



Higit Pa

Reaching Beyond What We Aimed For

As CODE-NGO marks its 25th year this 2016, it hopes to share the stories of its member organizations, leaders and community partners and their contributions to the growth of social development in the Philippines.

Writers:

Roderick Lirios (13 CSO leader profiles, Chapters 5, 8 and 11)

Sixto Donato C. Macasaet (Chapters 1 and 2)

Tina Arceo-Dumlao and Writers of Solidaridad Para sa Makabuluhang Balita, Inc. (SMBi) (Foreword and 8 case studies)

Rachel C. Barawid (Chapter 12 case study)

Editors:

Roderick B. Lirios

Celia Fatima E. de Jesus

Sixto Donato C. Macasaet

Roselle S. Rasay

Tina Arceo-Dumlao

Layout:

Kathleen C. Palasi

Additional Photography:

Kathleen C. Palasi

Roderick B. Lirios

HIGIT PA– Reaching Beyond What We Aimed For

Copyright ©2016

Rights Reserved

The **Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO)** encourages the use, translation, adaptation and copying of this material for non-commercial use, with appropriate credit given to CODE-NGO.

Printed in Manila, Philippines

First Printing, 2016

ISBN 978-971-95854-5-9

Published by:

Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO)

4F Llanar Building, 77 Xavierville Avenue corner B. Gonzales Street

Loyola Heights, 1108 Quezon City, Philippines

Tels. (+632)9202595, 4356616, 4331776

Fax (+632)9202595 loc 101

Email: caucus@code-ngo.org

Website: www.code-ngo.org

Higit Pa:

Reaching Beyond What We Aimed For

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement **06**

Foreword **07**

Section 1: Pagsisimula: Building one block at a time **09**

01 CSOs in the Philippines: The REAL Deal **10**

02 CODE-NGO: Twenty-five years young **15**

03 Association of Foundations (AF): **31**

Building Foundations, Building a Better Future

PROFILE 01: **Marissa Camacho** **35**

Former President, Association of Foundations

Section 2: Pagtugon: Real needs, real solutions **39**

04 CBD/CDLI: Responding to basic needs: **40**

The water project of Gñaran

PROFILE 02 **Salve Hermina**, President, Matanglawin **44**

Fisherfolks Association

05 EVNET: The Power to be One **53**

PROFILE 03: **Melbourga 'Meling' Corregidor**, Board Member, **57**

Eastern Visayas Network of NGOs and POs

06 MINCODE /PAKISAMA-Mindanao: People empowerment and **60**

bottom-up bugeting

PROFILE 04: **Andrea Maria Patricia 'Pat' Sarenas** **64**

Chairperson, Mindanao Coalition of Development NGO Networks

07 NATCCO: E-Banking: Bringing relevant banking services to **69**

where it's needed most

PROFILE 05: **Ka Hermie Hernandez** **73**

Pioneer, San Dionisio Credit Cooperative

Section 3: Pakikipagtulungan: Working with local government **80**

- 08 CENVISNET: A Growing Instrument of Change** **81**
PROFILE 06: Anthony '**Anton**' **Dignadice** **85**
Chairperson, Central Visayas Network of NGOs
- 09 CORDNET/Local Planning and Budgeting as a Poverty Reduction Tool** **89**
PROFILE 07: Marietta '**Mayet**' **Paragas** **93**
Former President, Cordillera Network of Development NGOs and POs
- 10 PHILDHARRA: The National Performance Monitoring System** **97**
PROFILE 08: **Alma de la Paz** **100**
National Chairperson, Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas

Section 4: Pagpapahalaga: Advocating human dignity **105**

- 11 WEVNET/ICODE: Renewable energy for** **106**
underserved communities
PROFILE 09: Emmanuel '**Boyet**' **Areño** **112**
Executive Director, Iloilo Caucus of Development Non-Government Organizations, Inc.
- 12 NCSD/Child Hope Asia Philippines: Caring for our nation's future** **116**
PROFILE 10: **Teresita 'Tessie' Silva**, Founder, Childhope Asia Philippines **121**
- 13 PHILSSA: Project UPSURGE:** **126**
Fighting for the urban poor settlements
PROFILE 11 **Ka Jose Morales** **131**
Convenor, Aksyon sa Kahandaan sa Kalamidad at Klima
PROFILE 12 **Anna Marie 'Jing' Karaos** **139**
Board Member, Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies
- 14 PBSP: Because we are all Filipinos** **144**
PROFILE 13: **Maria Aurora 'Rory' Francisco-Tolentino** **148**
Former Executive Director, Philippine Business for Social Progress and former Board Member, Association of Foundations
- 15 Epilogue: Paanong hihigitan pa?** **152**
Facing the challenges of the future

Acknowledgement

CODE-NGO thanks the various organizations and individuals who made the publication of this book possible. They number too many to be named here. However, we would like to express our gratitude particularly for the contributions and cooperation of the following:

The secretariats of the 12 member networks of CODE-NGO: the Association of Foundations (AF), Coalition for Bicol Development (CBD), Central Visayas Network of NGOs (CENVISNET), Cordillera Network of Development NGOs and POs (CORDNET), Eastern Visayas Network of NGOs and POs (EVNET), Mindanao Coalition of Development NGO Networks (MINCODE), National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO), National Council of Social Development Foundation of the Philippines (NCSD), Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in the Rural Areas (PHILDHRRRA), Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA) and Western Visayas Network of Social Development NGOs (WEVNET), for identifying and coordinating with the interviewees to complete the case studies of organizations and profiles of civil society organization (CSO) leaders they featured, and for reviewing and providing suggestions on the drafts.

The CSO leaders who gladly shared their inspiring stories of living a life of service to others: Boyet Areño, Marissa Camacho, Meling Corregidor, Alma de la Paz, Anton Dignadice, Salve Hermina, Hermie Hernandez, Jing Karaos, Jose Morales, Mayette Paragas, Patricia Sarenas, Tessie Silva and Rory Tolentino. Their tales of commitment, competence and courage are much needed by all of us, especially during the dark and desperate times that we encounter in our journey as a community of development CSOs and as a nation. The organizations who selflessly and willfully imparted their good practices in development work: AF, Caritas Diocese of Libmanan (CBD), CENVISNET, CORDNET, EVNET, Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka - Mindanao (MINCODE), NATCCO, Open Heart Foundation Worldwide (NCSD), PBSP, PHILDHRRRA, PHILSSA and WEVNET.

Roderick B. Lirios, who wrote most of the chapters, particularly all the profiles of the 13 CSO leaders and three (3) case studies. Sixto Donato C. Macasaet, for writing Chapters 1 and 2. Tina Arceo-Dumlao and writers of SMBI (Solidaridad Para sa Makabuluhang Balita, Inc.), for drafting eight (8) case studies of this book, and Rachel C. Barawid for writing PBSP's case study.

Roderick B. Lirios, Sixto Donato C. Macasaet, Roselle S. Rasay, Celia Fatima E. de Jesus and Tina-Arceo Dumlao, for editing the articles.

Kathleen C. Palasi and Roderick B. Lirios, for taking additional photos to complement the stories.

Kathleen C. Palasi, for doing the layout of the book.

Dimple Labios-Demata, for providing administrative support to the project.

The Peace and Equity Foundation (PEF) for supporting the data gathering and other works for the preparation of this book.

Foundation for Sustainable Societies, Inc. (FSSI), NATCCO, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Jollibee Group Foundation for supporting the printing of the book.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of you.

Foreword

A Salute to Committed Citizens **Changing the World**

Renowned American anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

The growing legacy of CODE-NGO through the years is how its members and programs have strived to cultivate these “game-changers,” these dedicated members of communities and organizations taking on varying social issues through innovation, information, and participation.

CODE-NGO, as an apex group of 12 networks of civil society organizations (CSOs), seeks to develop the capacities and skills of its members, as well as their partner communities to alleviate poverty and realize social transformation from the national level down to each individual citizen. CODE-NGO’s efforts have not gone unrecognized, nor uncriticized, as it explored new development strategies and methods, all within the bounds of democracy and social justice.

Inasmuch as the story of CODE-NGO is tightly woven with the struggles and successes of its member organizations, CODE-NGO offers this compendium of stories of perseverance, resilience, and, ultimately, triumph of individuals and organizations in the network, all committed to build better communities and futures in the Philippines.

Through the Cordillera Network of Development NGOs and POs’ (CORDNET) Localized Anti-Poverty Project, development plans focused on human and social improvement and it paved the way to the growth of social enterprises.

Seventeen (17) years after the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) launched the Mindanao Peace and Development Program (MPDP) in 1999, it has already been able to yield positive results in the areas of intervention for both education and health.

The Coalition for Bicol Development (CBD) not only improved their health services delivery but also installed a community-based potable water system in the fishing village of Barangay Gñaran, San Fernando, Camarines Sur.

Meanwhile, the National Council of Social Development Foundation of the Philippines (NCSD) chronicles dealing with child abuse prevention by establishing an intervention network and using the pillars of the justice system as its core mechanism.

Setting up an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) in far-flung areas, such as Barbaza, Antique is the innovation introduced by the members of the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO). With their ATM locations, the Barbaza Multi-purpose Cooperative delivers fiscal services to the town and its neighbors, whose clients comprise of farmers, beneficiaries of the government’s Conditional Cash Transfer Program, pensioners, and local citizens.

CODE-NGO members are particularly competent in strengthening community participation in local governance and demanding transparency and accountability from local to national governments.

Through its Citizens Right to Information tool, the Western Visayas Network of Social Development NGOs (WEVNET) enabled the citizens of Canabajan, Calinog in Iloilo to raise their issues with their local government officials over the implementation of projects and the use of the local budget. Now, residents in island

communities have been empowered to take into their own hands the issue of light and electricity as they use solar power to light their nights.

The Mindanao Caucus of Development NGO Networks (MINCODE) carried out the Bottom-Up-Budgeting and Local Anti-Poverty Plan (BUB-LAPP) with the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA) - Mindanao in Davao Oriental. PAKISAMA-Mindanao made sure that the workshops included marginalized sectors from farmers groups, women, the Moro community, and local government officials for a collective budgeting process and identification of community projects for poverty reduction.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration was forged by the Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA) to conduct Project UPSURGE (Urban Partnership for Sustainable Upliftment Renewal, Governance and Empowerment) to upgrade physical conditions and services in urban poor communities across eight cities nationwide.

The Eastern Visayas Network of NGOs and POs (EVNET), post-Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) in 2013, has become more vigilant in preparing their members and partner communities for disasters. The Central Visayas Network of NGOs (CENVISNET), on the other hand, cited its 10-year journey as a regional network – how it evolved to work for good governance and sustainable development. The network also emphasizes constructive engagement with the government as their core strategy for change and development.

Internal transparency, accountability, and sustainability of its network members are equally important concerns along with social transformation. This is highlighted with the Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA) as it maintains a strong and responsible network and devising a National Performance Monitoring System (NPMS) to measure each member organization's growth and participation especially in agrarian reform and rural development.

Lastly, the Association of Foundations recounts its challenges in sustaining the network's enthusiasm and finances. Reorganization and building an endowment fund from key member contributions helped ensure AF's operations and pursue its mission of assisting smaller foundations with their poverty reduction projects.

Apart from the institutional journeys of the CODE-NGO's member networks, this book also tells of 13 inspiring stories of the individuals behind these organizations. One can glean from the book that what makes up the CODE-NGO network are leaders from all walks of life who have a common drive to empower and amplify the voice of the disadvantaged and unite the strength of many to create a dent in reducing poverty in the country. This publication is thus a salute to individuals and organizations who are contributors, and not mere observers, in achieving broad-based democracy, social justice and genuine development amidst the huge challenges of our times.

As CODE-NGO marks 25 years of committed service, it looks back at the significant involvements of its member-organizations in local and national development. More than a look back at the past, however, this collection is a promise that CODE-NGO's dedication to development will not falter. As such, CODE-NGO looks forward to devising more effective and innovative solutions to pressing local and national concerns, together with its member organizations and partners.

“Higit Pa: Reaching Beyond What We Aimed For” tells of the stimulating synergy created by individuals and organizations that come together in solidarity, achieving more than what they originally set out to do. Indeed, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

May this book be an invitation to all citizens who yearn for the realization of all human rights for all Filipinos to join CODE-NGO's efforts for inclusive and holistic development.

Section 01



Pagsisimula: Building one block at a time

Helping people should come naturally but it doesn't always work that way. A good heart and a good intention are but starting points in the journey of helping one's fellow human being. Skills must be possessed and resources tapped to maximize any possibility of helping another person. Things get even more complicated when significant needs are to be addressed and an organization is necessary to get things done. Government must also be engaged at times and this is often not something that comes naturally.

This is the challenge faced by the civil society organization (CSO). Wanting to help is one thing but actually being able to do it is another one altogether. Even if things get started, there is always the next question: How do you keep doing the good thing? Sustainability is your next big question.

These concerns and questions need to be addressed if an effort, an endeavor is not to be a one-shot deal. A project or an organization's longevity is the true measure of success and CODE-NGO has been at it for years now and so with its member networks, including the Association of Foundations (AF). What keeps them going and what allows them to last this long? More importantly, what powers their hearts to keep on going? This is what these stories are about.

CSOs in the Philippines

The Real Deal

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Philippines have consistently been in the forefront of pivotal events in the country. From major government policies to landmark Supreme Court decisions to the ouster of Presidents, CSOs have been catalysts and primary movers.

The term “civil society organizations” is relatively new in the Philippines and the international arena, and refers to organizations that are non-government and non-profit. It therefore embraces a variety of organizations including neighborhood sports clubs, alumni associations, faith-based organizations, labor unions, and farmers’ associations, among many other groups.

Before the term came into use, “non-government organizations” or “NGOs” was preferred to refer to the same groups. However, “NGO” has since become identified with a particular type of CSO, referred to in this chapter as the “development NGO”.

This book focuses on CSOs engaged in social development work. In this field, the CSOs of note are people’s organizations (POs), development NGOs and cooperatives.

Getting to know CSOs

POs are often organized based on sector, issue or geographical area and are formed by their members for their own benefit, although many also serve their sector or locality as a whole. Sector-based POs include organizations of farmers, fisherfolk, workers, urban poor, public transport drivers, indigenous peoples, women and youth. Some social development workers refer to POs as “community-based organizations” or CBOs, although this term would leave out sector-based and issue-based POs, as well as provincial, regional and national federations of CBOs, which would otherwise be subsumed under the fold of POs.

Development NGOs are intermediate organizations that often operate with full-time staff and provide services not to their members but to POs, communities or disadvantaged individuals.

A cooperative, on the other hand, is a government-registered group of persons who have banded together to achieve their social, economic, and cultural needs and aspirations and follow the internationally cooperative principles which are integrated in the Cooperative Code and other laws of the country. The various types of cooperatives in the Philippines include savings and credit, consumer, marketing, service, and multi-purpose cooperatives. Some countries do not consider cooperatives as non-profit. But Philippine law recognizes that cooperatives do not distribute profit and that they also serve the interests of poor and disadvantaged sectors, putting them squarely within the ambit of CSOs.

There are also CSO networks that may be organized according to sector (e.g., federations or alliances of organizations of workers, farmers or other sectors), geographical scope (municipal, provincial/city or regional), or issues and causes (environment, accountable governance, etc.).

How CSOs operate

Philippine CSOs undertake many types of projects and activities, and a particular CSO can have interventions in more than one sector at any given time. A study by the Association of Foundations and CODE-NGO in 2001 showed that 77 percent of development NGOs was involved in education, training or human resource development, while 56 percent were engaged in community development. Other major interventions of development NGOs were in the areas of sustainable development and environment, health/nutrition, enterprise and livelihood development, gender and development, social services, micro-finance, cooperative development and community organizing.

Philippine CSOs get funding from various sources, such as membership dues, grants or donations from foreign and corporate donors, subsidies, and income-generating activities.

It has also been noted that CSOs in the Philippines are more politically active than their counterparts in many other countries. For example, CSOs were key actors in the opposition to the Marcos regime which culminated in the 1986 People Power Revolution, and also in the 2000-01 impeachment case and uprising against former President Joseph Estrada.

How many CSOs are there

Relevant government agencies do not keep an official tally of CSOs. Indeed, many CSOs are not registered with the government. Thus, it is difficult to estimate how many CSOs are now operating in the country.

One study done in 2002 put the total number of CSOs at between 249,000 to 497,000, only 60 percent of which were registered with government. The number of CSOs registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as non-stock and non-profit corporations decreased significantly since 2002 due to efforts of the SEC to clean up its registry by cancelling the registration of organizations that had not submitted their annual reports for five or more years. The number started going up again beginning in 2008 and, by April 2011, reportedly reached 130,000.

The Assessment on the Enabling Environment for Civil Society Organizations in the Philippines (2016) indicated that "based on recent data available, there are at least 261,762 registered CSOs in the Philippines. Non-stock non-profit corporations form the bulk of CSOs with a total of 164,000, constituting 63% of all CSOs in the country. The labor unions and workers' associations total 58,019 entities (18,853 labor unions and 39,166 workers' associations), which constitute 22% of the total number of CSOs. Lastly, there are 24,652 cooperatives and 15,091 homeowners' associations, representing 9% and 6% of the total CSOs respectively."

CSOs have been serving the people as early as the Spanish colonial period. Back then, they took the form of parish-based schools, orphanages and hospitals. The Catholic Church also established *cofradías* (brotherhoods), which encouraged visiting the sick, and helping with town fiesta preparations.

Legal Mandate of CSOs

Under the American colonial government, the Philippine Corporation Code of 1906 recognized the right to create private non-profit organizations. The colonial government subsidized the operation of some of these CSOs. The American Red Cross, the Anti-Tuberculosis Society and other American CSOs set up branches in the country. The American Methodist and Protestant churches and the Church of England established schools and hospitals. Home-grown organizations, such as the *Asociacion de Damas de Filipinas* (Organization of Filipino Women) and the Catholic Women's Club also provided welfare services.

During the martial law period, from 1972 to the early 1980s, there was very little space for CSOs and almost no tolerance for advocacy organizations and POs and NGOs not linked to the government. As a result, many

leaders and members of such organizations went underground and joined the armed struggle of the Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army - National Democratic Front. Others sought shelter by affiliating with universities or religious and church-based institutions. Despite the repressive atmosphere, several development NGOs, POs and cooperative federations were formed during this time, especially starting in the late 1970s. Many of these CSOs contributed to the success of the People Power Revolution of 1986.

The favorable legal environment and the inflow of foreign development assistance during the presidency of Corazon Aquino (1986-1992) led to the mushrooming of CSOs.

There is no stronger support for the promotion of CSOs than the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which recognizes that people's participation and empowerment is crucial to nation-building, and acknowledges the important role of CSOs. Moreover, several laws passed between 1987 and 1992 favored the development of civil society, such as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, the Cooperative Code, the Local Government Code (LGC), the Urban Development and Housing Act, and the Women in Development and Nation Building Act. It is no wonder then that during this time, many government agencies opened NGO liaison offices, and NGOs were permitted to negotiate directly with bilateral funding institutions for financing.

However, along with legitimate CSOs, organizations of dubious integrity engaging in questionable practices were also born. In response, 10 of the largest NGO networks formed CODE-NGO in 1991 to promote a Code of Conduct and professionalism as well as to expand the reach and increase the effectiveness of CSOs.

CSOs as Watchdogs or Partners of Government

Since 1986, the government has maintained a degree of openness to civil society, but the "democratic space" for CSOs has expanded or constricted depending on various factors, including the inclinations of those in power (both elected and appointed leaders and bureaucrats), general political conditions, and the positioning of CSOs viz the incumbent political leaders.

The former President, Benigno S. Aquino, was elected in May 2010 with strong support from many CSOs and volunteer groups which supported the anti-corruption and anti-poverty focus of his campaign platform and were inspired by the legacy of his parents, Ninoy and Cory Aquino.

Since mid-2010, significant improvements have been seen in the openness of the government to civil society organizations - both as "watchdogs", monitoring government policies, programs and projects and as "support groups" helping to implement government projects and deliver public services. Many government agencies and local governments have become more transparent through programs such as the Full Disclosure Policy for local governments. More avenues for CSO participation in governance have also been opened through initiatives such as the Budget Partnerships and the Bottom-up Budgeting process initiated by the Department of Budget and Management together with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) and other agencies.

However, there have still been some rough spots in the relations between CSOs and government. Many organizations, for example, decry the lack of substantial people's participation in the preparation by the National Economic and Development Authority of the Philippine Development Plan for 2011-2016. Advocates of transparency and good governance have also been disappointed by the delayed inclusion of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill in the former administration's priority legislation and the lukewarm support given to it by many of Aquino's party mates in Congress, resulting in the failure of Congress to pass the FOI Bill.

At the local government level, the LGC mandate that at least one-fourth of the membership of Local Development Councils (LDCs) should be CSO representatives has not been followed. In cases where the required membership is observed, the LDCs themselves have not functioned effectively.

According to the 2014 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia, "As a result of the Priority Development Assistance Funds (PDAF) scandal where there were allegations in 2013 of legislators laundering \$230 million of their congressionally-granted PDAF through fake CSOs, the government adopted several measures in 2013 and 2014 to regulate government grants to and contracts with CSOs more closely, such as the requirement for additional accreditation by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to be eligible for government contracts or grants." This new requirement is however seen by many CSOs as too restrictive especially for the smaller CSOs outside of Metro Manila.

A challenging future ahead

Looking to the future, Philippine CSOs are expected to maintain their prominence as some of the most vibrant and advanced in the world, owing to the extensive networking within the sector and with other sectors, the experience and skills of many CSO leaders and staff, their dedication and creativity, and the flexibility of CSOs, which is rooted in part to the small size of and camaraderie within most CSOs.

CSOs have also proven themselves to be excellent alternative providers of services to the poor, particularly those underserved by government. They have demonstrated that they are flexible, adaptable, and capable of innovative approaches to development challenges. Further, CSOs have typically incurred lower costs than the government under less bureaucratic measures with regard to delivering basic services.

However, many CSOs, particularly development NGOs, are dependent on external funding. This is a significant constraint as external or donor funding for the country and particularly for CSOs has been declining since the 1990s. While it is true that most CSOs rely on volunteerism, the more stable and capable CSOs are those with paid full-time staff. Lack of funds has prevented many CSOs from keeping their staff, losing them to better paying and more stable institutions such as the government, the business sector, corporate foundations, international NGOs and donor agencies. At the same time, CSOs have not been able to attract as many of the young graduates and talented youth as it used to.

Addressing the problem of funding would require that CSOs develop more internal sources of funds but would also require the development of broad-based local philanthropy, especially for CSOs not linked to churches and schools, where most local philanthropy currently go.

Many CSOs also need to strengthen their internal governance. There have been reports of mismanagement of CSO funds. Improving the internal governance of CSOs would include, among others, having more involved and active Board of Trustees, developing broadly accepted good governance standards and promoting self- and peer-assessment along these standards.

Finally, with the openness of the former government to working with CSOs to promote transparent, participatory and accountable governance, it had been found that while there is a core of CSOs willing and capable to engage government, their numbers are limited and most CSOs need to build up their capacity in effectively demanding good governance.

These then are the major challenges that Philippine CSOs now face: developing more internal sources of funds and also broad-based local philanthropy, attracting and keeping more of the idealistic and capable youth into the sector, improving the internal governance and building the capacity of CSOs to engage with government for good governance, human rights, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Addressing these concerns would not only improve the stability of CSOs, but also ensure that they will continue to be a moving force in improving the people's lives and developing the nation.

Sources:

Abao, C.V. 2011. Mapping and Analyzing Civil Society Organizations. In L. Yu Jose, ed.. Civil Society Organizations in the Philippines, A Mapping and Strategic Assessment. Quezon City: Civil Society Resource Institute.

Asian Development Bank. 2007. Civil Society Brief: Philippines, Manila.

Carino, L.V. 2002, "Size and Contours of the Sector", in L.V. Carino, ed., *Between the State and the Market: The Non-profit Sector and Civil Society in the Philippines*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines.

CODE-NGO. 2009. Assessing the Philippine NGO Environment: Regulation, Risks and Renewal - Highlights of the Philippine Non-Profit Organization Sector Report. Quezon City.

CODE-NGO. 2011. Civil Society Index: A Philippine Assessment Report. Quezon City: CODE-NGO, Civicus, UNDP and Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines.

CODE-NGO and Alternative Law Groups. Assessment of the Enabling Environment for Civil Society Organizations in the Philippines. Civicus, ICNL, World Movement for Democracy, and Article 21. June 2016.

Cooperative Development Authority. Statistic 2011.

Lim, P.O. 2011, "Civil Society in the Philippines", in T. Chong, and S. Elies, *An ASEAN Community for All: Exploring the Scope for Civil Society Engagement*. Singapore: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Department of Labor and Employment. <http://www.bles.dole.gov.ph/PUBLICATIONS/2011%20YLS/STATISTICAL%20TABLES/PDF/CHAPTER%2018/Tab18-1.pdf>. viewed 1 October 2012.

Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board. <http://hlurb.gov.ph/homeowners-association/>. Viewed Oct 1, 2 and 7 October 2012.

Macasaet, S.C. 2010. Philippine CSOs. Paper presented at the meeting of the Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA) - Asia in Toronto, Canada, August 18-19, 2010.

The Asia Foundation. 2010. 11th Field Appraisal of Decentralization. Manila.

USAID. 2014 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia. Washington, DC.

CODE-NGO: 25 years young

CODE-NGO's Silver Journey



The First Decade (1991-2001). CODE-NGO was born in May 1990 when ten of the largest networks of civil society organizations (CSOs) decided to band together. It was legally registered in January 1991.

In December 1991, CODE-NGO held its 1st National Congress, where close to a thousand non-government organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs) and cooperatives attended. The Congress ratified its Covenant on Philippine Development and the Code of Conduct for Development NGOs. These historic declarations marked the development community's desire to promote internal good governance and promote the accountability and credibility of CSOs, and also to expand the reach and effectiveness of social development work in the Philippines.

This was soon after the re-establishment of formal democracy in the country with the 1986 People Power Revolution against the Marcos dictatorship. Global support for the Cory Aquino government and the strengthening of the economy and political democracy was at its height. This included funding support for development work, which went to the government and also to CSOs. This was a welcome development after the economic and political debacle under Marcos, but it also encouraged the formation of "fly-by-night" NGOs by those wanting to unduly benefit from these funds. CODE-NGO was formed to help combat this misuse of NGOs and other CSOs, and to safeguard the integrity and image of CSOs.

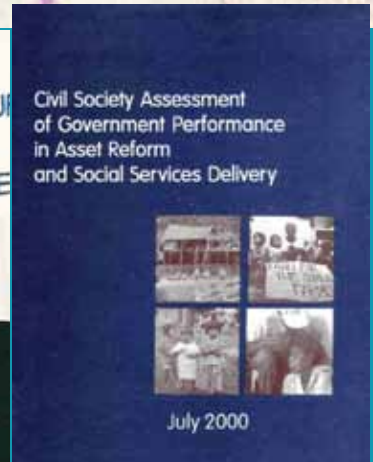
CODE-NGO also brought together its member networks, with their thousands of affiliated organizations, at a time when the Philippine Congress had just been restored through the 1987 elections, and vital political and social reform laws were being crafted.

The Local Government Code was approved in October 1991, mandating devolution of important powers and responsibilities, such as for social welfare, agricultural and fishery development and environment, and strengthening local governments. CODE-NGO responded to this by forming and/or strengthening regional CSO networks.

1990s



Early years



In 1992, CODE-NGO participated in the preparation of the Philippine Medium-Term Development Plan (MT-PDP) for 1992-98, being a civil society sector representative to the National Economic and Development Authority's (NEDA) Steering Committee for the MTPDP. Since then, it has regularly monitored the government's performance viz. its MTPDP commitments, and engaged in the formulation of the 6-year development plans of the government through participation in various bodies and processes and advocacy work.

Through collaborations with funding partners and foreign NGO counterparts, CODE-NGO was instrumental in the setting up of several NGO-managed fund mechanisms such as the Foundation for the Philippine Environment (FPE) and the Foundation for Sustainable Society, Inc. (FSSI) in 1993 to 1995.

When the Philippine Tax Code was being reviewed by Congress in 1997-98, there were moves by government to scrap the exemption from the 30% donor's tax of donations to non-profit and non-stock organizations, which they argued had often been abused. The government agreed to continue the exemption provided that the sector would help ensure the integrity of those applying for donor's tax exemption. In response, CODE-NGO and 5 other CSO networks established in 1998 the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC), a CSO-governed and managed body, that certifies CSOs based on good governance standards.

In 1999, CODE-NGO started its Successor Generation Program, which trained several batches of young CSO network leaders. This was in recognition of the need to continuously develop new blood for the sustainability of CSOs and CSO networks.

In 2000 to 2001, CODE-NGO, together with other civil society groups, convened the second Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino (KOMPII II), which ultimately became the backbone of People Power II. This was after President Joseph Estrada, who was elected President in May 1998, and several of his appointed officials and political allies were embroiled in various questionable alleged corruption cases. An impeachment case was lodged against Estrada and an impeachment trial was undertaken by the Philippine Senate. In January 2001, at the height of People Power II, Estrada resigned.

Since the late 1990s, with the country's improved economic condition, the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the opening up of Eastern Europe, and the various crises in Africa, donor funds to the Philippines had started to decrease. This affected many CSOs and their social development programs - still much needed because of persistent poverty amidst the improved economy.

With the need to raise resources for the development work of CSOs, CODE-NGO conceptualized a new financial instrument designed to raise funds from the private capital market. With the proceeds from this instrument called the PEACe (Poverty Eradication and Alleviation Certificates) Bonds, CODE-NGO was able to establish the Peace and Equity Foundation (PEF), a separate non-stock, non-profit private entity, which manages the endowment fund and uses the earnings to support CSO projects that address poverty and inequality in rural and urban communities.

From its initial capital fund of P1.3 billion from the proceeds of the PEACe Bonds, the PEF managed to grow the fund to P2.0 billion by 2015 and at the same time disburse more than P1.3 billion to support more than 1,300 projects of NGOs, POs and communities on social enterprises, livelihood and basic services such as potable water and renewable energy in off-grid areas, relief assistance, social capital and micro-finance.

By 2011, after its first decade, PEF's supported projects had benefited 320,000 households or over 1.5 million Filipinos in the poorest communities of the country. Around 40% of the total funds went to Mindanao, supporting livelihood and employment and bringing electricity, farm aid and health services, some of the basic prerequisites for peace in the region.



Vision

PEF envisions self-sustaining households providing for their basic needs of life - food, water, shelter, health, education - and contributing to the socio-cultural growth, economic development and effective governance of their sustainable communities.

The Peace Equity Access for Community Empowerment Foundation (or Peace and Equity Foundation, PEF) was established in 2001 to manage a Php 1.3 billion endowment fund raised by the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) for civil society-led efforts to reduce poverty.

In its first 10 years, the endowment fund benefited an estimated 336,000 households in the country's 28 poorest provinces, where Php 1.2 billion was channeled to 1,325 projects and funded basic services such as clean water, health programs, capital and market access to farmers and micro-entrepreneurs, renewable energy and other appropriate technologies.



In 2011, PEF started to focus on social enterprise development to create sustainable incomes and bring more Filipino households out of poverty. Influenced by the increasing poverty incidence in agricultural households, PEF puts greater emphasis on growing agricultural social enterprises focused on four priority crops, namely: coconut, cacao, coffee, and cane sugar.

Of the Php 840 million financial assistance from 2011-2015, social enterprises accounted for 68% or Php 572 million. This investment supported 179 enterprises with a direct impact to almost 50,000 households all over the country. Implementing SE partners were predominantly non-profit entities - NGOs/POs - at 52% with an average assistance of Php 3.5 million. Geographic distribution of SE financing went primarily to Mindanao totaling Php 82 million or 68% while Luzon, Visayas each shared about a third of the funding.



PEF continues to support other development initiatives that are in line with the Foundation's institutional thrusts which include assistance to natural calamity situations, research and development, capacity building, and development forums.

The PEF is governed by a nine-person Board of Trustees composed of civil society leaders: one (1) eminent person in social and economic development and leadership; three (3) representatives from national CSO networks; three (3) from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao; and one (1) each from the business and basic sectors.

More information, news and updates may be found at www.pef.ph.

The Second Decade (2001-2011)

In its second decade, CODE-NGO focused on its two-pronged mission of: 1) building its internal strength for effectiveness and sustainability (capacity-building for the coalition and its member networks and organizations), and 2) engaging in the public arena by influencing policies affecting its sector and social development (policy advocacy).

These tasks are rooted in the coalition's vision for a just and humane Philippine society, as adopted by the coalition when it was founded in 1991 and as stated in its Covenant on Philippine Development and Code of Conduct for Development NGOs.

The framework for action for the decade:

CODE-NGO's Strategic Thrusts 2002-2011

For this period, the coalition defined its Strategic Thrusts as follows:

- A. Building Capacity and Institutions
- B. Enhancing Policy Development and Advocacy
- C. Promoting Entrepreneurship
- D. Improving NGO Governance and Accountability
- E. Developing Effective Information Management and Communication Systems
- F. Caring for NGO Workers

CODE-NGO strived to reach these goals, while responding to the various socio-economic issues affecting the country and civil society during the period.

The context

Our work at this time was shaped largely by the political and socio-economic situation of the time and was a response to the new realities and demands on the civil society sector at the global, national and local development fronts.

In the political realm

Political upheavals and the constricted democratic space during the first eight years of this second decade posed an enormous challenge to CODE-NGO and other civil society organizations. People expected an end to corruption at the highest levels of government with the end of the Estrada Administration after People Power II. Unfortunately, corruption scandals, the lack of transparency and people's participation resurfaced under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, especially during the last five years of her nine-year rule.

Given the political climate, there was a prevailing sense of helplessness and apathy among the general public leading to the 2010 national elections.

In the socio-economic realm

The country's economic growth averaged 5% during this period, faster than what was achieved in the previous two decades. The economy grew by 7.6 percent in 2010, the fastest in 30 years.

Yet, the benefits of this economic growth have remained elusive for the poorest sectors of society. The poverty situation remained the same during this time, with 30% of the population below the poverty line.

In 2009, more than two decades after the comprehensive agrarian reform program was enacted, it was extended by another five years, since almost 2 million hectares was still for distribution, most of this vast prime agricultural lands controlled and owned by powerful hacienderos.

By 2010, more than 12 years after it was mandated by the Fisheries Code, only 24 of the 915 municipal waters have been delineated through local ordinances, largely because of strong lobby and influence of commercial fishers. More than 13 years after the enactment of the Indigenous People's Rights Act, less than 20 percent of 7.5 million hectares had been awarded to indigenous peoples. Twenty years after the passage of the Urban Development and Housing Act, only 10 percent of the urban poor had received housing lots.

In the global realm

Key world events have also influenced the way Philippine civil society worked in the past decade. The decade opened with US-led War on Terror against al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan and then Iraq, following the 9/11 terrorist attack of the World Trade Center, creating anti-US sentiments.

When the Arroyo government came out in support of the US war against Iraq, CODE-NGO, believing that this policy was against the Filipino people's interest, denounced this position through statements and various protest actions, together with other CSOs and peace groups.

The stock market and financial crises in 2008 escalated to a point described as the worst global economic crisis since the Great Depression in the 1920s.

This was also a decade of extreme weather, bearing fingerprint of climate change that is, in part, man-made. Record rainfall brought the worst flooding in Pakistan, Bangladesh and in our country.

Information and communications technology has also advanced much dramatically during this decade. Wikipedia, Google, social networking and smartphones, were just a few of the ICT changes in the last decade, and is seen to be increasingly both useful tools for social change and challenges for privacy and informed discourse.

The wave of international pro-democracy movements, such as the Arab Spring and the global Occupy movement, signifies a powerful call for more public participation in decision-making. These broad-base social movements have also highlighted the potential of social media in organizing consensus-based groups, stimulating the development of online platforms to facilitate collective decision-making on a large scale.

The response: practicing good governance and exacting public accountability

Given the context in which we operated in this decade, CODE-NGO chose to remain committed to our mission of building our internal strength and advocating for reforms in government and society.

Practicing good governance and building our strength

In our second decade, CODE-NGO also focused on building our internal strength.

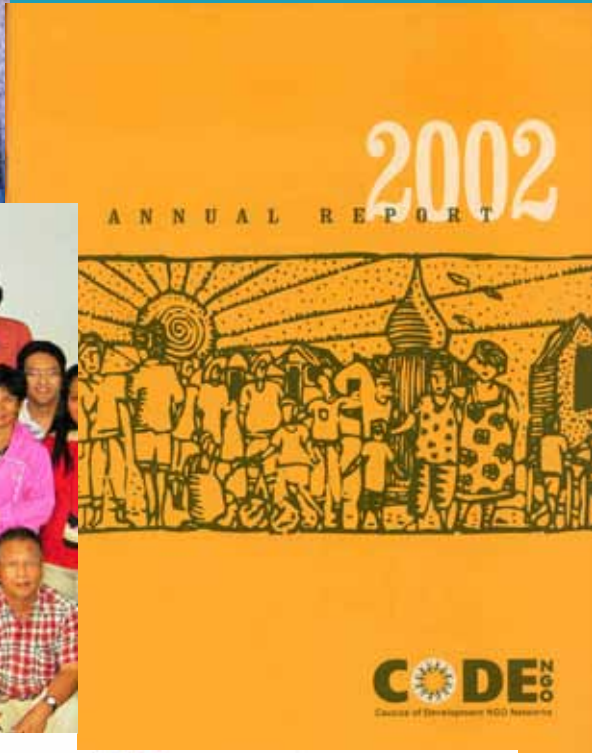
Ten percent of the proceeds of the PEACe Bonds helped create our own endowment fund. From this internal fund, we established in 2002 the Network Strengthening Fund (NSF) and the Democracy Fund (DF). The NSF was a grants program which supported our member networks' strategic capacity-building activities.

In 2002 to 2011, the NSF provided grants totaling P23.3 million, which financed more than 100 capacity-building projects and institutional activities of our member networks.

The DF, on the other hand, represents our commitment to supporting people's organizations (POs), and provided more than P7 million in grants for 165 advocacy projects by POs during this period.

In 2001, we reviewed our Code of Conduct and formulated its implementing rules. We also established the Commissions on Institution and Capacity Building (CICB) and Internal Reform Initiatives (CIRI), which has

2000s



The CODE-NGO
Covenant on
Philippine
Development

Caucus of Development
NGO Networks

CODE



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES, LEARNING AND TOOLKITS



since regularly reviewed and recommended policies and actions related to institutional strengthening and practice of good governance by our organization and our members.

In 2007-08, CODE-NGO fought hard against then President Macapagal-Arroyo's Executive Order 671 designating a government agency to certify and accredit charitable organizations as donee institutions, in effect threatening to de facto abolish the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC). The EO was seen as a means to constrict space and support for civil society work.

In 2009, together with the Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation, we conducted the Civil Society Index (CSI) for the first time in the Philippines. The CSI has been used in many countries to examine the civil society sector as a basis for work to support and strengthen civil society. During this time, we also partnered with the United Kingdom Charity Commission to undertake the Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Sector Assessment for the country.

