<td>LMPC</td>
<td>Lantad Multi-Purpose Cooperative</td>
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<td>MBLP</td>
<td>Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program</td>
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<td>MISORTEL</td>
<td>Misamis Oriental Telephone System</td>
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<td>NCIP</td>
<td>National Commission on Indigenous Peoples</td>
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<td>NDF</td>
<td>National Democratic Front</td>
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<td>NPA</td>
<td>New People’s Army</td>
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<td>PNP</td>
<td>Philippine National Police</td>
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<td>PPOC</td>
<td>Provincial Peace and Order Council</td>
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<td>PSWDO</td>
<td>Provincial Social Welfare Development Officer</td>
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Gov. Moreno’s Guiding Coalition:

- Hon. Oscar S. Moreno – Governor, Chairman
- Hon. Norris Babiera – Vice Governor, Vice Chairman
- Mr. Ariel Hernandez – Balay Mindanao, Vice Chairman
- Hon. Emmanuel Mugot – SP Member
- Hon. Jimmy Caña – SP Member
- Hon. Ruthie Guingona – Mayor, Gingoog City
- Mayor Alexis Quina – LMP President
- Hon. Teodeoro Buenavista, Jr. – NTC
- Ms. Elisa Pabellore – DTI
- Atty. Jose Justo Yap – NBI Regional Director
- Col. Romeo Gapuz – CO 403rd Brigade 4ID, PA
- PARO Zoraida Macadindang – DAR
- PENRO Edgardo Callanta – DENR
- Mr. Joasn Vincent Damasco – NCIP, Mis Or.
- Dr. Chery Mae Limbaco – DEPED, District Superintendent
- Dr. Pionciano Caberte – DILG Provincial Director
- P/Supt. Graciano Mijares – PNP Provincial Director
- Dir. Roberto S. Opena – PDEA, Region 10
- Ms. Fleurdeliz Tabamo – Provincial Cooperative Office
- C/Insp. Ciriaco Talines – Provincial Fire Marshall
- Mr. Vic Aleria – CHR, Region 10
- Mr. Teddy Sabugaa PPOC Executive Director/PSWDO
- Mr. Danilo Maputol – PANRO
- Mr. Conrado Sescon – ENRO, Misamis Oriental
- Dr. Ignacio Moreno – PHO
- Ms. Maricel Rivera – PRO
- Col. Alex Adeva (Ret.) – Gising Barangay Movement
- Ms. Segundina Borcillo – United Way
- Bae Rose – PCICC-BBP
- Ms. Ving Delia – DAR Province
- Rev. Samuel Domingo – Interfaith, United Methodist
- Atty. Ombra Gandamra – Interfaith, NCMFN
- Rev. Vic E. Arellano – Iglesia Filipina Independente
- Msgr. Rey Monsanto – Interfaith, Roman Catholic
- Ms. Sabrina Garcia – Lawig Kalinaw
- Mr. Kaka Dacup – Balaod Mindanao
Improvement in the Delivery of Basic Services

- Romy Tiongco
- Margarita Auxtero
When Romy Tiongco, a young and newly-ordained Jesuit priest, arrived in Damulog in 1974, he saw the miserable state of the town. Armed attacks, cattle rustling and evacuations were the order of the day. Economy was down. People had to leave their villages and move to the town center -- a hamleting strategy similar to the Vietnam War. People could go to their farms in the daytime but had to return to the town proper before sunset. Many families decided to leave Damulog and settle in safer municipalities. The population dwindled down to 4,000 from more than 17,000. Fighting continued between the notorious Ilagas (rats) among Christian carpetbaggers and the dreaded Barracudas or Blackshirts from the Muslim rebels at the boundaries of the town in the province of North Cotabato. His Jesuit education and idealism were challenged by the seemingly hopeless situation. He decided to stay for more than five years as a parish priest to help the internally displaced persons (IDPs).

**Immersion**

To show his resolve to be with the people, he fearlessly celebrated masses in the remote villages, despite threats of getting killed or kidnapped by the warring groups. His determination and sacrifice paid off. Slowly, farmers in small numbers joined him in prayers to resolve their problems. It was an immersion in the life of the masa, which then led him to the world of community empowerment and consciousness-raising.

Inspired by a young idealist and UP graduate Dinky Soliman (now the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development) who committed to work at the adjacent town of Kibawe, Romy embarked on a more dangerous community organizing action, an alternative to armed conflict on the ground. He was so immersed in his new mission with the poor that he decided to leave priesthood to spend more time and be closer with the communities. He thought he could only do so if he were freed from the chores of parish work. He formed a non-government organization (NGO) to support his new vision of community life.

In 1981, he married Linda McClintock, a British community worker, who worked with a Davao-based development NGO. The couple bore two children born in 1982 and 1984, respectively. While his work with his NGO continued with a new breed of young and committed “disciples,” the family decided to settle in England in 1989. To continue his link with his NGO, which had already expanded its activities to other parts of Mindanao, he worked with an international aid organization that provided them earlier fund support.
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His life in a foreign land with his family was secure and relatively comfortable, but his love for the poor kept gnawing at him and beckoned him to Mindanao from time to time. During one of his homecomings, he found Damulog still in a terrible mess, considering the intermittent guerrilla fighting among the military, militia groups and the rebels; and the confrontational political leadership in the municipality.

In 2005, he was asked to work in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the big tsunami that hit several countries in the Indian Ocean in December 2004. When his work was about to end in 2006, he went back to Damulog to look for a lot that he could buy. He would plan to plant trees. During that short stay, residents and village leaders trooped over to his house and begged him to run in the next elections and save Damulog from its despairing condition. He refused. “The trees will grow on their own and I can return to England to retire with my family in peace,” he said.

Turning Point

Then the tides turned in Damulog’s favor. The leaders decided to spearhead a signature campaign to convince Romy to run. He was determined not to. He kept saying no and insisted that the campaign wouldn’t work. Three days later, as fate would have it, something happened to change the course of his life.

Rogelio, a dear friend who was leading the campaign in the villages, was brutally murdered.

Everyone was stunned. Romy was in shock.

In that instant, he recognized the magnitude of the town’s problems. He could not imagine the desperation of the perpetrators to resort to such a senseless act just to stay in power.

At the burial ground of the fallen leader, and in a very rare public display of emotion, Romy, in front of relatives and friends, announced his decision to run as mayor in the next elections.

It was a very difficult decision because he was to challenge the third and final term of the incumbent. But he had to “bite the bullet”. In the last elections, nobody dared to challenge the politician who was a retired military officer. Romy was determined to win not for his own political gain but as sweet revenge for a dear friend.

At the end of 2006, leaders were mobilized and villages were organized to prepare for a tedious and dangerous campaign. Tools and experience in community organizing were applied, tempered by the wisdom of the veterans in mass actions to counter the dirty tactics of traditional politicians and their use of money to win at all costs. Participatory pocket meetings were conducted and strategy planning in communities was facilitated. Emissaries were also sent to negotiate and back channel political support, considering that the incumbent was supported by the machinery of the party in power. Romy outlined his campaign on the platform of peace and a demilitarized municipality to solve poverty. In his study, Damulog has been visited by war every ten years since
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the sixties. If the problem was not solved, another war was expected in 2013, considering the devastation that took place in the 2003 war. To Romy, the presence of military detachments in many villages attracted more raids from the rebels and served as easy targets from the enemies; instead of serving as deterre nts and a solution to the unstable peace and order situation.

Planting the Seed

When he won the elections in May 2007, he formulated with his team the new program dubbed Panaw sa Kalinaw (peace journey) and conducted his first real journey from the town proper to the site of what was once the battlefield in the abandoned Sitio Agong where the heaviest fighting happened in 2003. The site activities were attended by Christians, Muslim Maguindanaos, indigenous Manobos, and the MILF combatants who came without their weapons. The face-to-face encounter between Romy and the villagers was not without tears. He was embraced like a dear son who had finally come home. “Sulod sa 40 anyos namo nga pagpuyo dinhi, karon pa mi gibisitahan ug mayor” (In our 40 years of stay in this area, this is the first time that we have been visited by a mayor). For the first time in a long while, they felt that someone cared. And anywhere else he went, people happily greeted him and gave him the look of a people whose hunger had been sated.

In the same year, two Filipino friends brought a group of Korean friends from the Join Together Society (JTS), an international volunteer organization headed by a 2002 Ramon Magsaysay awardee for peace and international understanding. The Koreans, together with their local members, started the school projects in the rebel-controlled areas, popularly called in the vicinity as the Triangle due to its wedge-shaped field surrounded by the three rivers of the huge Pulangi, the wild Muleta, and the long Omonay creek. Interestingly, the area, inhabited by both Maguindanaos and Manobos, is not part of Damulog and there is no way projects funded by the LGU can be brought to the place.

The projects in the area were Romy’s first attempt to work with a small team that shared his dream to transform Damulog. Later, he expanded his circle with the involvement of supporters from friends and volunteers who came to his house and planned the actions. He called his small team the “think tank.” Surprisingly, the strategy worked out well and made the construction work faster in the area with the communities, rebels, and outside volunteers together. While the Koreans provided all the materials and transportation support, the technical assistance and food were sourced out from Romy’s team, and the communities rendered full free construction labor work. The feeling of ownership was very high among residents, borne out of the time, sweat, and resources contributed to the development activities.
Damulog has a very high illiteracy rate due to the absence of school facilities in the remote villages. Fortunately, because of the successful partnership, mobilization of resources, and high commitment to volunteer work, 22 classrooms and seven teachers’ cottages have been constructed. The Department of Education (DepEd) already deployed teachers to these schools. The team and allies continued the identification of more potential areas for school development to respond to the situation. Although the efforts were focused on the education of children, the older members of the community also benefited from the services of the teachers. The germ of commitment from the teachers spread in the communities seeing the plight of the children and their support to Romy’s vow to help the families with bias for the children. Other groups also participated in the provision of health services and agricultural technologies. The community leaders offered to build bigger boats to welcome the incoming assistance. The local government unit (LGU) was able to slowly provide small services and named the program of providing a regular schedule in the delivery of services as “Serbisyo de Banca” (boat service).

Looking back at what Romy and his think tank achieved, they were amazed at what they had delivered in only a span of three years vis-à-vis what had not been achieved by the government in the last forty years. His several visits to these communities brought the real face of the government - vibrant and closer to the people. His administration gave the people respect. “They listened to him because he listened to them. They respected him because he respected them.”

The people he met along the way and in the community started to ask: “Unsaon namo pagbalos ang kaayo ni mayor?” (In what way can we reciprocate the kindness of mayor?) His usual reply was a simple but inspiring statement urging them to renew their relationship with the government, beginning with filing their residence certificate and learning to love the country as Filipinos.

His family demanded his return to England but the aspirations of the people for a true leader also plagued his conscience. By the end of 2009, he had agreed to stay for another term with the consent of his wife and children. In 2010, he was re-elected for one last term.

“Sharpening the Saw”

In 2011, he was endorsed by his friends and was nominated to the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program launched by the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) as a fellow for 15 months. Taking with him his achievement in peace-building, he joined 21 other Mindanao leaders in innovating to help solve the problems of Mindanao, especially on peace and development. In July of the same year, he initially outlined his change project using the results of his baseline data and titled it: “Winning the Peace and Delivering Services.”
In the first workshop by the sponsor and armed with new information, Romy devised his strategy using the tools and schemes taught by the Institute. As part of the program, he was also assisted by Xavier University (XU) as the close-in coach to ensure that he is provided with the necessary technical assistance in the implementation of his transformation project. Two of the several tools introduced in the series of workshops influenced his framework plan, namely: the balanced scorecard and the causal loop. Dixon Yasay, former mayor and consultant of XU, subjected him and his core group to the rigors of strategic planning. "Tao na, Pinoy pa," became his battle cry.

He would serve not only the people of Damulog but even those along the borders because they are in need of services as the people living within his area of jurisdiction. The critiquing on his BL plan triggered the question, "Why is he delivering services outside his sphere of constituency?" The critique was so intense that a lot of ideas were incorporated into his plan and tempered the mission, vision and directions of his scorecard. To justify the budget provided by the LGU for his effort in the Triangle, the project shall be treated as a security trench rather than a mere service delivery strategy, which created envy among the residents of Damulog. He was perceived to be favoring the non-residents; he was nicknamed "Muslim lover." They even suspected that the design of his new house was patterned after a mosque.

Due to the new support he received from AIM and the assistance of XU, he tempered his peace and development project design by adding the principle of justice, aside from peace and development. The landscape also expanded from the Triangle to the other barangays in Damulog. With his bias for human dignity and Filipino identity, Romy scaled up his Panaw sa Kalinaw in his first term to the MBLP-supported project, Tao na! Pinoy pa! in his second term. In preparation for his third term and to cap his plan, Ang Bata was drafted as the next slogan that will banner his commitment to the universal rights of a child. It is a more grounded agenda that cut across the various issues on education, health, food, environment, governance, peace and development. The child development plan will serve as the building blocks and reinforcement of the co-creation phase of the BL program. In this phase, all stakeholders and resources will be mobilized. It will revolve around the principle of dignity and rights of a person to be served as Filipino in the primacy of a child.

This new plan has already touched ground, including the re-composition of the core group; from five members, he expanded it to ten with four women from only one in the group. "My core group is composed of people who are willing to die for me... they are those who realized the situation that I am in." The CG takes responsibility for planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of his change project. He is assisted by his guiding coalition (GC) members who he meets regularly and as needed. To him, the GC members are “those people whom I would approach...I can be vulnerable without them losing respect for me... and share my insights [with].” The other members of his GC according to Romy “play a heavy part in certain activities.” He listens to the opinions of his CG and GC members. His GC assisted him in lobbying for support, mobilization of resources, holding of consultation and educational fora to generate awareness on and participation in the efforts and initiatives of the LGU.
Beyond Borders

During his second term as mayor, he started his “bridging” work by meeting the mayors of President Roxas, Kabacan, and Carmen from the three municipalities of Cotabato province, which share boundaries with Damulog to discuss their responsibilities of helping the Triangle villages which are part of their jurisdiction. Two leaders of the said municipalities were lukewarm about the suggestion due to the hazards and difficulties in dealing with these belligerent Muslim villages. Romy believed that these communities deserved government support. He decided to take on the task of serving the residents without any discrimination and a plan to claim the territory to be part of Damulog.

He solicited the support of the governors of Bukidnon and North Cotabato, considering the strategic location of Damulog, President Roxas, and Carmen in relation to the peace and order of the two provinces. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was formulated for the governors of the two provinces to sign. Romy also visited the vice-chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Gazhali Jaafar, in their Simoaoy Camp and secured safe-conduct passes for all volunteers and workers to enter the rebel-controlled villages.

He presented four themes to pursue the new commitment that focuses on the child: survival, protection, development and participation rights. For survival rights, Romy envisions that each resident will have a name and nationality of which many of the residents in the Triangle do not have. He also wants to ensure that there is love and care for the child in a harmonious family and in a peaceful and wholesome community, and not to forget his advocacy for a healthy lifestyle and adequate food on the table. For the protection rights, Romy and his core group feel that local government resources should also be allocated to safeguard the children against abuse, exploitation, neglect, violence, and danger. For the development rights, he believes that children should be provided with the environment for leisure, and good education to harness the children’s potential. Finally, for the participation rights, Romy...
argues that children should be given the space to express their opinions and involve them in the decision-making process.

As of this writing, Romy’s plan has already attracted some support. The Korean volunteers who have joined Romy in his journey since 2007, supported the construction of a better health centre to improve the delivery of health services to remote areas, the construction of a high school nearer to the Triangle to absorb the graduates from the elementary schools established in the Triangle, the construction of two water systems for the high school and the municipal demo farm, and the building of three solar dryers in far-flung villages. The same group also conducted two conventional and three oriental medicine missions in the Triangle. Vegetable and rubber production were also introduced into the same area.

The Asia Foundation, through USAID, provided technical assistance for the strengthening of the systems between and among the assessment, treasury, accounting and budget offices. It is an on-the-job training where consultants visit Damulog for three days monthly in the aforementioned offices.

