



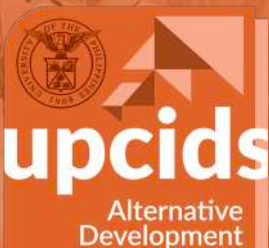
UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
PUBLIC POLICY MONOGRAPHS

# Towards a Peoples' Alternative Regionalism

Cases of Alternative Practices  
in the Philippines

VOLUME 1

EDUARDO C. TADEM • KARL HAPAL • VENARICA B. PAPA  
JOSE MONFRED C. SY • ANANEZA ABAN  
NATHANIEL P. CANDELARIA • HONEY B. TABIOLA  
Editors



SOLIDARITY  
RESISTANCE





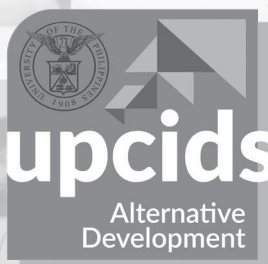
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## Notes on the Editors

**EDUARDO C. TADEM, Ph.D.** is Convenor of the Program on Alternative Development, University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS AltDev). He was President of the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) from 2014 to 2018, co-convenor of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) Philippine National Organizing Committee (2017), and a founding Governing Board Member of the Consortium on Southeast Asian Studies in Asia (SEASIA). He earned his Ph.D. in Southeast Asian Studies from the National University of Singapore, and a Master of Arts in Asian Studies and Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from the University of the Philippines Diliman. He retired as Professor of Asian Studies at the University of the Philippines Diliman in 2015 where he served as Editor-in-chief of *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia*. He has published over 100 articles in books, academic journals, and periodicals.

He is an avid amateur singer, but only at karaoke sessions, and has been doing gym work two to three times a week for the past five years, the results of which still remain inconclusive.

**KARL HAPAL** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Community Development of the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD), University of the Philippines Diliman and concurrently the Co-convenor of the Program on Alternative Development, University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS AltDev). He is an advocate of people-centered development and human rights. He hopes that world peace would become a reality during his lifetime.

**VENARICA B. PAPA** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Community Development of the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD), University of the Philippines Diliman. As a Project Leader at the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), she spearheads the Project on Alternative Practices: Indigenous Knowledge that seeks to document the alternative practices of Ayta Mag-Indi community in Porac, Pampanga. She is part of the Board of Directors of the Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB) and an advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs). Until today, she is still searching for answers to many questions.

**JOSE MONFRED C. SY** is currently pursuing a graduate degree in Araling Pilipino (Philippine Studies) from the Department of Filipino and Philippine Literature of the College of Arts and Letters (CAL), University of the Philippines Diliman. He obtained his BA in Comparative Literature, summa cum laude, from the same university. He conducts research for the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

His works have been published in journals such as *Literary Cultures across the World*, *Asian Politics and Policy*, *Unitas*, and in the book *Ecologies in Southeast Asian Literatures: Histories, Myths and Societies*

(2019). His research interests include protest literature, alternative development, Marxism, political ecology, and digital humanities.

He is also a children's book writer and a human rights activist. He teaches at the Senior High School level of the Bakwit School for Lumad refugees managed by the Save Our Schools Network. Given the chance, he would take a break from research and teaching to beat eight (8) gyms and compete for the Pokémon League.

**ANANEZA ABAN** currently serves as a Senior Research Associate of UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies Program on Alternative Development (UP CIDS AltDev). Prior to that, she headed the Secretariat Team of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum 2017, the broadest regional platform of civil society groups that engages issues on ASEAN. Her involvement on Southeast Asian issues began in 2002 during the Southeast Asia People's Festival in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

She finished her Master of Community Development degree from the University of the Philippines Diliman. She is also one of the younger generation of fellows of the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA). She has lived and worked with Metro Manila urban poor communities as well as indigenous peoples in Mindanao, where she practiced participatory development planning, and action research.