In the international arena, we helped form in 2004 the Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA). AGNA is a network of national CSO networks in more than 50 countries that is linked to and supported by Civicus. AGNA focuses on strengthening its members through information exchange and knowledge sharing. CODE-NGO served in the Steering Committee of AGNA from 2004 to 2008 and again in 2010-11.

In 2008 to 2009, the organization's investments were affected by the global financial crisis, which led to painful budget cuts in our internal programs and activities.

We chose to address our internal financial constraints by focusing on assessing the organizational development needs of our member networks and identifying interventions for network sustainability. We compensated by strengthening our linkages with local and international partners and being active in the coalitions we are part of.

Exacting public accountability and advocating for reforms

In this decade, we persisted with our advocacies for change.

In 2002, we served as the secretariat of Kilusan 12.30, a forum composed of cabinet secretaries and civil society leaders launched to support Macapagal-Arroyo's reform agenda at the beginning of her term.

While this was dissolved when Arroyo reneged on her word that she would not run in the 2004 presidential elections, the movement offered a structure for government-CSO relations in policy reforms and effective government program implementation.

We implemented the four-year Local Anti-Poverty Program (LAPP 2) in 2002 to 2006 and enabled citizens to participate in tracking poverty incidence in 100 poorest communities or barangays, in advocating that projects that address their needs are budgeted by their local government units and in demanding their local governments to be transparent and accountable in their spending.

As part of our advocacy for good governance, CODE-NGO started in 2005 our Pork Barrel Watch or PDAF Watch (PDAF being the "Priority Development Assistance Fund" of Congress), developed PDAF project monitoring tools, trained volunteer project monitors and produced PDAF Watch reports and policy recommendations, leading to the approval of a "right to information" provision in the General Appropriations Act of 2008 and greater public awareness about the PDAF. The PDAF Watch was also related to the decision of the Commission on Audit (COA) to undertake a special audit of the PDAF, which would eventually result to the uncovering in 2013 of a decade-old 10 Billion Peso corruption scheme involving senators, congresspersons, government agency officials, businesspersons and fake NGOs.

We also started in 2004-05 our advocacy for federalism and Constitutional Convention (Con-con) as the means to revise our Constitution. This was after there were moves at that time by congresspersons to revise

the Constitution through a Constituent Assembly (Con-Ass) to push for the shift to a parliamentary system of government. With other CSOs, we formed the Coalition for a Citizens' Constitution (C4CC). CODE-NGO and C4CC believe that federalism is important to equitably distribute political power and spur regional development. Con-con is the preferred mode to change the Constitution as it is more participatory and is better shielded from vested interests of the incumbent legislators. In 2007, the 4th CODE-NGO Congress formally approved a resolution supporting federalism and Con-con.

In 2006, C4CC, CODE-NGO and other groups organized the nationwide Pilgrimage/Caravan for Truth and Reforms, in the wake of the presidential election scandal unearthed in 2005 and the government's renewed push for constitutional reforms through Con-Ass.

CODE-NGO remains non-partisan. However, we recognize the important links between development and governance - and politics. Thus, we have actively engaged in non-partisan and trans-partisan ways in the 2004, 2007 and 2010 elections. These efforts include voter information and education campaigns, agenda building and dialogues / compacts with candidates.

In 2007, learning from the alleged irregularities in the canvassing of votes during the 2004 elections the vital need to monitor the (then manual) canvassing, CODE-NGO organized Bantay Canvass, which trained and mobilized volunteers who monitored the canvassing in more than half of the country's provinces.

In 2009-10, CODE-NGO helped form the Change Politics Movement (CPM), which identified national candidates it would support and campaign for based on a clear set of criteria and a participatory bottom-up process.

In 2009, CODE-NGO also convened an effort by many CSOs to formulate the Development and Reform Agenda (DRA) for 2010-13. The DRA identified priority policies, programs and projects that need to be implemented by the new government officials to be elected in May 2010.

We continued our civil society assessment of the government's Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) in 2004 and again in 2006. In 2009-2010, together with 27 other civil society groups and six expert advisers from various fields, we assessed the performance of the Arroyo government against its own MTPDP for 2004-2010.

CODE-NGO also co-led with the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) in 2010 the process for the "Citizens' Roadmap for Poverty Reduction and Achieving the MDGs: Recommendations for the 2010-2016 MTPDP". This agenda was crafted and supported by a broad range of CSOs under the UN Civil Society Advisory Committee (UN CSAC) and UN Civil Society Assembly (UN CSA) in the Philippines.

Mid-way into our Third Decade (2011-2016)

The context

In 2009, the political landscape was suddenly altered by the death of democracy icon Cory Aquino, ushering the "game-changing" entry of her son, then Senator Noyonoy Aquino, into the presidential race.

Noyonoy Aquino's anti-corruption campaign to fight poverty ("Kung walang corrupt, walang mahirap") resonated with many who were fed up with the impunity of the past administration, thus he was resoundingly voted into office in 2010.

Ensuring good governance was a top priority during the Aquino Administration in 2010-16. Its anti-corruption and good governance programs included the Full Disclosure Policy, Bottom Up Budgeting, Open Government Partnership and Open Data. Credible and competent people were also appointed to crucial bodies such as the Office of the Ombudsman and the Commission on Audit, and many high level officials allegedly involved in corruption were prosecuted and imprisoned. These efforts not only improved business climate for local and foreign investors, but also enhanced the government's delivery of social services.

High economic growth was sustained during the period. This, plus its good governance programs, allowed the government to more than double its revenue collections from 2009 to 2015, and enabled dramatic increases in the budget allocations for health (five-fold increase), infrastructure (three-fold increase), social protection and education, among others.

However, the Aquino Administration performed poorly in asset reform, attaining not even half of its target for land distribution under the agrarian reform program, and also performing poorly in ancestral domain, in-city and near-city resettlement and the delineation of municipal waters.

The past five years also saw the increased occurrence of destructive typhoons and other natural calamities, such as Typhoon Pablo in 2011, Sendong in 2012 and Yolanda in 2013, plus the Bohol earthquake, also in 2013.

On the peace front, the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in March 2014, but the effort to have the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) approved by Congress was derailed by the tragic Mamasapano encounter in early 2015.

At the international level, the 15-year Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the more comprehensive and ambitious successor of the Millennium Development Goals were approved by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.

Our Response

In the past five years, we have continued to focus on our two-pronged mission of capacity-building for the coalition and its member networks and organizations, and 2) advocacy and engagement with government related to our development agenda.

Our blueprint: Strategic Plan for 2013-2017

Formulated through a participatory and consultative one-year process in 2011-12 with our members and other stakeholders, we have been guided in the past years by our new Strategic Plan, including our vision for Philippine society, and:

Our refreshed MISSION: To be a trusted national voice of civil society and to advance the capacities of civil society organizations to exercise transformative leadership; plus

Our refreshed VISION FOR CODE-NGO: CODE-NGO is the largest coalition of competent, credible and committed development CSOs in the Philippines that influences public policies, shapes development and creates tangible impact in its partner communities.

We have been focusing on our four Key Result Areas for this period:

Member Network Strengthening

- 1) Resource Generation Assistance
- 2) Strategic Capacity-building for Governance, Networking, and Local and Sectoral Advocacy Effectiveness

Expanded Civil Society Influence

- 3) Knowledge Development and Management
- 4) Increased Effectiveness of Development Advocacy.

Strengthening CSO Good Governance and Capacities

In 2011-12, as part of the 20th anniversary celebration of CODE-NGO, and recognizing that it had been 20 years since the affiliated organizations of the network had signed on to the Code of Conduct, we initiated a

campaign for the renewal of commitment to the Code. By September 2016, more than 1,150 member base organizations of CODE-NGO had signed and renewed their commitment to the Code of Conduct.

Complementing our effort to promote PCNC certification as a seal of good housekeeping among our members, CODE-NGO also developed a Basic CSO Good Governance Checklist in 2013. By 2016, more than 460 affiliated organizations were using the checklist.

We also partnered with Ayala Foundation, Association of Foundations, Philippine Business for Social Progress, PCNC and University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Governance (UP NCPAG) in implementing the USAID supported CSO Strengthening Project in 2011-2014. This project developed the Capacity Assessment Tool (CAT) which CSOs can use for their organizational diagnosis and development, and which CODE-NGO adopted and continues to build on and use.

We have formed and continued to strengthen various communities of practice (CoPs) among our members and partner organizations, including CoPs on DRRM, transparent and participatory governance and CSO good governance.

We started updating our membership database in 2015; by September 2016, we already collected 715 organizational profiles from the affiliates of our member networks. We have also been more active in writing and publishing our experience and lessons, and in our social media presence through our e-newsletters, our website and our Facebook page.

In order to help address the need of CODE-NGO and most of its member networks for additional human resources, the network revived its volunteer service program, and in 2013 and 2014 organized two volunteer writers' summer camps.

CODE-NGO also developed the Capacity Building Fund, a successor to the previous Network Strengthening Fund (NSF), and adopted a mentoring approach to help strengthen our member networks. We have also initiated discussions and actions to support member networks to become more entrepreneurial so that they lessen their dependence on grants and develop various sources of funds including membership fees, service fees, a core of individual donors, social enterprises, an endowment fund and others.

We led the conduct of the CSO Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for the Philippines for 2014 and 2015 in partnership with Management Systems International (MSI) and the USAID. CSOSI is a tool used in various countries to assess the CSO sector and identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.

In 2014, in response to the Napoles pork barrel scandal that involved fake NGOs, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Commission on Audit (COA) issued Joint Resolution 1 of 2014 providing for the guidelines for the accreditation of CSOs that would receive financial support from the government. CODE-NGO and other CSOs advocated for the amendment of this resolution to make it more appropriate and less restrictive, and a number of these proposed amendments were included in the supplemental guidelines issued as Joint Resolution 1 of 2015.

In a bid to promote local philanthropy, facilitate resource generation for CSOs and strengthen CSO good governance, CODE-NGO supported the People's Fund bill. This proposed law would allow taxpayers to directly identify qualified CSOs which would be provided funding equivalent to 5% of the annual income tax. The bill was approved at the committee level by the House of Representatives in 2015. It has been re-filed in the 17th Congress in July 2016.

Advocating for Democratic Governance and Equitable Development

CODE-NGO and our members, both at national and local levels, engaged the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), DBM, the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) and other national govern-



KOMPIL

**2005-
present**

**CITIZENS' ROAD
FOR POVERTY RED
AND ACHIEVING T**



**PDAF
WATCH
project**

Publications



**Development and
Reform Agenda
for 2010-13**

October 2009



SUMILAO FARMERS



NATIONAL CANDIDATES PROFILES



PHILIPPINE ELECTION 2010

PGMA, Reverse Ermita's Decision!
Lupa sa Fajardo Farmers



CODE
Development NGO Networks

Produced by Caucus on Development NGO Networks

ment agencies for bottom-up budgeting (BUB). We also engaged the DILG and the local government units for the Full Disclosure Policy.

In 2012-13, we initiated with our member networks and partner CSOs the formation of BUB 383, a loose network of CSOs engaged in the BUB process (initially in 383 LGUs). BUB 383, now with presence in around 450 LGUs, continues to support participatory local planning and budgeting through information exchange and other forms of mutual support. CODE-NGO and BUB 383 conducted annual CSO evaluations of the BUB in 2012 to 2015, identified policy recommendations to improve BUB, and successfully advocated for changes in the government's BUB guidelines. BUB facilitated the substantial participation of local CSOs in local planning and budgeting for priority anti-poverty projects in the country's more than 1,500 municipalities and cities.

In this period, CODE-NGO also implemented various projects on participatory governance, including the Citizens' Monitoring of LGU Performance (CML) project, Decentralized Governance and Strengthening Decentralized Governance (DG and Strengthening DG) projects, Strengthening Participatory Local Governance (SPLG) project, the Data Access Towards Accountable Governance (DATAGov) project and the DRRM Fund Watch project. In 2015, our projects reached 1,296 CSOs in 512 municipalities and cities in 51 provinces in 16 regions of the country.

Moved by the series of strong typhoons that affected its member networks in various parts of the country, CODE-NGO started including in its strategic plan for 2013-2017 the need to strengthen its capacities on disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA). In early 2013, we started our training workshops on DRRM through the Advancing CSO Engagement in DRRM and CCA (ACED) Project. This effort was accelerated after Super Typhoon Yolanda hit the country in November 2013. Since then, we have facilitated the setting up of CSO DRRM Coordination Hubs in 10 regions and initiated linkages with other national DRRM organizations.

In preparation for the 2016 elections, we organized regional consultations and other activities as part of the process for crafting the Development and Reform Agenda (DRA) for 2016-19. This DRA was approved in November 2015 and is supported by CODE-NGO's member networks, 5 other national CSO networks, 15 regional and provincial networks and other CSOs.

Complementary to the DRA, we also undertook our civil society assessment of the government's Philippine Development Plan (PDP) for 2011-16. In 2015-16, we assessed the performance of the Aquino Administration viz the PDP together with 6 partner CSOs and five expert advisers. The CSO assessment of the PDP worked on 8 thematic assessments and produced recommendations for the next medium term development plan.

We also organized in 2015-16 the Enabling Environment National Assessment (EENA) for the Philippines in partnership with Civicus and the International Center for Non-Profit (ICNL). The EENA is an action-oriented research project aimed at assessing and improving the policy environment for CSOs.

At the international level, CODE-NGO actively participated in the process for the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with our international networks including the Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation, International Forum of NGO Platforms (IFP), Asia Development Alliance (ADA) and Beyond 2015. CODE-NGO is also a member of the newly formed Action for Sustainable Development (Action4SD). We are a co-convenor of ADA.

CODE-NGO continues to also network with other national CSO associations in the Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA). In 2016, CODE-NGO was again elected as a member of the AGNA Steering Committee.

Our new home

After 25 years, we have also began building our new office, our own new home. In November 2014, with the support of PEF, we bought a lot in Loyola Heights, Quezon City. We are now starting to build our new home there, and we expect to be able to move in by mid-2017.



Artist rendition of the future Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) building.

What lies ahead

In the coming year, we will continue to be guided by our strategic plan, and at the same time we have started the process for developing our new strategic plan for 2018-2022.

In all these, we will be pursuing our continuing VISION FOR PHILIPPINE SOCIETY - We dream of a society:

- That promotes the total well-being of the Filipino people and the full realization of human rights
- Where social justice and equitable distribution of wealth prevail
- Where the basic needs of the broad majority are met and fulfilled, along with maintaining the sustainability of human survival
- Where all spheres of national development are participated in by all sectors, and
- Where the culture of the Filipino peoples are continuously promoted and enhanced.

Our Stories

03 Association of Foundations:

Building Foundations,
Building a Better Future



In the 1960s, only a few people knew what a foundation was or that there actually were Filipino foundations. The initialisms *NGO* and *PO* had not yet been coined, nor were the terms networking, transparency, and counterpart commonly used by charity organizations. While there was never a lack of people or institutions wanting to make a positive difference in the country and in the lives of those who needed help the most, the issue of managing development or anything similar to it was not yet being discussed in schools as an academic pursuit or to directly prepare anyone to run a foundation.

Meetings among foundation executives began in 1969 and by November 1972 the Association of Foundations (AF) was established to serve as a clearinghouse of information to make referrals and informed decisions while also serving as a venue for the older and larger foundations to share their experience and expertise with the newer, smaller ones. AF's membership criteria were stricter than even government requirements since it expected its members to maintain a high standard of integrity and competence. As a result, the body overseeing tax-exempt institutions at the time (the National Science Development Board) looked at AF as a partner in keeping foundations credible.

In 1974, AF published the country's first directory of Philippine foundations and continued its trailblazing activities and expansion. By the 1980s, the initialism NGO came into use and the non-profit world grew to include thousands of non-government organizations. Collaboration became the norm among NGOs and networks were formed as a result. Networks shared common goals for their members and foremost among the goals were professionalism and transparency.

In 1998, AF and five other networks set up the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC) to guarantee non-profit organizations met established minimum criteria for financial management and accountability in the service of underprivileged Filipinos.

It wasn't long after that AF became known as a capacity builder, data bank, consultant, liaison to grant-giving agencies, and key advocate of major issues. Over the years, it enlarged its sphere of influence, expanding its membership across regions and sectors. Today, AF has over 140 member-foundations and NGOs that operate from the northern to the southern regions of the country engaged in education, science and technology, health, arts and culture, governance, social development, environment, and microfinance. AF members vary in size - from the small rural organizations to the large metro-based corporate foundations.

With its almost five decades of experience in social development, AF became and continues to be regarded as the go-to organization of younger, smaller NGO networks desiring to accomplish similar feats of making collaboration work to achieve a common goal.

AF's journey to where it is today, however, has been far from easy and was not without potholes or barriers. In fact, it came dangerously close to discontinuing its operations altogether. The crossroad was reached in the 1990s when AF shut down its regional offices and retrenched employees because its funds, which relied mainly on membership contributions and foreign grants, were not enough to sustain its operations. Less than half of the 140 organizations in its roster at the time attended meetings and general assemblies. Something had to be done quickly.

Transformation

Fortunately, the AF Board of Trustees believed enough in the vision and mission of AF that it guided the organization through the difficult years, nurturing it back to health by making drastic decisions, such as the reorganization and the slimming down of the organization to make it more efficient.

A new executive director was hired to execute the re-engineering decisions of the board. AF executive director, Norman Jiao, was given the difficult task to see AF through its transition and the board, management, and members had to make a painstaking review of the organization and do some basic housekeeping. The Secretariat was reorganized and moved to a new office hosted by then AF chairperson, Judy Roxas.

Operating procedures, policies, and systems were streamlined and codified; finances were organized and controls were put in place to ensure that the funds were spent wisely and properly. Slowly but surely, AF got back on its feet and regained its financial strength, enabling it to fulfill its mission to help NGOs do their part in nation-building.

Even with this new lease on life, AF still had to face the reality that what had happened in the past could happen again. To address the sustainability issue, which had caused the foundation to close its doors once before, and in view of its expanded services and operations, AF created an endowment fund, knowing it could not rely on members' contributions alone. The fund was initially put in an investment portfolio but was later managed by an investment team to generate higher returns. A strict policy on the administration of the funds' interest earnings was also established, restricting the use of proceeds only as a last recourse in order to keep the principal intact in a bank while the fund was being progressively built.

To meet this end, AF directors and management reached out to prospective donors, both individuals and institutions working hard to establish AF as a renewed and dynamic force for social good, worthy of receiv-

ing valuable funds. AF was “re-launched” during its 30th anniversary in 2002, with an endowment fund of PHP 10 million representing donations of PHP 1 million each from 10 benefactors who became part of AF’s Board of Advisors.

AF reviewed its compliance with pertinent laws, amended its Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws as needed and meticulously complied with reportorial requirements of government, NGOs, and its own network affiliations, project partners, and even member-foundations. AF was soon rewarded for going through the long and tedious housekeeping process when it got its first five-year certification from PCNC in 2004 and was certified as a competent recipient of donations. Since then, transparency and accountability have become the way of life for AF.

AF relied on its members to collectively determine its direction, goals, and targets. It counted on its Board of Trustees for advice and its management and staff members to execute programs efficiently. The shared effort cemented AF’s position as one of the strongest networks today and a partner of choice of government, NGOs, and funding agencies. Through its strict adherence to the highest standards of transparency and accountability, AF built a reputation and earned credibility as a reliable partner in project implementation and events management.

Capacity Building

AF is also now in a much stronger position to pursue its unwavering commitment to help enhance the capabilities of its member-organizations and other members of civil society while enabling them to pursue their own social development programs.

Such dedication to its purpose enabled AF to maintain the support of its veteran members and win the trust of new members. It is particularly appreciated for its expertise in capacity building honed over more than 40 years. AF, indeed, has become the main venue for people and foundations with expertise in specific fields to share their knowledge and experiences with groups that are either smaller or newer. This helps the bigger and more established organizations fulfill their own missions to reach out and help other groups and the newer ones to scale up operations and be more effective in pushing for their advocacies.

According to Connie Angeles, executive director of SM Foundation Inc. (SMI), they consider themselves lucky to be in a position to help smaller foundations through their membership in AF. She adds that the value of partnership and collaboration that AF embodies makes it an ideal partner for corporate foundations wanting to do their share to improve the lives of the less fortunate in the Philippines. “We are proud to be on the mentoring side. We are lucky to be in a position to be extending assistance rather than receiving help; that is why we are happy to partner with AF in many projects. We also get valuable information from AF and this is very much appreciated,” says Angeles.

AF institutionalized its capacity building program through the Members Capacity Contributed or MC² campaign, where members’ strengths and needs are matched so that the strength of one group can be used to respond to the need of another. Diane Romero, executive director of the J. Amado Araneta Foundation, Inc. (JAAFI) which became an AF member when it was a newly operating foundation, says that AF assistance proved valuable in its organizational development. “We were just starting then but we immediately realized the benefits of belonging to a network. It was inspiring to meet people with the same passion for development. Through AF and its members, we were mentored on how to improve our systems and do our work better,” says Romero.

Ilog Kinderhome Foundation, Inc.’s (IKFI) executive director, Gilda Cadagat, explained how AF helped the Negros Occidental-based organization “unleash its potentials and boost its morale to work with big and prominent members on equal footing.” This was facilitated by the fact that, as Cadagat added, “AF treats its members equally and opportunities are shared.”

Emily Catapang, executive director of the Mangyan Heritage Center, Inc. (MHC), likewise recognized AF's support when it first applied for PCNC certification in 2007. She said, "AF helped in the critical process of reviewing our administrative and finance systems. MHC is now on its second 5-year accreditation, thanks to AF's assistance."

Sustainability

AF would not have been able to regain its position of strength without its strict adherence to transparency and accountability to partners and members. Consequently, AF earned greater donor trust, enabling it to build up its endowment fund from the initial PHP 10 million to over PHP 30 million, and this amount is still growing. Confident in a more secure endowment, the AF Board resolved to utilize part of its earnings beginning in 2012 to support more programs for organizational development and building members' capacity to implement relevant and effective programs for their respective communities.

A champion of good governance

Emerging as a more stable and stronger organization, AF steadily gained recognition as a reputable NGO network advocating good governance in the sector. AF designed a two-pronged NGO Governance Program in 2004. The first part of the module, entitled Managing with Effective Board Governance, was designed for executive officers while the second part, Building Successful Boards, was meant for members of the board of trustees. Since its development, the module has been administered not just to AF member organizations but to the member-organizations within the CODE-NGO network and partner proponents of donor institutions including the Peace and Equity Foundation (PEF), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Australian Agency for International Development - Philippines-Australia Community Assistance Program (AusAID-PACAP), among others.

Today, AF continues its work in promoting good governance towards fortifying the credibility not just of the organizations within its network but of the larger NGO sector through the NGO Transparency Initiative - a mechanism to promote integrity, transparency, and accountability in the sector.

The Association of Foundation's journey in the last twenty years has demonstrated how an organization can weather storms and emerge stronger than ever. As it faces the challenges of the next twenty years, AF is determined to stay sustainable and steadfast in aiming for excellence and trustworthiness in its effort of building a better future.

PROFILE 01 **Marissa** Camacho

Former President, Association of Foundations



Brilliance from many **different angles**

A person's life is formed through small everyday realizations and decisions. Some can shake you to your core and maybe rock your world while other things come with patient understanding coupled with unwavering tenacity.

Such was the case with Marissa Camacho. She was but a high school student when she got exposed to things out of her usual sphere of experience to challenge her old notions. Such events ultimately led her to development work, the Association of Foundations (AF) and the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO).

Things began slowly for her. She joined an immersion program in Bicol organized by a student group and, as all immersions go, she lived with a family and participated in all their activities. She had been exposed to the idea that the poor are poor because they are lazy. The general "truth" that people hung onto was that all

a person needed was to be industrious for prosperity to be an almost sure thing. That wasn't what she saw. She saw a family that was more than industrious. They all woke up at 4 am and were tending to their crops even before breakfast. They made a trip to their vegetable garden to prepare for everyone's breakfast that day. After breakfast, the man of the house went off to harvest coconuts for copra. And the rest of the family did their chores.

That experience made Marissa think: "Hindi sila tamad. They were so hardworking. Wala silang oportunidad, access sa lupa at capital kaya sila mahirap. (They are not indolent. They did not have any opportunity or access to land and capital that's why they are poor.)"

This was but a brief experience but it already exposed her to complex and, often, persistent questions: Why do the poor continue to be poor? What can be done about this? What should be done about this?

Put this experience in a context where both parents were always helping other people and very much involved in their communities and you had the perfect environment for someone who would eventually be working for more than herself.

For the greater good

The alleviation of poverty cannot be done by just one person or one organization. People need to join hands to get things done. To this end, Marissa draws upon her belief in forging partnerships. "I believe in partnerships. I don't have to be the expert in everything. I can partner with others who can do other things more effectively."

When she joined the AF Board, many member organizations were inactive and not paying their membership dues. Not only were the coffers less than full, the network was asking itself if it was still needed? If it was still relevant?

"Maybe the reason people were not active was because there was no common advocacy. We had corporate foundations, family foundations, independent foundations, foundations doing education, foundations doing health, into arts and culture, etc. --it had such a diverse membership." There seemed to be no common advocacy like the other networks.

The soul-searching that they went through led to a realization that if an organization was not working for a specific sector such as women and children, the urban poor, the rural poor, or cooperatives, an organization had a hard time finding a network to belong to. How then could they (organizations) continue developing themselves? How could they continue being in touch with the rest of civil society? AF is the network where diverse civil society organizations could belong to.

The AF board together with its staff exerted efforts to identify the needs of its members that AF could respond to. Responding to its members' needs resulted in the members' active participation in the AF activities as well as payment of membership dues. AF also went into a fund-raising mode to set-up a trust fund that will ensure funding for its secretariat and basic network functions so that the organization did not have to live from project to project.

Being a member of a network that was also part of an even bigger network has important benefits for an organization: "If you're just alone (not a member of any network), you only know your own program, the people you are working with and the areas you are operating in. But if you're part of a network, you get to know other organizations and what they are doing, the issues they are working on and learn from their experiences. You also get exposed to the broader development community including donors. It can lead to partnerships with other organizations leading to synergies of efforts. Members of networks are also introduced to national issues which are not necessarily their issues, contributing to better understanding and appreciation of national issues that are advocated by the whole network. That's why I always tell friends that membership dues are worth every peso because you really become part of this development sector."

Helping the poor help themselves

Strategies for helping the poor has evolved from the traditional idea of giving them fish (what they need such as clothing, food, farm implements, housing, school supplies, etc.) to teaching them how to fish through various development projects. But it is not that simple!

Marissa noted that many agrarian reform farmer beneficiaries ended up mortgaging or “selling” their land because the land did not earn enough to provide for their families’ basic needs. In her talks with some farmer beneficiaries, Marissa realized that it was not enough to transfer the ownership of the land to the farmers. An effective support system was just as critical such as capital, business skills to manage the farm and make it profitable and access to market. In the old tenant system, the farmers were dependent on the landowners for the business side and were not prepared to take on the functions performed by the landowner.

“Philanthropy is changing. Young philanthropists are looking for a more sustainable way of giving. They’re engaging in social enterprises and more entrepreneurial kinds of programs . . . If we open ourselves to new ways of doing things, there are many things we can improve. Social enterprise is one way to address poverty,” she explained.

The political situation at the end of the century (1999 - 2000) was not stable and people were saying that the poverty situation would worsen before it got better. In response, AF started a process of exploring what its members can do together to address the worsening poverty. A concept for a collaborative livelihood program emerged. It needed new funding. After exploring the usual sources of funding, Marissa felt that no significant funds can be raised from them. The need for new funds and the success of microfinance in addressing poverty in the Philippines triggered the idea for raising funds through development bonds.

At about this time, CODE-NGO’s Chair (Dinky Soliman) was appointed to the cabinet and Marissa was elected to finish her term. Reflecting on what her contribution to CODE-NGO could be, she thought that raising funds would be helpful. “Where I could contribute was really on how we could raise resources so that our NGOs didn’t have to close shop because they had no more funds.”

Marissa, newly elected CODE-NGO chair, pursued the idea of raising funds from the capital market. To do this, she reached out to the mainstream finance sector. Marissa, the CODE-NGO board and secretariat worked with professional financial advisers, lawyers and tax experts in developing a design for a capital market fund raising structure for civil society’s anti-poverty programs.

In all the steps to make the fund raising initiative a reality, it was Marissa’s surprisingly simple characteristics which kept things going: patience and persistence or, as she would rather refer to it, “kulit.”

“I’m very patient. If I have to call you one hundred times, I will.” This seeming boast was put to the test because the quest for the PEACe (Poverty Eradication and Alleviation Certificates) bonds involved having to wait for hours to get a chance to talk to government officials. Often, too often, this meant waiting and waiting and then coming back again the next day for more waiting and also at the following day. This was done for months until she and her team were finally given an audience by the government officials concerned.

“I think my personality of having a small ego, my not having a need to be the star, allows me to focus on what I need to do to get the desired result. You really have to swallow your pride when you have to wait in some government officials’ anteroom for hours or meet with men who think they are always right.”

“I don’t have to have the loudest voice. I think my strength is that I’m able to get people together and talk and somehow to get them to do what needs to be done. I don’t have to be the expert. I know my limitations.”

And talk, the bankers and officials did. Months of hard work and an untold number of anxious days passed and the PEACe bonds were a reality. The PEACe bonds are 10-year zero-coupon bonds (Zeroes) issued by

the Bureau of the Treasury of the Republic of the Philippines and auctioned on October 16, 2001. CODE-NGO participated in the auction through Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC), a Government Securities Eligible Dealer (GSED), and was awarded the Zeroes because it offered the lowest rate. Then CODE NGO, through its underwriter RCBC Capital Corporation (RCBC Capital), was able to sell the PEACe Bonds in the secondary market at a higher price than what it paid for.

CODE-NGO finally had its fund – the realized trading gain! Now came another challenge: managing such a huge amount of money. Marissa and some members of the board were concerned about several things. Ensure that CODE-NGO did not drift away from its mission of building the network, capacitating its members and advocating for important national issues; that its network members do not fight over the distribution of the funds; and if the funds were divided among the network members, the capacity of each network to manage an endowment fund.

“We had several board meetings to discuss how to manage the funds. It was difficult because some networks felt that the networks should manage the funds and that each network should be allocated a portion of the funds. After much discussion of the CODE-NGO board, we decided to come up with an entity that would be the trustee of the fund so that CODE-NGO and its network members could focus on its mission, which was not managing a fund. We made the decision before the money was with us.”

CODE-NGO used the trading gain to create a permanent endowment and capital fund for the Peace and Equity Foundation (PEF). After 10 years and an external evaluation of the impact of PEF and its projects, PEF decided to focus on growing social enterprises to reduce poverty and create sustainable incomes of rural households and communities. There is hesitance on the part of some CODE-NGO members about this focus on social enterprises, because it seemed to them, that there was now more attention to business. Marissa explains it this way: “Most NGOs are used to grants and even when they think of enterprises, they never really lose the grant perspective. For that enterprise to be sustainable, it must be able to pay for the full cost of running the business. Slowly, we’re moving towards that . . . I remember many, many years ago when the idea of charging interest for lending programs for the poor was first discussed in a forum of NGOs, many people were up in arms about it. Now, it is standard practice for microfinance to charge interest.”

New experiences in social enterprise brought Marissa full circle as she is again exposed to farmer issues. “There was a time when I believed that for agriculture to take off, the best thing to do was to give farmers ownership over the land that they till. Given my exposure with some of the partners of PEF, I realized that maybe it’s not ownership that will make a difference but rather access to capital, land and business skills. I met agrarian reform beneficiaries who did not have any experience in running a business. They didn’t know how to plan for their farm, what input was necessary, how much these things cost, etc. Because of their not having this background, they ended up selling their land, buying maybe a tricycle and relying on the tricycle for livelihood. Those who didn’t sell, put it up for mortgage.”

Now Marissa feels that, “It is not simply ownership of the land that is critical but making that ownership productive for the poor to benefit. The question is how to make that land productive. In one of the projects submitted to PEF for funding, a farmer’s cooperative was requesting a loan so that they can redeem their mortgaged land. Reviewing the project from a social enterprise lens, it was determined that providing them funds to get back their land will not help the farmers get out of their poverty situation. If the land remained unproductive, they would just put it up for mortgage again. Thus, the PEF project assistance included identifying what crops would be appropriate for the land and what it would take for the enterprise to be profitable and sustainable.”

Marissa believes that “We have to be clear about what results we want and then be open to more creative and new ways of achieving the desired results. For example, what result do we want - making the land productive so that a farmer can meet the basic needs of his family? Or it is making the farmer own the land even if he cannot make the land productive enough to meet the basic needs of his family?”

Section 02



Pagtugon: Real needs, Real solutions

In many areas of our country, there are still numerous basic needs that have to be provided like water and financial services - things most people often take for granted. There are very real challenges faced by many communities and the solutions to these concerns are also very real.

But it is in such situations that the human heart can truly show just what it can make people do and fortunately, there is no lack of people who will not take things sitting down. Some have been inspired to be more active citizens to find a better way to do things. Still others look to government and how local leaders can be influenced to effect the changes that need to be made.

Indeed, how does one get water to communities that have had to physically haul buckets of water for kilometers to their homes every day? How does one teach a community's civil society leaders how to dialogue with local government leaders especially in terms of making adjustments in the local government budget? How does one bring modern financial technology to communities that have not even had the services of an established bank?

These are but challenges that CSO people look at and try to figure out. These are the scenarios they faced and these are how groups like Coalition for Bicol Development (CBD), Eastern Visayas Network of NGOs and POs (EVNET), Mindanao Coalition of Development NGO Networks (MINCODE) and National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) dealt with them.

04 CBD/CDLI: Responding to **basic needs**: The water project of **Gñaran**



Water for the People's Good

Barangay Gñaran, San Fernando, Camarines Sur

Development projects are always aimed at improving the lives of people. This is especially true when basic needs in an area are not even realized due to factors well beyond the control of residents. This was the case for the residents of Gñaran, one of 22 barangays in the municipality of San Fernando, Camarines Sur in the Philippines' southern region of Bicol. For these people, water was a vital resource that was painfully difficult to obtain on a regular basis.

Gñaran is a coastal village on the edge of Ragay Gulf and its people depend on the sea's bounty for their livelihood. However, because the barangay is quite remote, it does not have adequate access to basic social services such as education and that most basic of needs: Safe and potable drinking water.

The situation is hardly hopeless though. The people of Gñaran had already seen that working together could result in truly positive outcomes especially with the help of the local government. They improved the delivery of basic health services to their community with the rehabilitation of their Barangay Health Station

in 2011. The refurbished health station now continues to be instrumental in delivering the vital health and nutrition services to the villagers while providing other services as it doubles as a training facility for local health workers to hone their skills and improve their competencies in providing health care and nutrition services to the poor.

Having dealt with one of its most basic needs (health) with the guidance of the barangay local government unit (LGU), the people began to look at improving other aspects of their community life. Residents embarked on a greening project for their watershed area, planting coconut trees plus fruit-bearing and indigenous hardwood trees. With these experiences of being able to directly influence the improvement of their lives, they set their sights on rehabilitating their water system to finally ensure that potable water was made more easily available in their area. Their families had already been living too long with water not being directly accessible. They went into this with the confidence in their partnership with their local leaders and the resulting successes.

“The barangay has an existing water system but it was already damaged and badly in need of rehabilitation. When the villagers saw, through the implementation of the coastal resource management program and the health station, the beneficial effects of people’s participation in project implementation, which is a real public-private endeavor, they then thought of rehabilitating the water system,” then Vice-Mayor (2010 to 2013) Leopoldo Doblón shared.

The villagers engaged the LGU of San Fernando to provide funds for the project and sought assistance from Caritas Diocese of Libmanan, Inc. (CDL), a Coalition for Bicol Development (CBD) member. They lobbied for the project to form part of the municipality’s Annual Investment Plan, which provides for the “continuous development of the fishing community of Gñaran.” Financial assistance also came from the Philippine-Australia Community Assistance Project (PACAP) channeled through The Asia Foundation (TAF) with counterpart funding coming from the San Fernando LGU. The project was implemented by CDL using the participatory approach to increase the chances of sustainability.

“This project was supposed to be simply a rehabilitation of the first dysfunctional water system. As the project commenced, a new intake box and reservoir were assessed to be constructed rather than rehabilitate the old one,” Fr. Granwell N. Pitapit, executive director of CDL, shared.

Project outcomes

The project that had just promised to address an infrastructure issue soon involved organizing the community and setting up capability-building initiatives. This was a challenge that the community faced together. As a result of this, the community was able to:

- *Construct a functional water system with one intake box, one reservoir, and 24 public faucets with tap stands and cemented flooring. The water system has, since its construction, been consistently rated at level 2.*
- *Send four plumbers for training at a center accredited by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. These four plumbers continue to be in charge of taking care of the water system.*
- *Submit a bacteriological test twice to the local water district and the regional office of the Department of Health to assess the water’s potability. While the outcomes showed passing results, the villagers were still advised to put an improvised chlorinator and regularly clean the reservoir and intake box.*
- *Engage the local government unit of San Fernando. A project management team (PMT) was formed and participated during the whole process of project implementation. Members of the PMT included key stakeholders at the municipal and barangay LGU level, governmental line agencies, and NGOs.*
- *Form the Barangay Gñaran Water System Association (BAWASA) with its Board of Directors and officers making critical decisions on policy formulation while monitoring the maintenance and coordination with the barangay council to further advocate the improvement of the water system at the municipal level.*
- *Equip seven women self-help groups (SHG) with knowledge and skills and help them organize their respective activities, advocate concerns on health, nutrition and sanitation, and reach out to fellow members. The SHGs are supported by three Barangay Health Workers and one Barangay Nutrition Scholar.*

- *Create a comprehensive Community Health and Nutrition Plan, drafted by all community stakeholders, respected by appropriate government agencies and integrated in the Annual Investment Plan of the San Fernando LGU.*

Issues and concerns

The project implementers had a number of concerns coming into the project's commencement and each of these issues posed a unique challenge during the initial stages of the project.

The political affiliation of any barangay chairman had been a continuing concern since the chairman's loyalty tended to be with a previous municipal administration. Any change in administration brought some uncertainty regarding whether the community could truly bring their concerns to the new powers that be. Coordinating with the new LGU administration had been a challenge until the project monitoring team (PMT) was formed. Through the PMT, open communication was fostered regardless of political affiliation and continues to be. Meetings are now objectively facilitated with plans and project implementation being the main focus of discussion rather than political affiliations resulting in smooth operations and a harmonious relationship among project stakeholders.

With the straightforward rehabilitation of the village's dysfunctional water system having evolved into a much bigger endeavor involving the construction of a new intake box and reservoir, it was soon learned that there were no policies for the use and maintenance of the previous water system. A shift of perspective among community members regarding project implementation and ownership was needed. People engaged in policy formulation effecting changes like the imposition of a user's fee, the prohibition on washing and bathing at the faucets, and the institution of proper queuing. This was not a simple matter since there had been no user's fee previous to the completion of the new water system. BAWASA and the SHG intensified their campaign so that members could understand and follow the policies. The shift in perspective slowly but eventually took effect. The user's fee continues to be collected and, as a result, all faucets are well maintained.