He lobbied for the restoration of Lebpas as a barangay to earn and receive internal revenue allotment (IRA) allocation from the municipal LGU. He hopes that such lobbying will create precedence and pave the way for the restoration of three more moribund barangays in the Triangle.

The Serbisyo de Bangka program continues to reach out to the rebel communities including the Triangle with the LGU staff from various service units joining the monthly service trip to provide health, agriculture, and other basic services that they normally extend to the people in the población. Because of the LGU’s openness, sincerity, commitment to serve, and gesture of peace, some Muslim rebels have found the courage to come to the town center of Damulog; they are encouraged to visit the municipio and interact with the Christian residents through the Muslims who are already working in the LGU. The boat service program does not only benefit the communities; it also benefits Romy considering that it became a vehicle to change the views of the LGU Christian staff towards the Muslims after the trip and experience. The greater reward was learning that with the services provided by Romy and his team, many farmers who left their homes and farms due to the presence of rebels have already returned. The planning and implementation of this program is fully supported by his CG and GC.

Although the input from the fellowship did not change his character, the tools that he learned made him firmer, more dedicated, more focused. “[The tools] helped me systematize.” There were a lot of them that were introduced during the fellowship and he recognized that “some of them were sophisticated... the loop is more dynamic to go about with my project. The new [stuff] made things clearer for me... helped clarify what I wanted and why I wanted to do it.” Thus, although he originally planned to end his political career at the end of the second term and return to the United Kingdom to settle with his family, he decided to run again next year to pursue his change project that he considers as an “incomplete job.”
At first he thought that what he had been doing was just work, and the consummation of a sweet revenge, but now the project has become something of a personal mission.

He is grateful and acknowledged the contributions of the other stakeholders. This he has to say to them: “What was achieved in the municipality was not the work of one, but of a team... I really don’t think we could have achieved anything, if not of the assistance of these people.”

For Romy, he serves as a pair of crutches. He said that “a leader is one who listens, is able to present alternatives, and has the guts to pay the price... values respect and commits to justice and fairness by serving people regardless of their beliefs.”

**Continuing Challenges**

The initial gains achieved during his first and second terms have been put to test lately by two events: the entry of the New People’s Army (NPA) and the preparation for the next elections.

On July 5, 2012, a high-powered 70-strong NPA entered Barangay Tangkulan and demanded revolutionary taxes. They also declared their recovery claim of the area. Romy made several attempts to bring the new intruders to the negotiating table. Knowing the insurgents’ style of dictating the time and place to meet, Romy’s team waited. Patiently. When they learned that Romy had only two companions, the NPAs instructed them to wait at the barangay centre. They most likely assumed that there would be no security provided and that the NPAs would be able to dominate the meeting. They also assumed that the village would be on their side.

People gathered to join the mayor. When the NPAs arrived, a big crowd was waiting to meet them. The meeting was very open and frank, and the NPA troops raised highly political issues that were very abstract to the average resident. It was like a debate where the intruders were unprepared to argue on concrete issues raised by the community. A community leader even mentioned that while the NPAs were still talking about certain issues and what they wanted to happen, the community was already doing something about them in their journey towards peace and development. It was the first time that a barangay was empowered to talk back instead of allowing themselves to be dictated upon. The meeting ended with the pleadings of the community leaders for the intruders [NPAs] to leave and allow them to continue their journey to peace, justice and development. After the meeting, Romy sent information to the military, MILF, MNLF, and Vice Governor Zubiri, who has friends in the NPA circle. Local commanders of the MNLF and MILF, who were signatories to the declaration of Damulog as war-free zone, met their NPA counterparts to persuade them to free Damulog or meet the consequence of fighting against a combined strength of military, MILF, and MNLF forces.

The second event was the caucus and pocket meetings held prior to the filing of candidacy for the elections next year. The leaders of Damulog arrived at a consensus to put up only one candidate each for the position of the mayor, and with no opposition for the vice-mayor. Romy was
given his third term. It should be noted that his vice-mayor, who used to be on the other side of the fence, has become an ally. Only the positions of kagawads (councilors) were open for guest candidates. The unity platform of the campaign next year would focus on scaling up the gains of the journey towards peace (Panaw sa Kalinaw); to journey towards development and peace (Panaw sa Kaangayan, Kalamboan ug Kalinaw) with child protection and development as the heart of the journey.

Romy does not have monopoly of bridging leadership. He knows that if he wants to harvest the fruits of the seed that he has planted, he needs to show and nurture others to become carers and BLs as well. One of the steps of institutionalizing the efforts is the formation of a council of elders that would push the program forward. The formation of the council did not come out as his dictate. He invited the potential members who are leaders of various groups and tribes to a caucus where he presented the conditions and challenges of the municipality, as well as his. In the process, they said, “It may be better for us to [organize] a council... we will sit down and make a set of guidelines.” Romy was there as a catalyst and to inspire.

Since he and his core group, together with the other AIM fellows, were the only ones trained by Dixon in SEARSLIN on some of the BL tools such as the balanced scorecard, he wants to organize a training for the larger group in Damulog so that they will operate on the same plane. He would also like to strengthen their documentation capacity, recognizing that it is one of their weak areas and seeing it as critical in sustaining his BL project.

**Looking Back, Moving Forward**

Romy believes that “the real context of peace is not the absence of war but improvement in the quality of life of the individual and the community.” Creating change and making a difference requires that we “change our perspectives... the way we look at the Lumads, the way we look at the Muslims [and only] until... we start seeing Muslims and Christians as people like us who must be respected... I don’t think we’ll ever be able to treat them fairly.” “Mapadayon man ang kalinaw kun pareho kong Mayor Tiongco ang pantaw sa musunod nga mangulo,” remarked Ustadz Anwar of Barangay Kidama.

His journey with his core group, who co-owns the shared vision, will have to move to the next level of involving the other stakeholders to commit to the same vision. He acknowledged that there are three of them in the core group who are of retireable age. They admit to being old but they all agree that they can still contribute and rise to the demands of work. He is certain that if the vision is maintained by the successors, the path to peace and development will be smooth. If the next leadership would need assistance in implementing what has been started, they would gladly offer their help as consultants.

Romy is also interested in liaising with the other fellows of his batch, i.e., Gov Oca, Bae Rose and Datu Migketay. He looks to the day when they could all sit together and talk about Mindanao and how they could contribute to the development of the island. He also sets his eyes on his
neighbors. He hopes to continue working with the other peace advocates and government representatives so that they would no longer think of territories but of people who have been abandoned for many years, and whom they needed to serve.

Romy originally just wanted to plant trees to heal the land. But as fate would have it, it became a planting of a vision of justice, development and peace — for people who hungered for it and for a child who should be educated, fed and healed. Two of the many changes he started in Damulog and he wants to be sustained are: holding of clean elections and demilitarization.

He is optimistic for the future. Although he is no longer the mayor, he knows that somebody else can take over and sustain the gains that he and his team have started. He says, “The legacy that I want to leave behind in Damulog is a transparent, accountable, and responsible governance.” He argues that demilitarization is the way forward; that there is no need to buy armaments and train the soldiers because there is future for peace and development to be realized by delivering the basic services that the people badly need. When this happens, he can go on with his desire to plant trees, go back to England and be with his family, and write about Damulog’s and his own journey, so the harvest is multiplied.

He ends by saying, “The big change would be for politicians to win elections without having to buy votes, because the people will vote based on their platforms.”
Acknowledgment

Let me thank Mayor Romy Tiongco and Dodong Borja for providing me with very relevant information and for validating the data.
Let me also thank my daughter, Paula, for her editorial assistance.

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Join Together Society (JTS) annual reports

Tao na, Pinoy pa! Project Proposal co-written by RomeoTiongco and Will Sadler with inputs from Estrella Borja, October 2011
Helping Children Be Instruments of Peace  
*The case of Margarita Auxtero*

by Raymond Rueda and Miren Sanchez

“Peace can be attained not by a few and chosen sector but an effort by every individual in the community”

-- Margarita Auxtero  
*Area Manager, Isabela Foundation, Inc.*  
*working with ChildFund Philippines*

**Introduction**

Born and raised in Isabela City, Basilan—a land tormented by conflict and poverty—Margarita Auxtero realized early in life that education is a critical component of every child’s development. In spite of the poverty that her own family faced, she was persistent in her academics, eventually finishing a degree in commerce (major in accounting) at the Claret College of Isabela. Coming from a humble family background, with her dogged determination to succeed and be of service to others, she found her way to that prized college diploma.

Marge, as she is fondly called, was not only a disciplined student but also a youth leader. Being a Roman Catholic in a predominantly Muslim environment, she received inspiration and guidance from the priests and nuns in the community that she belonged to. In her own words, “they were my teachers and mentors”. As a youth facilitator of her prelate in her high school days, she started serving others, mirroring the kind of service rendered by her Church leaders.

Thus, it was without surprise that she used her college education to work for a government agency, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, first as a clerk and later on as an administrative officer. With 26 years of solid experience in the government, she then moved to the International Fund for Agricultural Development, handling Western Mindanao Community Initiative Projects (WMCIP) in rural development, gender issues, and livelihood enterprise. There, she was able to hone her skills and knowledge in capacity building, resource management, and community mobilization. Orlen Ocleasa, her former colleague in WMCIP, even went as far as claiming that engaging different stakeholders is Marge’s forte. Her experiences range from consulting and collaborating with local government units from the provincial level down to the barangay level; to engaging with and building the capacities of indigenous peoples, Muslim communities, farmers, fisher-folks, women, youth, children, and even rebel returnees.

Her immersion which involved interaction with and understanding of communities in Mindanao coupled with her intense desire to share the kind of education that she enjoyed led her back to her religious roots. In particular, an opportunity came knocking at her door in 2007 when she was invited to work as the Area Manager for Isabela Foundation Inc. (IFI), the social arm of the Roman Catholic Prelate of Isabela de Basilan and a ChildFund Philippines project affiliate.
A Marriage of Personal Dream and Commitment to Society

Established in October 1963, the Roman Catholic Prelate of Isabela de Basilan saw the beginnings and escalation of the recurring civil strife in the area. Having recognized the need to address the sufferings of Isabela’s people, it formed its own social arm, now called Isabela Foundation, Inc., in which Marge continues to serve as the Area Manager. It focuses on addressing the divides on education and poverty as experienced by children living in conflict affected areas. Specifically, the objectives of the organization are the following:

- To help deprived, excluded, and vulnerable children have the capacity to become young adults, parents, and leaders who bring lasting and positive changes in their communities
- To promote societies whose individuals and institutions participate in valuing, protecting, and advancing the worth and rights of children

With the assistance of the Philippine operations team of ChildFund International, a global non-profit organization that aims “to create the environments children need to thrive”, IFI has three ChildFund-supported projects: (1) Inspiracion delos Pobres which covers 27 barangays, (2) Maluso Project with 32 barangays, and (3) Panuhkubong Project with 19 barangays. Today, more than 3,200 children in these locations are being supported with the help of their families and local community leaders.

Marge fully submits herself in the mission to alleviate children from the poor living conditions in Basilan, which she attributes to the four decades of on and off civil strife, the severe lack of basic infrastructure and access to social services, and the dysfunctional governance in a number of areas.

To achieve a focused and holistic approach, IFI, as guided by ChildFund Philippines, mobilizes the following core programs on the ground carrying with it the vision that it would like have for specific age groups:

- 0-5 age group: healthy and secure infants;
- 6-14 age group: educated and confident children;
- 15-24 age group: skilled and involved youth; and
- Families and local organizations: a broad constituency of supporters dedicated to the well being and rights of the children.

Saddened by the situation, Marge laments that the number of children being supported has declined from as much as 5,000 children to the current 3,200 due to the worsening conditions in Basilan. In fact, when she joined her current organization in August 2007, Basilan was going through a turbulent period.
It was the aftermath of the Ginanta Massacre in the municipality of Al-Barka, which happened on the 10th of July 2007. In the said incident, members of the 1st Marine Brigade unexpectedly faced an attack coming from an estimated four hundred gunmen, who allegedly belonged to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. During the bloody encounter, 14 Marines were murdered, of whom 10 were reported to be beheaded and/or mutilated. As a result of the violence, civilians inhabiting areas within or near MILF forces had to be evacuated to more secure places in Basilan, thus displacing approximately 2,299 families or more or less 12,000 individuals.

Knowing that a significant portion of the groups affected were children, Marge was profoundly disturbed. These youth belonged to the same province where she grew up and lived for most of her life so she deeply felt that she had to protect their welfare. She wanted to share the fruitful childhood that she once had. Having recognized her role in a much bigger context, she acted right away and gave beyond what was expected of her.

**Bridging the Education Gap in Basilan**

For Marge and her organization, protecting the rights of children in war-torn areas meant focusing on education, an avenue by which they mature into capable and responsible citizens who have access to the opportunities necessary for a productive life.

However, countless families were traumatized by the disturbances between the military and the rebel forces. Parents were afraid of letting their children leave the house and teachers often received kidnap threats from the militants. They had difficulty resuming to their daily lives.

The paralysis brought about by this deep-seated fear of conflict and violence resulted to the low school attendance and literacy rates of elementary students in Basilan. In the Functional Literacy Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) cited by Marge, it was discovered that one out of ten Grade 6 pupils cannot read and write while three out of ten cannot comprehend what they read. Furthermore, it was also noted that Basilan’s literacy rate has risen over the past two decades, although it remains one of the Philippines' lowest; 72.23% are considered literate, as compared to the national figure of 92.6%.

ChildFund Philippines supports the three projects of IFI but unfortunately, Ginanta, along with the other barangays that suffered the most from the 2007 skirmish, was not among the ones covered by those projects. On her own, she looked for more resources, mobilized groups, invited volunteers, and together with the donors and other concerned citizens who joined her cause, built the Child Centered Space in October 2007 to help children continue learning despite having stopped their formal schooling. In December 2007, 200 of these children received learning materials from IFI.

For children who lived beyond the barangays covered by the Inspiracion delos Pobres, Maluso, and Panuhkubong projects, IFI still applied the program conceptualized with ChildFund Philippines. Entitled Neighborhood Reading Enhancement Ability Development Program or NREAD, the program relied on the premise that learning must be neighborhood-based. Because residents
were immobilized due to fear, community members themselves must act as the children’s own teachers.

To execute this strategy, Marge and her colleagues at IFI identified high-performing students in the community who could teach their low-performing peers and initially, approached resource speakers to conduct the training for the young tutors. After being familiar with the training process, Marge and her team began doing the training themselves. IFI started with 10 to 15 student tutors.

Their next step was to select around 25 tutees with the help of the Department of Education (DepEd). With this partnership, the two groups worked together on module crafting and student monitoring as well. Marge envisioned the program to create a ripple effect and successfully helped the tutees to eventually become tutors themselves to their friends.

As the program went on, the Child-Centered Space soon transformed into a full-time Day Care Center catering to over 200 children who had their first graduation in March 2009. Parents and barangay officials were so impressed with and grateful for the results of the NREAD that Marge felt compelled to enhance the program further with more partners and a better design for replication in barangays that needed it as well.

Moreover, the tutees under the DepEd-crafted module resulted in the development of Bulilit Guros – where children were empowered to engage other children to pursue reading and improve their literacy. Marge and her team focused on building this community of children tutees.

**Enhancing the Mission and Current Efforts through Co-Creation**

Although Marge started the boll rolling for NREAD with some significant gains, she knew that the province of Basilan still had a long journey to tread. She wanted to gain more partners and support, improve her project, and expand it to more conflict-affected and poverty-stricken areas with a fresh perspective on bridging the societal divide that she identified in the land she considers her home.

Therefore, when she heard that the AIM-Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership was launching the World Bank-funded Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program, she found a possible link that could help her continue the battle that she chose for her community.