As far as she remembers, her passion for peoples' theatre in her younger days, was the key to her unceasing commitment for activism and life-long learning.

**NATHANIEL P. CANDELARIA** is currently Senior Project Assistant at the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev), University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS). He is also a candidate for the Master of Arts in Political Science degree at the University of the Philippines Diliman, where he also earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science degree, cum laude, in 2015.

Prior to joining the AltDev Program, he was Research Assistant at the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies (ISDS Philippines), the Foundation for Integrative and Development Studies (FIDS), and was Senior Project Assistant at the Strategic Studies Program (SSP) of UP CIDS. His research interests are on non-traditional security, international relations, and religion and politics.

He likes to collect Gundam figures, and watches Japanese animated films. He also hopes to learn how to read and speak in Japanese.

**HONEY B. TABIOLA** is Junior Research Analyst of the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) and Ph.D. student at the Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines Diliman. His fields of interest include political theory, comparative politics, and critical theory and theories of contemporary capitalism. In 2013, he was a graduate student research fellow at the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at the National University of Singapore (NUS). He loves to sing and still daydreams about becoming a pop star.





# Organizational Profiles

## FREEDOM FROM DEBT COALITION

The Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC)–Philippines is a nationwide multi-sectoral coalition conducting advocacy work in the national, local and international arenas, to realize a common framework and agenda for economic development. The main task of the Coalition is advocacy, which is the process of promoting alternatives and working for change in policies, programs, structures and relations. FDC was formally launched in 1988 by 90 organizations, coalescing into a multi-sectoral, non-sectarian and pluralist advocacy group. At present, it has around 250 organizations, networks and individual members in Luzon and NCR alone. It has seven (7) local chapters in the Visayas and Mindanao, with their own set of member organizations, networks and individual members. FDC believes in the framework of human development, equity, economic rights, economic justice, democratizing the economy, sustainable economy, economic growth (that is humane, equitable, sustainable), economic sovereignty and national self-reliance, and fair and beneficial global economic relations.

## GRUPO NG KATUTUBONG KABABAIHAN SA CAMIAS AT PLANAS SA PORAC, PAMPANGA

Ang oryentasyon ng grupo ng katutubong kababaihan ay pagpapalakas ng samahan ng katutubong kababaihan para sa karapatan at pamamahala ng komunidad tungo sa kolektibong pag-unlad ng pamayanan ng Ayta Mag-indi.

## KANLUNGAN CENTER FOUNDATION

Founded in 1989, Kanlungan is a non-stock, non-profit organization engaged in direct service, advocacy work, research and policy interventions for Filipino migrant workers. Over the past 29 years, Kanlungan has provided legal and counseling services to over a thousand Filipino migrant workers who encountered problems and crisis situations. Such problems range from illegal recruitment, recruitment violations, contract violations, racial discrimination, deportation, and other security risks.

## MA-IGTING NA SAMAHAN NG PANLIPUNANG NEGOSYANTE NG TOWERVILLE

Ang Ma-igting na Samahan ng Panlipunang Negosyante ng Towerville o Igiting, ay isang grupo ng mga kananayan na, simula noong 2011 ay nagsumikap na palaguin ang kanilang samahan at negosyo. Bagaman ngayon, ang Igiting ay isang matatag na samahan na may malagong negosyo, ang proseso sa pagkamit nito ay hindi naging madali, ang daan ay hindi palaging direktso. Naniniwala ang Igiting na ang kahirapan ay maiibsan kung magmumula sa bawat indibidwal ang pag-kilos, pagtutulungan, at higit sa lahat pagsisikap upang magkaroon ng sama-samang pagkilos tungo sa pagunlad. Kung ikukumpara sa mga dambuhalang negosyanteng may malalaking capital, sa isang social enterprise, pantay-pantay ang lahat ng karapatan ng miyembro, pinapakinggan ang boses ng lahat, may mga sinusunod na mga polisiya at sistema na nagmumula din sa bawat miyembro at pinagkaisahan ng samahan.