Mayor Eugenio Lagasca shared that there were several projects of the LGU that were initiated in the past but all these faced the difficulty of being seen only as a government project. "They (the community) did not have a sense of accountability for their results and were hesitant to contribute," Lagasca explained.

The water project practically turned everything on its head, however, because people were involved from the very start - from conceptualization to implementation to actual operationalization. This continues even to the present as caring for water quality continues to be a big challenge with facilities and equipment requiring frequent and regular cleaning, chlorination, de-clogging, and maintenance. The plumbers in the Board and the involvement of BAWASA and the Barangay Council are meant to ensure that maintenance is done as scheduled. Logistical support has been ensured via the provision of a regular honorarium for the plumbers. During the summer months, the water system is turned off from 9 PM until 5 AM so that the water source is allowed to recover and everyone has some water the following day. This is something that the community members understand to be necessary.

Perhaps one of the biggest issues the people of Gñaran have had to face is the fact that some residents used their own pipes to connect the communal faucet to their own homes contrary to what had been agreed upon. This is a continuing issue that remains a challenge for both BAWASA and the whole community as this promises to put extra strain on the whole system and the water source.

Impact on Gender and Development

Many of the Board of Directors and majority of the SHG Officers are women. The SHG is composed of 62 women and 13 men, including the Barangay Council members in charge of their respective zones. The Board is composed of 6 women and 8 men, including the plumbers.

The installation of the water system has had a direct impact on households and housewives since they directly manage household chores and are dependent on clean water. With an uninterrupted water supply, mothers are able to do more household chores and maintain their family's good hygiene. There is also no need to nag their husbands and children to fetch water from a faraway source.

Anabel Claveria, a barangay health worker (BHW) and resident of Zone 7, shared her appreciation for now being able to more easily draw water. "We used to haul water from the community center. As we reside in a hilly portion of the barangay, we had to endure the long and steep road going to our sitio, carrying buckets full of water. Now, life is much easier with the faucets just near our houses," she said.

Impact on the environment

Households are now able to maintain their backyard gardens and communal vegetable plots located beside the Barangay outpost, adjacent to the elementary school, and on vacant lots beside the communal faucets. The continuous water supply encouraged the community to take care of the environment and make idle lands more productive. This is a symbiotic relationship with their surroundings as their watershed is now protected with more trees having been planted near the water intake box and reservoir.

"With this project, the community's major problem of potable water was finally solved. Our old and dilapidated system could only provide water for three zones. Now, the entire barangay has easy access to safe drinking water," explained Barangay chair Raul Capindit.

The community also received regional recognition for its efforts, winning the Second Grand Prize in the Astig Kan Baybayon Awards, a regional competition for exceptionally performing communities highlighting the key areas of participation, replicability, and impact on the environment. The barangay received a trophy and a service boat as their prize. This recognition further boosted the community's morale and confidence.

Sustainability

Fundamental in ensuring a project's sustainability is getting a community to own that project as theirs and being responsible for it. For this to happen, community members have to constantly be part of that project. "The water system project is community-based and it is up to us to maintain it. Households are consulted regarding the location of faucets. The BAWASA Board formulates policies for the use of the water system. Though at first it was difficult to enforce policies, particularly the one on user's fees, my neighbors eventually realized that it was best for our community," shared Teresita Lopez, chairperson of the BAWASA Board of Directors.

This sense of ownership among community members has been fostered, and they are mindful that the water system is locally managed and owned by the users - themselves. That being so, true and deep respect for each other's right to use the water system leading to proper daily use and continuing care for this project has been allowed to grow. Operationally, social structures such as BAWASA and the SHGs were organized to manage and maintain the facilities while trained plumbers are kept on-hand to directly care for the facilities in the timeliest manner. More, the Barangay Council and the community are conscious of the value of their environment since they now know how it affects their water source. Thus, they take an active part in caring for the watershed to ensure that their source of water is equally taken care of.



Pagbubuong tunay

Isa na namang mangingisda ang umuwing halos walang dala sa kanyang nag-aabang na pamilya. Kakaunti ang isda at maliliit pa ang mga ito. Mukhang kailangan na namang magtiyaga sa kaunting gutom ang mag-asawa para lang makakain nang mas maayos ang kanilang tatlong inaantok pang mga anak. Papasok ang mga ito sa kanilang paaralan at hindi maaaring magutom. Kapag gutom, aantukin sila at hindi makakapakinig sa kanilang mga guro.

Sayang ang pagkakataong matuto at, pagdating ng panahon, ang kakayahang makatulong sa pag-angat ng pamilya kahit kakaunti lang.

Maraming mga iligal na mangingisda at walang pakundangan ang mga itong gumamit ng pasabog sa kanilang pangingisda. Mayroon namang ibang gumagamit pa ng cyanide. Iisa lang ang kahahantungan ng mga ito: Ang malalaki at mga maliliit pang isda ay parehong mamamatay. Wala nang pagkakataong lumaki pa ang mga maliit na isda at wala na rin silang pagkakataong magparami pa. Hindi nga naman nakapagparami pa ang patay.

Hindi nakapagtataka tuloy na kakaunti na lang ang mga isda sa dagat sa paligid ng Barangay Salvacion, Libmanan, Camarines Sur. Hindi rin nakagugulat pa ang katotohanang mahirap ang buhay ng mga Bikolano sa bahaging ito ng kanilang probinsiya at marami ang patuloy na nakararanas ng gutom.

Si Manay Salve

Katatapos lang mag-alaga ni Manay Salve ng kanyang mga baboy at sisilipin naman niya ang tanim na mais at kamoteng kahoy. Pagkatapos nito, tatawagin na niya ang kanyang mga manok (nasa mga limampu ang mga ito at may mga sisiw, inahin, at tandang) para sila naman ang pakainin.

May radyong nakasabit malapit sa kanyang tarangkahan. Katabi ito ng kanyang simpleng cell phone. Kasapi siya ng Bantay Dagat at mahalaga ang radyong ito at ang kanyang telepono para sa mga pagkakataong kailangan niyang humingi ng saklolo sa kanilang Punong Barangay. May mga pagkakataon na kasing lumi-pas na may "naghahanap" sa kanya. Ayon kay Manay Salve, "hina-hanting" daw siya ng ilang may mahahabang mga baril.

Bakit ba hahanapin at pagtatangkaan pa ang buhay ng isang simpleng maybahay? Lyon siguro ang unang dapat linawin. Hindi "simpleng maybahay" si Manay Salve.

Tulad ng marami sa kanyang kapitbahay, hindi naman siya masyadong nakapag-aral. Tulad din ng marami sa kanila, tumigil siya pagkatapos ng elementarya at tumulong na sa mga gawaing bahay. Hindi siya naging tatamad-tamad.

Nakuha niya ito sa tatay niya. "Ang tatay ko masipag. Sinasabi niya noon sa akin, 'Kung may pagkain ka ngayon, kinakailangang madalas kang magtrabaho. Kailangan bago iyan maubos, may kapalit na. Kung may kapalit kang iniisip sa buwan na iyon, sa susunod na buwan, at sa susunod pang buwan uli, ano naman ang pansunod mo doon?'" Dagdag pa nga raw ng ama: "Bago ka kumain sa umaga, dapat magtrabaho ka muna para hindi lugi iyong kinain mo."

Ang mga pangaral na ito ng kanyang ama ang nagsilbing gabay kay Manay Salve. Dahil din dito, napilitan siyang mag-isip ng iba't-ibang paraan para mapakain ang sarili at ang mga mahal sa buhay. Halimbawa na lang, dahil nga hindi na maaaring asahan ang yaman ng dagat sa bawat araw na nagpaparamdam ang tiyan na kulang na ito sa laman, patuloy ang pagtatanim ni Manay Salve sa paligid ng kanyang bahay. Sa kabutihang palad, nabili ng kanyang ama ang karapatan sa lupang ito bago ito pumanaw.

"Kami, kahit kami naghihirap, may saging, may kamoteng kahoy, may manok. Sa amin, ang isang baldeng bigas tumatagal." Bukod pa rito, mayroon din siyang dalawang inahing baka na pinapaalagaan sa iba, isang kalabaw, at ilang mga baboy. "Kung wala kaming sabon o asukal, magbebenta lang ako ng isang manok, PHP 100 na."

Madali ba ang buhay ni Manay Salve? Hindi pero mas sigurado siya kaysa sa kanyang ilang mga kapitbahay na hindi magugutom ang pamilya niya. Malaking bagay na iyon. Ngunit sa bawat pagyanig na dala ng pambobomba ng mga isda, para na ring ang buhay ng mismong pamayanan ang sinisindak. Mahirap ang buhay na kahit may pagkain ay parating may bantang darating ang panahong wala na talagang maibibigay na kabuhayan ang karagatan.

Hindi pwedeng pansarili lang

May nakasabit na radyo at cell phone si Manay Salve malapit sa kanyang tarangkahan. Bakit?

Nagsimula ito sa pangaral ng isa pang “ama,” ang kura paroko sa kanilang simbahan. Sinabi nitong kailangan daw pangalagaan ang karagatan lalo pa’t ito nga ang maaaring maging malaking tulong sa kanilang komunidad. Maraming mga lumba-lumba at pawikang bumibisita dati sa kanilang barangay pero hindi na ngayon. Katay ang inaabot ng mga hayop na ito kaya hindi tumagal ay hindi na sila masilayan sa lugar na ito. Ipinaliwanag ng kura na kung pinapangalagaan sana ang karagatan at matigil hindi lang ang pagkatay sa mga lumba-lumba at pawikan kundi ang pagbomba o paglason sa mga isda, maaari sanang maging pasyalan ng mga turista ang lugar na ito na siyang maaaring magdala pa ng karagdagang pagkakakitaan sa buong komunidad.

Sa ngayon, mahina na ang pangingisda at kung ang dagat ang aasahan sa ikabubuhay ng isang pamilya, malamang may magugutom na naman. Sabi ni Manay Salve, “Grabe ang hirap kung aasa lang sa dagat. Magugutom talaga kami.” Ito na rin ang nagbunsod sa kanya, bukod pa sa pagtatanim at pag-aalaga ng hayop na siyang bumubuhay sa araw-araw sa kanya, sa kanyang asawa, at sa kanilang apo na ipinagkatiwala ng isa nilang anak, na makilahok na rin sa mga pagkilos laban sa ilegal na pangingisda. Hindi ito dahil gusto niyang magutom ang mga pamilya ng mga mangingingisdang ito kundi ayaw niyang magutom silang lahat pagdating ng panahon.

“Maraming nagagalit sa akin kasi pakialamero raw ako,” sumbong niya. Pati ang kanyang asawa at mga anak ay nababahala na rin nga at ilang beses na siyang pinagsabihan noon na tumigil na dala ng paniniwalang walang bayaning hindi namamatay. Sinasagot niya ito gamit ang natutunan sa Bibliya at sa kanyang kura paroko: “Tinuruan akong maging mabungang puno,” hango sa aral na ang mga kahoy na hindi mabunga ay dapat nang putulin. Dagdag pa niya, “Sino ba ang hindi mamamatay? Basta dapat mamatay tayo sa pakikipaglaban sa katotohanan. Kung magpapabaya tayo, mas lalo itong mabigat sa ating konsensiya dahil mabubuhay tayong walang pakialam sa ating kapaligiran.”

Hindi ibig sabihin nitong susugod na lang siya sa lahat ng mga ilegal na mangingingisda upang makipag-away. “Pinupuntahan ko talaga iyan. Pinapakiusapan. Mahina na ang isda at sila pa ang kumukuha tapos hindi naman sila tagarito.” Madalas, ang parati na lang tugon sa kanya ng mga nahuhuli sa mismong pagpapasabog ay ang hindi pagtingin nang diretso, ang karaniwang pagkakamot ng ulo, paghawak sa laylayan ng damit, at ang pagsabi ng, “Hindi naman namin alam na bawal.”

Sa mga pagkakataong ito, walang mahihita ang pakikipag-away o pagmamataas. Sasagutin ito ni Manay Salve ng, “Manoy, ‘wag naman ninyong bombahin kasi bawal na po na binobomba ang coral. Kasi pagdating ng araw, wala nang iitlugan yung mga isda.”

Para rin kasi sa kanya, simple lang: “Ang bawal, bawal talaga.”

Hindi naman siya nag-iilusyong kaya niya itong gawing mag-isa. Nakikipagsangguni at humihingi siya ng tulong sa Punong Barangay at sa mga konsehal. Sa kanila nga nanggaling ang radyong nakasabit sa bahay niya. Dahil daw malapit lang siya sa dagat, mas madali niyang malalaman kung may nambobomba nga. At, too nga, isang araw, habang inaasikaso lang niya ang kanyang karaniwang mga gawaing bahay, isang pagsabog ang bumasag sa katahimikan at nagyanig sa paligid. Nagsigalawan ang mga sanga sa mga punong kahoy sa paligid niya at nagtahulan ang mga aso. Tumalilis siya patungo sa pinakamalapit na konsehal upang magpasama sa dagat. Alam niyang nangingisda ang isa niyang anak at nagpatung-patong ang kaba niya. Sakay ng isang lantsa, napuntahan nila agad ang kinalalagyan ng kanyang anak at ng ilang mga lantsang sakay ang mga mangingingisdang tangan pa ang kanilang mga pasabog. Pinaligiran ng mga ito ang lulan nilang lantsa. Sinubukan na niyang panindigan ang kanyang ipinapakitang katapangan. Sa mga sandaling ito, anim na lantsa na ang nakapalibot sa kanila.

"Inisip kong mamamatay na kami. Hindi ako nagpakita na takot na takot ako. Sabi ko sa kanila, 'Alam ninyo, mga tagarito lang kayo, mga kababayan ko kayo. Dapat nakikipagtulungan kayo. Ako, wala na akong maliit na anak, pero grabe pa ang pagproteksyon ko (sa karagatan). May mga grade one pa kayo at para sa araw-araw ninyong pambaon, diyan kayo umaasa sa dagat. Bakit kayo kumakampi sa mga iligal?' Galit na galit ako pero takot na takot din ako."

Kung ganoon din naman pala, bakit pa nga ba niya ipagpapatuloy ito? Ang mismong asawa na nga niya ang nagsabi na sa kanya dating tumigil na dahil nalalagay na siya sa panganib. Siguro nga, may patak ng dugo ng pagkabayani si Manay Salve at mararamdaman ito sa kanyang sagot: "Ako pa kayang nasa katwiran ang magpapatalo sa kanila? Ano ba ang mamatay ako basta sa paglilingkod sa ating bayan at kalikasan?"

Hindi Basta-basta

Paliwanag niya, "Hindi ako pagkakatiwalaan kung ako'y babaeng basta-basta. Hindi ako makakapagsabi sa mga anak ko na 'hindi iyan maganda' kung ang nakikita nila sa akin ay hindi maganda."

Hindi niya kailanman nalimutang hindi malayo ang narating niya sa pag-aaral at buong pagpapakumbaba niyang sinasabing handa siya itama at ituwid siya ng mas nakaaalam. Pinalalakas itong pagpapakumbabang ito ng isang matayog na adhikain: Ang pangarap na makipagtulungan sa kanyang komunidad. "Gusto kong maisigaw ko ang karaingan ng maliliit na mangingisda, maiparating kahit sa Malacañang na bigyang pansin naman ang karagatan. Iyan ang pangarap ko."

Isang mahalagang bahagi nito ang pag-aaral ukol sa pakikisalamuha at pagtatrabaho kasama ng iba pang mga magtatanggol din sa kalikasan at karagatan. Lagi siyang inaanyayahang dumalo sa mga pulong ng ilang mga NGO at local government unit (LGU) at dahil sa mga natutuhan niya sa mga ito, masaya niyang sinasabing, "Para na akong high school ngayon!" Bukod pa sa maganda niyang pakiramdam na ito, mabilis niyang nakita ang mabuting maidudulot nito sa kanilang adhikain. "Malaki ang naitutulong nito halimbawa, paano ka lalapit kay Mayor? Paano ka makikipag-usap?" Kahit sa mga ito, kitang-kita ang pagpapakumbaba niya. "Kung hindi ako nag people's organization, hindi ako matututong mag-text!", tawa niya. Nagreklamo rin kasi ang ilang nakilala niya sa mga pulong na dinaluhan. Paano nga naman daw ba siya masasabihan ng mga susunod na pulong kung wala man lang siyang cell phone? Napilitan siyang bumili ng isang mumurahing unit at nagpaturo sa kanyang anak kung paano ito gamitin. "Pinag-aralan ko talaga para hindi ako mapahiya," buong pagmamalaki niya.

Ang kanyang komunidad

May pagkatanyag na rin si Manay Salve at hindi siya masaya dito. May ilang pinuno sa komunidad na mada-las magsabi sa mga nagpuputol ng kahoy ng, "Wag kayo diyang magpuputol ng kahoy. Lagot kayo kay Ma-nay Salve." Pailing niyang hinihiling na, "Sabihin ninyo ang bawal sa ating lahat pero wag 'yung lagot kayo kay Manay Salve."

Kasama na rin sa minumungkahi niya ang mas mapayapang pakikipag-usap. Una talaga niyang gamit ang pakikipag-usap at hindi galit. Turo din ito ng kanyang kura: "Kahit nasa matuwid ka, pag gumawa ka na ng masama, talo ka rin. Hindi mo maipaglalaban."

Dahil na rin sa kanyang pagpupunyagi, wala nang nangingisda ngayon sa kanilang barangay na gamit ang mga iligal na paraan kahit na mayroon pa rin sa kanilang karatig barangay. "Nawala kasi (ang iligal na pang-ingisda) kasi nagtutulungan ang Bantay Dagat at ang munisipyo. Isa na kaming modelo."

Kasama na ngayon sa mga pinupuntirya nila ang mahikayat pa ang ibang mga barangay na bitawan na rin ang mga iligal na paraan hindi lamang dahil bawal ito kundi dahil totoong nakasasama ito sa lahat - hindi lamang sa iisang barangay, munisipalidad, probinsiya, o rehiyon. "Bakit hindi pa ito ginagawa ng ibang munisipyo? Kaya nga hindi ako umiiwas pag may mga meeting."

Hindi rin naman manhid si Manay Salve sa kahirapan ng buhay ng mga gumagamit ng ilegal na paraan. Ang pagpapaliwanag niya ay ganito: “Kailangan nilang mapag-isip ng ibang hanapbuhay. Hindi naman talaga dahilan iyong mag-ilegal kasi walang hanapbuhay. Ako mahirap. Kung walang-wala talaga kami, mangungutang muna ako sa tindahan. Pag nagkapera, babayaran ito agad. Yung dating mga ilegal (sa kanilang barangay) nagtanim o nakitanim sa ibang may lupa. Babayaran na lang ang may-ari ng tanim pagdating ng ani. Paano ang punla? May galing sa munisipyong libreng pampunla – mais, gulay, atbp. Ako, kung may sobra pang pampunla, namimigay ako.”

Paano ang ayaw maghanap ng ibang paraan o gumawa ng ibang paraan para magkahanapbuhay? “Tamad o mahina ang utak.”

Masakit sigurong pakinggan ngunit matatag si Manay Salve dito. “Kung ano ang kakayahan nating itulong sa kapwa, sa barangay, sige lang tayo nang sige basta hindi naapektuhan ang pamilya.” Kung iisipin nga naman, kung magpapabaya ngayon tungkol sa kalikasan at karagatan, darating ang panahong wala na itong maibibigay pa sa tao at ang mga tao mismo ang mahihirapan din. Ang pagiging strikto ni Manay Salve sa kanyang mga kabarangay at pati na sa mga dayo ay pangangalaga lang din naman sa kanilang kapakanan kahit hindi pa nila ito nauunawaan. Para sa kanya, maaaring magsimula ang pagbabago sa magandang ugnyan at pagpapaliwanag at ito na rin mismo ang magdadala sa mas mabuting hantungan.

Si Salve Hermina ay Presidente ng Matanglawin Fisherfolks Association, isang organisasyon ng mga magingisda sa Barangay Salvacion, Libmanan, Camarines Sur. Ang kanyang organisasyon ay bahagi ng Camarines Sur CSOs’ Network for Development, Inc. (CAMSURNET), isang provincial network na miyembro ng Coalition for Bicol Development (CBD).

(English version)

Getting things together

Salve Hermina

Another fisherman comes home to his eagerly waiting family with hardly any catch. There was hardly any fish and those that were there were tiny. It seems the fisherman and his wife will have to endure a little hunger to make sure their three still-sleepy children have something to eat. The kids are going to school and they cannot be allowed to grow hungry. If they’re hungry, they’ll be sleepy and won’t be able to listen to their teacher properly. The chance to learn and eventually become better capable to help the family escape poverty may just go to waste.

There are many illegal fishermen and they have no issues in using explosives in their fishing activities. There are even others who use cyanide. These two activities result in one thing: Both full-grown fish and very young ones will die. The young fish will have no chance to reach their maturity and they won’t be able to reproduce. The dead cannot reproduce after all.

It is not surprising, therefore, that there are now very few fish in the waters around Barangay Salvacion, Libmanan, Camarines Sur. It’s likewise no shock that the lives of many in this part of the province remain a challenge and that numerous households often experience hunger.

Manay Salve

Manay Salve has just finished caring for her pigs and will have a look at her corn and cassava plants. After this, she’ll be calling out to her chickens (around 50 heads in all ranging from tiny chicks to full-grown hens and roosters) for their turn at getting fed.

There’s a two-way radio hanging near her main door right next to a small, low-cost cellular phone. She’s a member of the Bantay Dagat (Sea Watch) and that radio and cellular phone are very important in case she

needs to get help from the Barangay Captain. There have been some instances in the past when there were some men “looking” for her while they clutched their high-powered firearms.

Why would people like these look for her or even threaten the life of a “plain housewife?” This is something that needs some clarification.

Like many of her neighbors, she wasn’t able to go get an education beyond the elementary grades. She stopped schooling after sixth grade and started helping out in her home. She didn’t allow herself to be lazy, however.

She got this from her father. “My father was industrious. He would tell me, ‘If you have food now, you have to keep working. Before your food is gone, you need have something to replace it already. If you have something to replace it this month, then the next month, and then the month after that, what about the month after?’” He would also add, “Before you eat breakfast, you have to work first so that you don’t owe anything by having breakfast.”

These lessons from her father guided her. It was also because of all these that she has not stopped finding ways to feed herself and her loved ones. For example, since the sea cannot be relied upon to provide the necessary sustenance for a noisily grumbling stomach, Manay Salve continues to plant different items around her home. Fortunately for her, her father was able to buy the land before he passed on.

“Even if we’re poor, we have bananas, cassava, chickens. That’s why for us, even a pail of rice will last a long time.” Aside from this, she also has two female cows that are being cared for by others, a carabao, and a few pigs. “If we don’t have soap or sugar, I just sell chicken. That’s PHP 100 already.”

Is her life easy then? Hardly, but she is much more sure to not grow hungry as compared to some of her neighbors. That’s nothing to belittle.

However, every time the silence of their neighborhood is rocked by the explosion brought about by illegal fishing activities, the life of the whole community itself is sent reeling. A life, even with food, can be made much harder if there is always the threat that one day soon, the sea will not be able to provide any more sustenance.



Not only for the self

There's a two-way radio and a cellular phone hanging by Manay Salve's door. Why?

Things started with another father figure in her life, her parish priest. He was the one who introduced her community to the need to care for the seas especially since a good part of the community relied on it for their livelihood. It used to be that numerous dolphins and sea turtles would frequent the area but not anymore. These animals usually ended up on the chopping board and it didn't take long before these animals were more of a memory to the residents. The parish priest explained that if the seas were cared for and the slaughter of the dolphins and sea turtles would stop along with the use of explosives and cyanide in fishing, the area could become a tourist destination bringing with it some tangible economic benefits.

The fishing is quite weak now and if the sea were to be relied upon to support a family, it's very probable that some people would go hungry again. Manay Salve laments this saying, "It is really very difficult if one relies solely on the sea. We would really grow hungry." This is what pushed her to join efforts to stop all forms of illegal fishing. This is not just about not wanting her loved ones to grow hungry; it is because she doesn't want any of them to be hungry years down the road.

"Many have accused me of being a busybody," she complains. Even her husband and sons have shown much concern and have even told her to stop what she was doing saying that no hero didn't eventually die. She responds to this using what she learned from both the Bible and her parish priest: "I was taught to be a fruitful tree," from the story that talked of cutting down a tree that bore no fruit. She then adds, "Who doesn't die? We just have to die fighting for the truth. If we were to be careless, it would weigh heavily on our conscience since we would die not having cared for our environment."

This does not mean that she'll rush towards illegal fishermen looking for a fight. "I would go to them and talk to them. The fishing is already quite scarce here and they're from the outside who get the little we have left." Often, the response these illegal fishermen caught in the act of using explosives is to not look at her straight in the eye, scratch their heads, hold on to the edges of their t-shirts, and to say, "We didn't know it was not allowed."

In these instances, there is nothing to be gained by getting into a fight or being haughty. Manay Salve realizes this and tells them, "Manoy, don't use explosives because it's illegal to bomb the coral. If you keep doing it, there will come a time when the remaining fish will not have any place to lay their eggs."

For her, though, things are really simple: "What's illegal is illegal."

She doesn't have any delusion that she can do this all alone either. She asks for help from the Barangay Captain and the councilors. It was actually from them that the radio hanging near her door came. Since she does live quite close to the sea, she can more easily be aware if someone were using explosives again.

This proved to be true as one day, while she was busy with her usual household chores, a loud explosion rocked the stillness of that warm late morning. The leaves and branches shook and the nearby dogs started barking at something they still could not see. She rushed towards the nearest Barangay councilor to ask him to accompany her to the sea. She knew that one of her own sons was fishing in the same area and her fear began to increase uncontrollably. Aboard a pump boat, they were able to reach her son and the illegal fishermen who were still clutching their explosives. These men in six different boats surrounded their two smaller ones. Manay Salve decided to be the brave woman she believed herself to be.

"I really thought that we would die but I didn't show them I was petrified. I told them, 'You guys are from here; you are my neighbors. You should be helping the community out. I don't have any more small kids but I still do my best to protect the sea. You people still have children in grade one and you have to rely on the sea for their food every day. Why do you side with what is illegal?' I was fuming mad though I was still consumed by fear."

If such an incident could happen, why then is she still involved in the care for the sea? Her own husband has pleaded with her to stop since it does put her in danger. Perhaps she does have a few drops of hero's blood in her and this can be seen in her response: "I'm in the right so why should I allow myself to lose to them? So what if I die as long as it's in the service of our country and environment?"

Not just any woman

She explains that, "No one will trust me if I'm just a common woman. I won't be able to tell my children if something is not good if what they see in me is not good either."

She never forgot that she's not as educated as she wanted to be and she humbly expresses her openness to be corrected by anyone who knows better. This humility is strengthened by a lofty aspiration: The dream of helping her community. "I want to shout about the malaise faced by poor fishermen and bring even to Malacañang the need to give attention to our environment. That is my dream."

An integral part of this is learning to deal and work with other advocates of the environment and the seas. She is now often asked to join meetings of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and local government units and because of all she's learned in these sessions, she now proudly says, "It's like I'm in high school!". Aside from the good feeling this gives her, this experience has also shown her what else this can all do for her advocacy. "This has helped a lot in, say, how one can approach the Mayor for help. How does one talk to someone like that?"

Even in this, her modesty still shines through. "If I didn't join a people's organization, I would not have learned to text!" she laughs. Some of the people she met in those meetings had complained that with her not having a cell phone, it would be so difficult to contact her. How then were they to inform her of new meetings? She bought herself a cheap unit and got one of her sons to teach her how to use it. "I studied it so that I wouldn't be embarrassed," she now proudly recalls.



Her community

Manay Salve is a bit well known now and, amusingly, she's not that happy with it. Some local officials would use her name to tell off people who were cutting down trees saying they'd get it from Manay Salve if they got caught. She shakes her head with such stories and asks, "Tell people what's illegal but please, don't tell them it's because they'd get it from me."

She also advocates more peaceful talks. She would much rather talk first and not resort to anger. This is also part of what her parish priest taught her: "Even if you're in the right, if you do something bad, you still lose. You cannot defend such an action."

There are currently no more illegal fishermen in her immediate community and this is partly because of her own efforts though there are still some in other nearby communities. "Illegal fishing disappeared here because of the collaboration between the Bantay Dagat and the municipal government. We are now a model for others to follow."

One of their targets now is to get other barangays to let go of illegal ways of fishing not only because these are illegal but, more importantly, because they are not beneficial for anyone - not only for one barangay, municipality, province, or region. "Why don't other municipalities do this? That's why I can't avoid attending any meeting."

Manay Salve is not callous to the difficult life faced by those who employ illegal means in their fishing activities. She counters it this way though: They have to think about other ways to earn a living. It doesn't necessarily follow that you have to resort to illegal means just because you need a way to make a living. I'm poor. If there are days that we have nothing, I will borrow what I need from the nearby store. When I have money, I will pay immediately. Those who used to employ illegal means began planting or asked to plant in other people's land. They just paid these people when they harvest what they planted. What about the seeds? The municipality gives these for free - corn, vegetables, others. Me, if I have extra seeds, I give them to my neighbors.

What about those who don't want to find other ways to support themselves? "They're just lazy or not that smart."

This may seem harsh but Manay Salve is firm in this belief. "Whatever we can do to help others or the barangay, we should keep doing as long as our families are not adversely affected." If we think about it, if nobody took care of the environment or the sea, there will come a time when these will not be able to give anything to humanity and it is humanity, in the end, that will suffer. Manay Salve's firm position with the people in her barangay and even visitors is merely a way to care for them and their welfare even if they, themselves, don't understand it yet. For her, change can begin from good relationships and proper explanation and it is these things that will bring about a good resolution to all concerns.

Salve Hermina is the President of Matanglawin Fisherfolks Association, a fishers organization based in Barangay Salvacion, Libmanan, Camarines Sur. Her organization is part of the Camarines Sur CSOs' Network for Development, Inc. (CAMSURNET) which is a provincial network member of the Coalition for Bicol Development (CBD).

05 EVNET: The Power to be One



It used to be thought that there has to be one hero or heroine in the mold of an Andres Bonifacio or Gabriela Silang to effect change. That is hardly the case and the revolutions of the past – both bloody and otherwise like the EDSA Revolution of 1986 ousting the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos – have shown that the power really lies in the people even if there were some personalities like Cory Aquino, Fidel Ramos and Jaime Cardinal Sin who led the charge. Eventually, it was the concerted effort of regular, ordinary people, capacitated in different but complementary ways that led to success and something that could be sustained. Unfortunately, the reverse is also true: when people are not capacitated, they can get lost and opportunities for greatness may pass without having been utilized.

This is where the power of people's organizations and non-government organizations lies. Pauline Lawsin, Executive Director of Eastern Visayas Network of NGOs and POs (EVNet), understands this all too well and explains that, "It's recognizing that our influence can only be effective when there are more of us working together, raising our voices together. One organization will not be able to sustain that influence and will not gain the respect of the civil society community. We will have to work together."

The Eastern Visayas region is fertile ground to prove this. There are people's organizations, such as senior citizens organizations and women's organizations, aside from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations (CSOs). The landscape is rather diverse that EVNet even includes networks as part of its membership. "We're still small but we're initiating the expansion of the membership," Pauline explains.

It is not just building up the network that is their concern now, though. It is ensuring that all members of the network are able to achieve their fullest potential and this is by way of capacitating them properly. The main thrust? "Always capacity - building, capacitating, and linking civil society organizations to be able to engage local government units (LGUs) and get involved in local governance," she adds. "We need to capacitate them so that they can come up with their own agenda at the local (municipal) level to reduce poverty, increase resilience, and use that agenda when engaging with the local government unit... When they sit in the different councils at the local level, they bring the agenda they agreed on as a community of CSOs in their municipality."

Could this not constitute an overstepping of roles by the CSOs? Hardly, as this is an integral part of the whole idea behind getting more people involved in the governance of their community. Pauline explains further that, "The agenda are based on the functions of the LGUs. These refer to the services supposed to be provided by them." More, the agenda are not just fanciful creations of an idle public suddenly turned active by the chance at influencing their surroundings. The agenda are based on a CSO satisfaction report card (CSRC). The CSOs rate the local government unit in terms of the availability of certain services. Is there housing? Is there solid waste management? Are health services available in terms of their ability to access, the availability of information? It should all be there." While the first major venue for presenting the CSOs' agenda is at the municipal level, they can easily be brought to other platforms to include the provincial, regional, and even national venues because municipal governments also have their limitations and challenges.

One of the main ideas that must be made clear, however, is the fact that CSOs such as people's organizations (POs) and NGOs are not the enemies of the LGU. This is something that should be clear to not only the LGU and its officials but to the CSOs as well. "They are actually partners," Pauline stresses, "because they advocate services and programs that should be there and these CSOs have slowly gained the savvy to engage the LGUs."

It is challenging though if a local chief executive maintains a hardline stance. This is when the power of a network can be felt. "We engage our network in the region and in the country (e.g., the CODE-NGO family) to solve and address these issues." Simply put, to influence a hardliner, it may be necessary to get help from a much bigger network so that somebody who can sway or guide a hardliner. If necessary, CSOs can approach the provincial, regional, or even national leadership for their advocacy. "We have to act, to work with each other, to agree to bring out voices together. That's the only choice we have."

Pauline puts this concerted act of speaking out to bring concerns to local authorities beside how it was during the time of Martial Law when the order of the day was just to stay silent. "Being under the dark days of Martial Law, you had to be silent. You couldn't talk openly about poverty. You couldn't talk about the people because if you even use the term 'people,' you would be labelled a communist." Things are different now as people are supposed to be more able to air their concerns. To this, Pauline poses the question to not only her own organization but its member organizations: "If we don't talk, what use is our voice when we don't use it?" The unity among CSOs goes beyond the realization that they are more powerful and influential together; it is also built on recognizing that one of the biggest issues hounding the country is still there. "It's

the poverty situation that has been hounding us that keeps us together because we really have to work on it together and continue to advocate the programs that should be implemented.”

Which comes first?

It is difficult to address problems when you don't have the necessary skills or capabilities to deal with them. However, you also lose time when you focus on getting capacitated rather than trying to address very real, pressing concerns that affect society. To deal with such a situation necessitates doing both at the same time while being open to the possibility of making mistakes and then correcting these as you go along. “While we do our advocacy, we do our capacity building,” Pauline smiling says.

It is necessary to do this since there are quite a number of issues to deal with – the environment and getting more of the public to participate in the workings of government. “Patronage politics is so deeply imbedded. It's there and if we don't use the mechanisms that are there, if we don't maximize the space that is there, we won't be able to make a dent in addressing and reducing patronage politics. Only those who are capacitated, only those who know their rights, only those who know the law can understand if something is not right, that something has to stop.” Many Filipinos are unwitting or perhaps witting participants in patronage politics and it takes a lot of education to rectify this situation. Many now just look at the little trinkets politicians throw around during elections (e.g., t-shirts, ballpoint pens, calendars, food packs, etc.) or the momentary societal advantages they can get from exploitative and traditional politicians without having gotten a view of any long-term effects.

A possible answer to this? Pauline proposes that, “We have to increase the number of people and organizations that know their rights, who know the law, who know the spaces that are there, who appreciate and recognize the beauty of working together so that we can overcome (our situation).”

To deal with issues like this and others like those related to the environment, the local civil society organizations and people's organizations must not only know what to do but also who to work with and how to maximize such partnerships. This is why EVNet has chosen to focus on capacitating CSOs. EVNet looks at what it really can do to help its members help more directly. This is not an issue of avoiding getting the hands dirty. It is focusing on core competency and making sure others maximize their own core competencies.

“We don't implement projects; we don't provide direct service delivery because it is our members who do that. We may, in the future, get into monitoring projects, monitoring the environment as long as it involves CSO participation in the planning and monitoring.”

Further to capacitating members, EVNet has the distinct capability of connecting the right people with each other so that they can work together and achieve the greatest benefit. “We envision a network as deep as the barangay, as wide as the region so that those CSO leaders are actually our contacts in the barangay. If something happens, we have a contact. We will be able to gather ourselves and come up with at least an initial assessment.”

This idea was proven instrumental in the network's ability to respond to the effects of Typhoon Ruby (international name: Hagupit) in Eastern Samar. Though EVNet's base is in Tacloban, they did have people all the way to the barangay level giving up-to-date information. The information they had on the barangay, municipal, and provincial level was shared with the CODE-NGO community and this allowed NGOs around the country to respond in various ways to help those affected by the typhoon. Their members closest to the affected areas were able to assess the situation and make the most appropriate proposal regarding emergency response.

The people of EVNet were profoundly affected by Typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan) and they were able to act in a much more informed way because of it. Their area being what it is, they do have an appreciation of the fact that disaster risk reduction cannot ever be taken for granted nor belittled. This is very

important for them because most people in the provinces of Leyte and Samar are so used to typhoons that their preparations for it have been mostly focused on preparing some daing or dried fish, some candles and batteries, a radio, an ample supply of rice, and hardly anything else. Yolanda woke everybody up and told both these provinces that their past experiences could not anymore be used to inform preparations. The experience of Yolanda showed the whole country that there was an entirely new ballgame being played on a much higher level. This is something that EVNet and its members will have to continue preparing for. Indeed, some were actually asking right after Haiyan: "How does one prepare adequately for something like this?".

These experiences have led to capacitating members and even the whole network in how to respond to such situations. Included here now is how CSOs from neighboring provinces can come in. For example, within the CODE-NGO network, Bicol CSOs have been designated the first responders to any major events in Leyte while Cebu CSOs are in charge of Samar. Help can then come from all over.



Looking to the future

If some reports are to be believed, the areas of Leyte and Samar will experience a Yolanda-level event every five years or so. If that's the case, another Yolanda may be coming by 2018. An unprepared community will just suffer the devastation it suffered in 2013. However, a community that went through some soul-searching and honest assessment of itself leading to proper and ample preparation will not be caught as flatfooted.

This is what the CSOs and POs of Eastern Visayas want to be. That's what EVNet is trying to be. "We'd like to be a very potent regional network with more inclusive membership and increase the number of CSOs able to engage local governments and national governments very well. Also, we want ourselves and our members to be able to support ourselves and sustain our programs. For sustainability, we always aim for capacity building for our members."

This is what EVNet is all about. It can be more, that is true, and it will be. Right now, it is very focused on what it is: A network leading its members by means of giving them the necessary tools to care for themselves and their communities.



PROFILE 03

Melbourga **'Meling'**

Corregidor

Board member,
Eastern Visayas Network
of NGOs and POs

Getting things to work

You can't be 80 plus years old and still be active, right? Wrong. You certainly can and you certainly can be of service to your community still. She comes from a time when it was just natural for people who have been blessed with much to give back to society. This is something she hopes will return especially since she does note that there seems to be quite a number of problems in governance and the sense of service that people now have.

Manang Meling Corregidor was born in a time when people were taught to be gracious hosts and to be conscientious of their fellow human beings, when people were supposed to think not only of themselves but others as well. She was also taught to be very proud of where she came from. She was also taught to always listen. Ingrained in her is a sense of service that comes from her upbringing and what she refers to as her strong Catholic faith. These are some of the values that continue to guide her.