Having been equipped through the fellowship with more tools for rapid area assessment, more data and information on the history and socio-economic status of Mindanao, and applying the principles of systems thinking, Marge began to understand her societal divide better: Poor access to education was caused by many factors that fed into one another: broken families, isolation due to volatile peace and order situation and geographical location, low family income resulting in low
prioritization of children attending school (parents prefer to have them work for agricultural undertakings or other work to generate income) with poor academic performance directly affected by the level of income of the family which affected the family’s interest in education and also isolation due to conflict resulting to irregular conduct of classes. Assessing her past experience, her institution’s overall direction and programs, it was clear that her entry point to help children in Basilan gain better access to education was through addressing academic performance, however, her realization was a need for more stakeholder involvement in the process given the breadth and depth of impact of related issues to poor academic performance. The development of Bullit Guros and having it pushed by the children themselves was critical but, equally critical was the participation of the parents and the local government units and other stakeholders (government line agencies and academe) who were critical for sustainability and scalability of the change initiative of Marge’s team.

Under her AIM fellowship in 2011, NREAD was re-launched with her guiding coalition composed of representatives from Isabela City and the ARMM for the DepEd, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), local health office, as well as non-government groups such as Nagdilaab Foundation, Inc. (whose executive director is a pioneering fellow of the AIM TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership, Ms. Miriam Suacito), the Philippine Army, other NGOs such as BAPESDA, the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), local schools and parents’ associations.

Marge realized the need to involve more stakeholders to ensure ownership by the community of their change effort and an improvement in the target beneficiaries of the program. This also meant building on the social capital she gained through the fellowship where she was able to work with and exchange lessons learned with Basilan Provincial Board Member Yusop Alano; Mayor Nacianceno Pacalioga, Jr., of Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur; her coaches from the Western Mindanao State University (WMSU); Ms. Miriam Suacito of Nagdilaab Foundation, Inc.; and coaches from the MBLP management team.
Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

Guiding Coalition (GC) Members

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<td>1. Mrs. Gilda Babon</td>
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<td>Division Superintendent</td>
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<td>2. Mrs. Emma Gurrea</td>
<td>DSWD, Isabela City</td>
<td>City DSWDO</td>
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<td>3. Dr. Rafael Cabug</td>
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<td>4. Miriam Suacito</td>
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<td>5. Capt. Nilo Prado</td>
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<td><strong>Maluso Project</strong></td>
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<td>1. Mrs. Fatima Abubakar</td>
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<td>2. Mrs. Amelia Jalani</td>
<td>Dep. Ed, Maluso</td>
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<td>3. Cielo Atendido</td>
<td>Municipal Health Office</td>
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<td>4. Mr. Casinillo</td>
<td>LGU</td>
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<td>5. Ms. Lolita Bello</td>
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<td><strong>Punuhkubong Project</strong></td>
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<td>1. Mr. Jailani Tandih, Al</td>
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<td>4. Mr. Sonny Arabani</td>
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<td>5. Mr. Samuel Agang</td>
<td>Lamitan National High School</td>
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<td>6. Carmelita Limbo</td>
<td>Lamitan Central Elem. Pilot School</td>
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Moreover, closer coordination and sharing of experiences with MBLP co-fellows resulted in awareness on the need for better governance and leadership for education. Marge’s guiding coalition, particularly, the parents in the three project areas participated in a cross-learning trip to Dumingag where Mayor Nacianceno Pacalioga, Jr., MBLP co-fellow, is implementing transformative education while integrating sustainable organic agriculture.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration resulted to Marge and her team reaching out and coordinating closely with the DepEd ARMM and DepEd National. This provided the opportunity to develop a school-based peer-to-peer learning scheme with the support of other partners especially the community leaders.

Marge’s guiding coalition (GC) also shared a realization that NREAD cannot be a one-shot program but the start of a community undertaking with the participation of the whole community and the support of the local officials and other institutions.
Helping the GC also understand the unique situation of Mindanao, its history, helped enhance the program in terms addressing the needs of the children. The program consciously included students and tutees who were Muslims (versus predominantly Christian students/tutees). If the program were to appreciate its context, it needed to be inclusive. The program also needed to recognize that the situation in Basilan is unique, always caught in the crossfire of insurgency. The program had to support a culture of peace where all stakeholders were welcome. The program also had to recognize the need to contribute to peace-building and consider issues attached to it for the program to be successful as it assists children of insurgents. Marge hopes that the program will eventually discourage these children from being “recruited” or from becoming child soldiers.

**Challenges and Next Steps**

The change initiative initially faced the challenge of low interest from the local government units and barangay leaders who provided minimal assistance to the program. Moreover, DepEd ARMM was limited to providing whatever technical assistance was existing in their program. In addition, parents were unsupportive or lacked interest in providing proactive measures to ensure their children’s literacy.

Generating multiple opportunities for dialogue and awareness meetings aside from the NREAD and technical trainings helped facilitate the support of these three critical stakeholder communities.

Marge also recognizes that, even after the fellowship, key activities still need to be realized which are central to replication of the initiative in other barangays. This includes: (1) a training for another batch of Bulilit Guros as many will be graduating from elementary and high school; (2) Monitoring and evaluation including planning will have to be done with the partners and intended beneficiaries which will depend on the support that will be mobilized; (3) The NREAD program may need to be expanded to also help enhance children’s skills in English, Math, Science; (4) Ensuring continued values orientation for children on the culture of peace given the context of education of children in Basilan (where education seems to be a way to peace where multi-stakeholders are given the opportunity to collaborate).

For Marge, the biggest challenge would be “sustaining and replication of the program.” There remains a gap in the implementation of the program. While the parents are involved, so far, only the mothers are proactively involved. The whole family needs to be involved further in the process. Thus, the challenge of building the capacity of the whole family is a critical next step which will need increased resource mobilization or funds outside of the current program funds Isabela Foundation, Inc., has thanks to ChildFund Philippines.
Personal Reflection on the MBLP

Asking about her key realizations from her journey in the MBLP, Marge has consolidated and shared the following insights with her co-fellows and coaches:

- The value of volunteerism among children, youth, partners and parents has spread out which helped the program further enhance the reading ability of children who severely needed it hand-in-hand with inputs on discipline;
- The confidence of Bulilit Guros improved as they developed stronger skills in facilitation. Corollary to this, as better facilitators, they were able to better express and advocate for the rights of children;
- Peace can be attained not by a few and chosen sector but an effort by every individual in the community;
- The level of income or economic status of a community must be a key criteria for any program to be implemented. Best practices may not always be the way towards ensuring success, rather, customizing responses to the situation on the ground, particularly for conflict-affected areas such as Basilan is critical; and
- As the program is run by the community beneficiaries, ownership and sustainability become easier.

Marge sums up her journey as follows: “The MBLP Program has taught me to value and realize that I am a bridging leader for others to address the inequities brought about by a situation that cannot be answered by an individual, by few but by everybody. And this is my passion to work with the welfare and protecting children at all costs.”
Provision of Livelihood or Economic Opportunities

- Ernesto Casiple, Jr.
- Maria Luz Go
- Frederick Siao
Mainstreaming Cohesion in Diversity
By Eloisa Barbin and Ruth Aseron

“The test of leadership is not always leading the management of projects, but making yourself invisible ... so that others may also see their own individual contribution to the task at hand.”

- Ernesto “Nonoy” Casiple
  Former Provincial Officer for the RuMEP Program
  of the DTI South Cotabato Office

The Making of a Professional Advocate

Ernesto “Nonoy” Casiple sunk back into his chair as he entered the last word in his newest blog entry. He realized it’s been a while since he last featured an article on his blog. Events have been piling up on him lately and he felt he hasn’t had enough leisure time for himself nor his loved ones. But, rather than a feeling of regret, a series of images as a Bridging Leadership Fellow came into mind and a feeling of satisfaction enveloped him. He smiled, thinking of his life of advocacy.

Nonoy realized his passion for social development when he volunteered for a children’s welfare advocacy group at the age of ten. He entered into his teens with his first actual community-based work with adolescents at the age of 13. He later volunteered as a peace advocate at age 17. Eventually, he moved on to the complex social issues of family planning and HIV/AIDS, investing time as a volunteer even when he was already employed. With colleagues and friends, he co-founded advocacy groups which included the Tri-Youth Movement and the Circle of Peace Builders in SOCSARGEN.

Nonoy Casiple was a native of General Santos City, born on March 3, 1983, to a Roman Catholic family. He completed a degree in Political Science from the Mindanao State University (MSU) in 2004. In MSU, he followed through with advanced studies, accomplishing the academic requirements for a Masters degree in Public Administration and finishing a Certificate Program on Governmental Management in 2007, while serving an administrative function for the University.

In 2009, Nonoy was engaged on a consultancy basis as Provincial Officer for the South Cotabato provincial branch of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) under the Rural Micro Enterprise Promotion Program (RuMEPP). The RuMEPP was to be implemented from 2007 until 2013 with funding provided by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations. Under the RuMEPP, Nonoy was tasked to capitalize on public resource investments to enhance outputs particularly for the coco sugar and bamboo microenterprise clusters in the province. November 2011 saw the partial release of funding support which allowed for the implementation of the expanded initiatives of the DTI Provincial Office. By December 2011, Nonoy was assigned to lead the conduct of re-assessment meetings to target beneficiaries in different communities under the entire RuMEPP Project. Nonoy was to determine
and ensure relevance of the RuMEPP activities before and throughout the course of its implementation.

Healing the Unhealed Woundedness

South Cotabato is a province of diverse cultural heritage and ethnicity. Christian migrants came from as far as Ilocos in Northern Luzon and from some nearby provinces of Visayas. Residing with the Ilocanos and Ilonggos had been the local indigenous groups, the predominantly Muslim Maguindanaoans, the B’laan and the T’bolis. People of the province retained several practices and traditions of their particular tribal heritage.

Being a native of the province, Nonoy knew that while South Cotabato and the whole of Mindanao had a rich cultural heritage, it was also the region’s cultural diversity that had been a source of long-standing conflict and distrust among the people. He observed that the lack of peace and development in Mindanao was mainly due to what he termed as an “unhealed woundedness” of the people. It had been a result of a cycle of distrust and very little willingness to communicate and even less motivation to cooperate.

Nonoy felt that the cultural rifts and prejudices may be possibly healed by dialogue and communication, if there was ever any willingness by individuals or groups to try to understand each other. But, given that the distrust outweighed openness to dialogue, Nonoy conceded that economic cooperation would be far from coming in South Cotabato and neither would peace and development. He summed up his thoughts on the consequences of the prevailing conflict in the region by saying:

“Peace is kung may pagkain ang tao (Peace means food for everyone) … peace is beyond feelings and passion. And we have to work on realities, on poverty.”

Nonoy recognized that while the divide is a socio-cultural issue it is also very much a personal level of suffering experienced by individuals. Growing up from a poor family, he knew that his efforts at poverty alleviation and social development work stemmed from an understanding of an individual’s basic need to provide for himself.

“I think I really need to help the community. I think I need to address poverty because I experienced it. I came from a poor family so I have this personal bias. Naiintindihan ko ang needs ng mahirap kasi na-experience ko.” (I understand the needs of the poor because I experienced it.)

Nonoy remembered how when he was younger he came home to see his mother wiping off the rainwater that dripped onto the floor of their rickety house. She had just come home from a day’s work as a laundrywoman for some households in the neighboring villages. His father was close to drunk, having had his fill of alcohol soon after hours spent working in the rice and wheat mill across the street. Regrettably, they had a sari-sari store back then. But, it was closed because his father wasn’t pleased that his mother was earning more than him. For other women in Mindanao, they were compelled by their husbands to turn over their business once it began to turn a profit. Nonoy realized then that women were never more economically and culturally marginalized than in Mindanao. Even more disadvantaged were females in Mindanao who were unmarried but with children. The disabling effect of lack of resources and opportunities brought him back to memories of his older sister, Nene. In 2002, Nene, lost her baby girl to heart failure one month after being born. In 2006, it was Nene that lost her life after giving birth to her second child. Sometime after, Nonoy’s friend, Miss Tonette, gifted him a notebook with the inscription “No woman should die giving life”. Such life experience made his crucial involvement in the project all the more personal to him.

Nonoy anticipated the ripple effect of empowering women as microentrepreneurs and productive members of the community. He imagined how this could contribute to poverty alleviation and peace and development. He saw that if women could produce additional income, then they could climb out of poverty, lessening the impoverished members of their community. The less poor individuals there were in the community, then, the less the unrest and conflict there would be.

The Fellow’s Upscaling Barangay-Level Processing Project, also coined Peace Enterprise Project, was largely based on strategy components of the seven-year Rural Micro Enterprise Promotion Program (RuMEPP). While the RuMEPP emphasized enterprise development, it aimed to provide rural poor families with access to microfinance services as well as business development services as capacity-building for market linkage and product development. The RuMEPP was to run from 2007-2013 with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) as the primary implementer,

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4 Culled from the BL Fellow’s blog site: [www.ernestocasiple.blogspot.com](http://www.ernestocasiple.blogspot.com)
given the agency’s mandate to promote the welfare of local food producers in the province. So it was that Nonoy implemented his change project mainly through DTI support and resources.

The Peace Enterprise Project is guided by the strategic principle “Peace-based community-enterprise development” and the strategic themes of (1) gender-responsive microenterprise development; (2) responsible use of environmental resources; (3) rural poor and cultural friendly micro-financing; (4) market-oriented industry development, and (5) communal cohesion and economic ownership.

Several producers from various towns in the province made the local delicacies mostly for family consumption and special gatherings like birthdays, wedding ceremonies, anniversaries, and others. Potential was recognized in developing the capacity of these women for producing better quality and more saleable products in the local market. Self-sufficient and gender-responsive microenterprise development mechanisms were ultimately to be installed.

The project was implemented in three phases. Phase 1 was led by Nonoy and with a focus on 50 or more Maguindanaoans and women entrepreneurs as stakeholder-beneficiaries. The entrepreneurs were situated in the capital city of Koronadal and the peace and development communities of Sumbakil and Polomolok.

Local organizations were viewed as the key stakeholders of the Project. The Association of Women in the Koronadal City Proper and the Single Parents Association were primary beneficiaries to Phase 1. Their members were organized for capacity-building activities initially centered on food production and marketing.

The women in the target areas were already producing different products known as their local delicacies. It was fairly known that South Cotabato produced a wide array of local products that included “atchara” (pickled papaya), palapa (a Maguindanao delicacy), banana chips, “bagoong alamang” (shrimp paste), “tinatag”, coco delight, “povorani”, chocolate, turmeric tea, fried corn, coco sugar, herbal and food products, mangosteen tonic, and papaya cider. From these, four products were to be developed for local mass consumption while another four were to be identified as culture-based products to be positioned for the “pasalubong” market.

The producers also benefited from good quality raw materials abundant in the region. However, it was evident that community-owned facilities for sustainable access to raw materials needed to be installed if the stakeholders were ever to scale-up production. It was thus targeted that a minimum of two community-owned raw material facilities be established by 2013.
The Guiding Coalition formed by Nonoy was composed mainly of officers from the DTI, including DTI Provincial Director Ms. Flora Gabunales. While the eight-member Guiding Coalition seldom convened for project meetings, there were four members of the Core Group that regularly met two to three times monthly. It was common that issues and strategies on product quality enhancement and market linkaging were discussed. The Fellow credited the Coalition for providing valuable technical inputs that spurred productivity for the entrepreneurs.

Assisting Communities towards Cooperation and Trust

Nonoy was aware of the importance of establishing trust with the stakeholders given that not only was he external to the localities but he worked for the government, which is typically good reason for distrust by the community.

There was also the issue of establishing project ownership among stakeholders in order to ensure sustainability of the project. He observed a strong sense of entitlement among project stakeholder-beneficiaries. At some point, Nonoy decided to call the beneficiaries “partners” to affect a change in mindsets towards self-sufficiency and co-ownership. He believed that the idea of sustainability and self-sufficiency should be established in the minds of partners as early as project inception. Project stakeholders should ultimately understand the need for an “exit point” where they transition from dependency to self-sufficiency.

“The relationship with the people is important kasi hindi naman tayo palagi doon, (we are not always there). We are external so we are not often there. We just share. Their relationship is also very crucial kasi aalis tayo at sila lang ang maiiwan (because we will leave and it will be them who will be left behind). There was even a planning that we allow them to be on their own so that it will be their own. Just like the coco sugar, there was no report but even if they did not have one they come up with an output on their own, which is more true. Mas totoo at bumabalik sa amin to seek help (It’s more true and they come back to us to seek help) and we do.”

It was also this perspective of instilling co-ownership that the Project was able to generate a significant increase in partner-microentrepreneurs. The RuMEP Program of DTI began with only fifty (50) assisted microentrepreneurs in 2009. Since serving as point-person, Nonoy was able to assist the agency in extending the project to 256 microentrepreneurs by 2010. By 2011, the project saw a surge of 600 microentrepreneurs availing of the Project’s business development services. The conventional focus on income and sales as performance indicators were later supplemented by the use of the gender-responsive value chain analysis tool adapted from international donor GIZ. This helped ensure that the women as microentrepreneurs were able to operate their business and market it through the most effective channels as well as retain management of their enterprise. Amid the continuing application for RuMEPP support by aspiring microentrepreneurs, the Fellow and the Core Group opted to work even more towards qualitative value, where the Project’s
partner-microentrepreneurs would elevate their status to a higher income level; to independence from trade fair assistance or technical training, and to mentor status, serving smaller microenterprises.

The project was initially launched with Koronadal City in Polomolok as the primary project site. But activities ultimately extended to South Cotabato individual producers in the municipalities of Tampakan, Lake Sebu, Surallah, T'boli and Tupi. The change project also transitioned from partner-stakeholders under the women’s organizations to individual producers. Despite the stakeholder changes, the project facilitated the creation of networks of producers that served as cohesive units for microenterprise promotion and elevation. An effort at collaboration was ultimately developed as members of the network shared knowledge and helped promote another member’s products not only in Koronadal City but even beyond South Cotabato province.

Committed efforts to conduct dialogues with LGU officials resulted in transforming some politically partisan and insular localities into more cooperative markets for the entrepreneurs’ products. As a key stakeholder, the LGU of Polomolok even invested PhP60,000 for the project’s follow through activities.

The South Cotabato Pasalubong and MSME Center was ultimately established in Koronadal City, showcasing products of the local entrepreneurs. A wide range of products were featured including handicrafts, coffee, pineapple products, and other unique delicacies. The Center is operated as an enterprise, managed by youth and women volunteers with support from partners in the public and private sector. The Project attained actual distribution of products, extending beyond the South Cotabato market. Notably, trade fare sales by partner microentrepreneurs were seen to significantly increase from PhP517,000 in 2010 to P4.5 million by 2011. By February 2012, trade fare sales by partners increased to P8 million. (See table 1 in subsequent page)
Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao
Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

Table 1. Income and Partnership Results of the RuMEP Program\(^5\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bottomline Target/s</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Combined income of MEs</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade fair direct sales</td>
<td>P 200,000 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New jobs generated</td>
<td>935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEs served</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The Fellow’s engagement in the DTI-RuMEP Program ended in February 2012

Microentrepreneurship was embraced by stakeholders with some opting to venture into direct marketing of their products. Commitment to scale-up the project was signified by the approval of the Regional office of DTI of the development of a barangay-level processing project which was estimated at P245,000. Private sector participation was also solicited, resulting in a pledge by SMI <verify> amounting to P500,000.

Reflections of an Advocate

Nonoy was already aware that he already possessed the development orientation that helped him understand the needs of the community and stay committed to the project’s intentions. But his experience with the Bridging Leadership Program, combined with his exposure to the technical experts of DTI and LGU leaders, developed in him skills that allowed him to be more strategic and creative in his approach. It also fostered a greater appreciation of the importance of building strong relationships and linkages to expand the reach of whatever successes that were accomplished. The experience reinforced his belief that a shared vision must be established to ensure better success. But, to create this, there should be the conduct of dialogues and a strong effort at communicating.

Nonoy also believed that donors and development institutions in Mindanao should strive to create a mindset of economic independence among the people of communities they serve. Individuals should eventually be educated towards thinking of “contributing” rather than “receiving”. He opined: “The issue of exit is the reason why peace fails and why the problems persist”.

Ever since he concluded his engagement with DTI in February 2012, he’s had very little to do with the actual implementation of the RuMEP Program. But he was pleased that he was able to continue with his regular weekly meetings with the DTI Provincial Director for South Cotabato and, on occasion, the new Provincial Officer in-charge of RuMEPP. They were committed to continue the successes of the program and their informal brainstorming and mentoring sessions helped in

\(^5\) Data provided by the BLP Fellow, Ernesto “Nonoy” Casiple, based on DTI reports
sustaining the strategic direction of the program’s activities. Even without pay, Nonoy continued his efforts at sharing the knowledge and skills he acquired from the Bridging Leadership Program.

Nonoy attributed to the Bridging Leadership Program the positive changes in how the DTI-PO of South Cotabato now conducts project assessments. Previously, it reviewed based on the economic viability and market value of activities and projects applied for funding under the RuMEPP. But because of the BL Program, Nonoy was able to transmit learnings that provided the institution what he calls a “peace lens”. In all of its activities, the DTI-PO ultimately became guided by the question: “Are we bringing peace or are we creating conflict?”.

In his room, Nonoy looked out of the window and thought of what else there was to do. His love for advocacy and affection for his province of South Cotabato provided him the drive to establish collaboration and trust among some microentrepreneurs, some local government officials and some government agencies in South Cotabato. But the communities in Mindanao are many; the conflict in the region is rooted deep and the ripple of economic development remain slow. His involvement with various projects and organizations had given him the breadth of understanding of issues in the region. He knew he had influenced individuals and institutions with his work. But how to make peace and development in Mindanao mainstream remained the challenge.
Peace Enterprise Project Framework

Core Concept: Developing peace friendly business space for conflict-vulnerable rural communities of South Cotabato

Strategic themes:
1. Gender-responsive microenterprise development
2. Responsible use of environmental resources
3. Rural poor and cultural friendly micro-financing
4. Market-oriented industry development efforts
5. Communal cohesion and economic ownership

Expected Results:
1. The Maguindanaon women of Sumbakil and Koronadal Proper in Polomolok have stable income and income is expected to increase by 15% per year starting 2012
2. There will be sustained communal enterprise shared by the Maguindanaon women in the identified barangays that is also participated by women of other tribes as the production requirements increases.

Immediate results:
- There a considerable number of available products that the beneficiaries made in at least two local markets in Polomolok or South Cotabato.
- The beneficiaries are capacitated with business and financial management.
- The products are improved and value added and in compliance with food related regulations and trade and industry regulations.
- The microentrepreneurs are channeled towards marketing opportunities.

Project Components, Activities, Desired Outputs, Timeframes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Time-Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of Gender Responsive ME Development</td>
<td>Developed cadre of gender-responsive micro-enterprise development workers;</td>
<td>10 GR-MED Workers</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developed gender-responsive value chain analysis (GR-VCA) on products</td>
<td>4 Number of products with GR-VCA</td>
<td>GR-VCA workshop and use</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

### Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Measure</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Time-Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up scaled women-owned rural micro-enterprises</td>
<td>Number of ME’s who maintained ownership from level 1, 2, &amp; 3</td>
<td>Coaching on business ownership and management</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide space for continued and sustained supply raw materials for the products</td>
<td>Presence of plantation or sources of readily available raw materials</td>
<td>2 community-base raw material ‘center’</td>
<td>Provision of Community-owned plantation/raw material facility</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote cheap yet environmentally friendly packaging and labeling materials</td>
<td>environmentally friendly packaging and labeling materials</td>
<td>4 environmentally friendly packaging and labeling materials</td>
<td>Training on packaging and labeling</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote locally mass produced products</td>
<td>Increased number of products maintained at mainstreamed market</td>
<td>4 products</td>
<td>Ensure market driven and raw material driven products</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote culture-based products</td>
<td>Increase of culture-based products in the mainstreamed market</td>
<td>Enable 4 culture-based products to be at mainstreamed market</td>
<td>Training on product production and development</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved access to financing</td>
<td>No. of ME’s given values formation session before serving credit (using cultural tools, local folklores)</td>
<td>8 sessions</td>
<td>Training-sessions and regular counseling</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prototype culture-sensitive credit service facilities to tribal communities of ME’s</td>
<td>1 MFI</td>
<td>MFI capability-building</td>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

**Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders**

<table>
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<th>Target</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Time-Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreamed COP at the all levels of stakeholders</td>
<td>COP mainstreaming with target guiding coalition</td>
<td>1 COP trained Project Advisory Group</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreamed GR-MED at the stakeholders and enterprise level</td>
<td>No. of partners adapting GR-VCA and COP at institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Training, manualization,</td>
<td>2011-2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Strategic Direction Changes Influenced by the BL Program on the RuMEPP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>2007-2009</th>
<th>2010-2012 (September)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro-poor</td>
<td>Focus on MEs (assets with less than P 3 Million)</td>
<td>Focus on MEs (with assets less than 3 million) but prioritizing MEs with assets of less than P 50,000.00. Level 2 and Level 3 MEs act as big brothers and sisters to emerging MEs for coaching and inspiration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-</td>
<td>Communities are seen as stakeholders of the ME development through its</td>
<td>Value chain analysis are at the core of ME development however, other factors in community participation are accounted for such as stakeholders analysis and the role of communities in enterprise development. Other stakeholders participate in the development of particular enterprise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>participation in the value-chain analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>RuMEPP gets list/ “menu” of trainings from the DTI-BDD and deliver them to communities. Focus is at number of trainings and participants of such trainings. Increase in creating more formal MEs (registered with at least DTI business name) is minimal.</td>
<td>RuMEPP analyzes what are the varying needs of MEs and what specific types of intervention are needed at a given time. Services also vary depending on the status of MEs. Increase in BN registration is high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkage</td>
<td>Linkage is focused at those who are given finance and non-finance services.</td>
<td>While link of finance and non-finance services is crucial to RuMEPPs success, access to other providers, network and resources are being accounted for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-equality</td>
<td>RuMEPP is noted in general for its being gender blind and is said to be responding only to increase of income, product quality and jobs generated.</td>
<td>RuMEPP has become gender responsive (e.g. has developed/ adopted a Gender-Responsive Value Chain Analysis) and is responding to the gender needs and gender issues that MEs are facing to be able to sustain and create more jobs and increase income.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao
Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

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<tr>
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<th>2010-2012 (September)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional: peace and development lens</td>
<td>Not directly indicated in the principles</td>
<td>As the number of MEs increases and as more jobs are being developed, RuMEPP started to ask itself whether it gives more peace or its intervention creates more conflict in the community as a whole. This is also part of whether or not the intervention is being gender responsive or gender blind.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Microenterprises in South Cotabato Partnered with DTI under the RuMEP Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microenterprise</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youlah Ventures Industries</td>
<td>Palapa, Maguindanaoan delicacies</td>
<td>Bunao, Tupi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BKR Food Products and Services</td>
<td>Atchara (pickled papaya)</td>
<td>Bayan Subd., Polomok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6RG’s Food Products</td>
<td>Banana Chips, Bagoong Alamang</td>
<td>Tampakan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ina’s Foods Products</td>
<td>Tinagtag and other delicacies</td>
<td>Koronodal Proper, Polomolok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauziah’s Food Products</td>
<td>Polvoron</td>
<td>Koronadal City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Parents’ Association</td>
<td>Native Maguindanaoan delicacies and coco delight</td>
<td>Koronadal Proper, Polomolok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny’s Food Products</td>
<td>Chocolate Polvoron</td>
<td>Magsaysay, Polomolok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basan Foods / Danlag Women’s Association</td>
<td>Turmeric Tea, Bagoong Alamang (shrimp paste)</td>
<td>Barangay Danlag, Tampakan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindanawan Coco Sugar Corp.</td>
<td>Coco Sugar</td>
<td>Palian, Tupi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy-an’s Fried Corn</td>
<td>Fried Corn</td>
<td>Koronadal City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norylan Herbal and Food Products</td>
<td>Herbal and Food Products</td>
<td>Surallah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNB Diversified Food Industries</td>
<td>Mangosteen Tonic, Papaya Cider</td>
<td>Tupi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRF-RIC Livelihood Association</td>
<td>Recycled bags and rags</td>
<td>Polomolok</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microenterprise</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Allah Valley Crafters Association  
Contact Person: Maria Neza Prayco | Corn Husk-made products | Centrala, Surallah |
| South Cotabato Bamboo Crafters Association | Bamboo-crafted furniture and home accessories | (province-wide) |
| Kenhuling Handicraft Federation, Inc.  
Contact Person: Nida Bacaling | Hand-crafted and culturally-inspired accessories | Lake Sebu |
| Purok O Belo Pottery Makers Association | Pottery crafts | Tantangan |

### RuMEPP Microenterprise Big Brothers / Big Sisters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microenterprise</th>
<th>Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lake View Native Souvenir Shop  
Contact Person: Irene Legaste | Native Products / Bamboo Crafts |
| JPH Bamboo Crafts  
Contact Person: Felix Hilado | Native Products / Bamboo Crafts |
| Kablon Farm Foods Corporation  
Contact Person: Ernesto Pantua, Jr. | Processed Food and Food Preparation |
| South Valley Foods  
Contact Person: Edna Feliprada | Processed Food and Food Preparation |
| Ninos Food Products  
Contact Person: Elizabeth Rafal | Processed Food and Food Preparation |
| Grasel Food Products  
Contact Person: Iris Nievares | Processed Food and Food Preparation |
| VMotril Farm  
Contact Person: Victoria Motril | Processed Food and Food Preparation |

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6 Big brothers / Big Sisters are actual microentrepreneurs that participate as mentors to new and aspiring microentrepreneurs under the RuMEP Program.
Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

Introduction

Maria Luz G. Go was on her way back home from a consultative meeting with the residents of Barangay Saravia, Koronadal City. She was still quite overwhelmed by the positive comments given by the community on the project that she initiated not only to improve their economic well-being but also to build trust among the tri-people in the village. She was satisfied with the initial results and benefits of the project to the community.

The Fellow

Maria Luz G. Go was born on 10 October 1961 in General Santos City. She finished a degree in Management Engineering from Ateneo de Davao University in 1983. Luz first worked for a for-profit organization as an information architecture designer. She packaged information and helped ‘streamline organizational intelligence quotient’ for the decision-makers in the company. In this work, understanding the business and the industry was a prerequisite, and Luz informally became the strategist for the company. Here, she earned significant management training, which formed her to be adaptive to various situations, to be more fluid with structures and to be disciplined. She saw in the corporate world how serious and focused employees were in achieving profit and bottom line targets; it was a 24/7 effort. If desired profitability was not attained, all those hard work was seen as useless by the management. The discipline of the corporate world, not the values, was what Luz wanted to bring to her work in the development sector.

Later on Luz joined the Municipality of Kiamba in Sarangani Province as its Municipal Administrator. In this work, she realized how difficult it was to work and relate with people since she came from a corporate job that didn’t entail much interaction with customers. She learned how to collaborate, to look and work with people who could address the need of the municipality’s clients, especially if LGU resources were limited. She was later invited to work at the provincial government but declined because she felt that politics was very divisive.
“We cannot work fast in the ground if people are divided, and if a person is affiliated with certain political personalities. Although affiliation with politicians has its own benefits such as linkaging and getting resources, I don’t think it would be beneficial for me to have perpetual association with political personalities. When you are in the communities, especially after elections, people judge you based on your political affiliation. They would not work with you if you are doing a project ‘for this person.’”