However, with her age has also come wisdom that seems to be still lost on many social development workers. While she stresses that part of her obligation is helping others, she also underscores with equal emphasis the truth that true NGO (non-governmental organization) workers will have to leave a community they help once the people know what to do already. There should be no “messianic complex” and no overstaying. The goal is to empower people and not make them overly reliant on you or the NGO you represent. That is something very clear to Manang Meling. What happens when an NGO worker keeps allowing a community to rely on that NGO? She responds to this thus: “Hindi ka pala tumulong. (You didn’t help after all.) They should know.”

This, however, presupposes one more thing: Before an NGO or civil society organization (CSO) leaves a place, it has to make sure that the community can truly manage on its own already, that it has been empowered with the right set of tools, mechanisms, and knowledge. “This is why we have sharers of capability, of leadership skills, team-building techniques – all of that... Once the people know what to do, we leave it to them,” she smiles contentedly.

It isn’t lost on her, however, that there are numerous issues surrounding many NGOs and this she blames on too much politics both inside some NGOs and how it deals with other organizations or even the government. What is lamentable though is when some organizations are unable to deal directly with local officials to attain their goals of helping their community. Whether they like it or not, dealing with local officials – whether they are seasoned politicians or neophytes – is necessary in the world of public service and development work. No NGO can do things alone and Manang Meling knows this all too well. “They don’t speak with politicians. I do. If they are not courageous, they will fail.” One major reason for this is simple: If a politician doesn’t like you or your projects, that person will block or delay your efforts. Worse, your project may just never see the light of day.

For example, there was one instance where a relatively unutilized building of the Presidential Management Staff in Northern Samar was identified as a possible school building. Manang Meling had already noticed several times that school children at the age of six or seven walking along a busy road just to get to school. This building would definitely help those children and their families as they would not need to feel rushed in the morning and would be able to enjoy a bit more time in bed. As luck would have it, the newly-elected Mayor lost in that barangay and, because of this, he didn’t feel like allowing that building to be made into a school. As soon as Manang Meling heard of this, she went to the Mayor and implored him to allow the project to continue. She explained, quite simply, that because he did lose in that barangay in the past elections, he really needed to get these people on his side and make them believe that he was their ally and not their adversary. She even told him that she, herself, would go to the community and let them know that it was indeed his idea to have the building refurbished and opened as a school house. It wasn’t long after that the school was opened, the Mayor was welcomed, and that he was re-elected while garnering the most number of votes in that barangay. One major thing she taught the Mayor was the idea that politics is an exercise in addition and not subtraction. This was truly a case to show that. Not only did the Mayor have a new project to his name (with Manang Meling doing most of the work), he also had more supporters now.

Something similar happened but this time with the New People’s Army (NPA). This barangay needed repairs to its school building and while Manang Meling had found the funds for all the repairs, there was a concern by some that the NPA would come in and make things difficult. That wasn’t the case. In fact, some NPA members were part of the construction crew. Manang Meling had already spoken to them and made it clear that there was no politics involved here and that this was completely for the benefit of the children in the area – the children of those NPA members. Since they were always in the barangay, she just asked them for their help. She got them involved and made sure that they never felt that they weren’t part of the process.

In other cases, she has had to completely move despite people in government. There was an instance that a plot of land was available for the use of a local community where they could, conceivably, put up a building for things like meetings and training sessions for capacity building. The local executive went with her to look at the place still fallow and surrounded by thick wild grass the height of an average Filipino male, gave the idea a cursory glance, and then moved on. Not to be daunted, she spoke directly with the land owner and secured the right to have a building built there and found the funding necessary to get a building built. Three years later, the same public official was asked to visit the place. He couldn't understand how the thing came to be there and that the thick grass the height of an average Filipino male was all gone, replaced by much more pleasant flowering plants. Little did he know that Manang Meling had told herself and those around her three years before this that, "Let's not depend on the local government. Let's do it by ourselves. Mahihiya na lang sila pag nakita nila. (They will feel embarrassed when they see.)" Indeed, it seems this is what happened.

Getting the landowner in the previous example to let go of the land rights was not a simple matter either. It is instances like this that Manang Meling uses both her charm and her ability to get people to think beyond themselves. She talks to people like land owners to convince them of their social responsibility and the futility of hanging on to land they're not using anyway. "Mamamatay na lang kayo at ang lupa ninyo di ninyo madadala sa kabaong. (You will die and that land you won't be able to take to your grave.)"

Humility and humility

Though Manang Meling has indeed come from a wealth of experience and certainly enjoys quite a bit of influence not only in Leyte where she now lives but also in her native Samar, she insists that "Humility is a great virtue especially in the barangays. You have to be very humble." This comes from the belief that if someone asks for help, then you should give the best possible help and service within your capability and capacity. "If it is not within your capability, you cannot be of good service," she explains.

When it comes to having to deal with the various personalities in the world of social development and NGO work, when one has to deal with the pigheaded politician who thinks he's God's gift to the world, the know-it-all local official who hardly knows what to do in actual situations, the humble rising star whom you want to work with for years to come, or the jaded former idealist who is now usually pessimistic about the future, it's all a balancing act and an exercise in being able to stretch this way or that way. In many cases, this is the only way to get people to work together for the good of the people.

Manang Meling smiles at this and shares simply what her own father taught her, "Be like the bamboo. The taller you grow, the lower you must bend."

06 MINCODE-

PAKISAMA-Mindanao:

People empowerment and bottom-up budgeting (BUB)



Giving Voice to the Poor

Bottom-Up Budgeting and the quest for **people empowerment**

Yusoph Udoy clearly remembers the day when he and his family had to evacuate from their homes in Barangay Tagabakid, Sitio Kulilisi in Davao Oriental. Then Philippine President Joseph Estrada had declared an all-out war on Muslim rebels in Mindanao and over a million individuals were displaced from their homes, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation and abuse.

Twelve years after this incident, Udoy and his family, together with their Muslim brothers and sisters, finally found solace in Purok Consuelo, Mati, Davao Oriental. The residents of Purok Consuelo received organic farming training from their local government unit and they took it upon themselves to enrich the three-hectare land they lived on.

“Nagtatanim kami dito ng alugbati, mga prutas at gulay tulad ng sitaw, pechay, saka yung ibang lugar tina-taniman namin ng palay (We plant Malabar spinach, fruits and vegetables like string beans and cabbage and in other places we plant rice.),” Udoy shared. “Dito kami kumukuha ng pang pagkain namin, yung iba ay inilalako at naibebenta, kaya kahit maliit, kumikita na din kami (This is where we get our everyday food. The other stuff we sell so even though it’s not much, we do still earn.),” he added.

The organic farm, which is sustainable and profitable, provided the people of Purok Consuelo with so much hope and promise, that they developed it into a model farm and presented it as a model project and presented it for funding in the first Bottom-Up Budgeting (BUB) initiative in 2013. They took part in the workshops and conferences organized by the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka - Mindanao (PAKISAMA - Mindanao) to help participants gear up for the BUB designed to “reduce poverty significantly” through ensuring that the development needs of the identified 609 target municipalities/cities were addressed. Udoy was, like many of his neighbors, a member of Kagan Development Association, Mati, Davao Oriental (KADAMDO). The learning and demo farm was eventually relocated in 2015 to Tagabakid, another barangay Mati where most of the KADAMDO members lived.

KADAMDO-PAKISAMA then participated in the BUB process in the City of Mati and in the process proposed projects that would help them complete the establishment of their demo and learning farm and other poverty alleviation projects. They soon benefitted from the following:

- 1) Five units open sea fishing boats and paraphernalia from DSWD (2013)
- 2) The establishment of a seed bank and organic vegetable gardening (2014)
- 3) The purchase of small ruminants and fowl for the KADAMDO organic demo and learning farm (2014)

Things seemed to be in KADAMDO’s favor even recently as it was given an organic corn mill in 2015 from the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) of the Department of Agriculture.



This whole process took into consideration the needs of poor communities through a local poverty reduction action plan created and formulated with the participation of the basic sector organizations and other civil society organizations (CSOs) in the city. "This was something new to the community, and we are all very happy about this initiative," said Louise Lampon, coordinator of PAKISAMA-Mindanao.

The case of Udoy is but an example of how the very real and concrete needs of a community can truly be taken into consideration both by the local government and civil society. This was in line with the Philippine government's goal then of having more people's participation and transparency in the budget process that would provide effective mechanisms for poverty reduction initiatives. The BUB was designed to take into account what the poor and marginalized had to say about the poverty alleviation and development projects and programs that were being implemented through the expansion of CSO involvement in the budgeting process. This approach was applied in preparation for the 2013 national budget. "This is a groundbreaking action and it opened so many windows of engagement between government units and the people," Lampon added.

The Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO), its member networks including the Mindanao Coalition of Development NGO Networks (MINCODE) and its affiliated organizations, like PAKISAMA-Mindanao and other partner organizations participated in the orientation and consultation sessions conducted from February to March 2012 in preparation for the BUB process.

Birth Pains

With all its good intentions, the BUB has not been without imperfections. Emmalyn Legal, provincial coordinator of PAKISAMA-Mindanao, was witness to the haggling between the CSOs and the Mati local government unit (LGU). "The LGU had its own pet projects that it wanted to fund and promote," Legal said. She added that while the projects being pushed by the Mati LGU were not intended for poverty reduction, they still got the bulk of the budget, leaving the CSOs with PHP 5 million out of the allocated fund of PHP 24 million for this initiative in Mati.

The projects proposed by the CSOs had to give way to the "priority projects" of the LGU because the Commission on Audit (COA) would allow disbursements only for certain expenses. The CSOs, being new in this unchartered territory, were not as yet familiar with these priority projects. Moreover, the LGUs were not receptive to the idea of devolving the decision-making process to the people, especially when it came to the budget process. "Ang LGUs ay may kultura na sila lang ang nagdedesisyon, at hindi sila sanay sa mga tunay at transparent na consultation process katulad ng mekanismo ng BUB (The LGUs has this culture where only they make the decisions and they are not used to true transparency when it comes to the consultation process as it exists in the BUB)," Lampon explained. Lampon continued to say that it would be good if the BUB were institutionalized to make the LGUs work with the CSOs and grassroots in decision making processes.

There were also organizations that were reluctant to participate, thinking they would only be used as mere rubberstamps in the budget process. Other organizations chose not to attend and participate at all.

On the part of the LGUs in Mindanao, there were those who set limits on the workshops and actual planning. For example, there were LGU personnel who did not allow questions during the BUB-LAPP process. There were also instances where some LGUs took the lion's share of the budget.

Moving Forward

PAKISAMA-Mindanao and the CSOs who participated in the BUB initiative have been optimistic about the future saying that, "This is empowerment." Despite all the hurdles, Lampon said PAKISAMA-Mindanao would continue organizing its affiliated organizations and promote citizen-government engagement. She made this very clear saying, "This is part of PAKISAMA's empowering program," since the BUB process had already "opened the eyes of the ordinary citizens" and made them feel important, valued, and inspired.

"Madaming nagsabi na 'pwede pala kami pakinggan' kapag sila ay nag participate, nag engage...Pwede pala naming itulak ang aming mga karapatan (Many have recognized that they could be listened to when they participated and engaged in dialogue and that we could truly fight for our rights)," Lampon revealed.

Legal shared this view adding that she saw this as a positive and concrete proof that the government was serious in its poverty alleviation plan. She said the people who participated in the BUB process were happy and hopeful. "Na-empower at na-capacitate yung mga tao; dati hindi yan nangyayari (The people have been empowered and capacitated. This had not happened before.)," Legal said. "Kahit naging mahirap itong BUB ngayong taon, sasali pa din kami sa mga susunod na taon (Even though the BUB proved to be difficult this year, we will still take part in it next year)," she assured.

This statement was echoed by the participants of the BUB process as shown in the statement of Remedios Arios, a 74-year old member of the Tagibo Tagbinunga Buso Forest Land Farmers Association (TATABUFLA): "Sa tanda kong ito, hindi ko akalaing matatanong ako kung anong gusto kong proyekto ang maipatupad dito sa lugar namin (In my age, I never thought I would be asked what kind of project I wanted for our area)." Arios expressed her joy that her proposals, along with those of her neighbors', were included in the 2013 budget. "Mas maganda ito kasi nabibigyang aksyon ang pangangailangan ng mga tao (This is much better because the needs of the people are now being addressed.)," Arios ended.

(Editor's note: As this goes to print in November 2016, the fate of Bottom Up Budgeting (BUB) is uncertain. The new Budget and Management Secretary, Benjamin Diokno, has openly criticized BUB and promised to stop it. The proposed national government budget for FY2017 which was submitted to Congress in August 2016 deleted BUB and replaced it with the Assistance to Disadvantaged Municipalities (ADM). However, the allocation was cut by almost half to only 19 Billion Pesos and the guidelines for ADM issued by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) scrapped the role of local CSOs and the Local Poverty Reduction Action Team (LPRAT) in the identification of the projects to be funded and instead authorized the mayor and one CSO to be identified by the mayor to select the projects. Various organizations are now advocating for the revision of the ADM guidelines to make these more participatory and transparent.)

PROFILE **04** Andrea Maria Patricia
'Pat' Sarenas

Chairperson, Mindanao Coalition of
Development NGO Networks



A Woman's time for action

Often, it is the person reluctant to be in the spotlight who is best suited for the challenges at hand. This is especially true when a person is thrust into a difficult situation and that person has to act in the best possible way as a person of substance and genuine action.

This seems to have been the case with Patricia M. Sarenas who, at a rather young age, was already surrounded by what many consider to be one of the Philippines' darkest moments - Martial Law under dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Pat and some of her friends from college who were slowly becoming aware of the things around them, getting more concerned, and, little by little, getting radicalized and finding the radical movement ever more attractive. It didn't take long for some of these friends to join the underground movement, having lost hope in the usual structures of democracy successfully silenced by the Philippine strongman.

Among her friends was Atenean, Edgar Jopson, whom she met in the moderate National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP). Pat lost touch with him after graduation from college and she later found out that Edjop became more active in the protest movement. He had been famous for meeting with Marcos in Malacañang in an effort to get him to sign an agreement saying that the President wouldn't seek a third term in office. Marcos chided him saying he was just the son of a grocer. Edjop calmly replied, "Honest grocer naman." It was events like the eventual capture of Jopson by government forces later on and his subsequent murder after the young student leader had finally joined the underground (that were shocking to deeply pained Pat and she mourned the loss of her friend who died in practically her backyard of Davao City. Soon, it was the death of another legendary figure, Ninoy Aquino, which finally got her to sit up and be moved to action.

Having a family and being fully cognizant of her responsibilities as a mother prevented her from going the usual route of protestors. She instead chose what some would consider the road less travelled by going into social development work -- much lower profile but nonetheless effective and important.

The experience of Martial Law had taught her how important freedom (is) to a person for without freedom, one cannot even dream, cannot even hope. It continues to be her dream at present that people should have the freedom to hope. "How can you hope? The freedom to dream. That's where you start." What happens when there is hardly any freedom as in the case during the dark days of the Marcos Regime? "Where's democracy? Where's development? It's not gonna happen. When people cannot dream for a better life because there is oppression."

Her ideas regarding freedom, hope, and dreams influenced her especially as she got involved in women's issues and, in time, issues involving the women of Mindanao who suffered multiple burdens - they were poor, they were women and for some, they were Muslims.

Her being a wife and mother gave her a different lens with which to look at reality. She believes that a lot of issues society faces now can find their roots in how people have been raised and socialized. She believes that even things like community organizing should go back to values formation, "This is where the women's movement can really play a part because we can start with looking at our own life's experiences, our own stories."

What does she mean by this? Quite simply, it is at a mother's lap that children can start becoming good human beings. For example, when speaking about the rather vindictive and violence-prone stance of some current leaders, she argues that, "A six-year old boy sees the kill rhetoric, the destroy rhetoric, and the disrespect for women." This, she continues, will result in people who "think they can dominate, abuse and commodify women, that they can have women, their own death squads, and that they can be ill-mannered and unprincipled. This is the Filipino macho mentality and misogyny at work."

These are the issues involving crucial values that mothers have the responsibility to teach their children - both boys and girls - at an early age so that they can act accordingly when they become adults.

The life of a legislator

Women's issues have been always a concern of Pat and this is how she eventually found herself in the halls of Congress as the representative of AbansePinay, a party-list group advocating the rights of women in the Philippines. She was a reluctant nominee and she says, "I did not want or ask for this. I did not want this kind

of life." She had been involved in women's issues and she was also a business woman who sold pastries at some point. Walking the corridors of the Legislature was something she hadn't wished for and it was quite different life for her.

With all the fears and concerns though, her friends in the women's movement told her one thing: "Look at it as a short-term project where you will be bringing your advocacy inside (the House of Representatives)." Still, it was difficult for her to adjust. "Ano ba itong pinasok ko? (What did I get into?)," she asked herself.

Things were different from what she was used to and there were tremendous challenges like having to deal with power exercised differently and how to connect the world outside the halls of Congress to the rooms where vital discussions about laws and policies are made.

Not to be daunted however, she did see one major advantage of all this: There were clear opportunities to move an agenda forward and AbansePinay had an agenda that needed pushing legislative measures that can respond to women's issues: violence against women and their children, trafficking, and issues of women in politics, women's health and education, etc.

This needed some adjustments on her part, though.

From her own words, Pat describe her work in Congress. "It was difficult in the beginning, to get my male colleagues to see that the Abanse! Pinay legislative agenda was not an anti-men agenda, but an agenda for their mothers, their wives, their daughters, and every significant other woman in their lives. There were many little victories such as the strengthening of women's voices - both of Congresswomen (27 in the 11th Congress and 41 in the 12th Congress) more than two thousand women employees in the Batasan Complex, the informal networks and coalitions built on specific issues that we were fighting for on the Committee level as well as during floor deliberations. It could have talked about the slow but very satisfying change in the language used in the House - in the crafting of the laws, in journal records and communications, in ordinary conversations among members and staff in Congress. There was a palpable growth in awareness of every man and woman in that big Batasan Complex - from the Speakers to the maintenance crews - fostered every time we talked about women's issues or brought out the "hidden" gender angle in the other bills and resolutions, every time we stood for the rights of women employees and for the GAD budget, every time we insisted that our fight for gender equality was a fight for justice and love. Yes, justice and love, for that was how I fought for our agenda - tell my colleagues and the thousands of workers in the House that when they joined me in the fight for women's rights and structural change, they were fighting for justice and love."

Pat was committed to bringing to fore the long-evaded issues of gender inequities in legislation. And the challenge, she says, was great - "How to get the message across that the quality of a country's body of laws is the hallmark of its people's sense of justice and the touchstone by which imbalances and inequities in society can be redressed. How to make lawmakers realize and believe in their heart of hearts that laws, therefore, can play an important role in eliminating gender biases and disparities and changing attitudes and forms of conduct that perpetuate these inequities. To make them see that laws do have the effect of perpetuating gender biases and disparities. That laws inevitably reflect the interests, conduct and norms that are founded on socially-shaped assumptions about women and men - their roles, capacities, needs, vulnerabilities. That laws can arrogate upon men and women rights, privileges and obligations that are resonant of those socially constructed stereotypes and roles. That laws can legitimize and strengthen gender biases and subordination in society."

Pat acknowledges that there was a need here to employ what the NGO community has always been quite familiar with - coalition building. "When I entered the House, I knew that lessons learned in CODE-NGO, in MINCODE, would come in handy for me. I knew I had to form informal coalitions. Some informal coalitions were with the other Party-List Representatives, the Congresspersons from Mindanao and the Visayas and even the Ilocano-speaking Congresspersons, as she could speak the Ilocano dialect. Even formal networks within the House, like the associations of Congresswomen, legislators from Mindanao, the GAD Committee, were important for increasing support for the Abanse! Pinay legislative agenda.

The issue of peace and peace with women

Pat is a woman of Mindanao and has seen the area through its many stages in the past decades. She grew up with many Muslims and this was hardly out of the ordinary for her. "I grew up in a school and the Moros were there - the Abats, the Sinsuats, the Pendatuns. Wala namang problema. (There was no problem.) We just looked at them as one of us. These were happy times."

So what happened?



Pat is quick to say that Martial law changed all that. One of her young colleagues, a brilliant Muslim woman, shared the same experience, growing up with various Christians. When Martial Law came, it positioned the Muslims against the Christians. This was something difficult for everybody. They were friends. They grew up together. They weren't supposed to be enemies but, by that time, they were made to believe that they were.

Then after Marcos left, some healing had to happen so prejudices and biases can end. However, the Mamasapano incident of 2015 brought this all out into the fore once again. The old biases resurfaced and Pat felt a deep sense of sympathy for her Muslim sisters and brothers. This goes back to Pat's dreams of freedom and being able to hope for the future of the children of Mindanao. Hope was difficult once more.

While she was in Congress, Pat said that "in committee hearings and on the floor, I stood unafraid to denounce, loud and clear, the all-out-war campaign of the government and the violation of human rights in many communities in Mindanao." She says, "I guess our passion for peace causes is the heart of women's leadership so that we continue to work for the end of the conflicts that divide us, to put an end to the sense-

less loss of lives and property because of war and conflict. We continue to work for peace in the ways of peace. For the issue of peace strikes at the very core of the issue of women's empowerment and we know all too well that women and children suffer the most in any situation of conflict. Development efforts are rendered useless when people are at war and again women and children are the most vulnerable when development programs grind to a halt."

Being a woman is hard enough, she observed, and it was doubly so for women who were poor. A triple whammy situation seemed to exist for poor women who were also Bangsamoro. This was, and continues to be, unacceptable. Every person can easily recall one major detail in their lives: "Babae ang nagpapakain. (It is the woman who feeds the family.) That's why women are resourceful." More, it has been Pat's observation, one shared by many in the women's movement and the NGO community, that "A woman who is economically empowered can be politically empowered and can raise children with values that are correct."

Pat says that in a still macho and male-dominated structures of Philippine society, "it is our role to teach our children to respect women, to respect every person, to protect all of God's creation because that's where it starts. We show by our action and the words we use. That's why I worry so much about what they see on television. How do we do it? I can only think of individual actions - teaching your apo (grandson/granddaughter) or your children and for the brave souls to speak up and say, 'I don't like it that's not correct.'"

That's for within the family. What about outside it? That's where community organizing comes in. "You have to empower your communities. Community organizing is necessary especially for a government that tries to shortcut things and tends not to listen."

Going back to the dream

There are a multitude of things still left to do and though Pat has chosen to lie low now, what does persist is her dream of freedom. "I'm very sensitive to any traces of dictatorship...If you don't even have the freedom to dream, it's really very hard. Freedom is basic. Social justice and all the things we fight for are easier when you're free. It is basic to see to it that people live in freedom," she argues.

It is this basic idea that Pat continues to work for and work towards. There are still too many scared and scarred women especially in Mindanao whose voices have not been heard yet. To this she stresses, "We really have to be the voice, not just of our member networks or some organizations but also for the communities and the ordinary members of each community. More importantly, we must be catalysts in providing spaces for women and other marginalized sectors, spaces where they are free, so they can dream and find their voice to express how they want their dreams and hopes to come true. At the end of the day, ask yourself, 'What does it matter to Juana and Juan?' If it doesn't matter, why are you doing it? If you can't answer that, you're a confused person and you are not doing the right thing. You are not doing what is good."

07 NATCCO: E-Banking: Bringing relevant banking services to where it's needed most



City dwellers often take the automated teller machine (ATM) for granted, treating it as an unremarkable part of everyday life. ATMs are found in almost every corner of the city with such redundancy that it hardly matters when one ATM goes offline.

In the countryside, however, ATMs are few and the presence of just one working ATM can make such a big difference. Data from the World Bank indicate that the average number of ATM units per 100,000 adults in the Philippines has been steadily rising from

11 in 2005 to about 18. These ATM units are, however, located mostly in urban areas. The truth is that people in rural areas do require banking services. They, too, conduct businesses and move cash in considerable amounts and need the security and convenience that an ATM can provide.

Illustrating the banking challenges faced by rural folk, Felimon Espares, General Manager of the Barbaza Multi-Purpose Cooperative (BMPC), explained that in the case of Barbaza, a municipality in the province of Antique, "A person would typically spend about half a day to get money from an ATM in San Jose de Buenavista, the capital of Antique, which is about 70 kilometers away." Thus, half of a day's productivity is lost and the ATM customer is exposed to various security risks.

Meanwhile, in Centro Norte, Pandan, a municipality near the northernmost tip of Antique, the Pandan Multi-Purpose Cooperative (PMPC) reported that small traders transacting at the local fish port early in the morning were often robbed of their hard-earned money. If these traders had access to cash at the fish port itself, where they could immediately pass the money on to their suppliers, they would not need to carry around large amounts of money.

Responding to members' needs

"It is the dream of every cooperative to provide the most efficient and convenient financial services to its members," Espares stressed. BMPC now operates six ATMs: Three in Antique - Barbaza (Main), Culasi, and Sibalom - as well as those in Kalibo (Aklan), Barotac Viejo (Iloilo), and Molo (Iloilo City). Soon, another one will rise in Balasan in Iloilo province bringing the total to seven.

To make all this possible, the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) developed the eKoopBanker Plus software to allow its member-cooperatives to respond to the needs of their members. eKoopBanker Plus is an integrated financial software application launched in 2006 tailored to the unique processes and needs of cooperatives. In 2009, NATCCO launched an upgraded version supporting ATM operations and inter-branch transactions and accounting. This enabled cooperative managers in the headquarters to monitor branch transactions in real-time including inter-cooperative transactions.

eKoopBanker Plus paved the way for the launch of NATCCO's own ATM services in 2009. NATCCO became a member of Megalink, the largest interbank network in the Philippines, just a year later. Going by the brand PinoyCoop ATM, NATCCO's ATM service enhanced the image of coops as reliable financial service providers while providing 24-hour access to ATM-enabled transactions.

There was, of course, the question of cost and an ATM unit itself requires a substantial investment. Fortunately, in 2011, the European cooperative bank, Rabobank, donated forty-four (44) used ATMs. These were refurbished by NATCCO for use in the Philippines and were made available to member-cooperatives at a much lower price.

Seventy (70) PinoyCoop ATMs have been established all over the country since May 2010. Monthly transactions increase by an average of 27% each month as more people join cooperatives, more ATM cards are issued, and more ATMs are installed. For the members of NATCCO's ATM-enabled cooperatives, PinoyCoop ATMs mean faster, more convenient, and more secure transactions.

More importantly, these benefits have reached beyond co-op members with other members of the community now being able to take advantage of the convenience offered by the technology. BMPC Chairperson, Evelyn Remo, reported that the cooperative's ATMs also serve pensioners, government employees, and beneficiaries of the Philippine government's Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program.



It used to be especially daunting to service CCT beneficiaries. Typically, about a thousand beneficiaries simultaneously went to the nearest cooperative to withdraw cash issued under the CCT program. This volume of transactions would occupy the cooperative's personnel, crowd the premises, and delay other transactions. With the ATM, CCT beneficiaries can withdraw cash without the intervention of the cooperative's staff and do their transactions even after business hours.

The PinoyCoop ATM has become a sign of credibility showing that NATCCO cooperatives are already capable of providing more services. To implement this project, BMPC's personnel had to upgrade their skills to cover ATM maintenance tasks and duties and enhance their internal operations to keep up with the demands of the system and the requirements of all ATM users. Already, the credibility and trust generated by the PinoyCoop ATM has encouraged members to increase the number of their transactions with their cooperatives and has also motivated non-members to sign up for membership.

Overcoming challenges

The PinoyCoop ATM project was fraught with expected and unexpected challenges, as all new endeavors are and some were obvious from the get-go. An ATM unit requires stable electric power and internet connectivity - elements rarely present in the countryside. Fortunately, Barbaza has a stable power supply and enjoys relatively fast Internet service. This is due in part to the fact that providing the Internet connection is BMPC itself which is also a cable television and Internet service provider.

Once the PinoyCoop ATM was operational, other challenges arose. Since some of the co-op's ATMs were second-hand units, repairs were occasionally needed and the NATCCO ATM team and the repair service provider had to make every effort to get the affected unit working again. There was also the need to replen-

ish large amounts of cash in the ATM units. Not having the luxury of an armored vehicle, cooperatives had to make do with varying the routes, times, and vehicles used to transport the money to the various ATM locations. Not to be daunted, the NATCCO team welcomed these challenges as opportunities to improve their systems.

The response time to restore a downed ATM unit was greatly reduced by improving the communication lines among the cooperative, NATCCO, and the repair service provider. Meanwhile, as the cooperative closely monitored the performance of each ATM, it was able to devise a schedule for the replenishment of supplies and the replacement of parts before these were actually needed to avoid a breakdown of the machines especially when they were most needed.

Espares explained that leadership and skilled human resources, along with the commitment of NATCCO's management to see the initiative through its fruition, have been the major factors behind the success of eKoopBanker Plus and the PinoyCoop ATM system. It was likewise critical that all the people involved in the cooperative - from the management to all employees - put their heads together to resolve any difficulty to complete the project and commit to keep things going. "Most other cooperatives would likely give up upon encountering some glitches," Espares proudly stated.

Looking towards the future

As NATCCO encourages more cooperatives to use eKoopBanker Plus and the PinoyCoop ATM, it is hoped that all cooperatives will be interconnected eventually, moving closer towards a truly integrated financial cooperative network. Cooperatives will then be able to offer most of the services and conveniences once only available from leading financial institutions. The issue here is bringing more efficient and effective financial services not only to those in the urban areas but also to the people who live in the countryside. This is in line with the Strategy for Financial Inclusion launched in July 2015 by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. The ideals here are quite similar: Providing a "financial system that is accessible and responsive to the needs of Filipinos toward a broad-based and inclusive growth, serving the unserved and marginalized sectors of the population."

In the relatively short time since NATCCO deployed eKoopBanker Plus and PinoyCoop ATM, the cooperatives involved have developed new capabilities that have given them the confidence to embark on new challenges using the PinoyCoop ATM platform. "The obvious direction is to expand and add more ATM units in strategic locations," Espares stressed while explaining that as it has now become more affordable and cost effective to purchase even brand new ATM units to deal with the continuously increasing volume of transactions.

Espares also feels that the stage has been set for a foray into mobile banking. The technology is available and the cooperatives' personnel is ready. Ambitious? Perhaps. But driven by the same commitment to provide efficient and convenient services to its members, it is likely that NATCCO will strive to meet any challenges along the way with the same can-do attitude that it has already shown. Yes, it seems, ATMs are only but the first step.

PROFILE 05

Ka Hermie Hernandez

Pioneer, San Dionisio Credit Cooperative



Ang hindi Nauulingan

Isang kasabihan sa mga Pilipino ang, “Walang humawak ng palayok na hindi nauulingan.” Dumating ang panahon na ginamit ito patungkol sa mga taong may kinalaman sa mga usaping ukol sa salapi. Kadalasan nga lang, tanggap na ng mga taong kapag pera ang pinag-uusapan, halos lahat na lang ata ay “nauulingan” o nadudungisan dala ng tukso ng yaman at karangyaan.

Isa ito sa mga hamon na hinarap ni Ka Hermie Hernandez mula pa noong nagsimula siya sa San Dionisio Credit Cooperative (SDCC) noong 1961. Hindi maganda ang kalagayan ng maraming tao noon sa Parañaque dala ng kanilang pagkakabaon sa utang at sa mahigpit na palakad ng mga nagpapautang na five-six. Ang malungkot pa rito ay ang katotohanang kapwa Pilipino ang mapaniil. Hindi malayong maranasan ng isang nangutang na tubo pa lamang ang nababayaran kahit ilang taon na niyang binubuno ang pambayad utang habang tahimik na tinatanong ang sarili ng, “Kailan ba ito matatapos?”.

Si Ka Hermie

Mapalad ang ilang mga tao at may nakilala silang magiging huwaran nila sa kanilang mga buhay. May maliit na grupo na noon sa San Dionisio na binubuo ng ilang mas nakatatandang naggagabay at mas nakababatang tumitingala at sumusunod sa paggabay. Itinatag nila ang San Dionisio Rover Scouts (SDRS) at ang Good Government League (GGL), na ang mga opisyaes ay core group ng SDRS, hindi lang para pumuna sa mga nakikita nila sa kanilang pamayanan at hikayatin ang mga taong pag-usapan ang mga isyu ng lipunan kundi para na rin gumawa ng mga cleanliness drive, beautification projects, at ilang mga cultural activities tulad ng Moro-moro o Komedyas.

Sa ganoon nakilala ni Ka Hermie si Dr. Angel Mendoza, ang tinyente del barrio noong mga panahong iyon at namumuno sa kanila sa GGL. Naging gabay niya ito sa maraming bagay ngunit higit sa lahat dito ay ang idealismo at ang tapat na paglilingkod sa pamayanan. Naitanim ito sa pagkatao ni Ka Hermie mula pa sa simula noong 1950s at kitang-kita pa ito sa kanya hanggang sa kasalukuyan. Ginunita niya ang isang pagkakataong may pasyente ang duktora at pagkatapos resitahan ng gamot para sa kanyang karamdaman ay bumalik ito pagkaraan ng dalawang araw. Walang nagbago sa kalagayan nito at simple lang ang dahilan: Hindi siya nakabili ng gamot dahil wala siyang pambili pala. “Nakita ni Dr. Mendoza na hindi sapat ang paggamot lang dahil may social dimension ang issue. Walang pera ang maraming tao para bumili ng gamot,” inalala ni Ka Hermie.

Sa mga karanasang ganito at sa katotohanang puno ang kanilang baryo ng mga taong kumakapit sa patalim dahil sa mga tunay na pangangailangan tulad ng pagkakasakit o iba pang pang-araw-araw na tustusin, nakita ng GGL core group na may iba pa silang dapat gawin upang talagang makatulong sa kanilang mga kabaryo. Naikwento nila ang sitwasyon nilang ito sa isang Heswita, si Fr. Walter Hogan, at ito ang nagbigay ng mungkahing magtayo na kaya ng isang kooperatiba. Tumulong ang isa pang Heswita, si Fr. Gaston Duchesneau, upang gabayan sila sa pagtatayo na nga ng kanilang kooperatiba.

Hindi naging madali ang mga unang taon. Gabi-gabi ang mga pulong nila para maitatag ito nang maayos. Marami rin ang nagpahayag ng kanilang pagdududa sa maaring maging tagumpay ng grupo. Nakalulungkot na mismong ang Cooperative Administrative Office (CAO) sa mga panahong iyon ang isa sa maingay na nagsasabi nito dahil nga raw kung nagpapautang, hindi na makasisingil pa. Pero sa halip na mawalan ng loob, nagbingi-bingihan na lang sila at itinuring itong hamon. Ang nagsimulang kapital na PHP 380 para sa San Dionisio Credit Cooperative (SDCC) noong 1961 ay kasalukuyan nang PHP 1.6 billion. Masasabing totoo nga at maaaring paniwalaan ang kaisipang kaya palang magtagumpay ng isang kooperatibang nakauugat sa isang pamayanan.

Bahagi na rin ng mga naging pinagdaanan ng SDCC ang naging pag-ambag sa mismong paglago na rin ng National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO). Nauna ang SDCC sa kanila at binigay nito nang libre sa upa ang una nitong naging tanggapan. Paliwanag dito ni Ka Hermie, “Dapat tumulong sa kapwa co-op kung kakayanin din naman, alinsunod sa Coop Principle No. 6 na “Cooperation among Cooperatives.” Siyempre pa, may ganting tulong din naman sa kanila pagdating ng panahon. Ang pagbibigay ng training ang isa sa pinakakahusayan ng NATCCO at madalas itong nagbigay ng leadership training at mga klase sa financial literacy sa mga kasapi at pamunuan ng SDCC.

“In all humility, iyong ginawa ng San Dionisio para bang naging halimbawa sa mga ibang co-op. Nauna ang San Dionisio sa NATCCO kaya anuman ang magandang nangyari sa co-op, parang naging modelo kami doon sa mga grupong gustong magtatag ng co-op,” paliwanag at pagmamalaki ni Ka Hermie.

“Siguro tatanungin mo kung ano ang susi ng tagumpay,” singit ni Ka Hermie. “Transparency, honesty, and frugality observed to the letter.” Si Ka Hermie mismo ang unang naging ingat-yaman ng SDCC at dahil dito, nasubukan kaagad ang kanyang pagiging totoo sa mga natutunan niyang ideyalismo kay Dr. Mendoza. Ang isang pinahalagahan nila mula pa noon ay ang konsepto ng transparency dahil hindi ito sinusunod ng maraming mga samahan sa lipunan. Sabi nga ni Ka Hermie, sa mga korporasyon, dalawa ang libro -- isa para sa Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) at isang nagsasalaming ng katotohanan. Sa itinayong San Dionisio Credit Cooperative, iisa lang ang libro at bukas ito parati sa lahat ng miyembro. Pinaliwanag ni Ka Hermie na malinaw sa pamunuan ng SDCC na ang bawat kasapi ng kooperatiba ang mga tunay na may-ari at dahil dito, may karapatan silang silipin ang kanilang kinatatatayuang pinansyal.

Naging mahalaga ito sa kanya lalo pa’t naranasan na rin niyang kausapin ang mga kawani ng BIR at mapilitang magsabi ng kulang sa katotohanan nung nagtrabaho pa siya noon sa isang kumpanya. “Minsan sasagot ka sa BIR at ang isasagot mo ay hindi makatotohanan. Hindi ako masaya sa ganoon.” Tamang-tama naman at inalok na siya noon ng pamunuan ng SDCC na doon na mismo magtrabaho sa SDCC. Mas maliit ang sahod. May mga anak na siya noon. May bumulong na ring kailangan niyang isipin ang kapakanan ng kanyang pamilya lalo pa’t maliliit pa nga ang mga anak niya noon. Sabi pa ng iba, “Ano ba ang mapapala mo diyan? Meeting kayo nang meeting, sweldo mo naman hindi gaano.”

Alam ito ni Ka Hermie lalo pa noong simula kung saan puro pagkukusa lamang ang kanilang pagkilos. “Wala man kaming allowance, wala man kaming sweldo sa co-op during the formative years dahil volunteer lahat, malimit na sinasabi kong mayaman kami sa psychic income -- iyong kasiyahan mong ang ginagawa mo ay nagbubunga ng mabuti at nakatutulong sa kapwa. That is something money cannot buy.”

Si Ka Hermie naman ngayon ang tumanggap ng hamon. “Hindi ko iyon naging problema; tinanggap ko iyon. Ang happiness ko sa co-op, dito kung ano ang nangyayari, iyon and isinusulat lalo pa sa pinansyal. Walang itinatago.”

Full-time manager ng SDCC si Ka Hermie mula 1972 hanggang sa kanyang pagretiro noong 2000. Mula 2000 hanggang sa kasalukuyan naman, kasapi na siya ng Advisory Council. Sa mga panahon ngayon, maaari na niyang tingnan kung ano nga ba ang naiambag niya sa SDCC. “Pag nakita ako ng staff, mataas ang pagtingin nila sa akin...Ang pinakamalaking kontribusyon ko dito sa co-op ay yung aking sakripisyo. Kung ako’y nagtrabaho sa labas, siguro hindi naging problema ang financial pero nandiyan pa rin ang aking kagustuhang mamalagi sa co-op. Naniwala akong dito sa co-op ako magiging masaya at makapaglilingkod sa kapwa. Dito ko pinatunayan na kapag ako’y humawak ng palayok, matitiyak ko sa inyong di ako mauulingin. ‘Pag ako humawak ng pera, matitiyak mong hindi mawawala ang pera. Iyan ang pinakamahalagang kontribusyon ko sa co-op. Talagang sakripisyo sa sarili at sa pamilya.”