Luz then volunteered for Gawad Kalinga where she was involved in implementing housing and livelihood projects. Here, she realized that innovation was critical in getting results, various efforts may cost less or nothing if one is innovative. She later volunteered for Kapayapaan Kapatid Council where she assisted in writing project proposals and in implementing community projects on coco sugar processing plant development and vinegar industry development. When Luz joined the Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program (MBLP) of the Team Energy Center of the Asian Institute of Management in 2011 she was already the Chairperson of the Mindanao Tri-people Consultancy Services Cooperative (MinTriCo) and SOCSARGEN Peace Network, Inc since she wanted to apply her technical expertise for peace development intervention. Going into the MBLP, Luz had concrete learning objectives. She wanted to address the divide among tri-people in Mindanao particularly in Barangay Saravia, but she knew she was weak in collaboration, so there was a conscious effort to address this weakness.

“I wanted to be proficient in conflict resolution management. That is the most challenging role in the community because there are many dynamics, different interests. The challenge is how to trim down the biases and come up with a common vision. Sometimes people are thinking of malice – what are your interests in going into the community, things like that. Corporate business development is pretty straightforward, while the management of people, especially a loose one, community-based, is different. It’s different when you work for private companies. In the community, you cannot just remove people. Pag nagwild yan, ibang disruption yan. (It’s a different disruption if they go wild.)”

Luz also had concrete targets for the community she wanted to assist. For her project in Barangay Saravia, her goals were as follows: (1) localized economic system where tri-people will have equitable share of their opinions in the direction of the local economy. She was thinking of putting up a Saravia Chamber of Commerce, or an association of people involved in vinegar-making; (2) achieve a minimum of Php6,000 monthly income per family; and (3) for those families whose incomes are already above Php6,000 monthly, she wanted to achieve a 20 percent increase per annum in their income.

Societal Divide from Sectoral Biases

Luz’s work in the MinTriCo and SPNI introduced her to Barangay Saravia where most of the residents live in poverty: families could only eat once or twice a day and the B’laans and Muslims could not afford to send their children to college. In addition to the poor economic condition, the three cultures or peoples living in the village (Christians, Muslims and B’laans) were not comfortable interacting with each other, most especially in business.
Ownership of the divide

Luz was born and raised in Mindanao, a land populated by Muslims, Indigenous Peoples (the original settlers of the land) and Christian Filipinos from Luzon and Visayas who founded settlements and communities in Mindanao a few decades ago. Though they live in the same land, these three groups generally distrust each other. The distrust among the tri-people in Mindanao stemmed from a long history of conflict and social inequity. Based on Luz’s observation, social inequity stemmed from “the growth of individualism, kanya-kanya” mentality. Christian settlers who were exposed to limited resources in Luzon and Visayas, when they came to Mindanao worked and earned their living from the rich land. The locals, such as the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and original Muslim settlers, have been nourished with good food and were satisfied with what they had. When the settlers came they gave up some of their lands. But now, they have limited resources and even their food is not enough for them. Luz observed that this was where the peace and order disruptions came in.

“The Muslims and IPs were saying that the abundant plantations owned by the huge corporations now, used to be theirs. Mayaman na ang korporasyon pero sila andun pa rin, nasa gilid sila. Ano ang mararamdaman mo na lupa mo yun dati tapos ikaw mahirap ka pa rin? Natural lang na feeling siguro yung ‘Bakit sila yumaman, tapos kami hindi kasama?’ The Christians were too preoccupied with their own thing.”

(The Muslims and IPs were saying that the abundant plantations owned by the huge corporations now, used to be theirs. The corporations are now earning so much but the original settlers remained poor, and were relegated to the sidelines. How would you feel if the land that used to be yours now earns a lot yet you remained poor? It is but natural to feel this way, ‘How come they did not include us in their economic development?’ The Christians were too preoccupied with their own thing.)

When asked why she was passionate about bridging this divide and on achieving peace and development in Mindanao, Luz replied that she wanted to build a peaceful Mindanao for her children.

“My personal desire is to give a legacy of peaceful place for my children. I just realized that everything that my parents accumulated in terms of wealth and land resource has not translated into real economic gain because of peace and order disruptions. Aside from that, I also witnessed the ordeal of the family whose member was kidnapped; the sister of my husband was kidnapped during the heights of unrest. I was a family team member to participate in the consultation with the government rescue task force. Same thing might happen with my children if I don’t take action.”
Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

Alternative Approach to Peace-building: Vinegar Industry Development

The Project

Luz headed the implementation of the project entitled Kapatid Kong B’laan Kasama Ka sa Kaunlaran, a vinegar industry development project. The project was implemented in Barangay Saravia (in Koronadal City in the province of South Cotabato) where most residents were involved in coconut farming, production and selling of vinegar. The project wanted to ensure participation of the B’laan families in the mainstream economic development.

Vinegar-making has been a traditional livelihood among the Ilonggo vendors who know the traditional formulation. It had huge export potential. Luz saw that the vinegar industry could be a good venue for the tri-people to converge their resources (land, coconut trees, skill in sap production and vinegar production, product development and marketing), to increase their income, and build trust among one another. The vinegar-making project offered an alternative approach in pursuing peace in Mindanao.

Barangay Saravia was populated by Muslims, the B’laans and Christian settlers. However, these three groups generally distrust each other. The distrust mainly also stemmed from the inequitable sharing of income from the vinegar industry. Luz explained,

“The vendor earns two- to three-folds higher than the coconut farmer or tapper on every 20 liter-container of vinegar. For instance, the purchased vinegar from the tapper is 120 pesos, but after packing it by one gallon it becomes 280 pesos net. When processed into spicy vinegar, the gain is tripled. Pareho lang naman ang pinag-usapan natin – vinegar – bakit mas malaki ang kita sa kabilang sector? (We belong to the same vinegar industry; how come one sector earns more than the other?) We have poverty and shortage of food in the rural area, which is not supposed to be, because producers of raw materials do not have equitable economic share. This is the target of the project. People have to start being concerned about others who belong to the same industry.”

Luz saw the opportunity of developing an enterprise for the tri-people to pursue the following objectives: (1) to raise the self-esteem of the B’laans and (2) to involve the Muslims and other settlers in a joint venture. Luz believed that enterprise development would address the lack of income, productivity and savings. The complementary business activities would allow the tri-people to interact often and to reduce the element of distrust and miscommunication. It would also establish a venue for conflict resolution. Luz further explained the goals of this project.

“We are very particular about achieving food security; putting food on the table. For Barangay Saravia, what we are trying to achieve is higher level of equitable share of wealth. (I am very passionate about) working with people and troubleshooting with their problem especially with food. I could not stand it whenever they say they are frequently hungry, especially the B’laan sector, while I deliver lectures.”
The Guiding Coalition towards Bridging the Divide

Even before entering the MBLP, Luz had already worked with the church since she knew that the institution has huge influence on communities. She first convinced Fr. Angel Buenavides to be involved in social development programs. Luz recalled,

“Kasi si Fr. Angel during that time was not in socio-economic programs. I was thinking that the priest, especially the church, has a big role in arresting problems of poverty and other problems of society. So I challenged them, how can you have a meaningful existence as a priest if you could not effect change in communities? I believe that priests have the power to influence people, however there are very few priests who immerse in the communities; many are just in the pulpits. Jesus Christ helped feed the people. Jesus was concerned about the physical well being of people. So I convinced some more priests to go into people’s organizations.”

During the MBLP, she had the opportunity to form a guiding coalition composed of people representing various organizations. From the academe and civil society, Luz invited Dr. Fred Bidad and Czarina Saikol of the Mindanao State University (MSU); Danny Salino of the SocSarGen Peace Network; and Antonio Marin, Jr., President of STRUWEA. Fr. Angel B. Buenavides was still part of the coalition.

Luz also invited officials from the city government and barangay: Ruel U. Arti1 Barangay Kagawad of Barangay Saravia; Gregorio O. Presga, Captain of Barangay Saravia, Koronadal City; and Gilbert Gayosa, Livelihood In-charge of the Koronadal City government. Luz further extended her guiding coalition, and invited key officials from national agencies and the city government: Flora Gabunales, Provincial Director of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); Jess Gamer, Provincial Director of the Department of Agriculture (DA-PCA); and Dr. Peter Bascon Miguel, Mayor of Koronadal City. The members of the guiding coalition met regularly and assisted in providing market outlets, in ensuring the products’ quality, and in increasing the morale of the members of the vinegar association. Later on this guiding coalition was registered and became SocSarGen Peace Network, Inc. The members of the guiding coalition/ network no longer represented their respective organizations, but became “loose” individuals. They were part of the network in their own personal or individual capacity. These individuals became the network’s Board of Trustees. Luz was also a member of the board, in charge of program design and community development.

Leading Collaborative Action among the Tri-people

Even before Luz came to Barangay Saravia, a vinegar association was already formed through the assistance of the Department of Trade Industry (DTI). However, the association was made up only of vinegar vendors, mostly Christian settlers, the Ilonggos. Luz wanted other groups to be part of the association as well, but it was not easy to convince the B’laans and Maguindanos to join because of the distrust (see Box 1). The B’laans did not want to join because of the discrimination, while the Maguindanos believed that tuba7-making, one of the economic activities of the association was haram.

Box 1. The Fellow’s Chosen Divide

7 Local wine made from coconut.
To address the above divide, Luz and her guiding coalition’s leading collaborative actions were the formation of people (officers and members of the association), business enterprise development, market development, and other support activities. They sought the assistance of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) through Flora Gabunales, Ernesto Casiple, and Waren Nantes. Community organizing was the task of the barangay government unit through the assigned focal person Kagawad (Counsellor) Ruel Artil with Baranga Captain Presga and Fr. Angel. They helped in managing relationship among the association members, while Luz orchestrated the entire project management and handled the Business Enterprise Development component.

Danny Sabino of SPNI handled the product development, market development, and documentation functions. Jess Gamer of the Philippine Coconut Authority helped in the technology component, convincing the coconut farmers/tappers that fresh toddy production was a lot better than copra production in terms of economic returns. Mayor Peter Miguel helped in the promotion and marketing of the product, and in providing the needed materials. Gilbert Gayosa, the focal person of Mayor Miguel for this project, provided the venue/meals during seminars and promotions. STRUWEA President, Antonio Marin Jr. managed the relationship among the members, compliance of the installed product quality system, and distribution of opportunities from the bulk orders of the market. Marin’s daughter, Louelle Sheryl, helped in consolidating community project documents.

The members of the organized People’s Organization participated in the working committees. They formulated policies; although the tri-people refused to use term ‘policies’ since it connotes a negative disposition. They preferred to use the term “kasabutan” (which means agreement). The members also refused to integrate penalties since they believed that signing the kasabutan was enough to gain everybody’s cooperation. The person who would violate the agreement would be asked to explain to the body why they violated certain parts of the agreement.

Luz then asked the assistance of the Barangay Captain and the village’s community organizer to help in encouraging other groups to be part of the association. Seminars were conducted to let them know the objectives of the project. Later on, some B’laan families agreed to join, and the Maguidanons agreed to be suppliers of chili, an important ingredient of the sinamak (chili or hot vinegar). As of
November 2012, the association had 25 members representing all tri-people in the village (5 B’laans, 3 Maguindanons, and 17 Christian settlers, mostly llonggos).

The Challenge

The most critical challenge faced by Luz and her guiding coalition in supporting the association was getting the commitment and active participation of its officers. Most of them only wanted the prestige of being an officer. They seldom attended meetings or implemented planned activities. Some were more concerned about their own individual profits than with helping the association grow. A re-election and reorganization took place to change the first set of officers (the one organized by DTI), as well as the second set of officers (organized by the peace network). However, problems were also encountered with the president of the third set of officers. In seminars and meetings with outside groups, she proclaimed the sinamak, which was developed by the association through a series of product development and testing, as hers. The president was later replaced through a re-election and re-organization initiated by the members.

Results

One important indication of the success of the project was the participation of various stakeholders in the community project. It was able to bring to the barangay level the services and assistance of national and local government agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), the City Health Office and other NGOs. This was made possible because “the fellow is at home with the community and enjoys working with them, having established a good working relationship not only with the B’laans but with the rest of the community.”

The approach used, enterprise development, did not only address problems in poverty, low productivity and income of villagers, but also catalyzed peace and development. It became a venue for the tri-people to collaborate and work together towards achieving common goals. For Luz, the concrete manifestation of this change was when she heard the members said “Hindi kami lalaki kung kami lang” (We couldn’t grow our business on our own).

On the economic side, initial results were also positive. There was already a 50 percent increase in the income of some families, from PhP1,500 to PhP3,000 per month. One B’laan couple which previously did not earn from the 12 coconut trees that they had, began earning PhP3,200 per month. But for Luz, the biggest achievement of the project was the shift in the various stakeholders’ mindset from individualistic to a more communal interaction.

8 Observation of one of the fellow’s coaches.
Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao
Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

Personal reflection of the fellow on the MBLP

The Mindanao Bridging Leadership Program allowed Luz to harness her character and be “more proficient with the management of the project with the people.” She used to think that leadership entailed doing it on one’s own and just shepherding others to the goals that one has set. However, she realized that leadership is sharing the vision and influencing others to participate and to create a desired future together. Luz and her guiding coalition influence participation of various stakeholders. They involved leaders and officials from the barangay, the city government, various national government agencies, and external resource agencies. The Barangay Council gave their full support to the project and stressed the need for the B’laans to be involved. Luz also encouraged the participation of all groups; she ensured community ownership of the project. As one of her coaches observed: “She emphasized that development cannot happen without the people acting as the prime mover. She only acts as a facilitator.”

The frameworks and concepts learned in MBLP also allowed Luz to engage other stakeholders more effectively. Management tools and concepts such as the deep dive, stakeholder analysis, force field analysis, the balanced scorecard and systems thinking allowed her to identify the different actors in the community and analyze their possible participation in the project, as well as the resources that they can bring in. These allowed her to engage more people, even those whose opinions and perspectives did not jive with hers. “Dati kapag ang isang tao, iba ang pananaw kaysa sa akin, ayaw ko nang makipag-interact o makatrabaho. Ngayon mas malawak na ang pagtingin ko.” (Before, if a person has a different opinion, it chose not to interact or work with that person. Now, I have a wider perspective.)

Exhibit 1. Project Background

Vision

Panghabangbuhay, Panghanapbuhay, Bayanihan ng B’laan, Kristyano at Muslim sa Koronadal!

Mission

1. To model vinegar business industry of Saravia as a sound economic pursuit in sustaining peace.

2. To increase business mgmt proficiency of the tri-people in managing economic enterprise.

3. To increase income to a minimum value that would answer the basic needs of the family.
Enhancing Iligan City’s Business, Disaster Preparedness and Response through Public-Private Partnership
By Sittie Pasandalan
Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology

“...if the private (sector) trusts the public (governance system), there would be a great change.”
--- Frederick Siao, Iligan City Councilor

Introduction

Frederick W. Siao or “Freddie,” as he is fondly called by family and friends, was born and raised in Iligan City by Henry Tiu Siao and Juanita Wee Siao who are both entrepreneurs. Having earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Management degree from the University of Santo Tomas, Freddie joined the family business. In 1995, he married Ma. Teresa “Ampoy” Padilla, a businesswoman and daughter of one of the city’s prominent families. Freddie and Ampoy are blessed with three children.

Growing up, Freddie was exposed to the business climate of Iligan City. He witnessed first-hand the rise and fall of Iligan’s economy. Despite the economic drawback in the late 1990’s, he has been a firm believer that Iligan is capable of competing with its neighboring cities in terms of economic development. This belief is what drove him to give up his private life and run for public office in the 2009 election. Fortunately, he was elected as the third councilor of Iligan City out of the 59 aspirants. Since then, City Councilor Frederick W. Siao has been more aggressive with his campaign to boost the economy of the city.

Mobilizing Stakeholders to Improve Iligan’s Business Climate

At present, the status of Iligan’s economy is a result of “mismanagement of the government” which led to increase in poverty. As a means to address this, the government engages in dole-out activities to impoverished families, making them rely on the government instead of working hard for themselves. This according to Freddie is an oversight of the government.

In 2009, the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), through its Policy Center, released its second Philippine Cities Competitiveness Ranking Project (PCCRP) — a research which aims to determine the competitiveness of Philippine cities based on the Cost of Doing Business, Dynamism of the Local Economy, Human Resources and Training, Infrastructure, Responsiveness of LGU to

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Business Needs, and Quality of Life. In the 2009 PCCRP, Iligan City ranked 13th out of the 17 cities under Strata 1.10

With such awareness of Iligan’s economic status and being a businessman himself, Freddie became more driven to help elevate the rank of the city. Improving Iligan’s business climate eventually became his owned social divide to address as one of the fellows of the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP).

In order to better understand his divide and to benchmark the best practices of developing cities, Freddie visited and studied other cities in the Philippines, particularly Naga City. Armed with the vision “A globally competitive and investment-friendly city whose people are working in harmony to achieve peace and sustainable growth” for Iligan, Freddie presented this to other entrepreneurs in Iligan. He identified them as his major stakeholders and lobbied them to join him in his cause. He also presented his vision to the local chief executive and to some of his fellow councilors who expressed their support by helping him pass various resolutions to implement his projects. After all, the rise of Iligan’s economy is also the rise of local businesses and eventually the rise of the people of Iligan. Freddie dared to make changes. As he aptly puts it, “Sa Iligan kasi, if we never do it, we will never know.”11

Being a member of the Lanao-Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Commerce and Industry Foundation of Iligan Inc., Freddie already had the support of other entrepreneurs. However, it was when he presented to them his change project that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Foundation of Iligan, Inc. (CCIFII), through its president Ms. Emily M. Pascua, fully joined him in his cause and supported all his endeavors. Further believing that the government sector holds key pieces of the puzzle in addressing his divide, Freddie as chairman of the Committee on Trade, Commerce, and Industry of the City Council, enlisted the support of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) through its provincial director Mr. Ruel B. Paclipan. It was after joining the MBLP Workshop 2 when Freddie ultimately realized that “if the private trusts the public, there would be a great change.”12 Thus, he pursued a partnership with CCIFII and DTI which brought about the consciousness of working for a “Multi-Sectoral Convergence for a Reformed and Progressive Iligan City.”
After a series of meetings with various partners which eventually became part of his core group, Freddie, together with the CCIFII and DTI, launched the Iligan Business Month dubbed as “Asenso Iliganon” last October 2011. The said event was officially recognized by the City Government through Resolution No. 11-715. The Business Month paved way for local products to be displayed in the city’s mall. It gave local entrepreneurs the opportunity to advertise and strengthen their products. Further, local entrepreneurs of small and medium enterprises were given trainings such as accounting for non-accountants and business networking for young entrepreneurs to increase entrepreneurial quality. A business forum and a business summit were also held to better expose the local entrepreneurs to mainstream economy. To honor the entrepreneurs of the city, the Iligan Business Night was also organized. Stephen Gaisano, the owner of Gaisano mall, was recognized for his great contribution to the economy of Iligan City. All these contributed to Freddie’s existing effort of boosting small entrepreneurs. As a result, the weekly Night Market under City Ordinance 11-5693 was started last February 2011, bringing an income of PhP 36,000.00 on its first month. The Night Market not only serves as an income-generating business but also as a testament that indeed Iligan City has peace and order. The Night Market invited Christian and Muslim traders to display their respective products at the City Plaza every Friday and Saturday nights. The local police together with Salam Group, an organization of Muslim volunteers who are dedicated in ensuring peace and order, safeguard the people while enjoying the fanfare that the Night Market offers.

With the help of the DTI, Freddie localized the national DTI’s One Town, One Product (OTOP) program and dubbed it as “One Barangay, One Product” (OBOP). With the launching of OBOP, more than 10 barangays expressed their desire to join and participate. Preliminary evaluations were conducted to assess and identify products that the barangays can develop, package, and market.

Freddie also partnered with an academic institution. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the Local Government Unit represented by City Mayor Lawrence Cruz and the Mindanao State University–Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) represented by Chancellor Sukarno D. Tanggol for a partnership on business research, entrepreneurial capability building, and periodic monitoring and evaluation activities. Preliminary research on the impact of the weekly Night Market on the economy of the City as well as to the lives of the residents of the City is already being conducted by the students of the College of Business Administration and Accountancy of MSU-IIT.

**An Unexpected Disruption: Typhoon Sendong**

Unfortunately, in December 2011, Typhoon Sendong (internationally known as Tropical Storm Washi) hit the northern part of Mindanao, badly affecting Iligan City. With this unforeseeable
incident, activities for Iligan’s business climate had to be suspended in order to address more pressing matters such as evacuation, relief operations, medical missions, and eventually relocation of affected families. Still adhering to the framework of Bridging Leader, Freddie invited local and international nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) for a multi-stakeholders’ meeting on how to address the devastation brought about by Typhoon Sendong. For the first time, the local government, through Freddie, acknowledged and recognized the importance of the contributions of NGOs and CSOs. “We, in the politics, are just a very small speck of the entire system... Kini man gud sila ang naa so field gyud (they are the ones in the field). Ila trabaho kay kita gyud nila (It is their work because they see it in the field).”¹³ The meeting prompted the tasking of the clusters of NGOs and CSOs to better deliver goods and services to the typhoon survivors. The local government was also able to clearly define the role each organization had to play.

Freddie also served as the chairman of Camp Coordination and Camp Management where he coordinated the responses on the psychosocial, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food and nonfood items. He also made sure that the evacuation camps were orderly and comfortable for the typhoon survivors. Knowing that Muslims were also affected by Typhoon Sendong, Freddie readily accepted help offered by Muslim organizations such as the Al-Mujadillah Development Foundation, Inc., an NGO based in Marawi City under the directorship of Zahria Mapandi, a co-fellow under the MBLP. Using an Army helicopter, Freddie flew to hinterland barangays of Iligan which is dominated by Muslims and Higaonons to bring relief goods. And when a misunderstanding due to relief goods erupted among the people of a hinterland barangay, Freddie sought the help of Musa Sanguila, a Muslim and also an MBLP co-fellow. The devastation brought by Typhoon Sendong in some way united the Christians and Muslims in helping and supporting one another.

Before the end of 2011, a system of monitoring the evacuation camps was in place and different clusters met regularly every Tuesday for updating. On April 2012, the number of evacuation camps was lessened from 40 to 15, specifically from 7,154 families to 1,511 families. To date, the relocation of the affected families is ongoing. Some of Freddie’s partners in responding to the devastation brought on by Typhoon Sendong are the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Plan International, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Program (WFP), Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) – Belgium, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, Save the Children, Community and Family Services International (CFSI), Kaabag Ranaw Inc.

¹³ Level 2 interview.
Aside from his efforts on relocation, Freddie enlisted the help of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in identifying livelihood projects for the typhoon victims. In March 2012, 22 internally-displaced persons (IDP) due to Typhoon Sendong participated in the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Caravan facilitated by the DSWD through its Self-employment Assistance-Kaunlaran (SEA-K) project.

Also during this month, the Night Market resumed its operation which symbolized that Iligan is slowly getting back on its feet. On its reopening month, the Night Market gained an income of about PhP20,000.00 but turned six-fold in March, gaining approximately PhP120,000.00.

Enhancing Sustainability of Responses

To ensure that responses to the divide will be continued even after his term of office, Freddie proposed that all businesses in Iligan must be registered. This was supported by the local government through the City Ordinance 11-5745, also known as Iligan City Business Registry Databank (ICBRD). Through the said ordinance, the local government was able to obtain PhP800,000.00, an income to be administered by the CCIFII which is mandated “to facilitate effective communication, improve business information data, rationalize business zoning and keep track of development.”\(^{14}\) In guaranteeing that CCIFII will be delivering its mandate, Freddie again employed the BL framework by coming up with a check-and-balance mechanism in which the local government, together with the Lanao-Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce, will evaluate and monitor ICBRD.

At this time, new institutional arrangements as evidenced by the ICBRD, clearly solidify the ties between the private and the public sectors of Iligan City. If the ICBRD works, it is going to prove that trust already exists between the two sectors of Iligan.

Acknowledging the Iliganons as the main stakeholders, Freddie also launched the radio program: “Asenso Iliganon,” on January 2012, which aimed to educate the people on various topics such as local governance, values formation, and business. The radio program was originally slated to air three times a week but due to public demand, it is now being aired five times a week. The radio program is co-owned by CCIFII and MBLP Team IIT. Both organizations are heavily involved in planning the topics which are to be discussed and aired. “Asenso Iliganon” highlights the good things about and in Iligan. It is a refreshing variety of Iligan media as it breaks away from the typical Iligan media which focuses on the negativity of the City, its people, and the local government. The radio program helps balance the news and issues especially those pertaining to peace and order. For instance, when other radio programs call for condemnation of alleged wrong-doers such as

\(^{14}\) City Ordinance 11-5745
most of the City officials, “Asenso Iliganon” calls for deferment of opinions and verdicts until proper procedures have been followed.

In this year’s Business Month, Freddie and his core group became innovative and launched the Tourism Expo to increase the tourism industry of Iligan; once again proving that Iligan is ready to compete with other neighboring developed cities.

**Co-Owners in Freddie’s Successes**

Behind a bridging leader (BL) is a guiding coalition and as the saying goes, “behind every great man is a woman.” Freddie credits his wife Ampoy as one of the individuals who pushed him to be a better leader. In a coaching session, Freddie shared Ampoy’s text message saying that she may not be with him physically but he is in her heart and mind. Ampoy makes sure to attend events related to Freddie’s divide such as his Welcome Program as an MBLP Fellow at MSU-IIT, launching of the Business Month, and his Local Public Recital. Ampoy shared that on Christmas Day of 2011, Freddie cried as he realized that there are Iliganon families who will not celebrate Christmas as most of them may be mourning. Ampoy serves as support and encouragement for Freddie to do more good for the people of Iligan. Thus, despite not being the overall chairman for the Sendong response, Freddie still went out of his way to help address the needs of the committees not under him by linking them to other organizations like the Armed Forces of the Philippines to ensure that relief services were delivered to the affected communities.

Another woman behind Freddie is Ms. Armien P. Alloro, a good friend who wholly supports him. She resigned from her post as a staff of MSU-IIT to help Freddie in his cause. She is instrumental in making sure that Freddie is kept up-to-date with the needs of the Iliganons and in attending to these needs. For instance, she facilitated focus group discussions in identifying the OBOP of the participating barangays. She also assisted in responding to the needs of the Sendong survivors. Further, she serves as Freddie’s emissary in events which he cannot attend and in dialoguing with Iliganons about their respective concerns.

Freddie’s guiding coalition strongly shares his vision for the City. Armien who has been working closely with Freddie discusses the vision with people who are meeting Freddie for the first time as well as with probable partners. It is an indication that Freddie’s vision is strongly shared and accepted. Given Armien’s closeness to Freddie, she is one of the people who can help promote and continue the efforts of Freddie.

A BL also recognizes his core group; the people who would support and continue his divide. Freddie is also fortunate to have two devoted individuals by his side, namely, Ms. Emily M. Pascua and Mr. Ruel B. Paclipan. Both are as dedicated as he is in developing the business climate of Iligan. Ms. Pascua is the president of CCIFII. Being a businesswoman herself, she worked with Freddie in promoting the business climate of Iligan. She helped in designing and in gathering funds for the Business Month celebrations. She also shared her own experiences in business through the trainings she facilitated for small and medium entrepreneurs. As the CCIFII president, Ms. Pascua is
tasked with continuing the mission of Freddie. Through the ICBRD which Freddie is also a part of, the CCIFII aims to be self-sufficient in promoting and boosting the business climate of Iligan. An assurance that even without the political power and assistance of Freddie, the business climate of Iligan is progressing.

Mr. Ruel B. Paclipan is the provincial director of DTI. He shared that when Freddie reached out to him, it was the first time that the local government tapped the DTI. Through their collaboration, Freddie and Ruel pushed for the OBOP Program and they were able to conduct trainings on Coco Coir for Barangay Abuno last October 24, 2012 and Bamboo Craft in partnership with DepEd and MSU-IIT for Barangay Puga-an last November 5–9, 2012. And just like the ICBRD, the OBOP Program will continue even after Freddie’s term of office. At present, the city ordinance for OBOP is still at its second public hearing.

The core group is not unfamiliar with Freddie’s vision. When the concept of the radio program, “Asenso Iliganon,” was presented to CCIFII, they readily accepted the idea and suggested that the radio program should also help make Iliganons proud of themselves thus they added the line “I love Iligan.”

Given the measures undertaken by Freddie and his core group with the support of his guiding coalition, it can be said that Iligan City has reached a semblance of peace and order contrary to what many people hear. Iligan City, being the only highly-urbanized city in the proximity of the Lanao provinces, plays a vital role in demonstrating that tri-people could coexist with harmony and progress. It should be noted that Iligan City is reflective of the realities of Mindanao since it has been home to the Moros, Higaonons, and different settlers. The tri-people all contribute to the business climate of the city. The settlers are the main entrepreneurs who market the products of the Higaonons and the Moros.

**Challenges and Moving Forward**

With the signing of the Bangsamoro Framework Agreement last October 15, 2012, Iligan City is placed very near the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) since the Municipality of Baloi, which is situated on the south of Iligan, is now part of ARMM. Iligan has to strengthen its ties with the neighboring municipalities, especially in terms of business, if it wants to profit. It has been acknowledged that the Meranaos from the Lanao provinces are a big market of Iligan businesses; hence, measures should be made to guarantee that Iligan would still be able keep the market. To date, there are very few Halal restaurants in the city and only one existing Halal store owned by a Meranao. Freddie believes that “being near to Balo-i has not been a threat to Iligan City ever since, the important thing is we maintain the mutual good relationship with the people. Also, it has been contributing to the economy of Iligan.”

There are also hinterland barangays in the city whose people have expressed their desire to be part of the new political entity called Bangsamoro that will be created to replace the now-existing ARMM. Given these conditions and probable events that will take place in less than a
decade, Iligan City has to solidify its existence as a highly-urbanized city and to take great measures of taking care of its people. Sadly, the hinterland barangays have not been given enough attention by the local government and if these barangays agree to be part of the Bangsamoro, the city loses approximately 80% of its land area and its source of fresh produce. When asked for a comment on the desire of the residents of the hinterland barangays, Freddie said that “it is their right” since “it is provided in the agreement that a plebiscite will be conducted in areas who opted to be included in New Entity.” Simply put, Freddie “believe(s) that the intent of the framework is to provide peace and order in Mindanao, respecting the culture and tradition of the people. We just have to value the essence of our individuality.”

Freddie recognizes that a lot still has to be done in his divide such as “gaining the trust” of the people and the greatest challenge he faces is “the buy-in of the community towards the LGU.” Among the important stakeholders of his divide are the Local Government Unit (LGU) officials, especially the Chief Executive, and different sectors of the community. And with the upcoming election in May 2013, “it is very important that whoever heads the LGU must share same vision for sustainable development.” Since there is no guarantee that Freddie would still be a councilor in the next election, the engagements such as partnerships and collaborations undertaken with private and public offices must be reinforced to safeguard the steps Freddie implemented to improve the business climate of Iligan.

As a member of the two business chambers, Freddie, with his guiding coalition, will need to monitor the performance of the CCIFII in the ICBRD since it is the most significant new institutional arrangement that has been created. The ICBRD is a testament that the public and the private sectors can work together in promoting the welfare of everyone.

There is also the option to explore venturing into the business of marketing the OBOP of Iligan City. Despite the efforts of DTI and the barangays, if there is no massive promotion and a good market for the OBOP Products, the people’s drive to produce might dwindle leading to the downfall of the OBOP.

Finally, with or without political power, Freddie and his guiding coalition must continue to advocate for the development of the business climate of Iligan. As he stated, “If there is economic progress and at the same time equality, there will be peace.”

15 Level 2 interview.
Personal Reflection of the Fellow on the Program

After undergoing the MBLP, Freddie appreciated the diversity of races in Mindanao. He knows that he has to “learn to adjust to all races; learn to be fair to everybody. What is important is what you have should also be given to everybody.”