Para rin sa kanya, hindi ang kalagayang pinansiyal ang tunay na sukatan ng tagumpay ng isang kooperatiba. “Ang sukatan ng tagumpay ng isang kooperatiba ay wala sa pera. Nasa uri iyan ng mga miyembro. Ang pinakamatayog na layunin ng kooperatiba ay Total Human Development -- economic development ng miyembro, social development ng miyembro, political development ng miyembro, cultural development ng miyembro. At ang kataas-taasang aspeto: Spiritual development ng miyembro sa gabay ng Dakilang Lumikha.”

Bumabalik siya sa mga pangunahing dahilan kung bakit nga ba may kooperatiba. “Dapat matiyak ng kooperatiba na ang mga miyembro ay kakain nang tatlong beses isang araw sa pamamagitan ng loan services at loan products. Dapat din lahat ng miyembro nagtutulongan. Dito natin aalisin ang crab mentality na kapag may umangat, hahatakin mo pababa. Dapat baliktad. ‘Pag umaangat ang isang miyembro, katungkulan niyang hatakin ang kanyang kapwa miyembro pataas at tumulong siyang iangat ang komunidad.”

Ngayong bahagi na siya ng Advisory Council at hindi na kasama sa pang-araw-araw na pamamalakad ng SDCC at bunga na rin ng kanyang mga naging karanasan sa higit na limangpung (50) taon, mas kaya na niyang manahimik, tumanggap at makinig sa iba’t-ibang mga mungkahi, habang malumanay na iniaalay ang sariling pananaw sa mga kasalukuyang nasa katungkulan.

“Nung primero, maramdamin ako. ‘Pag ako pinupuna, sumasama ang loob ko. Nagbago iyan as the years went by. ‘Pag ako’y pinuna, ang aking iniisip ngayon ay para sa kapakanan ko rin iyan.” Ganoon na rin siguro ang maaaring ibahagi pa niya sa mga opisyal ng SDCC ngayon at inaamin naman ni Ka Hermie na hindi madali ang trabaho nila. May hangad ang lahat na higit pang payabungin ang SDCC ngunit hindi nila dapat malimutan ang unang katungkulan sa mga maliliit na miyembro. “Balancing the economic objectives of the co-op against the social objectives, yung balance noon napakahirap.”

Para rin kay Ka Hermie, parang tulad ng sa puno ang naging pagyabong ng SDCC. “Sa pagtatanim ng puno, sa tingin ko ako ay naging bahagi sa pagtatanim na iyon. Matapos maitanim ang sanga, ay bahagi pa rin ako sa regular na pagdidilig nito. Hindi ko pinagsisisihan. Hindi ko pinagsisisihan ang ginawa kong sakripisyo sa Kooperatiba.”

Dahilan sa kaniyang ipinamalas na pambihirang katangian si Ka Hermie ay binansagan ng CDA (Cooperative Development Authority) na “Cooperative Legend” noong 2011 at pinarangalan ng CDA na “Outstanding Cooperative Leader” sa National Capital Region noong 2011 at “Outstanding Parañaqueño in the field of Cooperativism” ng Parañaque City Government noong 2013.

(English version)

Who is not sullied

Ka Hermie Hernandez

There is a Filipino saying that goes, “No one who holds a blackened pot remains unsullied.” Time came when this saying was used to refer to people involved in money. It is just taken for granted that whenever money is in the question, the “pot” if you will, almost anyone is sullied by “soot” because of the temptation of money and riches.

This was one of the challenges faced by Hermie Hernandez when he got involved in the San Dionisio Credit Cooperative (SDCC). The situation of people in Parañaque then wasn’t at all encouraging because so many were mired in debt due in large part to the onerous credit conditions of local usurers. What was even more sad was the fact that these usurers were fellow Filipinos. It wasn’t uncommon for people to be paying just the interest for years and not even getting to paying for the principal amount while silently asking themselves, “When will this end?”

Ka Hermie

Some are fortunate enough to have a model to look up to in their lives. There was a small group in San Dionisio with a good mix of older men providing guidance and younger guys who saw these men as their models and sought their guidance. They set up San Dionisio Rover Scouts and the Good Government League (GGL) not only to do the obvious task of pointing out where governance could improve but also to get people to talk about issues in their communities and organize cleanliness drives, beautification projects, and cultural activities like the traditional theater forms of the Moro-moro or the Komedya.

It was in this way that Hermie Hernandez, now known fondly as “Ka Hermie,” met Dr. Angel Mendoza, a local barangay leader who also headed the GGL. Mendoza guided him in many things but what really stood out was his idealism and his commitment to serving the community. These ideas were planted deeply in Hermie’s own identity in the 1950s and he still bears these lessons even up to the present. He told of an instance when Dr. Mendoza had treated a patient and, after having given his patient his prescription, was surprised to see the same patient a couple of days later with no improvement in his condition. The reason for this was simple: The patient couldn’t buy his medication because he had no money. “Dr. Mendoza saw that it wasn’t sufficient to just treat patients because there was a social dimension to the issue. Many of these people didn’t have the money to buy their own medicine,” Hermie recalled.



These experiences and the truth that their barrio was full of people willing to put themselves at risk, borrowing money from unscrupulous usurers due to their need to be healthy or deal with other very real, everyday needs, allowed the people in GGL to see that there was much more they needed to do to truly serve the needs of their community. They described their situation to Jesuit, Fr. Walter Hogan, who dropped the hint that they should set up a cooperative to help their community. Another Jesuit, Fr. Gaston Duchesneau, gave them a comprehensive orientation on how to set one up. Things could then start.

Things weren't easy of course especially in the first year. They met every night so that the cooperative would be set up properly. There were a lot of people who expressed doubt as to the cooperative's success. It was doubly sad that one of those expressing such an opinion was the Cooperative Administration Office (CAO), a government agency, which held to the opinion that once money was loaned, that money was as good as gone. Instead of losing their spirit in their endeavor, however, they refused to listen to all the negative talk

and took everything as a challenge. What began as a capital of PHP 380 for SDCC in 1961 is now, fifty-five years later, PHP 1.6 billion. It can be said that a community-based cooperative can, in fact, succeed.

One of those that contributed to the positive growth of SDCC was the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO). SDCC existed before this organization, even giving their first office space free of rental. Hermie explains, "A fellow co-op should help another if it is within their power." NATCCO returned the favor in due time. With their expertise in training, they often gave leadership training and financial literacy classes to the members and officers of SDCC.

"In all humility, what San Dionisio did serve as an example to other co-ops. San Dionisio came before NATCCO and anything good that happened to our co-op was a model for other groups that wanted to put up a co-op," Hermie explained with pride.

"Maybe you'll ask me what was key to our success," he interjected. "Transparency, honesty, and frugality observed to the letter." Hermie, himself, was the first treasurer of the group and, because of this, his faithfulness to what he learned from Dr. Mendoza was tested. One of the ideals he valued most was the concept of transparency because far too many in society didn't even give it any mind. Hermie even said that in corporations, there were two books -- one for the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and one that contained the true numbers. In the San Dionisio Credit Cooperative, there is only one book and it has always been open to all members. Hermie explained that it was clear to all officials of SDCC that the members of the cooperative were the true owners and thus had every right to have a look at the financial status of the organization.

All of this was quite important for him especially since he did experience talking to the staff of the BIR and being forced to not be so truthful when he was still in the corporate world. "Sometimes, you respond to the BIR and what you'd say was not truthful. I wasn't happy with that." It then came right on time when the officials of SDCC asked him if he would consider working there full time. The salary was smaller and he did have kids already at the time. Some people were even telling him that he should always keep that in mind especially since his kids were all so young. Some even taunted him saying, "What do you really get there? You keep attending meetings but your salary is not at all that much."

Hermie knew all these even at the beginning especially when everything was still voluntary. "Though we didn't have an allowance, we didn't have any salary from the co-op during the formative years, I told everyone that we were rich in our psychic income -- that joy you experience when what you're doing bears good fruit and benefits your fellow man. That is something money cannot buy."

It was Hermie's turn to respond to the challenge. "This was not a problem for me; I accepted it. My happiness in the co-op comes from the fact that whatever happens is what is recorded especially with regard to finances. Nothing is kept secret."

He was full-time manager of SDCC from 1972 all the way to his retirement in 2000. Since then, he has been a member of the Advisory Council. Now, he can look at things and see what he has been able to contribute to SDCC. "When the staff now see me, they still have a very high regard for me...My biggest contribution to the co-op is my sacrifice. If I had worked outside, perhaps money would not have ever become a problem but there was always this desire to stick it out with the co-op. I knew that it was in the co-op that I would truly be happy and be able to serve other people. It was here that I was able to prove that even if I ever held a blackened pot, I would not be sullied. When I handle money, you can be assured that the money will not disappear. That is my most important contribution to the co-op. This was truly a sacrifice for me and for my family."

For him, the true measure of success for a cooperative is not in the money it makes though that is truly important. "The true measure of a cooperative's success is not in money. It is in the type of its members. The loftiest goal of a cooperative is Total Human Development -- the economic development of the members, the social development of the members, the political development of the members, the cultural develop-

ment of the member. The highest aspect of this is the spiritual development of the members. In this, he always goes back to the fundamental reason of why there are cooperatives in the first place. "A cooperative must ensure that all members are able to eat three times a day through loan services and loan products. All members should be helped. This is where we can eradicate crab mentality where when people get up in life, others pull them down. Instead, when a member starts getting ahead in life, that member has the responsibility to pull up the other members and help the whole community.

Now that he's a member of the Advisory Council and not part of the everyday operations of SDCC and also because of his experiences of more than fifty (50) years, he can actually stay quiet, take in and listen to suggestions even as he calmly offers his own views to the current officials.

"In the beginning, I was quite sensitive. When people pointed out something about me, I felt bad. That changed as the years went by. Now, when people criticize me, I tell myself that that is for my own good." This is probably the same thing he can offer to the officials of SDCC and he admits that their job is not an easy one. Everyone wants more growth for SDCC but they should not forget their first responsibility and that is to the smallest members. "Balancing the economic objectives of the co-op against the social objectives, striking that balance is really very difficult."

For Hermie, the growth of SDCC is like that of a tree. "In planting a tree, I think I was really part of that. Once the planting had been done, I was also part of watering the plant. I don't regret this. I don't regret anything."

Because of the remarkable characteristic he has demonstrated, Ka Hermie was named by CDA (Cooperative Development Authority) as "Cooperative Legend" in 2011 and was awarded by CDA as an "Outstanding Cooperative Leader" in the National Capital Region in 2011 and "Outstanding Parañaqueño in the field of Cooperativism" of the Parañaque City Government in 2013.



Pakikipagtulungan: Working with Local Government

Working with government used to be unheard of. Especially during the time of the Marcos dictatorship, people were more used to working around government rather than with it.

The stories in this section talk about how, after the Dictator was sent packing, the new democracy won by the people allowed a new relationship to flourish between local authorities and their constituencies. It talks about how people from different backgrounds and different specializations could now influence in a very positive way how local government worked. This was not a case of one group wagging a finger at their local leaders. This was groups of people saying they were willing to be active participants in governance, that they would be watching how leaders were actually governing, and that they would hold these leaders accountable for what they said and did.

It was encouraging how the Iloilo Caucus of Development NGOs (ICODE) of the Western Visayas Network of Social Development NGOs (WEVNET) was able to get electoral candidates to sign covenants with their future constituency so that they could be measured by the contents of this covenant. If they failed, the people know who not to vote for in the succeeding elections.

Both the Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA) and the Central Visayas Network of NGOs (CENVISNET) utilized assessment tools to evaluate both themselves and their members so that they can more effectively assist their members and fulfill the necessary requirements of government.

Finally, the Cordillera Network of Development NGOs and POs (CORDNET) worked closely with government to give assistance in alleviating poverty in what is actually one of the most blessed areas in the country.

Is development work possible while working with government? These stories will show how it's not only possible, it is also quite necessary to do so.

08 CENVISNET: A Growing Instrument of Change



Ten years in the NGO world is a short time. There is much work to do and many people to work with that things can get confusing and even intimidating. Since politics in the Philippines tends to suffer from too much loyalty – not being able to work with someone who isn't of the same political persuasion or being beholden to some political patron and that patron's specific "interests" – it is necessary for the non-government sector to pick up the slack.

This isn't at all easy and there are definite challenges. Some have pointed out that good intentions and a good heart are but starting points to the endeavor of helping society. People need concrete skills to give real help and to make sure they continue helping in a positive way. There has to be a way for people and organizations who sincerely want to help to acquire these skills.

This is what CENVISNET has been doing for the past decade even as it serves its three members – Kaabag sa Sugbo in Cebu, Bohol Alliance of NGOs (BANGON), and Negros Oriental Network of NGOs and POs (NEGORNET). While the membership may seem modest, it must be remembered that these members represent a network of NGOs and that the reach is beyond the confines of just one province. Coming from a

much bigger organization, the Visayas Network (VisNET), CENVISNET has had to figure things out on its own even while it focused on what services were needed by its members. This separation, which also saw the formation of the Western Visayas Network of Social Development NGOs (WEVNET) and the Eastern Visayas Network of NGOs and POs (EVNET), did result in some very positive things not the least of which was being able to focus on the specific needs and challenges of members who shared the same general geographical area.

The coalition has sought to build on the strength of its member networks in effecting good governance and achieving sustainable development in the region. This is done by practicing social development and continuously advocating the growth of leaders who not only have roots in the region but also have a deep appreciation of the region's realities. These go hand-in-hand with building up multi-sectoral partnerships, utilizing the assets of the network, and intensifying the capability of any member organization.

This is not as simple as it sounds as there are some steps that had to be dealt with both within CENVISNET itself and that which deals with its members. Member-networks needed to be evaluated in terms of their compliance with government requirements especially those pertaining to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) along with their eligibility to be certified by the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC). This has gained even more importance now because of the bogus NGOs allegedly used to channel large amounts of money into private pockets that have been a cause of national concern. This is why CENVISNET has chosen to review all documents, records, and organizational manuals not only to ensure compliance but also to determine an organization's sustainability and reliability.

With such a review, CENVISNET was able to identify areas that needed improvement. It was hardly a way to just find fault. With these areas of improvement determined, appropriate plans of action could be put forward. The network even assisted in preparing all the documents that were submitted to the SEC and BIR to ensure a smooth flow of the process. This then allowed CENVISNET eventual representation in the Regional Development Council and the Regional Youth Advisory Council so that relevant programs and projects had a chance to be included in local government plans. This also meant a much better alignment of youth programs with the general needs of the region based on the Regional Poverty Reduction and Development Agenda (RPRDA) of CSOs. This alone already holds so much promise with more than 60 organizations from different sectors - women, youth, the urban poor, the academe, religious groups, persons with disabilities, children, farmers - involved in the RPRDA.

There has been a lot of focus on providing technical assistance through training sessions and mentoring to capacitate member organizations in running their own affairs. Part of this also is giving some financial assistance for the conduct of board meetings and general assemblies. CENVISNET took a look at its own organizational direction and plans and that of its members using the Capacity Assessment Tool adopted by CODE-NGO to come up with customized capacity-building plans to address the following areas: Good Governance; Project Development, Implementation, Management, Monitoring and Evaluation (PDIMME); Financial Management; Human Resource and Administrative Management; Strategic Planning; Resource Mobilization; Membership Strengthening; and Advocacy.

Major Programs and Projects

The work of development always has to involve government cooperation while also looking at what can be done without it so that government resources can be focused on areas where they are needed more. Thus, the past few years have seen CENVISNET giving much attention to decentralizing development efforts to be more responsive to and effectively address the needs of local communities. This allows civil society organizations (CSOs) to collaborate more closely with local government units and national government agencies. More, such an initiative gives rise to local leaders who are closer to the ground and have a better appreciation of community realities.

CENVISNET does realize the need to closely cooperate with government entities and even helped formulate a development agenda for Region 7. It presently has representation in the Regional Poverty Reduction Action Team (RPRAT) of the government's bottom-up budgeting (BUB) process and its three provincial networks, NEGORNET, BANGON and Kaabag sa Sugbo, are now working on their partnership agreements with respective DILG provincial offices with BANGON already sitting in the Regional Development Council of Region 7. It is hoped that the constructive engagement with government as partners for change and development can continue and expand to other areas and avenues.

What have the CENVISNET members been doing individually?

BANGON has been involved in biodiversity conservation, protecting and managing the ecosystem in both upland and coastal areas in Bohol. It has taken part in the Provincial Environmental Natural Resources Management System Technical Working Groups to focus on biodiversity conservation and the water resources and ecological systems of the provincial watershed.

BANGON also puts a lot of importance on poverty reduction and is involved in the Bohol Organic Agriculture Advisory Committee to advocate organic agriculture and livelihood programs like eco-cultural tourism implemented by its member networks.

To get these things done, BANGON has a close partnership with government and private entities to effect good governance and public accountability. Like CENVISNET itself, efforts related to disaster resiliency have also been done. To share everything that has been learned, training sessions and consultancy programs have been initiated while documenting all efforts for future reference.

NEGORNET had similar efforts but focused more on human resource development; gender and youth issues, public empowerment especially as regards governance; agrarian reform and rural development; industrialization; environment and conservation; as well as peace initiatives.

Kaabag sa Sugbo's work has addressed government engagement, Climate Change Adaptation-Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (CCA-DRRM), plus peace and sustainable security. It facilitated the CSO review of the Cebu Rehabilitation, Recovery, and Development Plan working closely with the Cebu Provincial DRRM Office and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

Kaabag also implemented a six-month pilot project, the Data Access towards Accountable Governance (DATAGov) with CODE-NGO to capacitate municipal and city CSOs to help them understand government data and the local planning and budget cycle to support engagements on development priorities with their respective local governments.

For all these to happen simultaneously, a very important project targeted the need to strengthen the network itself. This dealt with supporting the capacity-building activities of the network as well as its institutional capabilities. CODE-NGO was instrumental in getting this done with the end result being the amendment of CENVISNET's by-laws and constitution and the reevaluation of its three-year strategic plan all the way to 2016.

While the first two initiatives were more internal in scope, the third looked outward. CENVISNET devoted a whole year from June 2013 to July 2014 to strengthen the varied capacities of the different CSOs within the region because it continues to be true that a chain is only as good as its weakest link. The goal then was to make sure that each member of the network was the strongest and most effective it could possibly be. That addressed the key aspect of any NGO and that it had to be accountable to its constituents while effectively competing for and managing donor resources. It was because of this that training sessions in identified subject areas - resource mobilization; human resource management; financial management; PDIMME; and validating the Capacity Assessment Tool (CAT) - were organized.

CENVISNET is now looking at putting more attention on business model design and social enterprise work to ensure that its programs and plans can be made more sustainable. It is hoped that this is operationalized in the next five years even while partnerships with donors and other agencies to support its programs continue. The number of partnerships should also be expanded. The network is also working on consultancy training services to do just this especially since it still operates with a not inconsiderable reliance on outside grants. It hopes to be truly financially sustainable with income-generating mechanisms, operating without having to depend on project grants by the year 2021.

Another aspiration is for CENVISNET to be a knowledge development hub recording how a CSO can work and eventually thrive within this particular region. Already, the idea of having a knowledge hub has gained concreteness with the creation of the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management - Climate Change Adaptation (DRRM-CCA) hub which acts as a repository of best practices for CSOs in this regard. With more typhoons expected to hit the country every year, this is essential. Armed with the documentation regarding how best to deal with disasters and what actually exacerbates the damage brought about by these disasters, a network like CENVISNET can more effectively advocate changes in the ways local governments prepare and deal with these always threatening events so that they can be so much less catastrophic. Soon, the knowledge hub idea is expected to evolve from dealing with just DRRM-CCA concerns into other areas that different CSOs and NGOs have to address.

Perhaps it is because CENVISNET is still such a young organization that it likes to give much attention to the youth. CENVISNET partnered with Ready Asia Pacific in its Advanced Youth Project to build the capacity of the youth in Lapu-Lapu City in DRRM-CCA work as part of building an active successor generation. More than 30 youth leaders were oriented on the Basic Concepts on DRRM-CCA, leadership training and organizational management, DRRM planning, contingency planning, participatory capacity, the use of a Vulnerability Analysis Tool, etc. for them to come up with their own projects. These young people did not disappoint as they came up with PROJECT SAFE to address what needs to be done in flood situations. This project gave birth to activities to orient communities on DRRM, hazards and basic evacuation plans, build the youth's leadership skills and test their knowledge on DRRM-CCA, and encourage recycling on the barangay level. This last one focused on families exchanging biodegradable waste for school supplies and other goods while the youth sold recyclable materials to junk shops as part of their sustainability mechanisms. Not done yet, these enterprising youth also came up with a Lapu-Lapu-wide Youth Development Agenda prioritizing youth concerns. The youth are now members of the youth council of Lapu-Lapu and are now identifying some projects and programs to be budgeted and implemented by 2017.

Youthful Energy

The youth in Lapu-lapu have shown that being young can be a distinct advantage. It is the same for CENVISNET. It has very little baggage to tie it down and there is still so much that it can hope to do. It is growing steadily and now has a lean staff of five people and one who is part-time. There is also now an office that can be called home.

While there is much growing that still needs to be done, CENVISNET is definitely on the right track. It has anchored itself on how to assess what it does, looks at what its network of members needs and addresses these needs, and it looks to the future by engaging the youth. One decade is over and, now, it can look to a future where greater challenges are met and solutions are crafted from data-driven assessments. The future truly does seem promising.

PROFILE 06 Anthony **'Anton'** Dignadice

Chairperson, Central Visayas Network of NGOs



Being the youngest player in a game played by some of the best players around can be daunting. Nevertheless, it is the greater calling to attend to the game itself and to a team's supporters.

Central Visayas Network of NGOs (CenVISNET) was born from the Visayas Network of Development NGOs (VISNET) only in 2007 but Chairperson Anthony 'Anton' Dignadice explains that there was a great value in setting up the new group. The point here is to serve the provincial networks with the end goal of making the

members better NGOs and, relying on the strength and reach of the network, pushing the advocacies of good governance and sustainable development based on the Covenant for Philippine Development of CODE-NGO. With its regional coverage, CenVISNET is able to engage a much wider range of organizations including government and non-government agencies.

CenVISNET identifies common areas of concern and acts to build up the institutional capacities of its members. This is especially useful when new issues or needs are identified. With the onslaught of Typhoon Yolanda (international name Haiyan) in the latter part of 2013, for example, it became apparent that many individuals and groups in the Visayas area were hardly ready for weather disturbances of that magnitude. CenVISNET was able to put much more attention on a formerly neglected concern -- disaster risk reduction management (DRRM). The training in this and other areas was provided to the network members and this education is expected to cascade to the member networks' own members and to their communities.

Anton explains that the implementation of such capacity building efforts is given to the provincial networks since they are more knowledgeable of exactly what their own members need. Another issue here is that if CenVISNET were to do this on its own, they would be competing with their own members and causing confusion in the provincial networks and their members.

CenVISNET then gives more focus on areas that may not be as easily done by the provincial networks. These are governance and financial management. In governance, there is a focus on policy systems and structures while in financial management, the ideas of project development, implementation, and evaluation; human resource development and administration; advocacy; and resource mobilization.

One of the biggest challenges faced here is dealing with the different provincial networks. Anton explains that, "May kanya-kanyang dynamism. Challenge iyon sa coordinator to navigate the different networks. (There are individual dynamisms. It is a real challenge for coordinators to navigate these different networks.)" It is incumbent therefore, he continues, for CenVISNET to monitor and prod members to do what they need to do and push them to perform the best that they can.

At this point, these are such important areas of focus because the greater majority of CenVISNET's members are still reliant on grants. These skills therefore play an important role in the members' fulfillment of their grant-giver's requirements. However, it even goes beyond this: organizations cannot always be reliant on grants and must seek more sustainable sources of income. Obviously, the skills and abilities related to financial management play a very important role in this.

While CenVISNET is teaching its own members to find their own wings, CenVISNET is also in the process of charting its own course. "We need projects on our own and not just always relying on CODE-NGO," Anton stresses. It is because of this mindset that the network is now doing its pilot projects. This is a very significant step for an organization this young with such a wide coverage. The network needs to be strengthened especially in terms of its systems so that once a project is initiated, it can be properly passed on or cascaded to the members for their own implementation.

A good example of this is CenVISNET's project on DRRM. The good twist that the network provided here was the focus on youth development. "DRRM affects all. The bigger challenge is for communities to be resilient to disasters and we need to be prepared individually and familiarly." It is then hoped that these resiliency efforts are eventually turned into policies and that the youth can be organized to properly appreciate what DRRM is so that they can come up with their own action plan in line with their own community's plans. This is where the Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Council) can also come in so that a more inclusive system

can be formulated, one that has the local government leadership and the youth leadership working together with the entire community.

Areas for Strengthening

The challenge for a young network is quite real especially as regards getting all members up to a certain standard by which they will all be expected to perform. Things cannot be “business as usual” in some areas. Anton expresses this quite clearly when he said that, “We need to bring our members to a certain level of maturity as organizations.” This has multiple facets -- in their systems, in the way they deal with their immediate communities, in how they interact with donors, etc. Currently, CenVISNET is using a capacity assessment tool which serves as a good starting and reference point to detect or identify any areas that may need more attention.

Anton explains that this is not, in any way, meant to belittle any network member but rather a means to determine how else the parent network, CenVISNET, can serve its members by providing the needed input in areas where there may be deficiencies. The issue here is being able to continue being relevant because, by doing so, “You don’t need to worry about funding; it will just come.” To get this done, CenVISNET provides “organizational development through an experiential way of learning. We have been successful in building an organizational culture and setting up the proper mindset. Before you even start planning or engaging in a project, it’s good to have a certain degree of understanding and common values. This is a circle of trust that needs to exist within an organization.”



All these developments in CenVISNET are such a good fit for Anton himself whose work has always been related to development and one which he considers his way of contributing to the larger social development network. "The motivation is not the pay but the sense of fulfillment that you're happy with what you are able to accomplish in that community."

This is a very important point especially if you consider that his work in CenVISNET is not Anton's "day job." He devotes most of his time to the Ramon Aboitiz Foundation, Inc. (RAFI) where he is the Executive Director of the Integrated Development Unit and was Executive Director of the Education Development Unit. How does the work in CenVISNET itself count in his work in RAFI? Strictly speaking, it doesn't. His efforts there hardly address any of his key performance indicators in his home organization. His main take home really is thus the fulfillment and friendships he gains from his work both in RAFI and also in CenVISNET.

Fortunately for both, his bent towards education and making sure that people are able to better themselves is very strongly present in his efforts in both organizations. He led the creation of RAFI's education unit. While people knew that the organization had education programs, there wasn't yet a distinct unit that handled these efforts. This unit focused on basic education during Anton's stint. "We targeted supporting public schools primarily in terms of school governance, school management, capacity building, and infrastructure repair and development." Due to the Department of Education's own limitations, it often falls to organizations like RAFI to help local schools in terms of rehabilitation and it was in this that Anton led the effort. By the time he moved on to the Integrated Development Unit, around 1,300 classrooms all over Cebu had been fixed by RAFI.

While he, himself, has not concentrated on why he keeps doing this, it really does all boil down to development and caring for one's community that Anton continues with his work for society -- whether it be for RAFI or CenVISNET. It is also a sense of sharing one's own gifts and making sure that a greater number of people can be more than they are at present.

09 CORDNET: Local Planning and Budgeting as a Poverty Reduction Tool



The Local Government Code of 1991 mandates local government units (LGUs) to plan in accordance with their function as “political units” and “local management bodies.” LGUs are specifically required to come up with a comprehensive land use plan, which spells out how to manage local territories and help promote the general welfare of residents.

The municipality of Kapangan, in the northern province of Benguet, is one municipality that does so. Kapangan is barely an hour’s drive from Baguio City, the economic hub of the Cordillera, yet it has been one of the poorest municipalities of Benguet. The 4th class municipality does not have the mineral and agricultural resources of its neighbors and has been dependent on its Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA).

With the help from the Cordillera Network of Development NGOs and POs (CORDNET), the Localized Anti-Poverty Project (LAPP) model designed by CODE-NGO was piloted in Kapangan where the Poverty Incidence Monitoring System (PIMS) and Budget Advocacy Project (BAP) was undertaken in 2002-2003.

In 2007, LAPP was adopted and institutionalized by the Kapangan municipal local government with Municipal Ordinance No. 53 as its framework.

The Localized Poverty Reduction through Active Participation of the Poor in Governance (LPRAPP-Gov) Project, an enhanced LAPP, was crafted and implemented by Shontoug Foundation, the Secretariat of CORDNET, in 2008-2011. LPRAPP-Gov is a model of an enhanced participatory local governance system to reduce poverty incidence and facilitate inclusive growth and development through multi-stakeholder partnership and collaboration. It focuses on the active involvement of the grassroots and community members in LGU development planning and bottom-up budgeting. This includes managing economic resources in the municipality and its barangays – all critical in creating wealth for the community both in the present and for the future.

“The LGUs should be made to realize that they should not just rely on their IRA as there are many other sources of funds for development projects and programs, if they know how and where to tap them,” said Marietta Paragas, Chief Executive Officer of Shontoug Foundation.

Under the LPRAPP-Gov framework, barangays adopt the resources/asset-based approach of development with technical and financial support primarily from the (municipal and provincial) LGUs complemented by government line agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), the academe, or even foreign funding institutions.

There were three stages in the implementation of LAPP and these are outlined in the following paragraphs.

LAPP Stage 1: MBN-CBPIMS

LAPP 1 monitored the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of basic services delivery at the barangay level. It adopted the Minimum Basic Needs–Community Based Poverty Indicator and Monitoring System (MBN-CBPIMS), a tool to minimize aggregate poverty. It made use of a barangay-based information system designed by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), in coordination with the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to gather, analyze, and digitize data on the basic needs of the community.

Barangays with high poverty incidence were easily identified because the tool made it easier to identify the barangays that needed the most help, where exactly they were, the population of each village (sitios) in every barangay living at or below the poverty threshold, and what they needed in terms of basic needs. More, the tool made it very easy to pinpoint families who needed the most attention.

As a participatory and empowering tool, the MBN-CBPIMS provided an opportunity for the villagers to participate in identifying and prioritizing concerns that could be translated into services or projects for development agencies (government and non-government) to support and implement. The data gathered from the MBN provided the community a common “poverty lens.”

In a nutshell, LAPP 1 opened opportunities for the LGUs to involve their constituents in preparing the annual barangay development plans and budget. It also paved the way for enhancing NGO-PO-GO partnerships. Most importantly, the once passive and indifferent community members were able to develop enough confidence to participate much more actively in the crucial barangay development planning and budgeting process.

LAPP Stage 2: Expanded PIMS and Budget Advocacy

With LAPP 1 having been proven as a feasible model for poverty reduction, the Kapangan local officials gave the go signal to replicate and upscale the model through LAPP 2.

Building on the relative success and acceptability of the PIMS project implemented earlier in pilot barangays and municipalities, CODE-NGO designed a more comprehensive approach to reduce poverty at the local government level with three major components: The Poverty Incidence Monitoring System (PIMS), Budget Advocacy (BA), and Public Expenditure Tracking (PET). In Kapangan, only PIMS and BA were fully implemented due to time constraints, with PET being only partially implemented.

The pre-implementation stage for LAPP 2 included site-selection with five barangays eventually being chosen, social preparation, the organization of Poverty Reduction Action Teams (PRAT) from both the municipal and barangay levels complete with sub-committees, and the creation of capability-building activities especially for community leaders.

A survey was conducted in the five identified barangays with five enumerators and one supervisor coming from each of these barangays. The survey was conducted using household interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The PIM survey revealed four minimum basic needs that had remained unmet for the majority of households:

1. *No access to safe drinking water*
2. *Income less than the poverty threshold*
3. *No sanitary toilets*
4. *Unemployment for persons aged 15 years and older*

Under this component of LAPP 2, PRAT and BA team members attended seminars on the stages of the local government budget process to familiarize themselves with the content and format of the local budget prepared by the LGU.

“The Budget Advocacy component also explores avenues that ensure pro-poor and poverty-reduction programs and projects are included in the Annual Investment Program (AIP). If poverty reduction is a major thrust of the LGU, the local budget should be pro-poor. Thus, the need to influence the budget allocation along these lines,” Paragas explained.

After the seminars, the PRAT and BA members actively involved themselves in advocating the funding of their poverty reduction projects and programs with their local development councils (barangay, municipal, provincial), government line agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Through these lobbying efforts, a number of projects and activities targeting poverty and unmet basic needs were implemented. Among these were: waterworks, reforestation, the construction of sanitary toilets, skills training for livelihood, the establishment of day care centers, and the provision of training on community-based management systems. Funds for these projects came from the municipal and provincial LGUs, line agencies, and NGOs.

The LAPP was eventually institutionalized as a result of this, making it a regular program incorporated in the system of local governance of the municipality.

LAPP 3: Economic Governance

This component specifically addresses the lack of employment opportunities thereby causing low household incomes and the limited involvement of ordinary citizens in local governance. It was designed to develop a culture of participatory governance and catalyze social enterprises to improve the quality of life of the poor. It formed and added the Economic Development Team (EDT) to the LPRAT to help get this done.

In essence, Economic Governance aimed at enabling and empowering ordinary community members to become active participants in local governance instead of being mere recipients of government services. It introduced a corporate form of governance, encouraging stakeholders to generate income that would bring about a multiplier effect on the economy of the LGUs.

Outputs and results

All projects and initiatives will eventually be judged based on what they accomplish. In this, the Localized Anti-Poverty Project experienced a good amount of success as shown by the following:

1. Development Plans Focused on Human and Social Improvement

Various stakeholders and partners committed to support LGUs in their effort to reduce poverty incidence, paving the way for development plans that prioritized the human and greater social situation by moving away from infrastructure-dominated AIPs.

2. Social Enterprises for Employment Generation

Stakeholders from government line agencies, local government units, the academe, and community-based organizations changed the economic landscape of villages for the better with the introduction of social enterprises providing jobs to the unemployed.

3. Development of an Economic Road Map

Economic development teams analyzed the prevailing economic situation to develop a road map that can effectively guide mandated line agencies and other development catalysts in improving the economic condition of the poor and marginalized. This also allows all concerned to properly plan for the future.

4. Formulation of Economic Development Agenda

Upon its completion, the Economic Development Agenda was eventually incorporated in the Executive-Legislative Agenda and in the LGU's Annual Investment Plan with an allocated budget of 20% of the Development Fund.

5. Growth of Social Enterprises

Resource-based and market-driven enterprises were identified, developed, and given a clear social mission.

6. Economic Development Team

A team dedicated to the implementation of the Economic Development Agenda was created as a result of the successful partnership with the LGUs and the continued thrust for holistic social development.

Insights gained from the Kapangan experience

Reducing poverty incidence as a major thrust of local government is not necessarily that difficult if there is ample focus and cooperation in promoting a framework like LPRAP and always budgeting from the bottom up. Indeed, while it is challenging to shift from the more traditional and common governance mindset of the top-to-bottom approach to participatory, from-the-bottom-up planning and budgeting, it can be done. The people of Kapangan have shown that.

The multi-stakeholder partnership as exhibited in the municipality, facilitated and coordinated by a CSO, provides the much-needed push and impetus as well as resources and expertise to fight poverty. On its own, an LGU with meager resources cannot do everything that must be done.

Such partnerships also often do result in many positive things for all concerned. Reform in governance through localization and empowerment also transforms local government executives to become development managers as partnerships give them a more complete picture of everything happening in their areas of responsibility.

However, perhaps more important in this whole endeavor is how people themselves come together and realize that they are not without power and influence and that, ultimately, it is only with their participation and cooperation that any anti-poverty effort can come to fruition.

PROFILE 07 Marietta 'Mayet' Paragas

President, Cordillera Network
of Development NGOs



A Journey with **Cordillera** **Indigenous** Communities

Culture of sharing the gifts of the earth

"We do not sell the avocados because these are the only things we can give as parting gifts to our visitors", Mayet recalled the words of an elder in the Ibaloi community of Sagubo Kapanagan, Benguet during her visit sometime in 2001. "It was a wake up call for me. I saw the fruits as something that could earn cash

and extra income while the old man clearly knows that the fruits growing near the houses will freely be shared with others”, she continued.

Marietta Paragas, fondly called Mayet is the Chief Executive Officer of Shontoug Foundation, Inc. based in Baguio City. She is instrumental in the formation of the Cordillera Network of Development NGOs and POs (CORDNET) in 1998 of which she now acts as principal mentor. For years as the President, she led CORDNET into what it is today. Of lowland Ilocano origin with a degree in Economics from the University of the Philippines, she was enjoying a flourishing academic career until family priorities called for a change in pace and environment. She later found herself journeying with the sisters of the Religious of the Good Shepherd in the mission and advocacy to help the marginalized and address the problem of poverty in the upland, indigenous communities in the Cordillera.

In another community in Mountain Province, she was baffled how a whole bunch of bananas were exchanged for a measly 50 pesos to traders who would come pick-up the bananas placed along the roadside. In the city market, the same bunch would actually be sold for 300 to 500 pesos. For Mayet, something was amiss. But the local farmers did not complain about this since they said the bananas grew naturally without much care and they were just happy to get something from the plants.

Sooner, Mayet realized that common to the indigenous communities is a culture of sharing the abundant blessings of the earth and the plants that grow around them as they also nurture relationships with kin, neighbor or even a confessed outsider like herself.

Of poverty and abundance

The Cordillera Region has been classified as one of the poorest in the country. “How can I agree? What I have seen is so much wealth that people generously share. Yes, perhaps there is not a lot of money in the communities, but I have seen another form of wealth that sustains the people.”

One of the tasks Mayet did was to help assess the actual income of the families in the communities. “When asked about their income and its sources, people commonly responded that they did not have any work. Yet, they would say, no one in the community would go hungry unless they are lazy. The problem is the very western metrics of evaluating wealth and resources that saw only cash as basis for prosperity resulting to a common response of NONE if people are asked if they have a job”, Mayet explained.

Mayet started to ask the questions differently, focusing instead on what people actually did to feed their families and, generally, how they spent their days. This revealed something quite telling: Much of their livelihood activities were farm or home-based and were hardly what most metrics considered. These include women who got some bananas and made them into banana que or made rice cakes then sold to the neighbors or nearby stores. The situation was similar when it came to men who were occupied with simple farming. This was very different from what is considered to be a “job,” which involved a daily wage or a monthly salary. Simple farming revealed low cash input farming yet sufficient produce to sustain basic food needs and even some surplus to share.

Mayet has seen the contrast in the indigenous lifeways that speak of simplicity, community and harmony against the destructive mining corporations and chemical based-farming that has been displacing communities and destroying the caring culture among the indigenous peoples. She was bothered how people end up in the city earning meager wages when their once fertile fields were scraped and made lifeless by the mining companies. Being an environmental advocate, she also took on the advocacy for indigenous peoples rights. She actively advocated for Free Prior Informed Consent to large development projects that impacts the ancestral domains of the indigenous peoples. This even got her branded as communist by the military. Something she definitely is not.

Transformations and innovations

Mayet herself has been transformed in many ways having experienced the kindness and graciousness of the indigenous communities amidst the bounty of the mountains of the Cordillera despite the obvious lack of the basic parameters of classic development models. Much as she perceived the beauty of the land, the people and its culture that she has come to appreciate, she has also seen the gaps needing intervention. For despite the natural wealth and the equally rich culture, indeed, the communities need more than sufficient food.

Keen on the empowerment of women and village leaders to pro-actively engage the local government to ensure participatory and accountable governance in poverty reduction, Mayet would encourage local politicians to listen to the voices of the community and relate more closely with them. She tells them that in this way, development programs will be more effective and sustainable and they will have more chances of getting re-elected. She has patiently mentored potential women leaders as well as youth to gain confidence in articulating and defining development priorities for the community.



The economist in Mayet would not stop looking at the bananas being processed into banana chips or banana ketchup. Being a firm believer in adding value, she knows that doing this could result in gaining income for the families and the communities in the Cordillera. Her strong support and advocacy for the development of community-based social enterprises is now bearing fruit. The ginger tea enterprise of three communities in Kapangan has been linked to the WE 21 in Japan who are not only buying the product but also providing technical as well as infrastructure support for the growth of the enterprise. While facing natural challenges in its development, the muscovado enterprise in Agtangao Abra has the potential to produce another export quality product.

A former college instructor in the field of commerce, she has sharply perceived the need to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and skills of small farmers. This she believes will free them from the exploitation of scheming business men who take advantage of their sharing culture and economic deprivation. It will also open opportunities for economic sustainability beyond self-subsistence.

Engaging in collaborative multi-stakeholder partnerships is another strategy, Mayet ensures CORDNET members and base organizations embrace. This has been demonstrated to optimize meager resources but

gain much in the synergy of various efforts towards the realization of shared vision and common goals. Aware that she also bears a certain perspective influenced by her own culture and education, she reminds her indigenous colleagues to provide the balance to ensure that development initiatives will not disturb the communities they work with.

To keep going

Social Development work can tax not only the sinews but also the heart. There are considerable challenges and one cannot just be persistent; there has to be something else powering than persistence.

Mayet has drawn an early inspiration from her mother. As her sister has joked, their mother acted like the Department of Social Welfare when she would periodically give seeds to farmers without asking for any payment.

She also reveals that after years of working directly with the poor, Mayet noticed that she began to enjoy her work though it entailed going to faraway places wearing jeans and step-ins, something she would not have dreamed of doing as a university professor and dean.

“Gustong-gusto ko na pumunta sa liblib, maski naglalakad kami sa bundok-bundok. Iba yung fulfillment, natutuwa ako ‘pag may natutulungan ako. (I enjoyed going to the farflung communities even if we had to walk mountains. The fulfillment is different. I love to help people). I move more because of the heart now, no longer head level”, she explained.

“I also want to see that you, the younger people will lead”, Mayet said confidently throwing her support to Ms Rosella Bahni who took on the CORDNET presidency after her. She also made sure that the Shontoug staff who belong to the indigenous communities would take greater role in leading the development of their communities.

10 PHILDHARRA: The National Performance Monitoring System



PhilDHRRA's NGO Performance Monitoring System: **A work in progress**

Truly daunting is an endeavor focused on building and maintaining a strong and responsible network where each member organization has a definite role to play but also needs continued assistance. Doing all this in Mindanao is even more so with the area's very distinct and unique set of challenges - the diverse topography, history, culture, and political situation.

Coordination is crucial in partnerships between organizations and facilitating links between such groups is both beneficial and necessary. The Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA) has made it its mission to make this happen. However, keeping abreast with the conditions of partners and member organizations has been a real challenge and PhilDHRRA has needed a tool to allow it to see which member needs help and in what form. Without an effective tool for monitoring, organizations often get lost in a lot of irrelevant information and eventually lose contact with its members. In effect, it is the people these groups help that ultimately suffer.

To address this difficulty, PhilDHRRA devised the NGO Performance Monitoring System (NPMS), a monitoring tool that helps to update PhilDHRRA's management team on the condition of its members especially as they aim to better themselves and help their communities.

“The NPMS is a tool that helps track the organizational status and degree of compliance with the network’s requirements for each member and measures their contribution and commitment to PhilDHRRA’s mission and aim,” explains Glenn Bais, PhilDHRRA Mindanao Regional Coordinator. Bais adds that there are two general areas for tracking organizational performance:

1. Organizational Growth

The Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC) process/standard was adopted by PhilDHRRA to measure or indicate the organizational strength of a member organization. Members not certified by PCNC need to undergo the organizational growth monitoring tool to assist them in complying with minimum standards for good governance.

2. Participation with Network Activities and Compliance with Membership Requirements

This is a mechanism to form the basis of imposing sanctions or granting incentives to members depending on whether they actively participate in the activities of the network and whether they are faithful in complying with what is expected of them as a member. Minimum indicators used in monitoring members’ compliance with network requirements include (a) attendance in meetings, (b) the payment of annual dues, (c) submission of an annual report, (d) submission of audited annual financial statements, and (e) regular updating of their organizational profile.

“The NPMS helps determine the level of strength and maturity of an organization so we, as an umbrella organization, will know when and how to intervene, to help them break any possible fall,” Bais clarified. A member organization’s participation is very important especially as regards work related to Asset Reform and Rural Development (ARRD), PhilDHRRA’s flagship project revolving around five thematic issues:

1. *Asset Reform*
2. *Basic Social Services*
3. *Agricultural Productivity and Natural Resource Management*
4. *Rural Enterprise Development*
5. *People Empowerment*

“It is very important for us to know if they (member organizations) adhere to our themes and if their projects help us as a network to realize our collective goals,” Bais added. “The NPMS is an effective tool when we gather information to see the growth and development of an organization, which is also important in building a strong, reliable network.” Through the NPMS, PhilDHRRA is able to get reliable indicators from any network organization, thus ensuring accountability and the ability to provide assistance to member organizations that need it.

At first glance, the NPMS seems to be a godsend and though it has brought many advantages, closer inspection and everyday experience reveal its limitations. For example, PhilDHRRA Mindanao is composed of 22 member organizations and is divided into five clusters for easier coordination. These are the clusters of SOCSARGEN, Northern Mindanao, Davao, CARAGA, and Zamboanga. The NPMS needs important information from each of these clusters for it to generate useful data on their work in rural development. The challenges of distance and information interchange are enough to give one pause.

The issue now, therefore, is getting the necessary input. “You really have to follow up, in cluster meetings, focus group discussions, etc.,” Bais said. “Minsan wala ang point person ng NGO. Minsan naman, natatabunan na ng ibang email at hindi napapansin (Sometimes, the point person of an NGO is not around. At other times, the data is buried in a lot of email and is just not noticed.)” he shared. Another dimension here was that some member organizations had to be physically visited. This entailed money, time, and energy on the part of PhilDHRRA staff.

Additionally, the NPMS itself could be challenging to accomplish especially for new staff members because it is rather technically worded. This is the reason why having an online version of NPMS is currently being

discussed to allow members to just fill in data fields without having to wait for a PhilDHRRA staff member to come by. No member will then be able to say that notifications were not received. More, data collection will be much easier and safer, not to mention faster and more user-friendly.

NPMS development involves defining and agreeing on standard organizational parameters and indicators like PCNC. This development also includes PhilDHRRA's work on ARRD and the flagship programs revolving around the five thematic issues focusing on network members' contributions and commitment to the mission of PhilDHRRA. Interestingly enough, such a process can be replicated by other CODE-NGO members with some innovations.

The tool has already helped PhilDHRRA become more guided and mindful of its member organizations, providing an avenue for the network to see each member's commitment to the eradication of poverty. It is hoped that the NPMS will, in due time, be truly able to gauge the strengths, weaknesses, maturity, and needs of PhilDHRRA members and these will then be evaluated and addressed by the secretariat. Just recently, PhilDHRRA made significant improvements in the system by adding CODE-NGO's "good governance" indicators along with PCNC indicators. The proposal to go online will, understandably, take some time before it is implemented. Lastly, the present NPMS form is also being reviewed to make it more accessible, understandable, and user-friendly.

This is indeed a tool that needs to be perfected as, according to Bais, "The tool gives us something tangible to work on," Bais ended.

PROFILE 08 **Alma de la Paz**

National Chairperson, Philippine Partnership
for the Development of Human Resources in
Rural Areas



No tree hugger

The environment is a pet concern of many people and there are numerous approaches to being environmentally aware. There are those who have taken up recycling while others banner the cause of fighting against plastic use.

The situation in the 1980s saw forest cover plummeting to a disturbingly low level and people and the government were in a rush to come up with programs to address the situation. The mountains and forests were denuded from centuries of logging and things only promised to get worse. Trees were being planted but it was always a question of whether the right ones were being planted and whether the people living in the areas had the right attitude and capabilities to ensure that their surroundings were being well cared for.

Indeed, it seemed that there was a serious disconnect between human beings seeking to live in those areas and the surrounding environment that was under great stress with all the human activity while it struggled to survive. A goal, therefore, was getting the people to live in a certain way that cared for and even cultivated their surroundings so that they would be in synch with each other and that no harm need come when inclement weather made its presence felt. Could it be possible that things like landslides threatening both lives and livelihood need not be such a big concern?

Finding herself

Alma de la Paz came home to the Philippines from a stint in the United States in 1981 with a desire to help her native land. The problem was, she didn't know what to get into. She has always had the humility to follow the lead given by others and to learn as she goes along and, fortunately for her, one of the people who lit her way was her own mother-in-law. Trinidad de la Paz was one of the people behind the Davao Medical School and she introduced Alma first to the Ateneo de Davao community and then to the Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRRA).

Things began slowly enough for her but one thing that both her mother-in-law and the Ateneo president stressed to her was that she didn't have to do everything there was to do. "You just have to do a few things and do them well," Alma was told. This idea seemed to be the trick for her along with her belief that if God wants something to happen, it will happen.

Her involvement in the development efforts of Ateneo exposed her to various concerns and people and, as providence would have it, she found herself focusing on environmental concerns. Unlike many people, however, Alma's work with and for the environment was always guided by what would be best also for people especially since all those denuded forests and mountain areas had people living in them.

"I'm not a tree hugger. Caring for the environment is not in exchange for anyone's wellbeing. We want people to have a good life." This was born out of necessity in a way. It was a question of getting people there to realize how caring for the suffering forest would be beneficial for them in the long run. "You cannot just forest an area because there are so many people living in it. You have to find an area proximate to that forest and connect their livelihood to agroforestry. Instead of short-term cropping (rice, corn, etc.) where you will have a lot of erosion because the land is steep and sloping, what you do is you plant tree-based crops - coffee, cacao, etc."

This involved giving residents in the mountainous areas what may just be better options for them to plant. Some government agencies, in their effort to provide livelihood and food security, suggested the planting of cash crops like vegetables. This wasn't really beneficial for the terrain because vegetable production requires intensive tillage causing more soil erosion. Just a little water flow and the top soil is immediately removed. The benefits for both people and the former forest was therefore short-lived and eventually harmful.

Alma and her group needed more knowhow and they needed it from those who knew best. There were courses in Luzon on offer from groups like the Ford Foundation. These courses were exactly what they were looking for because the topics were on agroforestry, agroforestry planning, and water conservation. Since they were being funded by an international organization at the time, the plunging peso value of the 80s worked to their favor as they had more pesos for the same number of dollars. This was a unique opportunity and Alma had a lightbulb moment: "Let's do two things and bring the courses to Mindanao and publish these courses!" They brought the professors to Mindanao because it was much cheaper to do so than bringing their staff and the staff of likeminded organizations to Luzon. They published the materials and tweaked details so that agri-chemicals were hardly part of any of the solutions offered and there was more gender sensitivity.

Doing work that involved so many people and various organizations both public and private was completely new to Alma. What's more is that money was always part of the equation. Never daunted, she hung on to her short conversations with God where she put her trust in Him: "Lord, if it's meant to be, Kapwa will find

the money. If it is not meant to be, I won't find the money." How has that worked for her so far? "So far, so good," she smiles happily.

These efforts of hers through the years have resulted in some fruitful partnerships with people in government that have had such lasting effects. "One thing I like to think I greatly influenced is looking at environmental parameters side-by-side with economic parameters when measuring development." This was truly significant especially when western economic ideas focused mostly on a country's gross domestic product, employment, and inflation but not on environmental details. "We should have environmental indices and look at forest cover, the state of biodiversity, water quality, etc.," she stresses because these will be translated into measurable indicators. For example, it can be asked, "What is the minimum forest cover needed to provide essential environmental services?"

Such things don't come easy, however. Adopting the idea of having environmental indices took years of advocacy and patience. This is simple enough to understand because people do need to appreciate the gravity of a situation and the effectiveness of a solution before any solution is adopted. Alma explains this quite simply: "If you do not know the magnitude of the problem, you cannot ask other people to help you because you're not admitting the scope of the problem." This reveals a deep need for collaboration rather than antagonism. "We're here to help each other. My advocacy is stronger because I'm doing something on the ground and I know the challenges in actually bringing about change."

There is also the need to make environmental indicators something more people can relate to. This is especially true for those in positions of power and influence who may not necessarily have the necessary knowledge but the requisite desire to do the best for their communities. For example, saying there is mercury contamination in local bodies of water just does not have the same impact as talking about water quality. Such a skill in communication is likewise needed in getting people to understand how once arable land is now stone hard and completely unusable because the water that had been passing through it for months was contaminated by mine tailings.

Perhaps the most crucial partnership in Alma's line of work is the one that exists within the walls of her own organization, Kapwa Upliftment Foundation. The simple truth of the matter is that people all have financial needs and they do have their dreams for themselves and their families. Alma realized early on that she could not always afford the best people for the job. What she did have were some of the most dedicated people around and, in this line of work, that was most important. She needed people who were willing to learn and develop into something more than they were. Does Kapwa lose people? Of course, but it sometimes is because of her own prodding. She once had a very able and reliable second in command who eventually got married. She, herself, realized that for this man to truly give his family the best possible options, he had to leave the organization. She sat him down and told him his options especially about moving into consultancy work. They parted as even closer friends because of that.

Living for others

The NGO worker is always one who lives for others. This is very true of Alma who not only cares for places like Mt. Apo but also the indigenous people who live there. It started with the belief that the people could and should be moved away from there especially since the erosion and denudation posed a great danger to their lives. It didn't take long to realize that these people wouldn't be there if they had a choice. For the indigenous people (IP), this was part of their sacred heritage. For those who came there from the lowlands, these mountainous areas were the only place they could live. "If they had a choice, they wouldn't live there. It's just that they don't have any other option."

The Mt. Apo connection came because her peers chose her for this advocacy. That was years ago and now, she refers to herself as perhaps the "institutional memory" of the group, being able to trace the development of all their efforts for the past decades. This came in handy not only for them but for government agencies, one of which even asked for all the Kapwa files so that they could complete their own.

Alma explains the need for a “landscape perspective.” What’s that? There was a time when Kapwa had taught erosion protection to farmers and they seemed to be successful in this. Soon, however, they saw that the mountain was still eroded. “We had farmer-adopters but the mountain was still mostly eroded.” The problem here was, at that point, neither they nor the farmers themselves saw the whole “landscape.” What they really needed to do was to see the entire mountain’s situation and not just that of the farmers and their farms. “You can’t just be happy planting X number of trees. You have to see the landscape. You have to see whether you’re protecting the watershed. You have to teach agroforestry versus high-value crops (like vegetables) to protect the mountain.

On a higher plane, there is another very important aspect of this “landscape” – tenure. Many of the residents of the mountains, whether they be from the IPs or not, hesitated to take part in any planting activities because they were seldom sure if the fruits of their labor would end up with them or with some other group or with the government. This was especially important for the IPs since many of them had been fighting for their ancestral domain for decades. “We needed to encourage those in the uplands to plant trees but why would they plant trees if they didn’t have security of tenure? They could be made to leave since they didn’t have any rights.” With the Philippine government basing most of its decisions on legal grounds and rights as provided by law, these IPs needed something within that framework. After a lot of work with many sectors of society, the Indigenous People’s Rights Act came to be and with it, Kapwa was able to help the IPs secure two Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADT) in Mt. Apo. These two CAD titles covered around 43 barangays and 66% of the entire park. Since then, more areas in the Mt. Apo national park have been titled to several ethnolinguistic groups.

This was a significant accomplishment as the IPs were quite poor and because of their lack of tenure, many had already left and there were also a lot of people there who were not originally from the IP groups because of intermarriage and those from immigrant families. Kapwa chose to prioritize assistance to the IPs but recognizes that migrants would, of course, stay and so must also be assisted to farm using non-destructive practices.

Another aspect of this effort was teaching new work practices to the IPs. “The tribes worked longer and more days to plant more in their farms. They weren’t used to that.” With this also came the need for food security and empowering the women. There was a time when men would seek daily wage labor opportunities and their wives and children would just wait near the places of work. After the day’s labor was done, the whole family would buy rice and go home together. This scheme failed to utilize the woman’s own ability to help support the family. These women were taught how to garden within the perimeter of their own home. These were primarily root crops like kamote which provided a source of nutrition and extra income for those who were able to plant more. This was reducing hunger at the community level and those who now had surplus income would even happily brag that, “May pang asukal pa. (There’s even enough to buy sugar.)”

Part of the currency in these dealings has to do with the reputation of the implementing organization. This was another area where the years of reliable work done by both Alma and Kapwa came in really handy. Their reputation usually preceded them and this was recognized by both local and foreign groups. Local groups looked to them to help guide discussions while foreign groups willingly lent their support – both financial and otherwise – because Alma and Kapwa were, and continue to be, trustworthy. A German organization had even helped in putting up the physical, concrete markers for the ancestral domain. This involved putting small concrete cylinders in the ground locally called “muhon” to mark the boundaries of an area. At first there was some confusion since the local term for the endeavor was “monumentation” with the concrete cylinders being referred to as “monuments.” Upon being told that the project would need around a thousand “monuments,” the German representative was taken aback. It was only after some more explaining that he finally understood just what was being referred to. “It was really a funny story,” Alma shared.

Looking back

Alma’s life in development work has been challenging though eventually fruitful. One thing has been consistent in this however – a certain sense of humility and the realization that she could not have done things

alone. Many of the challenges she faced involved technical knowhow that she did not have. This never stopped her because part of her humility was knowing she could find people who were experts in these tasks - engineers, teachers, agroforestry experts, etc. "Hindi man ako marunong, marunong naman akong maghanap ng taong marunong. (I may not be knowledgeable but I do know how to find someone who is.)" A constant refrain in her life story, is an acceptance of divine providence and intervention. "My life is really like that. I may not know something but because they asked me for water, I found the money and the Lord provided. We built it and we have many successful water projects under our belt... It really tells me that I'm not the one who did all these."

Section 04



Pagpapahalaga: Advocating Human Dignity

All the efforts of civil society organizations are rooted in a firm belief in human dignity. It is because of this conviction that numerous individuals have put aside their own comfort and even their personal safety. There are many in society who have hardly any voice or influence that they have to endure abuse while having their rights trampled upon and their futures threatened.

These stories give a glimpse on what it is to always face an uphill battle and what it means to gird one's loins and grit one's teeth to effect some change and getting people with means to help to assume a more active role. One aspect that can be looked at here is the fact that the people in these stories never gave up and still continue in their work regardless of the hardship. They could not afford to be caught in anything that would hamper their efforts as too much continues to be in the balance.

What would have happened if Teresita Silva allowed sorrow and disappointment to stop her from helping street kids and those girls abused sexually? Or if Jose Morales, an urban poor leader and partner of the Partnership of the Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA) just told himself that there was really no hope in talking to people in government and that his urban poor neighbors should just enjoy their homes before the bulldozers come? Or if Rory Tolentino, former leader of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) had just told herself that she really should just work for herself regardless of how people in business could more directly help the poor? Or if Jing Karaos, fresh from getting her PhD, just joined the business community and worked with big-money real estate instead of looking at urban poor housing?

But what about those that were helped? There is more than one person who, because of ChildHope Asia Philippines, a member of the National Council of Social Development (NCSD) now has a better chance at life and can even help others from the same situation. There is one more person who sees the possibility of talking and working with government to find a better solution to urban congestion. There is one more corporate individual intent on helping others and one more from the marginalized sector benefitting from this intensity.

These are but some stories of how the value of the human person continues to drive people to do more and reach out to others. After all, if not for human dignity, why else should people strive for a better life?

11 WEVNET/ICODE:

Holding local leaders **Accountable** and providing **Renewable Energy** for underserved communities



Addressing the needs of one's community

A non-governmental organization (NGO) or people's organization has to be responsive to the needs of its community or it really has hardly any reason to exist. This has been a major issue in the Philippines in the past few years and the inability of some groups to show actual results led to much public distrust.

What happens when an NGO is actually able to show that it does, indeed, look at the public's real and concrete needs and responds to these in such a way that the people not only benefit from it but they actually also see and feel that benefit?

Such has been the experience with Iloilo CODE NGOs, Inc. (ICODE), a member of Western Visayas Network of Social Development NGOs (WEVNET). This is the story of two of its endeavors that have looked at public needs and then looked harder at how these should be addressed.

I. Information Restores Power to the People

"Accountability, not Lip Service."

With that maxim, the municipality of Bingawan in Iloilo province successfully launched and perpetuated a system called the Pamangkutanon sang Banwa (PsB), or Citizens' Query, where residents held their officials accountable in delivering basic services.

At the core of the system are regular assemblies where citizens ask questions or raise complaints to their elected officials. The power of PsB lies in part in the fact that all candidates for elective positions sign a contract with their constituents. This contract stipulates that candidates who win in the elections agree to undergo performance evaluation. Thus, bound by their word, the officials are obliged to respond to their constituents' demands.

PsB is founded on the citizens' right to information regarding what their officials are doing with public resources and how those officials are addressing the people's concerns. Coupled with a venue where the constituents directly interact with their officials and can demand immediate reports or responses, PsB becomes an effective tool for transparency and accountability. Bingawan has been recognized for its PsB program with the conferment of a Galing Pook Award in 2010.

ICODE conducted a series of training sessions on transparency and local governance designed for grassroots leaders with a recounting of the Bingawan experience as one of the highpoints of the training sessions. Among the participants in one such training were the officials of Barangay Canabajan in the municipality of Calinog, Iloilo. "The training session for Calinog was from February to July 2011," recalls Emmanuel Areño, ICODE Executive Director and WEVNET Regional Network Coordinator. "The learning process was very hands-on, and the lecturers were practitioners of participatory local governance. We exposed the trainees to various models and innovations in local governance when they visited areas where particular mechanisms were being successfully implemented," Areño adds.

As part of the training module, participants were asked to replicate a project they were interested in and which they saw to be suitable for their own respective communities. The Punong Barangay (Barangay Chief Executive) of Canabajan, Dino Chaves, chose to replicate PsB.

FOI at the grassroots level

Chaves implemented PsB under the name Kinamatarong Mo, Ipamangkot Mo (KMIM), or Citizens' Right to Information. KMIM follows the basic principles of PsB: It implements the people's right to information by providing a regular venue for constituents to identify issues and raise concerns to their officials. The officials, on the other hand, have the opportunity to update the citizens about the use of funds and the status of projects. In sum, KMIM allows all stakeholders to evaluate the performance of barangay officials.

KMIM was first implemented in Canabajan on November 27, 2011. The session took advantage of information culled from data-mapping exercises and a database provided by CODE-NGO which identified particular areas that the community could develop using a system of participatory planning. As a result, several projects related to agriculture were proposed. One concrete outcome from the session was the agreement to put up a project on composting, which came about because data maps showed a very high incidence of unsanitary waste disposal.

The barangay officials came away from the session having learned that consultation was key to successful project planning and implementation. Thus, the Canabajan officials endeavored to institute the participation of residents in the Barangay Development Council. Any initial resistance from some community leaders was diluted by the example and promise of Bingawan's success. Illustrating the value of KMIM, Chaves cites an instance where "We became aware that we needed to improve governance regarding expenses; a lot of barangay citizens asked questions about the expenses, so we included those concerns in our next steps." KMIM thus crystallized the power of freedom of information at the grassroots level. Residents got to ask officials about pressing community concerns. With a regular and reliable venue for such concerns, residents were encouraged to more keenly observe what was happening to their community and to ask what their officials were doing about it. Officials, on the other hand, were hard pressed to take action. As Areño puts it, "You can see the challenge so you have to act or there will be nothing to report at the next session."

This exchange between constituents and officials has helped form policies and has ensured the implementation of those policies. Evidently, KMIM enabled the people to take charge of their community.

Replicating success

ICODE's credibility is one of the elements that assured the success of KMIM. "Barangay leaders are not used to a system of NGOs helping them because they think NGOs have that feeling of superiority and NGOs will only ask for money," Areño explains. ICODE's approach was constructive and open thus helping barangay officials be more receptive to the innovations showcased by ICODE.

It also helped that the officials themselves were eager to make a difference in their community. This eagerness of the Canabajan officials encouraged their constituents to participate in the process. Areño notes that, "During the preparations for KMIM, specialists and municipal development planning officers offered to help Mr. Chaves because they saw his openness to incorporate new ideas in the governance of his barangay." To protect the system against the unpredictability of future officials or administrations, Chaves instituted KMIM through an ordinance. KMIM is now as much a part of Canabajan and each cannot exist without the other. Buoyed by their positive experience with KMIM, Canabajan residents have encouraged their neighbors to launch similar initiatives. Eight other barangays in Calinog now have their own KMIM as a result of this.

"We started with only one town - Batad in Iloilo. Now, we have 16 areas in Panay island that have replicated the system, and at least three of those have passed an ordinance requiring the conduct of a regular discussion of this type," Areño says proudly. The next challenge is to duplicate the system in the provincial capital, Iloilo City itself. While there may be possible resistance from traditional politicians and local clans, Areño believes that any resistance can be weakened with enlightenment. "We have to start with educating the stakeholders," he explains.

Pioneering local government units (LGUs) like Bingawan and barangays like Canabajan, with the encouragement of organizations like ICODE, have shown that when the people are free to use government information to advance public interest, local officials are encouraged to govern wisely and prudently. Groups both in and outside the Philippines have expressed interest in ICODE's efforts. Indeed, it seems like the day of a better informed and a truly empowered public has finally come.

II. Light from light

Many island barangays in the municipalities of Carles, Estancia, and Concepcion have remained isolated in more than a few ways. The people in these islands regularly travel by boat to get to the mainland to access common services that most people take for granted. The lack of some basic services, however, is more commonly felt than others simply because these affect people's everyday lives.

While most people in the world now consider electricity a given, the people in the three mentioned municipalities have remained off the grid. For their electricity needs, many of these communities have had to rely on generators so that residents could have light. The issue of light is often not appreciated enough. The absence of reliable light sources has many negative implications especially for fishermen trying to find their way home at the wee hours of the morning, their nets and boats full of the night's catch. Electricity is also necessary for communication and health services. While each barangay has a health center where check-ups, immunizations, child births, and other health concerns can be addressed, these centers do need a constant supply of electricity especially during operations like when women give birth. At the very least, doctors or midwives need light so that they can properly serve their patients. Related to this is the capability of these health centers to refrigerate vaccines and other medical supplies.

The onslaught of Typhoon Haiyan (local name: Yolanda) in November 2013 revealed even further needs for health workers: Aside from light, both health professionals and their patients need ventilation for improved delivery of basic health services. Municipal consultation in January 2014 revealed as much and it was because of this that ICODE undertook the installation of solar systems within identified barangays. The first targets were the health centers and these were duly handed over by March 2015. The hand over included an agreement with barangay captains regarding the proper care of the facilities and the responsibility of the local government officials regarding maintenance.

Hesitance leading to acceptance

Anything new is usually met with some fear and hesitance. That is but natural even for innovations that may be eventually for the better. People have varied ways of dealing with the familiar but everyone is easily caught flatfooted with something new. Sooner or later, however, needs trump fears and the welfare of people beats any hesitance.

The renewable energy project is just a year old but already, the people in these island communities have made it part of their everyday lives, espousing the benefits of it while expressing some concerns for the future.

The community has had to rely on storage batteries for their lighting needs because the power coming from the generator connection is only on until 10 PM. Generally speaking, 10 PM is usually too early for families especially those with children who need to study. After they're done with household responsibilities, these children used to have very little time to do homework and study. Their families then resorted to using storage batteries to power their household lights. While these batteries, depending on their size and the number of bulbs they had to power, could give enough electricity for a few days to even a week (for the really big and expensive batteries), the people still had to bring them to the mainland for charging. An issue they had faced then was that they would sometimes find that their batteries had not been fully charged though they were charged full price. The full price is usually not more than PHP 50 but for them, that's a sizeable enough amount. Also, to go to the mainland and then back home means a roundtrip via boat costing PHP 30 total. That's along with the reality that having to go for another charge was more than a little inconvenience.

With a charging station now right where they are, the people in the island communities don't have to spend extra for the trip to the mainland and they can generally get a charge just a few feet away from their own homes. While it is true that because there are only a few panels in their system resulting in at most four batteries being charged at a time, it is hardly a real inconvenience since each battery, as mentioned previously,



can last days. Compared also with other charging stations in the mainland, the price for a full charge here is but PHP 30 and that's for a big battery. It normally takes four hours for a full charge when the sun is shining bright so people really do have to take advantage of the hours when there is reliable sunlight. As a result, families with a big battery can have light for perhaps a week if they only use one bulb for two to three days if there are more lights used. While many families still do rely on the electricity from the generator, they all value the freedom to turn off their lights when they themselves choose.

This system is very useful for fishermen because it gives them the necessary illumination when they do their work far at sea and, with the lighthouse powered by a storage battery, they can more easily find their way home in the hours when the sun isn't up yet.

It isn't all about light either. Landline connections are hardly an option for such island communities and cellular phones are usually the main option. Though getting a cellular signal can still be challenging, it is at least possible to be connected to the rest of the world through texting, the Internet, and social media. This is now more possible and conveniently done because the cell phones of the community can be charged in the solar charging station for the price of Php10.

There are other projects already in the process of completion. One has to do with providing refrigeration and ice-making services while another, much more ambitious project is still on the way to full fruition. Potable water remains an issue in these island communities and, for the uninitiated, this seems a little ironic. After all, water does surround these islands but none of it is drinkable. Or is it?

Desalination is a process used by much bigger communities like Cebu and even Singapore since their natural fresh water is very limited. There is now a process being shared by ICODE to these communities and the

whole effort will be powered by the solar panels. While this effort is not yet fully operational, it is but a matter of time before it is. Once this is fully operational, it can serve as a model for other communities especially in terms of how solar energy projects can address more than one basic need.

Mentoring for the future

ICODE is continuing its mentorship to these communities especially in terms of achieving sustainability. Filipinos are famous for their hospitality and generosity and this can be disadvantageous in business. One does not just give away or undersell a product or service especially if there is a good competitive advantage present.

Mentoring is very necessary for the associations looking after the solar power stations. Those who do the actual work and maintenance are supposed to be compensated otherwise, they will soon lose interest and may just not be participative in the effort anymore. After all, a person has to focus on what best feeds the family. If an endeavor is all work without any benefit, there is hardly any real reason to continue with it especially for families that need every last peso to keep themselves going. Such individuals need to be paid while the association itself needs money for its projects and endeavors. Already, the island communities see the need for growth especially when the peak season of February to June. These issues, seemingly simple for seasons businessmen, are still quite new to such associations.

If we were to compare the cost of having a storage battery charged in the mainland (PHP 50 plus PHP 30 for the roundtrip boat fare) and within an island (PHP 30), there really does seem like a good opportunity to ask for more money even just an additional PHP 10. One major advantage that the solar charging station has over the others is that those who take care of charging will always check a battery's condition before anything is done. This is not the case with the other stations. This is the reason why even after a so-called full charge, some batteries die after only a day or two of use.

One particular solar charging station within the mainland even charges lower than the regular charging stations, around just PHP 15 per big battery. This certainly seems like an underutilized opportunity and ICODE will reassess the financial situation and advise the association there accordingly.

One other issue that may just become something significant business-wise is the fact that more and more households, realizing that solar power can serve so many of their needs can just buy a few units of self-charging lights. Imagine: Two or three solar-powered lamps at approximately PHP 600 each will preclude the need for a battery. That way, a household may only need the services of a charging station for cellular phones and not have any need for a storage battery anymore. What happens to the association and the solar charging business?

These and other concerns need to be dealt with. Fortunately for these communities, as can be seen both in the social covenant signed with local government officials and the solar power projects, ICODE is more than up to the task. It will not be forcing the issue at any point but it will, nonetheless get the ball rolling so that the communities can start with their own solutions and then learn their way to success.

09 Emmanuel 'Boyet' Areño

Executive Director, Iloilo Caucus of Development
Non-Government Organizations, Inc.



Called to Serve

When you come from a deeply religious family that produces some seminarians and eventually at least one priest, there's a pretty good chance that you will end up doing at least some ser-

vice to the public regardless of what line of work you are in. Boyet Areño was not only raised by a family that saw it as part of who they were to serve others but he was molded by the Redemptorist priests when he joined their ranks as a young man. This was the start of a lot of things for him who saw his having been blessed as a call to return these same blessings to the community.

Being a “Martial Law baby,” he was exposed to a lot of challenges like many people of his day, being harassed and strafed by military forces in Mindanao while he and his Redemptorist mentors were working with poor communities. It wasn’t very long before they were branded as “Redemptterrorists.” Unlike some of his peers though, he chose not to join the underground movement or move to the mountains in protest of the injustices perpetrated by the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and his cronies. He was a “free spirit” and did not want to be dictated upon by anybody – whether by the establishment or those against it.

Working with the church at that point, he was very much affected by the notion of Liberation Theology, something many conservatives still consider radical up to now. This mindset kept him close to the disadvantaged and always kept his heart and mind oriented towards them and their needs, constantly keeping a “preferential option for the poor.” This was faith in action with the underlying belief that faith without action, as the book of St. James points out, is nothing.

Though the call to join the armed struggle during the Marcos days was getting stronger, things took a turn for the better with the EDSA Revolution of February 1986. People were able to move much more freely, speak much more freely, and think of more ways of helping others without fear of being branded a Communist.

Boyet eventually left the seminary (perhaps also as a result of his being a free spirit?) but not without having been deeply influenced by his priest-mentors. He continues to use an “action-reflection process” which he credits to having freed him from the same burn out many of his contemporaries went through. He explains that many of his friends “...didn’t give themselves time to reflect. It was all action, action, action until they burned out.”

Different battlefields

He worked in the Makati business district for a while, working for a corporate-based NGO (non-governmental organization) which exposed him to opportunities for training and this is where he excelled. “The other trainers were impressed with how I communicated with communities and came up with ideas saying it was very innovative. That’s because my approach to training is not very academic with my exposure to structural learning plus I was trained to develop out-of-the-box solutions.” He made use of games, play techniques, and group dynamics and married these with methods more commonly associated with marketing. Amusingly enough, this NGO he was working for had a lot of interest in the field of marketing and was involved in the sale of various commercial products. Was this a move in the wrong direction? Hardly. Boyet saw this as something new to learn though he does admit there was a bit of a culture shock at first. Eventually, he had no problem using what he learned in the world of Makati, even using innovative and radical ideas proposed by people like Peter Drucker.

Soon, back in the province of Iloilo, he made use of all these experiences to resume serving his community as part of Iloilo CODE NGOs. With what he learned in rural development, community organizing, marketing and the business world, he soon realized that there has to be a lot of diplomacy employed in his work especially with regard to engaging local government officials like governors and mayors and that, often, backdoor channels also had to be found. These alternative ways to offices of the powers that be often came

in the form of what he calls “peer champions” who have joined government but still have kept their passion for true public service. He was championing the notion of good governance, something his religious approach before would not have touched, and this came with another realization: “We have to go to politicians who are open to people’s participation, telling them that if you allow sharing of powers, it will lead to more popularity and bring you closer to the people. This will translate to votes.”

The battleground then had to do with politics and, free spirit that he was, this was not something daunting for Boyet. “We were among the first NGOs to organize voter’s education,” he proudly says while admitting that this wasn’t even something new to him since he had gone through the same when he was still a Redeptorist theologian, missionary and lay volunteer. He did add a very significant innovation however: Covenant signing and the idea of holding politicians to a social contract. With this, the community could hold a politician answerable to something he/she promised during the campaign period. Not only could people remind a politician of campaign promises but hold up an actual signed document attesting to a commitment to something. This made elected officials more directly accountable to the electorate and it allowed the public to truly assess how true their leaders were to their promises. More than that, because these social contracts were signed by both the politicians and representatives of the public, it was politically dangerous for a politician to go against what was signed.

This does not mean that Boyet and his group are anti-politician. His experiences have taught him that he needed to work with everybody for the good of the people. More than that, local officials are elected to a three-year term of office and, unless a public official wins another term, it is very possible that another person will be holding the same office after the three-year term is up. His NGO is the objective third party and this was shown clearly by the fact that, in the case of Batad, Iloilo, they were on good terms with the two opposing candidates for mayor. The goal for them was to give the electorate the necessary tools of empowerment, letting them know that they shouldn’t allow politicians to pull the wool over their eyes, that they had the right to assert what was due them using the power of raising their voices.

The idea of holding a “town hall meeting” was introduced to them and they observed how this was done in Bicol. They took this home to Iloilo and, armed with the Local Government Code, looked into how the populace could take a more active part in local governance. The idea here was to transform leadership towards allowing the public to be active partners in governance by being more participative and being genuinely pro-poor. The pilot area of Batad eventually expanded to Bingawan, Iloilo in and there saw another municipal ordinance in 2002 specifically stating that there be an account of performance twice a year. The institutionalized practice has been continued until now, transcending every new administration.

Thinking towards the future

These ideas had to be spread and made more accessible to a greater number of people. The first step here was to partner with the Central Philippine University (CPU) to develop a diploma course on participatory governance. The program was able to produce around 250 students in five years. A certificate program was also crafted to increase the number of beneficiaries to include those who had not been able to finish high school but were already in public service. Boyet’s marketing knowhow came to the fore here as he pushed for more exposure by joining series of World Bank initiated Development Innovation Marketplace. ICODE and two of its community partners successively won grant awards from different donors between 2004 to 2008.

This university-based program was eventually expanded in a big way with an interesting twist: The creation of field school tapping CSO professors from CPU, UP Visayas and other CSO practitioners. This can be seen as a means of bringing the teachers to the communities instead of the people from communities having to trek to Iloilo City proper where the school campus was. This resulted in 400 graduates in just one year. More than that, the certificates being given out had the stamp of the British embassy giving them a bit more weight.

Beyond even the certificate and diploma courses was the continuing effort to educate each community under their wing. This was to be such an endeavor especially in a country and a province that has had the oligarchy charting the destiny of a nation for centuries. A crucial part of all education activities was advocating open-minded and pro-people leadership that shunned the idea of political dynasties or warlords. A good amount of focus was on leadership that had the potential for growth not only for the politician but, more importantly, for the people as well.