Freddie also saw the need of exposing other leaders to the BL framework; thus, he invited his fellow councilors and Fiscal Abdul Ghaffur “AG” Alonto to apply to the program. Fiscal AG Alonto, whom he recommended, is now part of the MBLP Cohort 2. Having other BL within the vicinity of Iligan will help guarantee that Freddie’s efforts will be supported given that other fellows such as Fiscal AG Alonto is addressing other divides which are correlated to Freddie’s divide. Having other MBLP fellows like Musa Sanguila, Zahria Mapandi (MBLP fellow from Cohort 1), AG Alonto, and other Cohort 2 MBLP fellows such as BGen. Daniel Lucero, Dante Eleuterio, Pogie Atar, and Ms. Dipsy Maruhom advocating bridging leadership approaches around the vicinity of Iligan is helping create a critical mass of a new breed of leadership that involves everyone; something that is foreign in this part of Mindanao where usually only one or a select group rules.

In an interview, Freddie confided that integrity is very important and he believes that every BL should demonstrate this. For Freddie, his greatest contribution of having addressed his divide is the fact that his divide is the “convergence of multi-sectoral representations towards a reformed and progressive community regardless of religion, ethnic affiliation, and race.” And ultimately, his projects will help eradicate poverty and improve the economy of Iligan City.

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16 Level 2 interview
Strengthening of Social Capital and Social Cohesion

- Aisha Flores-Malayang
- Sitti Djalia Hataman
Building Bridges of Justice and Harmony for Muslim Women in Jail and in Depressed Communities in North Caloocan City
By Eloisa Barbin and Ruth Aseron

“I am very committed and I give my everything in anything I do... (but) one needs to be with others to accomplish anything.”
- Aisha Flores-Malayang
Founder, Muslim Sisters Bridging Society, Inc. (MSBS)

Introduction

Aisha Flores-Malayang was in her husband’s law office reviewing the targets she had set for a project proposal submitted to the Philippine-Australia Community Assistance Program (PACAP). Less than four months after submitting the proposal and getting approved, Aisha was satisfied with their accomplishments so far.

Aisha was now recalling the journey she took from being alone in her advocacy in helping Muslim women in jail and depressed communities, to eventually getting her friends to join her as incorporators and advisors in her new organization, to finally getting funding and hiring full-time employees for one of her many projects for Muslim women in jail and depressed communities. These may be little victories, but victories to be celebrated nonetheless.

Context of the fellow’s divide and Ownership of the divide

Aisha Flores-Malayang is an AB Psychology graduate from the Philippine Normal University. She took up several masteral units from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines and De La Salle University before finally taking up and completing the Masters of Arts in Islamic Studies at the University of the Philippines-Institute of Islamic Studies in March 2011. As a graduate student, she was president of the student council for two consecutive terms. Through this experience, her leadership skills were honed.

When typhoon Ondoy struck the country in 2009, Aisha and her family were just as severely affected as several families in Metro Manila and the neighboring provinces. However, she was aware that people in more depressed Muslim communities were likely even more devastated. Along with her co-officers at the student council of the UP Institute of Islamic Studies, the Asia America Initiative and other NGOs, Aisha went to the communities to provide affected families with medicines and relief goods.

But not all projects that she launched as student council president were as successful. In a forum on Islamic studies that she initiated, several officers did not show commitment nor full attention to the project. It was experiences like this one that helped her grow into a better leader.
Aisha is a *Balik-Islam* who converted in 2003 after a lifelong search for a religion. When Aisha received a research grant from the Asian Muslim Action Network for her masteral thesis, she studied the plight of Muslim women in Correctional Institution for Women. She found out that 85 percent of Muslim women in jail were not guilty of the crimes charged against them. Most of them were victims of *palit-ulo*. Aisha explained,

> “Palit-ulo: iba ang gumawa ng krimen pero sila ang hinuli bilang kapalit sa kriminal. Tapos the police asks for exorbitant amounts for their freedom. Kapag nagbigay ka ng pera minsan papalayain ka, minsan hindi. Iyong iba napag-initan lang ng kapit-bahay at itunuro sa pulis. Marami pang ibang istorya. Kaya hindi na uubra na magdadala lang ako ng pagkain sa kanila tuwing Ramadhan o dadaalaw sa kanila paminsan-minsan.”

(“Head switching: another person committed the crime but another person is arrested. Then, the police asks for exorbitant amounts for their freedom. If you pay, sometimes you’re freed, sometimes you’re not. Others were just maliciously accused by their neighbors and had them arrested by the police. There are other such stories. That is why I feel that the occasional visit to the jail and giving the inmates food during Ramadhan is not enough.”)

The Divide that must be bridged

Most Muslim Filipinos (95.79 percent) live in the southern part of the country – in southern and western Mindanao, southern Palawan, and the Sulu Archipelago. However, heavy fighting between the government troops and the separatist groups, which escalated in 2008, led to the displacement of thousands of Muslim Filipinos. Although some of the displaced families returned to their homes as soon as fighting subsided, many remained displaced. Some migrated to the northern and eastern part of Mindanao and to other parts of the country, reaching Metro Manila, southern Luzon and as far as the island of Batanes, the northern-most province in the country. In Metro Manila, there were Muslim Filipino communities in Maharlika Village in Taguig City, in Barangay Culiat in Quezon City, Quaiipo in the City of Manila, Parañaque City, Las Piñas City, and Pasig City.
Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

As Muslim Filipinos migrated to Metro Manila and southern Luzon to escape the war in the southern provinces of Mindanao, they faced other kinds of hardship in the metropolis – discrimination, lack of opportunities and poverty. Below are manifestations of the widespread discrimination and marginalization of Muslim Filipinos in Metro Manila:

Muslim Filipinos found it difficult to find work in Metro Manila. They were likely to get rejected during job applications because of their Muslim names. In relation to this, it was much harder for Muslim Filipinos to get police and NBI clearance, documents needed for job applications.

According to the 2005 Philippine Human Development Report, 33 percent to 39 percent of Filipinos were biased against Muslims. This is reflected in the hiring practices of Christian business owners: only four percent (4%) of Christian business owners would choose a Muslim male worker and seven percent (7%) would choose a Muslim female domestic helper.

Muslim Filipinos who decided to go into business and become traders found it difficult to deal with government agencies. They experienced difficulty in the release of their goods from the customs bureau. They also felt that the government did not treat them equally and fairly along with other business communities. They felt that the government did not give them support and other concessions and privileges that were extended to Chinese and foreign entrepreneurs in the form of less import taxes and financial assistance.

Muslim Filipino families who migrated to Metro Manila received no or poor social services, such as the inadequate health centers and the absence of day care centers for Muslim Filipino children. Muslim Filipinos have also been the targets of the police during operations against crimes like illegal drugs and terrorism. Muslim Filipinos have been victims of illegal arrests and searches, planted evidence, and extortion in exchange for freedom of those arrested but innocent Muslims.

In October 2002, there was a series of deadly bomb blasts, on a Manila bus and at three locations in Zamboanga City. The bombings were blamed on Islamic militants. A few months later, the police raided and illegally searched homes and a Madrasah boarding school in Muslim communities in Metro Manila.

In 2003, at the height of the police’s illegal arrests of suspected terrorists in Muslim communities in Metro Manila, Aisha’s husband Atty. Musa Malayang and a few friends founded the Muslims Legal Assistance Foundation (MLAF). Aisha became the secretary of the Foundation and was very involved in its activities.

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20 This data was based on the results of a focus group discussion with Muslim Filipinos living and working in Metro Manila. Noel Morada, “Metro Manila-Rizal Case Study,” A Background Paper submitted to the Human Development Network Foundation, Inc. for the Philippine Human Development Report, 2005.

Ownership of the divide

In 2009, Aisha conducted a research and documentary work on the plight of Muslim Filipino women in prisons. The research was made possible through a grant she received from the Asian Muslim Action Network – Asia Research Foundation (AMAN-ARF). She further studied this topic in her thesis for her masteral class in the University of the Philippines. These works further immersed her in the issue and moved her to launch projects that aimed to provide education and livelihood for Muslim women in prisons. She launched Project Mukhna wherein she provided prayer garbs to Muslim women in jails. During Ramadhan she also went to the Correctional Institute for Women, using her own money and sometimes getting donations from a few friends, and distributed food, toiletries and other goods to Muslim women inmates. However, Aisha felt that such little efforts were not enough. She needed to do more for the women whose stories greatly touched her heart (see Box No. 1).

Box No. 1 – The Case of “Hannah”

At age 8, Hannah labored in her aunt’s farm in Mindanao until she stowed away to Manila at age 17. She got married to a pedicab driver, begot two sons, and worked as laundrywoman.

In an illegal raid conducted by the police in their community, Hannah was arrested (with no warrant of arrest) and detained at PNP headquarters. There were fabricated evidence against her, and trumped up charges of violating RA 9165 (Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002). While on trial and detained at Manila City Jail, Hannah got infected with tuberculosis. She lost her two sons (one got sick, the other one fell from a fence and died on the spot), and lost her husband in a hit-and-run.

Hannah was later sentenced to jail and committed to Correctional Institute for Women. Her sickness worsened (tuberculosis with complications) and she died on the fourth day of Ramadhan. Nine days after her burial, the Supreme Court acquitted Hannah.

Co-ownership of the Divide

In summer of 2011, a close friend and known peace and civil society advocate Yasmin Busran-Lao encouraged her to apply for the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP) of the Asian Institute of Management’s TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership. During this time, she was a volunteer at the Muslim Legal Assistance Foundation, Inc. (MLAF), acting as Secretary to the Secretary-General. She applied for the program since she felt the program could help her in her advocacy:

“Dahil feeling ko nag-iisa lang ako sa gusto kong mangyari. I had no funding, kailangan ko pa mag-ipon para may maitulong sa iba. I was alone in my advocacy.” (I felt I was alone in what I wanted to achieve. I had no funding. I needed to save first before I could extend help to those in need. I was alone in my advocacy.)

A few months after joining MBLP in September 2011, Aisha resigned from her work as Incorporator-Auditor of Balik-Islam National Consultative Assembly (BINCA). She resigned due to
differences with the president who had a different view on how to provide assistance to Muslim women. Her resignation was a tragic experience for Aisha at first. She was disheartened for a while since she felt she lost an organization on which to anchor her project ideas – “Who will be my core group members? Who will be my guiding coalition?”

Later on, Aisha viewed the event as a pre-cursor for her establishment of an all-women organization devoted to helping Muslim Filipino women. She founded the Muslim Sisters Bridging Society (MSBS). Aisha explained the advantage of having an all-women group,

“Mahirap makasama ang mga lalaki, iba kasi ang interpretasyon nila of what Islam is, and on what Muslim women should be doing.” (It is difficult to be in the same organization with men who have a different interpretation of what Islam is, and on what Muslim women should be doing.)

In April 2012, MSBS was registered at Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and Aisha’s friends formally joined her in her advocacy as incorporators. These friends were former colleagues in the universities where Aisha used to teach, some were also Balik-Islam. They were all volunteers, receiving neither salary nor honoraria for the work that they do in the organization whose aim was women empowerment, giving financial independence, capacitating women through education and livelihood activities. In July 2012, Aisha submitted a project proposal to the Philippine-Australia Community Assistance Program (PACAP). This project intended to address the needs of 121 Muslim women inmates at the Correctional Institute for Women in Mandaluyong City. The project also aimed to provide psychosocial interventions, livelihood opportunities and legal assistance to the women inmates. It aimed to help Muslim women inmates regain self-respect and self-worth through psychosocial intervention and livelihood training. The project also intended to set up personal and community emergency savings fund, and provide legal assistance on case audits towards the possible commutation of sentences or release because of good conduct or for humanitarian reasons. Aisha explained the rationale for all these interventions:

“There is a need for a livelihood component so the inmates could earn some money. Right now, they can’t even afford to buy their own food or sanitary napkin. The Correctional allots a budget of only 50 pesos per prisoner per day – 47 pesos for meals and three pesos for medical. Just imagine what kind of meals they eat. If meat is served, the Muslim women have no choice but to eat rice with salt. Toiletries are also not being provided; they have no shampoo, no toothpaste, and no

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22 From MSBS Project Proposal to PACAP, 2011.
Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao
Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

napkin. Prisoners are only given one-fourth of a detergent bar soap every week, which the women use for washing their clothes and for bathing.

There is also a need for psychosocial interventions. Wala ng dumadalaw sa mga inmates, parang kinalimutan na sila. Iyong iba pinili na huwag na lang ipaalam sa mga kamag-anak sa Mindanao na nakakulong sila. Ikaw ba naman ang hindi na dalawin, may epekto na yan sa pag-isip mo. They have no social or financial support. May mga namamatay na iba na walang kamag-anak. May ibang inmates na namatay na kami ang nag-asikaso ng pagpapalibing. (Some inmates get no visits from their families or relatives, it is as if they have already been forgotten. Others chose not to inform their relatives in Mindanao that they are in jail. For anyone who had no one to visit them, this would have an effect on their psychological and mental health. They have no social or financial support. Some inmates die with no one but us to take care of their burial.)

The paralegal services component is mostly for case audit of Muslim women in jail. We recommend some inmates for commutation of sentence, especially those who are already very old or have serious illnesses. There is no litigation involved. This intervention is needed kasi marginalized na nga sila sa labas, pagdating sa loob mas nagiging marginalized pa sila. (This intervention is needed because they’re already marginalized outside of prison. When they enter prison, they’re marginalized even more.)

Aside from assisting Muslim women in prison, Aisha also wanted to assist women in diaspora – Muslim women who migrated from Mindanao to Metro Manila in search of opportunities but were highly discriminated against and found it difficult to find jobs or start up a business. The project wanted to assist 30 Muslim women from depressed Muslim communities in North Caloocan City, and provide them with livelihood training and business development assistance. In all these work and advocacies, Aisha was aware of the core ingredients for her desired success.

“Commitment is very important – passion [for] and familiarity [with] the issue and what you want to achieve. Network and connections are also important – institutional tie-ups can make or break what you intend to happen since you will always work with other people.”

Going into the MBLP, Aisha was already aware of her personal and leadership strengths, as well as her weaknesses. Thus, she knew what she already wanted from the program:

“I am very committed and I give everything in anything I do... (but) one needs to be with others to accomplish anything. No man is an island. In this society, no one is alone.... I am hoping to build a strong network of stakeholders through this fellowship... Definitely, I need to reach out more to people in government.”
Co-creation

Getting other people to be involved in her advocacy was not an easy task for Aisha, who started her advocacy work on her own. However, the sessions from the Bridging Leadership Program wherein she learned the concepts of ownership, co-ownership and co-creation, helped her become stronger and more confident in sharing her vision with others and in leading collaborative action.

“When I started, I told the story of Muslim women in jail and in depressed communities to my friends. The sharing led to planning, and everybody volunteered. They felt the same for the Muslim women. I asked them to visit the jail, they were exposed, and then they wanted to give something of themselves. They started to volunteer. We were all volunteers. Before the PACAP funding came in, all of our funds came from our own pockets. We shared office space in my husband’s law office.”

When she started sharing the stories of Muslim women in jail, other organizations also started giving support. When she was looking for a training center, she chanced upon the Caloocan City Manpower Training Center and was able to talk to the officer-in-charge (OIC), who saw that what MSBS was doing was in line with the mandate of their office. Instead of asking for a fee of 250 pesos per participant for the livelihood training, the OIC just asked Aisha to shoulder the trainer’s transportation expenses going to and from the training center.

The involvement of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Region IV-A was also not expected. The government agency was helping MSBS develop a business cooperative for the Muslim women in Caloocan City. The captain of the barangay (village) from which the Muslim women beneficiaries of MSBS resided also extended assistance. The captain agreed to issue certificates of residency and barangay clearances for Muslim women. These were documents needed for job applications.