However, taking care of the future doesn't only mean politics and governance. Sooner or later, even as communities continue to learn what it means to participate actively in governance, they will have to address their own concrete needs. Boyet has taken part in this especially with the efforts to deal with the devastation wrought by Typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan) in 2013. Housing had to be provided for as many people as possible and this needed the help of all who could. While there were families that had their homes completely destroyed and, thus, needed the most help, others suffered damage and needed a different type of assistance. Boyet and Iloilo Caucus of Development NGOs (ICODE) provided repair kits to 320 houses and rebuilt 240 core shelter with latrines under their watch as they were asked by international organization Christian Aid - UK to go to island communities because no one, at that point, was sending help to those areas. They got more NGOs and individuals involved to help. They also adopted a position that was quite different from what other groups were doing: They didn't just leave their help and leave. They stayed to get the beneficiaries to actually take ownership in the repair and rebuilding of their homes. They weren't just recipients of help; they were responsible and empowered beneficiaries.

While the exercise involving the house repair kits did result in ICODE having to leave some areas because some beneficiaries were under the impression that they were moving too slowly, they, themselves, eventually saw the wisdom in this approach after they saw what it had done to those who stuck it out with ICODE's approach.

Soon, the use of technology that was never before considered was slowly enjoying some use in the island communities of Iloilo that ICODE was serving. These island communities had been off the grid when it came to electricity and had to rely on a generator system where everybody knew that there would be no more electricity after 10PM. Also, these were fishing communities and with no light after that time, each fisherman had a difficult time finding his way back home in the pitch black darkness of early morning.

Solar technology was introduced with the help of both ICODE and partner solar energy service providers through Christian Aid grant and, while this didn't mean electricity was available the way it is in the rest of the province, it did mean that the off-grid island communities now had much more control over when their motor boat batteries, cellular phones, fans, and other small gadgets were charged or up to what time they had light in their homes. The fishermen also now had a good way to find their way back home since their communities could now power a strong enough light on their shore.

Also, to help increase the fish population around these communities, network of artificial reefs made of concrete jackstone type structures are being fabricated and deployed to attract the fish, repopulate the biodiversity and build their own rich ecosystems.

Leaving behind

Boyet still has much to do. The experience with covenant signing and the town hall approach is that they can still depend much on strong leadership. When someone is elected with less motivation, skill, or acumen, the whole system can slowly lose steam as it has in Bingawan.

This is where true empowerment comes in and Boyet knows this. Inspired by the Chinese philosopher, LaoTze, even as he still continues to take an active role, he recognizes that he, as a true leader, should not get all the credits and adulations but be able to get more and more people to say to themselves, "we did it ourselves." And this is how Boyet, himself, can eventually ride into the sunset - but not yet.

12 **NCS**D/Child Hope Asia



Philippines: Caring for our nation's future

Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Network (CAPIN)

A multi-sectoral and multi-pronged **response to child abuse**

All children have the right to be protected from violence, exploitation, and abuse. However, far too many children are still subjected to violence, exploitation, and abuse in far too many parts of the world. Some are forced to work under harmful conditions while others face violence or abuse in their homes, schools, and communities.

Children in the Philippines have not been exempted from such abuse. Behind the often grim statistics is the stark reality of faceless children who are survivors of abuse struggling with day-to-day life, putting up a front to conceal the effects of abuse and suffering in silence. These are the children who need to be helped or



even rescued so that appropriate and effective interventions can be provided to ease their pains and make their lives whole again.

According to the data from community and center-based agencies served by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in 2009 to 2010, the top five regions in terms of child abuse incidence were Region IX - Zamboanga Peninsula (1485 cases), Region VII-Central Visayas (867), National Capital Region-NCR (663), Region III-Central Luzon (660), Region II-Cagayan Valley (499). These numbers refer to all types of child abuse.

The Southern Tagalog Region recorded 193 cases, a seemingly low number compared with the others reported. However, in the year 2000, when the Consuelo Foundation Inc., a non-governmental organization involved in preventing child abuse commissioned a study on the incidence of child abuse cases, it was revealed that Southern Tagalog was actually one of the top five regions with a high incidence of child abuse cases (830 cases).

Considering how difficult it is to report even just one case of child abuse, it can be safely assumed the actual numbers can even be much higher.

To help lower the incidence of child abuse in the Southern Tagalog Region, Open Heart Foundation Worldwide, Inc., affiliated with the National Council of Social Development Foundation (NCSD), partnered with the Consuelo Foundation in 2005 to implement a project in establishing a "Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention Network (CAPIN)" in the province of Laguna.

This project is a replication of the strategy implemented by the Social Action Center of the Catholic Church in Albay. The Child and Family Services Philippines, Inc. (CFSPI) undertook a similar effort to address child abuse and introduced the five pillars of the justice system (community, law enforcement, prosecution service, courts, and correctional system) as a core mechanism.

With the merging of the CAPIN strategy of Albay and the five-pillared approach of CFSPI, new dimensions, like expanding the inclusion and involvement of other government agencies, non-government organizations and faith-based groups evolved. The evolution of this strategy was replicated in Laguna.

This strategy gave birth to the so-called CAPIN technology, which focuses on network organizing and strengthening involving a multi-sectoral and multi-pronged response to child abuse prevention. It involves a participatory approach in addressing child abuse which can be adopted by any local government unit (LGU).

Community members with a stake in preventing child abuse and those handling child abuse cases – police officers, court personnel, social workers, prosecutors, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and local government leaders – were brought together to create an efficient and effective network with a standardized approach to help child abuse survivors.

Among CAPIN's goals were the development of case management systems to protect victims by reducing the number of times they had to recount their ordeals as their case was being prepared. This and other initiatives were eventually institutionalized by the local governments where CAPIN operated.

In Laguna, CAPIN was piloted in the cities of Biñan, Calamba, and San Pablo as these were reported to have the highest incidence of child abuse cases in the province. Records from the Philippine National Police showed that 70-80 percent of the reported cases involved rape and sexual abuse and, in at least 90 percent of the cases, the victims were female.

After four years of CAPIN implementation in the pilot areas, the municipalities of Alaminos, Bae, Sta. Cruz, and the city of Cabuyao, also in the province of Laguna, were chosen next where CAPIN was implemented.

Surprisingly, it was learned that there were still some municipalities in Laguna where child abuse cases were not reported especially when parents were behind the abuse. In one case handled by CAPIN, the parents themselves were the ones making their children, ages 14, 9, and 7, perform lascivious acts for cybersex clients. The mother ran the business while the father acted as tech support maintaining the computers. The parents are now in police custody.

Also, there were instances when the Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) did not record or monitor child abuse cases especially when parents of abused children and the perpetrators arrived at amicable settlements. This meant that the reported number could have been much higher.

With CAPIN and its efforts, neighborhood officials have become more conscious of their roles as the first line of defense against abuse and this has led to the allocation of more resources and the passage of new ordinances to protect children's rights.

The local government units of Calamba City, Pagsanjan, Bae, and Sta. Cruz have passed ordinances adopting the CAPIN program. They have institutionalized the program and adopted it as their own by allocating a budget to fund programs/activities and to sustain the maintenance and operations of the Child Protection Unit (CPU), the legacy of the CAPIN program from the Consuelo Foundation, Inc. Initially CAPIN did not warrant a decrease of child abuse cases in these LGUs. In fact, the opposite was observed a few months after its implementation where the number of child abuse cases increased. This was, however, attributed to an increased awareness of the people in the community that there existed a support mechanism for children victims of abuse and their families, thus they were coming out now in the open.

CAPIN is said to be multi-pronged because it uses strategies for the prevention of abuse. In one of the interviews with a social welfare officer in one of the LGUs, one of the best outcomes of the program according to her was the acquisition of knowledge during training, capacity building, and development activities. She said she applied the knowledge she gained in delivering her tasks and responsibilities thus gaining much more confidence and expertise in dealing with processes and protocols that must be observed when dealing with child abuse cases.

Interventions, Strategies, and Challenges

The strength of the CAPIN project in Laguna lies in its being multi-sectoral and multi-pronged in line with the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006. Already, all sectors of society who put a premium on the welfare of children were actively involved. It involves not just helping victims but also goes into preventing abuse with intervention focused both on victims and their families. Mobilizing the community makes the

most sense here as more can be done than if people relied and waited for the government to act. At the onset of the project, stakeholders from both government and non-government sectors were identified and given capability-building opportunities to develop their skills and abilities in case management, psychological intervention, conducting case conferences, campaigning for their advocacies, etc. These partners then became the volunteer child rights advocates in their own communities.

The group reached out to more organizations especially the big-name ones like the Rotary Club and Lions Club especially since these two had their own child abuse campaigns. This was necessary because, while different smaller groups may have the same advocacy, such efforts may overlap and the reach may not be maximized if things are not properly coordinated. Additionally, the various strengths of each group may end up not being fully utilized. Janice Julla, CAPIN coordinator for Calamba, explained that before the CAPIN project was established in the city, each government office had its own program and so did the civic groups.

With CAPIN, child abuse programs became more coordinated and streamlined. Janice explained that the referral system was designed so that everybody knew exactly where to bring children suspected of having been abused. Previously, these children were passed around and often made to recount their ordeal over and over again causing undue stress and frustration. To facilitate all these efforts, information, education, and communication materials were designed and developed to educate people on this issue, making it much easier for children and their families to appreciate just what they were up against. Orientation activities were held in elementary and high schools to empower students, parents, and school personnel in curbing child abuse.

Families and communities were educated on child's rights and protection while volunteers were trained to advocate child abuse prevention. These volunteers, in turn, trained others in the community for them to become child's rights advocates. They reported cases of abuse so that proper intervention could be provided. It was also here that service providers were trained on case management. Now, case conferences are a regular activity. The case conference assembles a multi-disciplinary team to develop a holistic, coordinated, and integrated program to achieve identified goals for a client.

The CAPIN project was instrumental in providing the officers of the WCPD with additional knowledge on how to handle cases involving abused children. They were trained on the protocols and laws governing child abuse. More people in the LGUs are hoped to be trained so that they can continue the programs, particularly community-based programs thus empowering more barangays.

Another issue here is where to bring abused children. Victims of child abuse are often scared and scarred, worried and wounded and they quickly need various psychosocial services to help them regain their self-esteem even as their families need their own interventions.

CAPIN does not have its own shelter and relies on other NGOs and the DSWD. CAPIN project coordinators explain that while other NGOs and the government may have shelters, which they can access, they do have to go through the processes of those NGOs and government agencies which result in much paperwork. The situation becomes doubly difficult in cases when there is an immediate need for a child to be taken out of his or her present environment as in the case of incest. With such a lengthy process to access shelters, the child may be too late for saving. This is why CAPIN really does need its own shelter.

Moving Forward

Any project has to be assessed in terms of what it is actually getting done. All good intentions remain nothing but good intentions and plans are just inkblots on paper if nothing concrete is tangibly achieved. This can only be determined if measurable indicators are present and if these indicators are, in turn, used to generate new actions.

The project is currently being monitored as regards activities recorded and qualitative and quantitative indicators like getting the number and type of abuse cases per month. These are spelled out in action plans and quarterly narrative and financial reports are submitted to the Consuelo Foundation.

Assessment and planning sessions are conducted yearly at the city/municipal and barangay levels to find out from the implementers themselves where gaps exist and how these gaps can be filled, especially when it comes to coordination. An end-of-year evaluation is also conducted.

With the mechanisms set in place, reported cases of abuse are responded to while unreported cases are brought to the forefront via effective community surveillance and monitoring. It is through greater awareness that the community can start addressing existing problems. Indeed, it is the awakening of the community members that Janice considers the biggest impact of the project. People are now more aware of the fact that child abuse does and can occur in their midst and that addressing the issue will require the help of all stakeholders, from the parents to the residents, teachers, police officers, social workers, lawyers, judges, and local government officials.

"The problem is not enough for one man but will require the intervention of all. It is everybody's problem," Janice stressed.



A Dedicated Life

Every day, Filipinos in the nation's capital are roused from their slumber, have some breakfast, get cleaned up, and prepare for their day. Every day, they brave the infamous and disheartening traffic in the increasingly crowded streets of Manila. Every day, most of them will not notice, once again, those who woke up, most likely didn't have breakfast, didn't get cleaned up, and couldn't really prepare for the day that probably brings with it a

typically daunting set of challenges. Not your garden-variety office or school work, definitely.

Some have asked why street dwellers continue to be so numerous and why, given the various efforts from different groups and individuals and even city and national governments, their number hardly seems to be going down. Social workers explain that while so much effort has already been exerted, there is a seemingly unending influx of people from the provinces believing they will find their fortunes here. There has been some success with those street dwellers who have desired more for their lives but there are just too many still coming in. The steady stream of people coming into the metropolis is easy to explain with peace and order issues in some areas and with very limited job opportunities in others.

Another explanation for the growing street dweller population is the fact that more and more of them are “hooking up.” Time spent with each other always contributes to establishing a relationship and many street dwellers spend the requisite amount of time together. The result of this is teenage relationships and, eventually, pregnancies becoming expected and even being treated as normal. It isn’t at all unlikely for teenagers to be walking around with a baby in their arms looking as clueless as ever regarding their future and the future of their own child.

Currently, there are at least three types of street children as defined by social workers:

- 1) Community-based: Those who still go home to parents or guardians in some nearby urban poor area but spend varying amounts of time on the streets. Probably are into peddling goods but likely go to school.
- 2) Children of street-based families
- 3) Abandoned, neglected, street-based children: Seldom, if ever, go home and probably abused at home. May not have a home.

Encountering the distressing disguise

Recently canonized St. Teresa of Calcutta encouraged people to encounter Jesus Christ in what she referred to as “the distressing disguise of the poor.” Perhaps this is what happened to Teresita (Tessie) Silva when she came home to the Philippines. She was in the United States for some years and gained a Masters degree in Social Work (just like her mom). The reality that greeted her in Manila was enough, not to shock her, but for her to realize that there was a much greater need for her to be in the Philippines rather than in the US. There were also all these children who were facing a less than promising future.

Why did she focus on street children?

“When I began, it was to work with the whole family but when we started working with the families in Luneta and Binondo, we saw the children were really, really grossly neglected... We definitely had to reach out to them.”

Faced with a task that threatened to tear the hearts out of many people, Tessie drew on her professional training. She explains that if all a person has is remorse for the poor, very little can really get done. This is where the training of a true social worker comes in and where she was able to come up with processes that address the situation of the children on the streets and get more people off the streets. There is still a sizable and considerable number of people living on the streets of Manila and very many of them are children. While it is easy enough to notice the people on the streets, one thing most fail to recognize is how many of them have actually moved on to better things. Child Hope, Tessie’s main effort to deal with the challenge that is keeping children off the streets, now happily and proudly has eight (8) street educators who, themselves, were once street kids.

The first point of contact for children are the street educators and the street social workers. "They're the ones who establish the relationship with the children. Gradually, they initiate activities among these children and train them to engage in these activities. For that reason, it was not difficult to draw these girls out who initially were difficult to work with because they were getting more satisfaction from the money they would receive by joining the sex trade. So we focused on the girls."

Boys and girls have their own set of issues but boys have more organizations and groups catering to them. Why aren't more groups putting more attention on girls?

"Girls are more challenging because of the possible emotional breakdowns. The enjoyment of sex, the enjoyment of being with men, make it really difficult (for them to let go). Sex is a source of satisfaction for the girls as well as the boys," she laments.

In dealing with these situations, Tessie trained her staff to build relationships based on trust with the girls as getting the girls to trust anyone can be quite difficult. Fortunately, building such a relationship is part of how her social workers and street educators have been trained. It begins with simple acts like sitting with them and listening to them even if it involves very mundane or seemingly insignificant topics and details.

It is through this that the street educators can ask some piercing questions regarding their situation especially since many of these girls don't even know that they are the victims of abuse. They can be asked, "What does this mean in terms of your future?" This seemingly simple question has a special significance in their ability to be healthy both in terms of being physically whole and emotionally whole. It is quite possible, in fact, for these children to be broken at such an early age never to recover.

Once trust has been gained along with the permission of the parents of minors (for those who have parents), a request for a psychiatric evaluation can be made so that a girl can be brought to their center for better and more focused care. Once there, they get psychosocial counseling, medical care, sports activities, or, if necessary, even get referred to appropriate shelters. They are also given an alternative learning system for them to catch up on the education they haven't been blessed with. Tessie explains that this is part of a holistic program and approach.

In the center, the girls are also exposed to a process called vision-mission goals. The girls are guided to analyze their life situation using, again, simple questions formulated to get them thinking about their lives.

"Ano ba ang pananaw mo sa buhay? Ano ba ang gusto mo sa buhay? Hanggang dito na lang ba? (What is your outlook in life? What do you want in life? Are you already satisfied with your current state?)"

Things don't stop here, either. There are, of course, recreational activities but, more importantly, there are also spiritual ones to "...help them recognize that there is a God and we all depend on Him for our existence. It's an integration of the spiritual, educational, and the psychological."

With every child still eventually influenced by family, the approach also includes responsible parent sessions to teach parents, who might not have been exposed to good parenting themselves, children's rights and the different laws governing children so that they can realize that what they may be doing violates the rights of their children.

The Challenge

When she came home from the States, Tessie saw "...the need of hordes and hordes, thousands and thousands of poor people. I couldn't find it satisfying at all to remain in the United States and just be in comfort. To me the challenge for my profession was really here."

Doing the work is one thing but getting the support of organizations and agencies that should be helping is another thing. To take preventive rather than corrective action, for example, they go to the barangays to



be closer to the families themselves. The idea is that if a family knows how to care for a child, then that child has a better chance of being kept off the streets. However, it seems that when there are efforts for children--those who aren't voters--some barangay officials don't seem to be interested. This lack of support and permission has to be respected though and if an area is not open to having Child Hope there, they don't go there. Fortunately, Child Hope is a street-based endeavor and since streets are public spaces, the social workers and street educators can freely connect with the children.

More, Tessie, with a group of staff social workers, organized the Families and Children for Empowerment and Development (FCED) for a two-pronged attack: Deal with the children where they are and get the support and understanding of families so that children don't need to end up on the streets.

The person behind

All these efforts point to a woman who not only cares but also has the intellectual knowhow and professional training to get things done. Much of this comes, expectedly, from her family background. The family hung on tightly to their spirituality and this is part of who she is. Daily Mass and reception of the Holy Eucharist are included in her daily routine and her faith is integral to who she is. More than that, her mother really led the way in terms of not only her faith but also how it is to be a dedicated professional social worker.

This faith of hers clearly defined who she is as a person, as a professional, and even as an individual. She attributes this to those experiences saying, "I saw how my mother used her knowledge and skill as a social worker to really change the lives of the people, the families, the children. From there, I developed the inspiration. My mother was one of the founders of the Catholic Women's League and the Daughters of Isabela. That's how I developed my trust in God's grace, the long-term spirituality which up to now has kept me going at 86 and kept me healthy."

The vocation of a social worker, after all, is no mean task especially when it means dealing with young girls not only caught up in poverty but also sexual abuse. It's not just a question of ensuring that they are free from gonorrhea, herpes, or even AIDS. It is a question of whether they will have a future or not or whether they will be part of a new set of street families and street children.

How does one approach what then seems to be a self-perpetuating problem? If we refer to Tessie Silva's namesake, St. Teresa of Calcutta, this is explained rather simply: "I do not pray for success; I ask for faithfulness."

Does this mean that there is hardly any success in this endeavor? Hardly. The street educators some of whom came from being streets kids themselves are a testament to this. It is, indeed, seemingly daunting when you consider that there are still hordes and hordes and thousands upon thousands of poor people on the streets, the same formidable situation that Tessie herself faced all those years. However, with her faith in Christ and the strength and inspiration from her own mother, it really is not that hard to see why, even given her age, she still has not stopped with this same vocation that she pledged herself to all those years ago.

13 PHILSSA: Project **UPSURGE**: Fighting for the urban poor settlements



Ensuring Safe and **Secure Settlements for All**

Increased urban development in developing countries is often accompanied by high population growth. This also brings an increase in the number of the urban poor, the slum dwellers, and the informal settlers. Many of them live in danger areas - under bridges, over waterways, in dumpsites, and in other unsafe locations.

This is true for the Philippines, which, like many Asian countries, is expected to double its population in the next 30 years with about half of that population expected to reside in slum areas. While the Philippines does need to grow and develop, the welfare of those who now live and will live in squalor must be considered.

Initiatives toward addressing the needs of the urban poor and improving the conditions of slum areas in Philippine cities have been many involving national government agencies, city governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), and local communities and associations of slum dwellers. However, it is widely accepted that these slum improvement efforts are unable to cope with the increasing magnitude of the problem.

Metro Manila, the country's premiere metropolis, has become one of the world's "megacities." Many of the cities and municipalities within its geographical area are urbanizing but have inadequate access to basic services and lack security in land tenure. More, a considerable number live below the poverty threshold. There are also natural disaster-at-risk sites as well as deplorable housing and environment conditions.

The Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA) concerns itself with these issues - urban poverty, homelessness, and unsafe settlements - while promoting inclusive, transformative, and sustainable urbanization. In the past years, PHILSSA has been developing and implementing consortium projects among its members towards "Safe and Secure Settlements for All." It is with this in mind that PHILSSA has undertaken the following projects in the past few years.

Project UPSURGE

Project UPSURGE (Urban Partnership for Sustainable Upliftment, Renewal, Governance, and Empowerment) formally began on July 11, 2007 with a grant from the World Bank's Japan Social Development Fund. Its aim has been two-fold: (1) Upgrade the physical conditions of selected urban poor communities across the country and (2) Seek an enhanced understanding of the development of dynamic city-based multi-sectoral partnerships and the effective institutionalization of slum upgrading strategies in the development work of participating cities.

The project also has six components: (1) Design and organization; (2) Community planning, mobilization, and subproject implementation; (3) Training and capability building; (4) Institutionalization; (5) Learning and dissemination; and (6) Support for project implementation.

These aims and components have been served with the development of dynamic and sustainable partnerships among city governments, NGOs, community associations, and other civil society groups, as well as members of the business community, particularly civil works contractor-companies. The project has been implemented in eight cities - Quezon City and Valenzuela City in Metro Manila, San Fernando in La Union, Naga City and Legazpi City in the Bicol Region, Mandaue City and Talisay City in Central Visayas, and Iligan City in Northern Mindanao.

The focus has been on developing the capacities of urban poor leaders, their associations, and local government officials specifically in participatory project planning and implementation. The project experience has allowed the target communities to enhance their resource management skills and broaden their development networks thereby contributing to enhancing economic opportunities for household beneficiaries.

There were also undertakings to help improve physical infrastructure facilities and related environmental conditions. Relocation sites and housing projects were developed and local infrastructure like roads, drainages, and multi-purpose centers while community services including water systems and material recovery facilities were enhanced. In one case, a mini-park and playground were improved.

Endeavors benefitting slum dwellers were mobilized and institutionalized at the local or city level. This was initially viewed as taking place through formal multi-sectoral partnership structures such as the Local Housing Board.

Dr. Anna Maria Karaos, Director of Project UPSURGE, explains that, "Project UPSURGE has demonstrated the capacity of urban poor communities, with the help of non-government organizations and their city governments, to undertake the improvement of infrastructure in their communities. But more than that, the project helped communities build social structures."

For three years, PHILSSA brought together the eight city governments in dynamic partnership arrangements with eight NGOs serving as implementing agencies of subprojects, covering nearly 4,000 household-beneficiaries who benefitted from 19 infrastructure subprojects amounting to almost PHP 50 million (over USD 1 million) in direct construction costs. "The social infrastructure which Project UPSURGE has begun to build in

the eight cities hopefully will enable PHILSSA to pursue its more ambitious goal of urban governance reform," Karaos sums up.

Project DFID

PHILSSA, with support from the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom, embarked on its next consortium project, "Institutionalising Local and National Partnerships to Address Urban Poverty and Homelessness in the Philippines," known commonly as the DFID Project. This project began in September 2008 with an over-all objective of developing and implementing partnership models to improve the urban poor's access to housing and community services in four regions in the Philippines. Eventually, this was shared and replicated on a wider scale.

"The DFID Project builds on the experience of PHILSSA and its member-NGOs in urban development and strengthens multi-stakeholder engagement for good governance, transparency, and accountability towards enhanced national policies, city housing programs/services, and people's plans for social housing and community services," Dick Balderrama, PHILSSA National Coordinator and Director of the DFID Project, explains.

The project has been implemented in four pilot cities (Quezon City, Legazpi City, Mandaue City, and Davao City) and in ten partner cities (Manila, Malabon, and Montalban in the National Capital Region; Naga and Tabaco in the Bicol Region; Cebu and Toledo in Central Visayas; and General Santos, Iligan, and Zamboanga in Mindanao).



There were seven components in this project: (1) Organizing and consensus-building on the local and national levels; (2) Building the capabilities of and empowering urban poor leaders; (3) Engaging local and national government agencies; (4) Conducting social research for evidence-based advocacy; (5) Piloting community housing and social service projects; (6) Fostering solidarity and advocacy work in local, national, and international levels; and (7) Learning, disseminating, and communicating.

The DFID Project supported the establishment and strengthening of city federations of urban poor communities in the four pilot and ten partner cities, building the capabilities of their leaders and enhancing their organizational structures and systems towards engaging their local governments and demanding good governance and transparency in delivering responsive housing and social services to their communities.

To support these local and national advocacies, the DFID Project backed relevant social research and technical services towards evidence-based advocacy campaigns, participatory city planning processes, and technically sound pilot community projects. On the national level, the DFID Project supported the strengthening of the Urban Poor Alliance (UP-ALL), the largest and widest confederation of urban poor groups in the country, assisting in the development of its advocacy agenda and its engagement with government agencies and officials.

“The DFID Project believes that government programs and services for the poor can be made responsive, transparent, and accountable when the poor are organized and empowered to demand good governance,” Balderrama adds. In the more than four years of project implementation, the project worked with 17 implementing NGOs, 14 city People’s Organization (PO) federations, and 2 national PO federations to strengthen the demand side of good governance.

In its work with the local and national government, it was able to plan and pilot 34 community projects, directly benefiting 2,807 families. It was also able to work for an additional budget allotment for social housing amounting to PHP 1.26 billion for social housing in 2011. Further, the advocacy work contributed to the government allotment of PHP 50 billion for housing projects for informal settler families (ISFs) in danger areas of Metro Manila for 2012-2016.

During the national elections of 2010, UP-ALL held dialogues with Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates leading to a covenant between the urban poor and eventual President Benigno Simeon Aquino III who prevailed in those elections.

During the implementation period of the DFID Project, the Philippines faced several major disasters: Typhoon Ondoy (Ketsana) in the Greater Manila Area in 2009 and Typhoon Sendong (Washi) in Northern Mindanao in 2011. These led to the integration of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Climate Change Adaptation (DRRM-CCA) in the project. This was the reason why the agenda for tenurial security, decent housing, and social services was expanded to “Safe and Secure Settlements for All.”

Balderrama explains it this way: “As a whole, the DFID Project strengthened community organizations, both on the local and national levels, to engage government and demand responsive policies and programs through multi-stakeholder mechanisms and processes that must be continually sustained, expanded, and maximized for the well-being of citizens, especially the poor and vulnerable.”

AKKMA Project

Building on the two earlier consortium initiatives, PHILSSA started the project for “Building a National Agenda and Constituency for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management - Climate Change Adaptation” (DRRM-CCA) in 2010, with support from Christian Aid. This new endeavor was referred to as the AKKMA Project, as it resulted in the formation of a national confederation of DRRM-CCA advocate groups, the Aksyon para sa Kahandaan sa Kalamidad at Klima (Action for Preparedness for Disasters and Climate Change).

“AKKMA seeks to bring together community groups working on disaster preparedness and resilience towards building and advocating our common agenda of Safe and Secure Settlements for All,” says Jose Morales, urban poor leader and AKKMA National Convener.

The AKKMA Project started in the Greater Manila Area in 2010 expanding to other regions in 2012: Bicol, Mindoro-Marinduque-Romblon-Palawan, Central Visayas, Northern Mindanao, and Davao with three main components: (1) Establishing and strengthening regional AKKMA affiliate groups, (2) National consolidation and agenda-building, and (3) Local and national advocacy campaigns.

AKKMA has aimed to form and strengthen regional affiliates and partners in several regions, formulate a national DRRM-CCA agenda, consolidate a national advocacy platform, and conduct legislative, executive, and awareness-raising advocacy activities.

Jaime Evangelista, Laguna Lake fisherfolk leader and AKKMA Co-Convener, emphasizes that, “AKKMA is a convergence and confederation of several regional and sectoral federations of community groups advocating a common agenda of DRRM-CCA. We have seen the power of DRRM-CCA as a unifying concern, even in our dealing with government.”

The hope

The Philippines has already broken through the 100-million population barrier and this number will only get larger. There is, thus, a definite immediacy in efforts to provide safe and secure dwellings for all regardless of a person’s social status but especially for those who are most vulnerable in society.

It is PHILSSA’s hope that its projects and initiatives will become the building blocks not only for empowering poor communities and changing their physical, socio-economic, and governance landscape, but also for building meaningful multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable communities, inclusive cities, and transformative urbanization.



Nagsimula sa banta ng tatlong araw

Mula sa pag-aalinglangan

Tahimik lang sana ang araw na iyon noong 2003 nang napansin ni Jose Morales ang ilang magagarang kotse at ang halatang isang malaking taong nakatayo sa tulay na mistulang bantay sa kanyang munting tirahan. Nagmamasid itong taong ito at paturo-turo sa bahay nila. Umakyat siya ng tulay at lumapit.

“Taga-rito ka?”

“Bahay ko po yang tinitignan ninyo,” marahan niyang tugon.

“Tatlong araw ha. Ayoko nang makita ‘yang bahay mo. Naglilinis kami ng basura dito sa tabing-ilog.”

“Basura? Bahay po namin iyan.”

“Basura ‘yan. Ang trabaho ko linisin ito. Nakakaharang kayo sa daloy ng tubig.”

Ibinalita niya ito sa mga kapitbahay at sabay-sabay silang natakot. Si Bayani Fernando na noo’y pinuno ng Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) lang naman ang kausap niya sa tulay. Hindi lang bahay ni Jose ang damay dito. Alam nilang silang lahat ang pinapaalis at itinataboy.

Dito nagsimula ang kamulatan ni Jose at nanghina siya sa kawalan niya ng lakas at kapangyarihan. Kinausap siya ng isang community organizer (CO), si Jessica Amon ng Community Organizers Multiversity (COM), upang linawin ang isang mahalagang bagay: May magagawa ka basta may gagawin ka. Malabo ata iyon, sabi ni Jose sa sarili lalo pa’t lantaran ang kanilang kahinaan sa harap ng tahasang kapangyarihan hindi lamang ng isang tao kundi ng mismong pamahalaan.

Dinala siya sa mga pulong ukol sa ganitong uring ng pakikibaka. Hindi niya alam, hinuhubog na pala siya para sa hinaharap. Sa pulong na ito, mula pa lang sa panalangin, pinag-usapan na ang mga maralitang itinataboy sa kanilang mga tahanan nang walang kasiguruhan sa kanilang kahihinatnan. Nasuntok niya ang mesa at napabulalas ng, “Ito ba ang mangyayari sa amin? Di ako papayag!”. Dito nalaman ng mga tao doon at lalo pa ng mga dumalong community organizer na ito na nga siguro ang isang magiging magandang tinig para sa mga maralita.

Dahil na rin sa ipinakita niyang gilas sa pulong na iyon, inatasan siyang magmanman at magbantay sa pagdating ng mga tauhan ng MMDA na siyang gigiba sa kanilang mga tahanan. Doon siya mismo tumayo sa tulay sa may ibabaw ng kanilang mga bahay kung saan daraan ng mga trak. Noong natanaw na niya ito, sinimulan na siyang kabahan. Mag-isa nga lang naman siya. Sa hindi pa rin niya maipaliwanag na dahilan, nilampasan lang siya nito. Nung akala niyang maaari na siyang makahinga, nakita niyang umikot ito pabalik sa kanyang kinatatayuan. Kaba at takot na naman ang nanaig sa damdamin niya at parang may bumabarena sa dibdib niya. Ngunit, muli, nilampasan lang siya at hindi na bumalik.

“Sabi ata sa akin ng Diyos, ‘Jose, hindi mo pa sila kayang harapin.’”

Tinulungan sila ng mga community organizer na humarap at dumulog sa Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines para humingi ng tulong na makausap ang Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo upang maipatigil ang demolisyon. Pagod ang mga dinatnan niyang obispo dala ng kanilang buong araw na pag-pupulong. Dinaan na lang ni Jose ang mga sumusunod sa lakas ng loob. Nilukot niya sa harapan nila ang hawak niyang papel kung saan nakasulat lahat ng mga datos na kailangan sana niyang ilahad sa kanila ukol sa hinaharap niyang suliranin. Hindi na rin niya pinansin ang PowerPoint presentation na nakasinag na sa kanyang likuran.

“Hindi ko na po babasahin iyan isa-isa. Bago ko pa basahin, alam na po ninyo iyan.”

Natigilan ang ilang obispo at tinanong siya kung ano nga ba ang maipaglilingkod nila sa kaniya at sa kaniyang mga kapitbahay. Ipinakausap siya ng isang obispong malapit sa Pangulo. Hindi nagtagal, si Pangulong Arroyo na mismo ang kausap niya at ito mismo ang nagsabing hindi sila dapat paalisin sa kanilang kinatitirhan.

Mula noon, sa bawat pagkakataong may mangangahas na paalisin na lang sila o ang ibang komunidad sa kanilang mga tirahan, si Jose ang kanilang pinapaharap. Ngayon, mas kilala na siya bilang Ka Jose.

Makabagong lider ng maralitang tagalunsod

Ano nga ba ang magagawa ng isang hindi nakatapos ng pag-aaral lalo pa't mga malalaking tao ang ha-harapin? Isa ito sa mga katotohanan at hamong unti-unti niyang hinarap. Dala na rin ng tulong ng CODE-NGO (Caucus of Development NGO Networks) at ng PHILSSA (Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies), kasama ang patuloy na gabay ng Simbahan at ng mga CO, patuloy ang kanyang naging pagyabong bilang pinuno. Naging isa siyang taong maaaring tingnan ng kanyang mga kapitbahay at ibang naghihirap na nakikibaka para sa kani-kanilang mga tahanan bilang isang huwaran sa pakikitungo sa mga taong hindi niya inakalang maaari niyang harapin.

Ano nga bang uring tao siya at ano ang kanyang pinanggalingan?

“Arogante ako. Di ako pasensyoso. Pikon din ako. Nung una, gusto ko talagang makipag-away.”

Dala ng turo ng mga naggagabay sa kanya, nagbago ito. At una sa kanyang bagong estilo? “Wag kang magmumura. Talo ka na agad. Ang leader ang unang-unang virtue ang pagiging understanding. Hindi ka mapanggipit.” Gamit na gamit niya ito sa mismong mga kapitbahay o mga kasapi ng ibang komunidad. May ibang sa halip na ipaglaban ang kanilang karapatan ay pumayag nang magpalipat ng tirahan. Ano nga ba ang kadalasang kinahihinatnan ng mga ganoon? Mga maliliit at dikit-dikit na bahay sa mga mabundok na lugar na walang kapuno-puno at walang mapagtatrabahuhan. Hindi nakapagtataakang sandali lang ay babalik din ang mga ito sa dating tirahan. Binabati ang mga ito ng galit ng ilan sa pananaw na naging traydor sila sa kanilang pagkakaisa at pakikilaban.

Ipinapaliwanag ni Ka Jose sa kanila na ang mismong pagbalik nga mga dating kapitbahay ay tanda ng kanilang pag-amin ng pagkakamali. Hindi pa nga ba sapat na tagumpay ito para sa mga hindi umalis? Kung gayon, hindi na nga kailangan pa silang gipitin at ipahiya. Ito mula sa isang taong siya mismo ang aaming mahilig siya sa away noong kanyang kabataan. Ipinaliwanag niyang, “Magalit ka pero pag dinikdik mo ‘yan, sino ba ang ipinagtatanggol mo? Sino ba ang gusto mong mapabuti ang buhay?”

Sa mga karanasang ito lumantad ang ilang katangian ni Ka Jose na lubusang nakatulong sa kanya: Ang katatasang magsalita at kakayahang makapagpaalab ng mga damdamin. “Sabi nga raw ng iba charming daw ako. Charming nga ba ako?”, biro niya. Tungkol naman sa kakayahang makapagpaantig ng mga kaloo-ban, sabi niya, “Pag nagsasalita ako, totoo ang sinasabi ko. Gusto ko yung nanggagaling dito (sabay turo sa puso). Pag nanggagaling dito, dire-diretso. Pagbali-baliktarin mo man, ‘yun ‘yon.”

Nakita na rin ng parami at parami pang tao ang kakayahan niyang makagawa ng paraan para makatulong sa iba kahit na pa siya mismo ay may kagipitan. Halimbawa, sa panahon ng bagyong Ondoy noong 2009, karamihan sa kanila ay pumaibabaw sa tulay dahil lampas na sa mga bahay nila ang tubig baha. Napansin niyang giniginaw na at nagugutom ang maraming bata at ang ilang nakatatanda. Pinakiusapan niya ang mga nagmamaneho ng mga stranded na container van kung maaari bang doon muna sa loob ang mga bata at nakatatanda. Dala na rin siguro ng kanyang “charm,” binuksan ng mga pahinante at drayber ang mga container van at wala nang kinailangan pang ginawin. Nag-organisa rin siya ng soup kitchen para siguradong makakain ang lahat. Siyempre pa, sinama na nila sa pagkain ang mga tumulong na tsuper at pahinante ng mga truck at container van. Malinaw sa kanya na kung hihingi pa sila ng tulong sa gobyerno, magiging pabigat sila. Hindi nila kinailangang maging pabigat dahil sila na mismo ang nag-asikaso sa mga pangangailangan nila.

Alam na rin ni Ka Jose na hindi niya kaya o kailangang parating nasa gitna ng lahat ng issue. Natutunan na niyang may isang sinusundang balangkas ang mga grupo at organisasyon. “Sa isang structure, ako ang brain. Hindi na ako magcha-chop-chop niyan. May taga-chop-chop na. Ako lang ang mag-iisip ng ideya. Ito ang proseso. Hindi puedeng may hindi masunod. Meron nang umaalalay. Kaya nga sabi nila, ‘No man is an

island.' Hindi na ako gagalaw na ako lang." Dala na rin nito ang patuloy na pagsali sa mga pulong ng mga NGO at People's Organization na siyang naging dahilan kaya napalapit siya kina Pangulong Benigno Simeon Aquino at kay Kalihim Corazon "Dinky" Soliman.

Pagbabalik-tanaw at pagharap sa hinaharap

Marami na nga rin namang napagdaanan si Ka Jose at nananatili pa rin ang ilang mahahalagang bagay. Nariyan pa rin ang kawalan ng kasiguruhan na lahat sila'y may matitirhan, karapat-dapat sa tao lalo pa't patuloy ang banta ng demolisyon o pagtataboy. Totoo ito hindi lang sa sarili niyang komunidad kundi pati sa nakararaming lugar ng maralitang tagalunsod.

"Hindi ka puedeng umayaw ngayon sa kalagayang ito. Malaki ang handicap ng mahihirap. Kapag mahirap ka, wala kang kapangyarihan." Ang kaibahan lang ngayon, hindi na siya nakakulong sa sarili niyang mga kahinaan at sa takot kumilos. Ito na rin ang ibinabahagi niya sa kanyang mga nakakasalamuhang nawawalan ng loob.

Malinaw ang pananaw niya dito: "Bago kita tulungan, ikaw muna ang tutulong sa sarili mo. Wala kang magagawa kung wala kang gagawin. Saka mo na lang ako sisihin kung ang ginagawa natin ay wala ngang nagawa. Wala kang karapatang sabihing wala kang magagawa kung nakaupo ka lang. Tumayo ka; sumama ka sa akin."

"Bakit ako nakapagpapaandap ng isang Bayani Fernando at naging 'best friend' ni President Noynoy Aquino? Naging masigasig ako! Maya't-maya umaattend ako ng meeting. 'Pag hindi ako nakikipag-usap, ano ang mangyayari sa buhay namin?"

Kung susumahin, hindi rin niya makakayanang gawin lahat ito nang wala ang suporta at pag-antabay ng misis niya. Hindi naging madali para sa kanila iyon. Naroon ang pagtatalo ukol sa kanyang trabaho. Habang punta siya nang punta sa mga meeting, hindi siya makapagtatrabaho. Buti na nga lang at may naging foreman siyang kapitbahay. Ito na nga mismo ang naghahanap ng pamasaha niya para lang makapunta siya sa mga meeting. Alam ni foreman na kung magtatagumpay si Ka Jose, ligtas ang mga bahay nila. Kung pipilitin niya itong pumasok parati, baka isang hapon pagbalik nila galing trabaho, wala na ang mga bahay nila. Naunawaan din ito ng asawa niya at tulung-tulong silang dalawa sa pagtataguyod ng pamilya nila.

Hindi rin nakakalimot sa Diyos at Simbahan si Ka Jose. Isang patuloy niyang ipinagmamalaki sa mga tao ang pagtuloy sa bahay niya ni Bishop Broderick Pabillo. "Nag-immersed ba." Kasama na rin dito ang malalim niyang pananalig sa patuloy na tulong ng Diyos sa kanilang buhay. Hindi niya kinalimutan ang paniwala niyang iniligtas siya sa gulo laban sa MMDA sa ibabaw ng tulay at ang wala ring patid na pagligtas sa kanila sa demolisyon.

"Tumulong ang Diyos. Wag silang maniniwalang walang Diyos. Meron! Kapain mo lang kung nasaan."

Ito na nga si Ka Jose. Nagsimula sa isang taong maraming takot na hindi tuloy makagalaw dahil sa takot na ito. May kaunting takot pa rin siyang humarap sa mga pagsubok na kasama ng pagiging mahirap ngunit ngayon, pinatapang na siya ng kaalamang may husay at galing din siya at kaya na niyang makipagsabayan sa mas malalaking tao. Kasama niya ang asawa niya, mga anak at apo, pati ang komunidad niya at pati ang Simbahan dito. At dahil diyan, tuloy ang kanyang pakikibaka habang inaangat ang loob ng mga kapwa mahirap.

(English version)

A threat of three days

Ka Jose Morales

From a time of doubt

That day in 2003 had promised to be a quiet one for Jose Morales until he saw some really fancy cars and an obviously very important person on the bridge that overlooked his small house along the San Juan River. The man was looking their way and would point at his house occasionally. Curious, Jose went up the bridge to investigate.

"You from here?"

"That's my house you're looking at," he politely offered.

"Three days. I don't want to see your house in three days. We're clearing this place of all garbage."

"Garbage? That's my house."

"That's garbage. My job is to clean up this place. You're blocking the flow of water."

He reported the incident to his neighbors and they all shared a common fear. Jose had been speaking to Bayani Fernando, then chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA). It wasn't just Jose's house, too. All of them knew that they were all being forced to move away.

This is where Jose's awareness of these issues began along with knowing his own lack of power. A community organizer (CO), Jessica Amon of Community Organizers Multiversity (COM), spoke to him and made one thing very clear to him: He wasn't powerless. There was something he could do as long as he was willing to work for it. He doubted this at first looking at his situation of weakness and the enormous power not only of one person but also of a whole government that he had to face.

He was brought to a meeting dealing with this type of struggle. Little did he know that this first meeting was the beginning of his formation in preparation for the future. It was in this meeting, beginning the way it did with a prayer that spoke of the reality of demolition faced by the urban poor, that he found himself incensed, eventually punching a table and blurting out, "Is this what's to happen to us? I will not allow it!". With that forceful statement, those present knew that he would be a strong voice for the poor.

With what he showed in that meeting, he was tasked to keep watch and stand guard over the bridge above his house in preparation for the arrival of the MMDA personnel who were to tear apart and demolish his house along with those of his neighbors'. He stood where the trucks would most likely pass. When he saw them, fear gripped his heart but he stood his ground regardless of the fact that he was only one man. The truck just passed him. When he thought that the threat was over, he saw the truck make a turn and move towards where he was. His heart was pounding so strong he could feel it through his shirt. Again, the truck just went by him.

"It seemed like God was telling me that I wasn't ready to face them yet."

The COs helped him attend a meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines to get their help in seeking an audience with then President Gloria Macapal-Arroyo in the hope of stopping the impending demolition. He stood in front of very tired bishops who had been in discussion for the whole day.

He gritted his teeth and stood his ground. He took his notes with all the facts that he needed to share with them and crumpled these for them to see. He didn't bother to look at the PowerPoint presentation flashed right behind him. "I won't read those things one by one. Even before I can read them, you already know what they're about."

This grabbed the bishops' attention and they asked what they could do to help him and his neighbors. They asked him to speak to a bishop close to the President and it wasn't long before he was speaking to Her Excellency. It was she, herself, who told him that his area should not be demolished.

From then on, with every threat to their community or any other community, Jose was called in to help mediate. He thus began to be known as Ka Jose.

A new leader for the urban poor

What can a person who wasn't able to finish school do especially against people with much more power and influence? This was a reality that Ka Jose had to face squarely. With the help of the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) and the Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA), along with the support of the Catholic Church and COs, his growth as a leader continued. He soon became a model for both his neighbors and others also in the fight to keep their homes especially in regard to how they could stand in front of those they never thought they could dialogue with.

What kind of person was he at first?

"I was arrogant. I lacked patience. I used to always want to get into fights.



These things changed and one of the first things that he now advocates? "Don't cuss. You lose immediately if you do. A leader's first virtue is understanding. You shouldn't put too much pressure on people." He used these changes in dealing especially with his own neighbors and other community members. Some of them

had chosen to give up their fight and allowed themselves to be relocated. Often, the relocation sites were very crowded, with hardly any trees, and with no place to work. It wasn't surprising then that these people soon started showing up in their old neighborhood. They were greeted with much anger and disdain by those who chose to stay behind and refuse relocation.

Ka Jose explained that the mere fact that these people returned was already an admission that they were wrong. Wasn't this enough of a triumph for those who stayed behind? It, therefore, wasn't necessary to give these people any grief. This from a person who would've easily picked a fight in the past. He explained further that, "Get angry but if you make life difficult for them, whose life are you really protecting? Whose life are you really trying to make better?"

These experiences revealed some personal qualities that were very useful for Ka Jose: His eloquence and his charm. "People say I'm charming. Do you think I'm charming?", he jokes. He explains that he can touch people's hearts because, "When I talk, I speak the truth. I want it to come from here (touching his heart). When it comes from here, things just flow. No matter how you slice it, it will still be the same."

More and more people witnessed his ability in making things happen to help others even while he, himself, still had his own financial challenges. During the torrential rains and rampaging floods brought by typhoon Ondoy in 2009, many members of his community sought refuge in the bridge since their homes were already submerged in the now much larger and faster waters of the San Juan River. He noticed that many children and older people were having a difficult time with the cold weather so he approached some stranded container vans and spoke to their drivers. He asked if the vans could be opened so that those who needed shelter could at least have some comfort. His charm was at work and the drivers and their helpers opened the container vans to let the people in. He also organized a soup kitchen so that everyone could eat. Of course, he made sure that the drivers and their helpers were well fed. It was clear to him at that point that had he asked for help from the government, their already heavily burdened resources would be taxed further. His community didn't need to be anybody's burden because they had already organized themselves and took care of their needs.



In all this, he also knew that he couldn't and didn't always have to be in the center of things. He had already learned that there was a structure followed by organizations. "In a structure, I'm the brain. I don't have to chop things on my own. There are others to do that. I just think of the idea and set the process. Nobody can deviate from that process. There are those who will look into this. That's why people say, 'No man is an island.' I don't ever have to move alone." These views were a clear result of his having attended all those meetings with NGOs and People's Organizations which also brought with them his close friendship with President Benigno Simeon Aquino and Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman.

Looking back and facing the future

Ka Jose has been through a lot and the most important things have remained with him. There is still the lack of security as regards their always having a home fit for human habitation especially with the threat of demolition still quite real. This is true not only for their community but other urban poor communities as well.

"You can't turn your back on a situation like this. The poor deal with such a big handicap. If you're poor, you don't have power." What's different now is that he is not paralyzed by fear or limited by his own weaknesses. This is something he shares with those who have slowly lost hope.

His view in this is clear: "Before I help you, you have to first help yourself. You really can't do anything if you don't do anything. Blame me if what we do really doesn't result in anything. You have no right to tell me that you can't do anything if you stay sitting down. Stand up; join me."

"How can I go against a Bayani Fernando or become a 'best friend' of President Noynoy Aquino? I worked hard! I kept attending these meetings. If I don't speak to people, what will happen to us?"

Ka Jose would not have been able to do all of this without the constant support of his wife. This wasn't easy for them to deal with as a couple. There were arguments about his work. If he went to meetings, he couldn't work. It was fortunate that he even once had a foreman staying in the same community. It was this foreman who helped find him money for transportation to go to his meetings. The man understood that if Ka Jose were successful, their houses would be safe. If he forced him to always be at work, he might have come home to a totally demolished house. This was something the wife also eventually understood and they committed to helping each other care for their family.

He never forgot the Lord and the Church. He still proudly recalls the time when Bishop Broderick Pabillo stayed in his house for a few days, "As an immersion." This has always been accompanied by his deep faith in the Lord's help in their lives. He still considers it God's providence how he was able to escape any trouble when he was on that bridge waiting for the MMDA people to come and demolish their homes.

"The Lord helped. People should never believe there is no God. There is! You just have to feel for where He is."

This is Ka Jose. He started with so many fears leading to his inability to act. There is still some fear now brought by his being poor but he has been made brave by a belief in himself and his abilities especially with regard to dealing with society's big names. He is with his wife, his children and his grandchildren, his community and even the Church. With all these, his struggle continues in his quest to raise the hopes of his fellow urban poor.

12 Anna Marie **'Jing'** Karaos

Board Member,
Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies



A true Catholic response

"I am a product of those times when I was in college. It was martial law and we heard about the injustices happening, the suspension of the civil liberties of people, the arrests."

It was a time of great volatility and unrest. There was much uncertainty with people getting hurt or even disappearing. Local authorities seemed unworthy of public trust and young people were taking to the streets to voice their dissatisfaction and discontent. It was a time when so many of the nation's best young minds would

be taken from their families and the country that so needed their idealism and their dreams.

This was the milieu in which Jing Karaos grew up. She was part of the Ateneo Student Catholic Action (AtSCA) then being guided by Fr. Francis Reilly, SJ. Her Jesuit formation had been greatly influenced by the example and ideas of the then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J. who called on people to be "men and women for others." This meant for Jing that one's faith as a Catholic could not be separated from involvement in society and its problems. .

"We give witness to and live our faith in a society which, at that time, was a society riddled with injustice and warping of the truth. In AtSCA, we expressed this through the service of people who were underprivileged." More, "There was real pressure to be true to what you say you believe in. If you accept the teaching of Ateneo to be true, sig. Ipakita mo. (Go ahead. Show it.)"

After college she joined the Share and Care Apostolate for Poor Settlers. The road she would eventually walk seemed to be getting clear at this point. In this job, she went to resettlement sites for the poor, interacted with them, and learned about development projects of the government that displaced the poor in rural and urban areas. Soon, the Jesuits facilitated her education in the United Kingdom where she obtained a masters degree in Economics and Politics of Development and then in the United States for her doctorate. Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, S.J. steered her towards a doctorate in Sociology arguing that there was a need in the country for social thinkers especially since the nation found new hope in the new democratic order. The People Power Revolution of 1986 had happened and the Philippines was to rebuild its shattered democracy.



The need for technical competence

The Jesuits believed there was a need for a social ministry that was technically competent. The move towards competence had two aspects: “Hindi sapat na may puso ka para sa mahihirap. (It’s not enough that you have a heart for the poor.) It has to be an intelligent way of engaging the issues.” Since this was the case, raw intelligence wasn’t also enough. “Hindi porke’t matalino ka kaya mo nang gawin. (Just because you’re intelligent doesn’t mean you can already do something.) You have to study. You have to learn. You need to study so you are effective in what you do.”

It was with these in mind and with her expertise in sociology that she joined the Institute on Church and Social Issues (ICSI), which was formulating policy agenda for the different sectors it was assisting, particularly the urban poor. This was the early days of policy advocacy. “We were rebuilding our democracy, and how do you make that democracy stable? You needed real expertise and skills in doing policy analysis, formulating policies for policymakers both in the executive and legislative branches. This was where policy research, informed by the rigor of the social science, met the social teachings of the Catholic Church. Policy advocacy brought Jing to interacting and meeting with urban poor leaders on a regular basis and these meetings developed in her a closeness with them. “We had a common view of the reforms that needed to be done. There was a sense of solidarity because we knew each other and we had worked together on the reforms we were advocating.”

More than the policies they were pushing, however, was the realization of how human the urban poor leaders were, how real their concerns were, and how flawed they were just like everybody else. “Karaniwang tao sila na may inconsistencies sa buhay. (They were regular people with inconsistencies in life.)” Was this a problem? Not really. Jing looked at these leaders and saw in them perhaps what Christ, Himself, saw in his Apostles and disciples. “Si Kristo nung namili rin siya ng mga apostoles, hindi naman perpektong mga tao ito. May kanya-kanyang pagkukulang. (Maybe when Christ chose his apostles, they weren’t perfect people either. They had their own limitations.)”

ICSI’s social position allows it to facilitate meetings between the urban poor and those in positions of power. This is often a tricky situation because such meetings involve not only different positions on issues but also different approaches and even sensitivities. Once, in a meeting between urban poor leaders and a high-ranking government official, the said official felt slighted when one of the urban poor leaders asked during the opening prayer that God not harden the hearts of those they were meeting with. Jing explains it this way: “There was a clash of cultures. The culture of the poor is different from that of the government official. Then there’s also his social background.” Indeed, the official felt that he was being attacked and maligned by the leader through her prayer.

The clash of culture needs some strategizing especially regarding what approach is necessary so that parties involved in an issue can more easily accept, understand, and appreciate each other’s position. In its simplest form, the strategy involves just getting people to listen to one another and, more and more, this is necessary.

An example is the introduction of multistory in-city resettlement. Aside from the high cost and need for planning, there is also the resistance coming from the urban poor. Among their concerns is the small size of each unit; where will they keep their fishball carts for instance. Another reality is the cost. While such a resettlement will not need as much land, it will entail a more secure foundation and hence higher construction costs. Because the urban poor will pay for these units in monthly installments, they are well within their right to be critical of any defects in the construction. One more issue is the management of the multistory housing facility Waste disposal, security, noise pollution, safety, and care for common spaces are concerns that must be attended to by the urban poor.

This problem prompted the World Bank to ask ICSI to conduct a research on estate management -- how to make the whole concept viable, what practices are necessary, and what people need to learn to live in such type of housing. The next step here is to formulate a capacity building plan to enable those who would

live in such housing facilities to make the best of their situation and live harmoniously with other residents. Obviously, this cannot be just a half-baked suggestion or proposal to the government. Jing explains, "It's the nitty-gritty. You have a proposal. Now, how do you implement it? It's not just an idea anymore. You have to be involved all the way to the end of the project. You cannot just say that you gave the government the idea and now it's all up to them to make it work."

How crucial is this work? Very much so especially since the Supreme Court had come out with a mandamus ordering all structures including dwellings at or near rivers and waterways to be removed for the good of the urban poor themselves. Such orders are often made much more complicated when the poor families themselves resist relocation or will not accept living in a multistory facility. Plus, there is also the possibility that the facility may not be ready in time for people to move in.

Many resettlement projects in the past have been plagued with very real issues. They are located off-city and a good distance from the work places of the urban poor. This usually forces the breadwinners to move back to the city or for the whole family to just sell their units to ineligible individuals and then move the entire household to where they used to live.

One response has been to put up businesses or factories in these areas so that there are job opportunities available to the new residents. This idea does not necessarily work, however. The private sector puts up factories but the companies' needs dictate whether a factory or business is put up somewhere. Moreover, even if such businesses are put up near resettlement areas, the skills these companies may be looking for may not necessarily be available among the resettled families.

This underscores the need for true urban planning because unless more decentralization is done drastically, more and more people, regardless of social class, will continue to flock to the urban centers. Jing stresses the threefold goals of inclusivity, livability, and sustainability in such urban plans. She explains that without the urban poor providing services to those living in cities, many of the comforts of the urban lifestyle would not be enjoyed by urban residents. Indeed, many family and corporate drivers come from the urban poor as do many housekeepers, security guards, caregivers, washing ladies, construction workers, etc. The low wages of the poor in fact subsidize the easy lifestyle of the better-off.

This is why PHILSSA (Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies), as a network, has focused on urban concerns -- health, housing, children's welfare, women's issues, etc. It recognizes that individual cities or municipalities cannot be allowed to continue to develop (or not develop) in isolation from the neighboring areas. "Kailangang tingnan ang kabuuan (The whole situation must be looked into)," Jing explains.

This now requires a certain stretching of one's worldview -- both for the poor and those who are not. "Kailangan ng kaunting pagbatak ng utak para makita nating mas malaki ang kailangang ayusin. Hindi lang security of tenure parati kasi maaaring makuha nga nila 'yan pero wala naman silang trabaho, nata-trapik tayong lahat, o mamamatay na tayong lahat dahil sa polusyon. (We need to broaden our minds to see that there's so much more that needs to be fixed. It's not just security of tenure because though they may get it, they may not have a job, we're all suffering from terrible traffic jams, or we're all dying slowly because of pollution.)"

Regrets?

A person who graduates from college with highest honors and then gets a masters in the U.K. and a PhD from the States is normally expected to be a high-ranking executive of some big company and not working with the urban poor.

Jing really thanks her parents for not getting on her case because of this. "Ang laking pasasalamat ko na maibait ang mga magulang ko at hinayaan nila ako. Feeling ng nanay ko, wala rin namang nawala kasi tinulungan ako ng mga Heswitang makapag-aral sa ibang bansa. Siguro, sa pakiramdam nila, hindi na rin kami lugi.

(I am really thankful that my parents were such good people and that they allowed me to do this. I think my mother feels like we didn't really lose out because the Jesuits helped me study abroad. Maybe they feel we weren't on the losing end of things.)"

More than this, however, is the continuing refrain of her life, a challenge that she received as early as her days as a student waking up to the realities of her country: "So what can you offer to this situation of the country? You cannot not do anything. It was put to us in a very stark way that as a Christian and as a Catholic true to your faith, you must at least give part of your life or your life totally to doing something meaningful to correct these injustices."

Though the days of Martial Law are over, there is always the threat of injustice and the poor getting even more disadvantaged. "May mga sektor ng lipunan na nangangailangan ng katarungan, ng social justice. (There are sectors of society that need justice, social justice.)" This is what Jing Karaos is all about. It's not just about having the heart to help nor is it providing the intellectual rigor to come up with policies that may benefit the greater mass of society. It is also about a Christian trying to live out that Christianity in response to what St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta refers to as encountering Christ in the distressing disguise of the poor.

14 PBSP: Because we are all Filipinos



BRIDGING THE GAP: PBSP evaluates the gains of its 15-year Peace and Development Program in Mindanao

Mindanao has always been rich in natural resources – verdant hills, abundant seas teeming with marine life, and fertile lands that yield significant produce. Ironically, it has been poor in many aspects. For one, these assets have always been overshadowed by the region’s negative image brought by insurgencies and rampant kidnapping in some areas.

One of its root causes? Poverty.

Seventeen years ago, the region wasn't just at a standstill due to violence and poverty. A study done by Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) unearthed a second and much poorer Mindanao mired in a serious crisis in education.

Making PBSP More Relevant

"Mindanao is the area in the country that has had high levels of poverty. It also had probably the most widespread cases of insurgencies. PBSP has always wanted to be where the need was greatest and this was the logic for its major contributions that it has been trying to make in Mindanao. That is why, 17 years ago, PBSP decided to review its operations in Mindanao and plan out what to do in the succeeding years by doing an analysis of where Mindanao was," explained Paul G. Dominguez, vice-chairman of PBSP and chairman of its Mindanao Regional Center.

Former PBSP senior executive Prof. Ernesto Garilao was commissioned to do a study in 1999 which became the basis of the organization's strategy for intervention in the Mindanao peace and development effort.

"The study showed that while there were areas in Mindanao that were obviously very progressive, such as Davao, there were also areas that had fallen behind because of a variety of reasons and continue to have very limited prospects for growth. This is where the term 'the second Mindanao' emerged. It was PBSP's decision then to focus its efforts and to make a contribution to accelerate growth, addressing poverty in those specific areas that were identified in the study," he said.

A Second Mindanao

There were very revealing findings in the study. It showed that there was a "social volcano" about to erupt as development was skewed in several areas and there was a lot of discontent. According to Dominguez, there were very serious gaps in human resource development, specifically in education. "It was in the human resource sector where the gaps had become widest. A lot of the schools were heavily affected with the entire educational system interrupted by the intermittent conflict that had plagued certain areas in Mindanao over the last 30 years," he said.

The 1998 statistics showed that the areas mostly affected by conflict or were dominated by either Muslims or Indigenous Peoples (usually Region 11) had lower rates of performance, income, enrollment, and other important metrics than the lowest scoring areas of Luzon and the Visayas. Development assistance was also not reaching this so-called second Mindanao because most of the donors shied away due to the peace and order situation. There was also a lack of delivery mechanisms in these areas.

Most of the casualties of the conflicts were young people aged 14 to 21 - those who were supposed to be in school but were not. Statistics also showed that only 10 out of 100 students were able to graduate from high school on time in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The drop-out rate in elementary was 12 percent. Among the Mindanao regions, ARMM had the highest drop-out rate at 20 percent.

Moreover, the quality of education that the children received was also found to be not of the same quality received by their counterparts in Luzon and the Visayas.

In the health sector, the most urgent needs were health services and simple facilities for the storage of vaccines. Few people in these areas were health-conscious thus compounding the challenges facing the sector.

Responding to the Challenges

To respond to these challenges, PBSP launched the Mindanao Peace and Development Program (MPDP) in 1999. It focused on improving interventions in education and literacy, health and water, and productivity and income improvement in the impoverished areas.

The 10 priority areas were Basilan, Agusan del Norte, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga Sibugay, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Maguindanao, Sarangani, Zamboanga del Sur, and North Cotabato. The program was augmented by governance and constituency building to improve the management capacities of local governments. A 10-year catch-up program was also implemented to bring the living standards in the poorer provinces in ARMM and other conflict-affected areas up to par with the more progressive areas in Mindanao. The Garilao study was shared with members of the media to create awareness and attract donor support.

At that time, PBSP was the only NGO working in Mindanao with such a wide scope of services. Its program became the benchmark for other donors and organizations because it had models to show. In 2000, a budget of PHP 800 million was initially targeted to be raised for the program but over the course of 15 years, PBSP was able to raise a total of PHP 1.1 billion from donors, member-companies, and partners who believed in the cause. Later, PBSP focused on education and health while allowing better equipped organizations that had more funds to handle projects on productivity and income enhancement.

In education, literacy programs were the entry point of interventions in Basilan and Jolo. Review classes were organized for Education graduates who needed to take the Licensure Exam for Teachers (LET). At that time, these graduates did not even know how to fill up forms and follow instructions. However, the bigger challenge was that they didn't have birth certificates and diplomas preventing them from complying with the exam requirements.

These issues revealed a very deep-rooted problem and this prompted PBSP to focus on formal education. To address access to education, it expanded its classroom assistance project to include classroom construction to increase the number of children that could attend school. Classrooms came complete with chairs and tables, teacher training, and facilities like science laboratories. Audio-visual materials were provided to improve teaching content and delivery. Educational assistance in the form of school supplies, uniforms, and transportation expenses was given to address daily needs. Feeding programs were also implemented in target schools in Basilan and other areas to help address malnutrition.

To improve financial capability, PBSP helped parent-teacher associations (PTA) engage in livelihood activities and facilities were given to schools to improve their Technology Livelihood Education (TLE) subject. Technical schools were encouraged to offer more technical-vocational short courses that could cater to the industries within their areas. In Tawi-Tawi, for instance, many students studied cellular phone repair to help them start earning their own income.

Other innovations focused on the teaching staff and school administrators. One endeavor saw the funding of volunteer teachers who served to fill the gaps when full-time teachers were not available. School heads (principals and teachers-in-charge) were trained to be effective instructional leaders and managers. Local school boards (LSBs) were empowered and taught how to put their special education fund to better use. These funds were usually used to pay volunteer teachers, to build infrastructure or provide facilities. Among the most cooperative LSBs who continued PBSP's programs were those in Saranggani and Bongao, Tawi-Tawi.

PBSP introduced the concept of the Municipal Education Agenda to local government units to encourage a more collective approach to solving problems in their respective towns and cities.

For the health sector, PBSP's goals were to bring health services nearer to the communities and encourage health-seeking behavior among the populace. Hence, local people were mobilized and deployed while

health centers were equipped and upgraded in Zamboanga City and Agusan del Norte. Rural Health Units or Centers (RHUs/RHCs) were encouraged to deploy midwives in barangays with barangay health workers (BHWs). Refrigerators and coolers were provided for the storage of vaccines brought to these units and centers. Maternity and lying-in clinics were built and equipped with necessary facilities so they could be accredited by PhilHealth. BHWs were trained on first aid and maternal and child care services and were equipped with the necessary medical kits. More, water systems were also set up to address health problems. In these efforts, it was the generosity of donors that helped keep things going. Among the reliable donors of the MPDP were Fundacion Humanismo y Democracia and Philam Foundation.

Making Great Strides

While there is still a lot of work to be done in Mindanao, the MPDP has already been able to yield positive results in the areas of intervention for both education and health.

Fifteen percent (860 schools and 359,950 beneficiaries) in the 10 priority areas were reached. A total of 568 classrooms were constructed while 75 science laboratories and 76 TLE workshops, and 183 audio-visual rooms were set up. A total of 131,654 books were furnished to various schools. There were also 30,767 students given educational assistance, 141,945 given supplemental feeding, 8,080 teachers and 535 school heads trained, 34 LSBs assisted, and 353 PTAs trained.

This endeavor has already resulted in an improvement in National Achievement Test (NAT) scores of 47 percent in elementary and 10 percent in high school in Region IX, XII, CARAGA, and ARMM. High school enrolment increased to 64.60 percent while 84 percent of students were able to finish high school in these areas.

For health, a total of 38 health center facilities were upgraded, three maternity clinics constructed, 1,636 medical kits provided, and 2,386 health personnel trained.

While some of these numbers may seem modest, they nonetheless represent the most significant accomplishment which is the improvement in the lives of many people in Mindanao.

Dominguez puts it all quite simply: "I think PBSP'S major contribution has been to focus local government attention on the gaps of human resource challenges. Mindanao is no longer an island whose growth is going to be dependent on its natural resources simply because our population has become very large. Our (Mindanao's) growth and performance in the future is going to be directly dependent on how well we are able to educate our people because they are now our principal resource that has to be mobilized to address poverty and bring about economic growth, especially in the rural areas. I'm certain that PBSP will continue to make a contribution not only in the human resource sector but also in addressing the income gaps in the rural sector through the Inclusive Business Imperative model that we're trying to promote."

PROFILE 13 **Maria Aurora**

'RORY' Francisco-Tolentino

Former Executive Director,
Philippine Business for Social Progress
and former Board Member,
Association of Foundations



Finding one's way

Knocking at the door of one's heart

Rory Tolentino began life as many young Filipino girls her age and was in an exclusive Catholic girl's school. Her grandmother did point out though that she seemed to be always taking home stray cats and stray dogs. "I guess that was something that was hardwired into me," Rory now recalls laughingly. The heart of someone like that didn't escape the watchful eyes of a Dutch

priest in school and he challenged her to be more than a savior of strays. He asked her to put her money where her mouth was and got her to articulate in papers just what it meant for her to be Catholic. It didn't take long for her to do more than just write; she began doing volunteer work. "When I started volunteering with the children's hospital, I could see I was lucky compared with a lot of other people."

Things didn't stop in college for her as she went from one group of what she referred to as "forward-thinking Catholics" in high school to nuns who weren't only good examples as human beings but were also expressive of their commitment to their vocations. Rory remembers the way she saw how "...Their faith required sacrifice of their own desires, their own backgrounds." She was already considering getting into social work and after college, through the same priest in high school, found herself working in the Social Communications Center, eventually known as the Communications Foundation for Asia (CFA). This was in the 70s, perhaps one of the most trying times for the country as it had to endure the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and the wiles of his wife, Imelda. CFA was in the middle of all this especially with the sense of social justice of the Dutch priests running the organization. Rory was doing videos on topics like labor unionism and the Constitutional Convention of 1972 meant to give the dictatorship a veneer of legitimacy. This environment all served to feed her sense of advocacy and how it was possible and necessary to help the marginalized in society beyond what she calls "the usual patronizing way."

She eventually found herself in the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) where the biggest companies in the country were trying to figure out how to help the various sectors in society and how to maneuver around the First Lady's continued insistence that these companies prioritize giving funds to her projects. These companies had put their heads together so that their way of helping others was not limited to the views of just one company. "There was a sense in the 60s and 70s that we had to do more so it had more impact." The corporate leaders were talking about making a difference and not getting bogged down by the anti-government rallies on one side and the not-so-gentle hints regarding funding "requests" coming from the nation's First Lady. Since this endeavor involved the country's biggest companies, the Philippine strongman decided to allow PBSP to continue with its projects while keeping his wife in check. He could then use these development efforts as a showcase to the world that his government did give ample space to the private sector and that he wasn't anti-poor.

Perhaps one of the biggest advantages of having PBSP exist was that it showed the people who were frustrated with the government that there was another way to help, that not everything had to be done via street demonstrations or joining the underground movement as many were already doing. Those who had different views and priorities but genuinely wanted to help society finally had another way available to them. This was a way of connecting people and their resources to achieve more than what one individual could do alone. Rory explained it this way: "The more you're able to connect people, the easier it is because ultimately people want to be part of the marketplace and a peaceful society." It also had the effect of connecting government with businesses. Government could now contact groups like PBSP and say, "We need you. How can you help?"

It didn't take long for businesses to engage civil society. "In the end, we need all of them. How do you solve all our problems which are so deeply rooted? That's what civil society needs to do: Reach people on the fringes of society but it needs to do this with business in a way that is sustainable." An example of this is a food company foundation organizing a vegetable planting project with the end result of that same foundation purchasing these same vegetables. Since the company's need for those vegetables is sustainable, the community growing those vegetables now have continuing income. This is very different from the traditional notion of dole outs or keeping things low key so as not to be accused of seeking praise from the public. "It's

more important to succeed," Rory stresses and success here definitely includes the idea of sustainability. "For communities to succeed, the philanthropic sector, business sector, and even civil society have to treat the communities as their main partners." This necessitates asking what these communities need and want rather than just coming in and deciding for them what projects will be undertaken. "When you ask them," Rory continues, "they're not asking for handouts. It's better to give people jobs so that they can send their children to school." She explains further that poverty tends to go down if the head of the household is educated, as even a little education can lead to possibilities of gainful employment.

New places, new experiences, new challenges

By her early 20s, Rory was sent to Mindanao. PBSP had set up a regional office there and she had to train people in PBSP's mindset and processes. She worked closely with Bishop Federico Escaler and various Columban priests.

It was here that certain societal realities hit her harder. In a boat one night, next to chickens and other farm animals and without even a cot to sleep in, she began asking, "Markyknoller naman ako a. Ba't di man lang ako makahiga? (I'm a Maryknoller. Why can't I even find somewhere to lie down?)". Fortunately for this graduate of Maryknoll College, a kindly old soldier offered to take turns sleeping in his cot as he watched his own granddaughter. This act of kindness was more than something she appreciated.

There was armed conflict in Mindanao and the Columbans had asked PBSP for a rice mill to serve both Muslims and Christians in a community. One night, while reviewing a proposal for the mill, Rory had to rush into a foxhole with the Columbans as armed conflict suddenly erupted around them. While inside the foxhole, she could hear the rushed numerous footfalls of the residents as they tried to find shelter themselves. The cacophony and fear were only drowned out by her heart's own loud beating.

In another instance, she had to go on top of a bus since there was no more space inside. It occurred to her that if a firefight suddenly broke out, she would probably be one of the first to get shot being so exposed. This time, it was an act of friendship that made things easier: Two men were making fun of her for not knowing how to speak Bisaya but asked her to teach them Tagalog. She responded well to this and not only did they all begin to learn each other's language, she also noted how these two strangers always made sure she was safe all the way to her destination.

These and other experiences showed her that, "Although these people were struggling to make ends meet, they could easily protect someone who wasn't from there, who couldn't even speak their language. They could help that person out. From that time on, I never questioned where I was or what I was doing."

Something else she learned in those experiences she carries with her up to now: "These are people who didn't need to do it but their hearts were open. They had nothing to give, but they gave it anyway."

How did her parents react to all this? Their 20-something Maryknoll College graduate was in what people thought was the most dangerous region in the Philippines. "I was very headstrong as a child. They knew enough not to impose on me." Funny thing though was that Rory admitted that, for some reason, her father, up to his death, seemed to think that she was working for the Boy Scouts. This she attributed to the shared three letters of PBSP and the BSP of the Boy Scouts of the Philippines. She laughed saying, "They always saw me as the one who was adventurous, who would get herself into trouble."

Legacy

Now, decades later, what does she have to look back on especially with the much-changed landscape and the return of each company giving more focus on its own corporate social responsibility projects? "We (CSR practitioners) are boundary spanners. We're the ones who interpret the aspirations and desires of our communities and communicate these with the business sector and philanthropic community who really don't see this." In PBSP, she brought various board members to different places and it was because of this

that they became more respectful of the communities and cognizant of their needs. The business leaders also brought something else into the communities: Their own practices that have led to their success. A good example of this is the insistence of Andres Soriano III to have regular monthly meetings with the communities. Nothing would be left to hearsay; discussions had to be done and updates given. Other PBSP members were brought to the uplands of Cebu, Samar, Quezon, and other places to meet with their target communities. When they didn't have the time to go to these communities, the community leaders would be brought to them. Indeed, there was no excuse not to really sit down and talk.



Frustrations? Rory has some.

"Sometimes the NGOs can get very territorial or develop a sense of entitlement," she laments. This is far from an ideal situation because there is a lot that needs to be done and people and NGOs actually need more help than they'd care to admit at times. Some NGOs can also become very competitive because of their financial challenges and the idea can be to chase a grant almost ferociously since the NGO's existence may depend on it. Again, this is disappointing and disheartening, especially for groups supposedly working towards development of society and human beings.

A different aspect of this issue is, especially since business entities are involved in the development efforts, NGOs have to show evidence of competence. Good intentions are not enough. "You have to be able to prove your worth. It isn't a matter of your having good intentions and therefore you deserve to exist. It has to be, 'I have good intentions and I can show results and that's why I deserve to exist. I deserve the money I can get from various organizations.'

Similar to this is the fact that some NGOs seem to forget that they are not supposed to always be with their communities. It is very important for an NGO to be unnecessary for a community in due time because the people in that community already know what to do for themselves. "Your job is not just to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and give shelter to the homeless. Your job is to help them to do it themselves and that's the hardest part of it because you want to take credit (rightly so!) for the things you've done. However, the ultimate proof of our work is if the communities are able to do things for themselves so that they don't need you anymore."

Rory seems to have realized something quite important already and she hopes that this also dawns on many people involved in similar work: "It is about the systems with which they solve problems. How do we develop the problem-solving skills as a community? How do we get people to sit down and make them work together? When you recognize that you come from different worlds, you have to extend your patience and understanding. Your mindset always has to be, 'How do I allow them to see us, what we are, and how do we see what they are?'"

To Rory, this is where things can really begin by "Seeing the other's point of view without being assimilated into the other." It is a meeting of two individual and unique perspectives and seeing where they can truly get together and accomplish something for themselves.

Epilogue

Paanong hihigitan pa?

Facing the challenges of the future

A lot has happened in the past decades and not all of these events have been peaceful ones. Much of the 70s has been marked by violence and the suppression of human rights and civil liberties. This continued up to the mid-80s which eventually saw the murder of former Senator Benigno Aquino on the tarmac of the Manila International Airport, the 1986 Snap Elections which were the last attempt to show the United States that the dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, still had the nod of the Filipinos, and, finally, the historic EDSA Revolution just a few weeks after those elections that saw not only the ouster of the dictatorship but also the return of the country's democracy. Throughout the country, the people began to realize what it meant again to be free and what it meant to be a person for others. Clearly, the new government needed help and, more importantly, the poorest of the poor needed help and very little was coming. The efforts that began even during the time of the dictatorship began to pick up speed and it wasn't very long before people were helping other people and it dawned on them that working together was really the way to go.



This was the basic story of CODE-NGO and most of its member networks. It has been a story of helping, of collaborating, of figuring out the more effective and more needed ways others can be lent assistance, and of making sure these efforts continued beyond just a few months or even a few years. Some networks are young while others are much more seasoned. Others focus on building up member organizations and local civil society networks while others focus on getting down and dirty with their constituencies. All these are necessary. All these have a place in the tapestry of life and these networks all see that. The problems of the Philippines and those that live in these islands cannot be solved by one messianic personage who promises

quick and easy solutions to very complex and deeply-rooted problems. With these networks and the people behind them willing to work with each other regardless of their political, cultural, religious, or even social backgrounds - inch by inch, foot by foot, mile by mile - solutions can be crafted.



This is what we need and this is what we hope to continue achieving in the future. There are more problems emerging even as older ones are slowly addressed. It is fortunate, therefore, that the people in CODE-NGO and its member networks have looked beyond and will continue to look beyond what is there now to come up with answers that address concrete situations. Our people have real challenges and real problems. We need real solutions that go beyond political administrations and local government leaders who may not be around in a few years while realizing that working with existing leaders is imperative for any effort to take flight and continue.

This is what now confronts CODE-NGO and its members. The past twenty-five years are over. What we have now is just the future and its own set of challenges and issues that need real and lasting solutions. This is what it hopes to address in the coming years. This is what it will continue working on. There is much work to be done especially with many developments in 2016 alone and resting on one's laurels is not something CODE-NGO, nor its members, does.

Platinum Partners:

Foundation for a Sustainable Society

<http://www.fssi.com.ph/>



National Confederation of Cooperatives

<http://www.natcco.coop/>



United Nations Development Programme

<http://www.ph.undp.org/>



Silver Partner:

Jollibee Group Foundation

<http://jollibeefoundation.org/>