Others also declared their intention to help. The founder of Asian American Initiative, who was also involved in Aisha’s relief giving operation after the Ondoy typhoon, promised to help look for funding for the MSBS’s other projects. Another sister (a balik-Islam working abroad) donated a seven-cubic foot freezer for a MSBS meat-processing project before returning to Dubai for work. Other Balik-Islam sisters also began donating money or volunteering for MSBS’s various activities. Gestures like these were very much appreciated by Aisha. It made her feel that she was not alone anymore in her advocacy.

Challenges

The initial activities of MSBS were gaining positive results, more particularly in getting other people and organizations involved in projects that assist Muslim women. But Aisha was aware that
it was still a long way towards changing the mindset of people not only towards Muslims, but also towards people in jail.

One challenge that Aisha was encountering was the huge income share that the Correction Institute was imposing on the MSBS’s livelihood project. The Institute was already getting 10 percent as ‘input tax’ for all raw materials that entered the jail. Thus, for every 100 pesos worth of materials that any organization brings in, the institute gets ten pesos. When Aisha related to a jail officer her intention to put up a livelihood program for the Muslim women inmates, the officer wanted 40 percent of their gross income (so called institutional share). Aisha was shocked and was even upset when the officer told her why they have to get institutional share from the livelihood project’s income.

“Sabi sa akin noong isang officer sa Correctional, ‘Kasi itong mga inmates nagiging materialistic na kaya kailangan namin gawin ito. Kaya nga sila nakulong dahil sa pera, hindi ba?’ May ganoong mentalidad, may ganoong frame of mind. Eh ang mga inmates ni pambili ng napkin, wala sila! Nakakagalit!”

(One officer told me this, ‘Our inmates are now becoming materialistic that is why we have to do this. They are in jail because of money, right?’ There is this kind of mentality, a frame of mind among them. The inmates don’t even have money to buy sanitary napkins! It’s infuriating!)

Aisha was allowing herself to be upset for a while. She could not fathom how and why others viewed the inmates this way. But she was aware that being mad wouldn’t solve her problem. She needed to think of ways to convince the officer to at least waive the 40 percent institutional share they were asking.

For the longer term, she needed to find a way to convince officers and wardens at Bureau of Corrections to be on her side because they were very critical in the achievement of MSBS’s goals and targets. Aisha also needed to establish good relationships with non-Muslim staff and employees so that they would not feel threatened that MSBS was implementing a project for Muslim women. Aisha was aware that these people could dictate what should happen, which may cause the project not to unfold the way it was envisioned to.

**MSBS Project Framework (submitted to PACAP)**

**Vision**
Empowered Muslim women in diaspora, both inside and outside the jail, imbued with self-respect and dignity, economic independence, and fully cognizant of their rights as women.

**Mission**
We commit to enable the Muslim Women in diaspora by providing psychosocial services, livelihood assistance towards community business development and legal assistance with human rights education.

**Project Components, Activities, Desired Outputs, Timeframes**

<table>
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<th>Components</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Psychosocial Interventions</td>
<td>Personality pre and post-testing</td>
<td>Baseline personality data</td>
<td>Month 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healing sessions</td>
<td>Feeling of being at peace with self, God and others</td>
<td>Months 1-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminar on Values, Roles and responsibilities of Muslim Women</td>
<td>Increased awareness of basic rights, roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Months 2-4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership Training and Team Building</td>
<td>Capacity to take on leadership roles and group unity</td>
<td>Months 1-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Legal Assistance</td>
<td>Acquisition of prison records</td>
<td>Recommendation for parole and probation/</td>
<td>Month 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual case audit</td>
<td>Commutation of sentence and release from prison custody</td>
<td>Months 2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation and recommendation for parole and probation, commutation of sentence, release due to old age, sickness and being of minor age</td>
<td></td>
<td>Months 4-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Livelihood Intervention</td>
<td>Baseline, midway and exit SES Survey</td>
<td>Progress monitoring</td>
<td>Months 1-3, 7-8, &amp; 10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
<td>Seminar on Islamically-sound livelihood and business conduct</td>
<td>Basic business orientation and halal economic practice</td>
<td>Month 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
<td>Training on food handling and packaging</td>
<td>Acquired basic skills on food business</td>
<td>Month 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
<td>Purchase and delivery of materials and equipment for the “One Tribe One Product”</td>
<td>Products akin to each tribe produced and introduced in the market</td>
<td>Month 4 thru end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
<td>“Bead-ahan sa Looban”</td>
<td>Materials for the <em>obayas</em> beads/appliqué design ready for production</td>
<td>Month 5 thru end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mechanics for Funding and contribution scheme established, fund holder</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao

Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of beads and decorative application</td>
<td></td>
<td>identified</td>
<td>Months 4 to 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings for setting up of Personal Savings Fund and Muslim Community</td>
<td></td>
<td>Acquired basic and advanced skills <em>abaya</em> fashion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Savings Fund</td>
<td></td>
<td>Canvassed current market prices of equipments and materials, procured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut and sew training for women in communities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipments and ingredients procured, production commences</td>
<td>Months 3 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garment production and on site-canvas and purchase of sewing machines and</td>
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<td>Marketing &amp; production strategies and outlets/ partnership set up</td>
<td>Months 2 to 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garment materials</td>
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<td>Marketing partners and outlets established</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed food project: Purchase of equipments and ingredients for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Months 4 thru end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meetings to discuss production and marketing plans</td>
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Co-Creating Peace in Conflict-Affected Areas in Muslim Mindanao
Stories of Mindanao Bridging Leaders

Muslim Women Community Peace-Builders in Conflict-Affected Areas of BASULTA
by Amor Lynn Macalalad and Miren Sanchez

“If you speak of resources, there are many...in terms of resources for peace. We just don’t know where most of them are being placed...it is not enough that we rely on the local leaders...or blame national government...everyone’s participation is needed (to have sustainable peace in Mindanao)...”

-- Sitti Djalia Hataman
Founding Chair, Pinay Kilos

Introduction

Born on November 26, 1976, Sitti Djalia Hataman came from a family of leaders. Exposed to the demands of her father, Ibno Hajar Dalinding Turabin’s role as an organizer at an early age, she accompanied him in his meetings during the time of Martial Law. As her father is a staunch advocate of the late President Ninoy Aquino, Djalia witnessed him expose himself to the danger of being associated with the Aquinos. But he remained committed to his advocacy and this taught her to be the same, remaining steadfast and strong in her values. “Panindigan mo kung ano tingin mo ang tama (Stand up for what you believe is right).”

Growing up in Basilan, Djalia lived in a suffering society, hindered from development because of the existence of clan wars or rido brought about by ill political motives. Her stories of distress in her homeland are vivid and painful, talking about family members killing each other because of political positions and of a never-ending cycle of greed and the fight for honor. She believes that Mindanao is already bountiful of resources, receiving plenty of aid and help from International Agencies and that the misallocation of resources can be attributed to a divide in politics. Carrying her husband’s (a political leader) name also proved to be another challenge. As a Hataman, people see her family as influential and because of this doubt her intentions when it comes to projects and programs.

Unfazed, she remains rooted in the land where she was brought up, claiming personal ownership over the suffering that haunts the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi (BASULTA) to this very day. With this, she aimed to extend this ownership beyond her sphere of personal influence and be part of a greater movement towards peace in Mindanao. Through her involvements, she hopes to influence the policies of local leaders to address the needs of their communities rather than simply focus on their political interests.
At the core of her calling is raising the value of Muslim women in society. She credits her affiliation with women’s group LIKHAAN for providing her with the necessary information on women’s issues. From documentation that she gathered on maternity issues from maternal deaths to barriers to access to safe motherhood, Djalia found herself wanting to respond to these glaring realities. For her, it is clear that to address these issues, the role of Muslim women is imperative and crucial.

As the Founding Chair of Pinay Kilos! (PinK!), a Zamboanga City-based organization devoted to empowering women in BASULTA provinces, Djalia acted as the medium in which reform may take place. Even before becoming a Bridging Leader, she already took on the role of one, providing opportunities where people may come together and help those who needed them. To concretize a dream of constructing a women’s library in the PinK! office, the group, through Djalia’s leadership, organized a Celebrity Auction in 2008 in Zamboanga City, inviting friends and members of her network to participate. In the end, the group successfully raised enough funds for the library, through donations from different people and celebrities like the late actor, Dolphy.

At the core of Djalia’s leadership is her Islam faith. While participating in a South East Asian Short Cause in Islam, Gender, Sexuality and Reproductive Rights, it hit her that her vocation as an advocate of women and women’s rights is consistent with the teachings of Islam. She went home that day more confident in pursuing her advocacy. This is the turning point, the alignment of her work and her faith that made her more committed and relentless in her quest for reform.

**Pursuing Her Purpose With Others**

Through her selection in the Cohort 1 of the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program (MBLP), Djalia’s change project, *Institutionalized Development Program for Muslim Women Community Peace-builders*, was born. Consequently, PAYAPA or Pinay Kilos Young Cadres for Peace was organized under this project, providing a platform for Muslim women-peace builders to have a stake at promoting peace at the local level, championing their gender and campaigning peace in the process.

The target beneficiaries of the change project are communities that are victim to armed conflict. More often than not, it is women and children that are most affected by violence in the area.

The project also seeks to change the discrimination and biases against women. Here, women are taught to be leaders, to be key players in bridging peace and change agents in the community. These cadres have conducted community consultations in their respective areas, gathering relevant data on community issues, concerns and problems. This resulted to the
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drafting of the community peace agenda, identifying the level of capacity and available resources present in the communities. In their journey, she hopes to collect the success stories of these Young Cadres for Peace, to show that collaboration and partnership can exist within tribes in order to advance the quest for peace.

The goals of the project are consistent with the objectives of the Mindanao 20/20, 8 Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and Human Development Indices (HDIs). Through community activities like consultations and meetings, dynamics and relationships within the community are improving, increasing the communities awareness and accountability for peace issues in their areas. Other activities on the ground help the community, especially women and children, be more prepared when conflicts arise. The Young Peace Cadres have established themselves to be exemplars of peace within the community, ready to listen, respond and help.

PAYAPA cadres underwent similar workshops that Djalia underwent under the MBLP. The PAYAPA workshops were designed after the MBLP with emphasis on social awareness issues, personal mastery and multi-stakeholder engagement.

**Cadre 1: Dayang Dayang Wilhelmina**
- Datu Kalbi of Jolo, Sulu
- 23 years old
- Area of Interest: Tausog culture and tradition

**Cadre 2: Mary Jane Ladjahassan**
- Jolo, Sulu
- 34 years old
- GK Community Organizer
- Area of Interest: Public Information/Education towards Social Transformation

**Cadre 3: Rhainiza Yasin**
- Lantawan, Basilan
- 25 years old
- RN Heals
- Area of Interest: Reproductive Health

**Cadre 4: Sara Jane Ladjagais**
- Isabela, Basilan
- 34 years old
- College Instructor, Basilan State College
- Area of Interest: Role of Bangsamoro Women in Peacebuilding
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Cadre 5: Hadija Hassan
- Guinanta, Al Barka
- 37 years old
- Madrasah teacher
- Area of Interest: Displacement and Human Rights

Cadre 6: Kinlene Sabaani
- Bongao, Tawi Tawi
- 33 years old
- Community Coordinator
- Area of Interest: Illegal Drugs

Cadre 7: Anhar Sirajan
- Bongao, Tawi Tawi
- 27 years old
- Volunteer Teacher
- Area of Interest: Poverty
While Djalia sees this as an opportunity for young peace cadres, she also says that she sees this Fellowship “as an opportunity for growth.”

With an empty cup and an open mind, she embarked on the Fellowship program. The First Workshop made her more aware of her imperfections and limitations as an individual, Djalia sought to transcend this by involving crucial stakeholders in her advocacy. Though she has established herself as a leader, she finds that she is still apprehensive to ask for help and go out of her comfort zone. It is this fear of being rejected or making her groups feel used that hinders her to ask for their help. Her participation in the Fellowship caused her to evaluate her networks through the Stakeholders Analysis tool and realize the value of impact they can make if they take part in her mission. It became clearer where different networks and affiliations can be most effective through matching, categorizing and mapping.

Djalia formed her guiding coalition that helped her implement PAYAPA: Jasmin Teodoro of Pinay Kilos, Dir. Fatmawati Salapuddi of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), Mr. John Magno of the Western Mindanao State University (WMSU) and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Amihilda Sangcopan, Noriam Ladjagais of NISA UL HÀQQ- Basilan and Fatima Allian of TARBI LANG in Tawi-Tawi. After being convinced of the vision for the project, and after providing their inputs, the coalition met monthly to discuss updates, issues and concerns and plans for the change project that now became an initiative across the multi-sectoral group. They also prepared proposals for consultation activities and identified help needed during the conduct of field activities as well as interventions on how to respond to the needs as a result of the community consultation.

Along with her core group, composed of Ms. Jasmin Teodoro of Pinay Kilos, Dir. Fatmawati Salapuddin of NCMF and Mr. Robert Aseña also of Pinay Kilos who served as her personal compass and trust circle, the vision of having peace in the community through women-led initiatives was reinforced in the coalition. “Shared vision is something which… upon conceptualization, involves everyone already.”

The coalition’s efforts are focused on developing the Young Peace Cadres to become Peace- Builders that involve the community in crafting the peace agenda through consultations. The Young Cadres showed aggressiveness, dedication and commitment in gathering information from the community which became a strong basis in identifying major interventions and also became a catalyst by which the community became aware of their own situation.
For Djalia, achieving all these is the result of collaboration within her change project. Thus, she continues to be consultative and participative through her approaches in project management and stakeholder engagement.

Together with her Guiding Coalition and Core Group, their shared vision of peace in the community through women-led initiatives resulted in a sharing of efforts and resources, enhancing the strong partnership and coordination among the members in the process. In the beginning, she identified that there is a need to tap different women’s groups, local leaders and other partners who can help provide for the capacity-building and development of the Young Peace Cadres. During the course of the Fellowship, she has tapped, other Bridging Leader Fellows such as Mayor Jasper Que of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi and Col. Bim Quemado, her co-fellows under the program as well Sec. Nassreena Baddiri of the second cohort of the MBLP, to share their experiences on the development issues and problems in implementing projects related to peace and development.

The Challenge to Continue

The momentum has been set for PAYAPA, it is now up to the guiding coalition to ensure that the gains achieved through PAYAPA last and that the consultative process continues. A third-party evaluation of the project reported that the “Young Peace Cadres are becoming effective agents of Peace and Development since they have practically gotten the support and cooperation of the community leaders and members during their consultation activities” 23 The project’s smooth trajectory can be readily replicated through intensified efforts and the development of more Young Peace Cadres.

On being a Bridging Leader: A Reflection

Being a BL Fellow also means continuous learning and reflection about one’s self and the community. The MBLP Workshops may not have provided all the answers to pressing questions of the fellows, but it did provide tools that helped Djalia be led to answers and solutions. Djalia learned that true consultation does not dictate a response.

Also, in the Fellowship, Djalia’s skills and capacity as a leader were examined and, with her openness, she continues to listen and share. Djalia, herself an agent of peace in her community,

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gained a deeper understanding and strengthened her commitment to her mission and her project during the course of the Fellowship. She concludes that given the situation in her homeland, attainment of peace starts with a personal ownership of the problem. And with this stems the desire to be part of the solution, the desire to be proactive instead of negative. This personal choice overflows and affects the community, giving peace a viable chance to flourish.

Djalia also credits the Fellowship for allowing her to be open to other perspectives and opinions especially to that of cultures different from her own. For example, she understands that the way she views political power is not the same as how another sees it. With this, she is able to respect another’s point-of-view providing a safe place where dialogue can ensue.

In spite of all these challenges, she continues to see herself as a Bridging Leader, not just providing opportunities for those with the capacity to help and those in need, but also as someone who can remind her communities of their shared vision, a compass-of-sorts. “Compass ka na rin (You also become a compass). Not just responding but now providing them a vision of where they want to go. I realized that if you are recognized as a leader, ‘yung simpleng statement mo can make or break what they are doing (a simple statement can make or break what they are doing).”