### **PARENTS AND YOUTH OF GAMU (PAYOGA) AND KASAMA SA PAGBABAGO TUNGO SA GANAP NA PAG-UNLAD NG TAO (KAPATAGAN)**

Founded in 1985, the Payoga-Kapatagan Multipurpose Cooperative (PK-MPC) was conceptualized by members of the Parents and Youth of Gamu (PAYOGA), a non-government organization, and Kasama sa Pagbabago Tungo sa Ganap na Pag-Unlad ng Tao (KAPATAGAN) a development group registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission in 1985. Their mission is to “strengthen the voice of farmers” and “empower them by providing livelihood opportunities”. Their main intervention consisted of providing farm households in Gamu municipality a stock grant of two goats, one male and one female. The initiators were Belgian missionaries in partnership with the Parish Youth of St. Rose de Lima Parish Church in Gamu, Isabela who saw that share tenants had no voice in Isabela Province as they were under the economic and political control of politicians and big landlords who themselves were engaged in the business of trading and moneylending.

### **SAVE OUR SCHOOLS NETWORK**

The Save our Schools Network (SOS) is an alliance of child rights advocates, organizations and various stakeholders working together to bring light and take action on the ongoing violation of children’s right to education, particularly those targeted by militarization. Education is a basic human right. However, over recent years, there has been an alarming increase in the number of reports of schools, particularly those of indigenous peoples, being militarized and used as barracks and detachments in the course of the Philippine government’s counter-insurgency campaign. These recurring child rights violations gave birth to SOS. The network provides advocacy and services to community schools that are recognized by the Department of Education Indigenous People’s Education Office (IPSEO). SOS upholds these schools’ programs that instill cultural heritage and pride to protect their culture and ancestral land against the encroachment of multinational investments and instead promote a sustainable, community-based development program.

### **TRIMONA MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERATIVE**

The TriMona Multi-purpose Cooperative (TMPC), with its Co-op Café, opened membership to all Filipino citizens interested in a healthy lifestyle. What began as a spoof of the TriNoma Mall which opened at about the same time in Quezon City, TriMona—a homonym of “try *mo na*,” a Taglish phrase meaning “try it”—evolved as a campaign for an alternative lifestyle and consumer movement based on food as medicine, slow food, alternative healing, and fair production and trade among its members and consumers. TriMona Healthy Dining offered a healthy menu of fresh, organic, and natural food with no artificial flavoring and synthetic taste enhancers. TMPC and TCC respond to challenges of sustainability and growth.



## INTRODUCTION

# Alternative Development from the Philippine Grassroots

KARL HAPAL

There is little doubt that Philippine society is bifurcated and unequal. To borrow from Cheng (2013), the Philippines is a society characterized by a “schizophrenic mix of wealth and poverty.” Cheng’s description is not difficult to encounter; the mixture of wealth and poverty is palpable and enduring. While a robust scholarship about the maladies of Philippine politics and society already exists, providing invaluable accounts and explanatory models, we believe that few have seriously attempted to examine these issues and privilege voices from the margins. There are a large number of spirited individuals, communities, organizations, projects, and programs that demonstrate that there are other ways of doing development. These efforts have, in many ways, created new configurations of development where its subjects are empowered socially, economically, and culturally. We believe it is important to surface these practices as these embody the elements of an alternative model of how development is implemented and propagated. Nonetheless, while various actors have implemented alternative development projects, it remains that their practices persist at the margins of both the public imaginary and discourse. Furthermore, they do not get the support and encouragement that mainstream practices receive despite its successes.

In the first volume of *Towards a Peoples’ Alternative Regionalism: Cases of Alternative Practices in the Philippines*, we aim to feature stories and accounts of grassroots-led initiatives addressing various issues related to development. These grassroots development paradigms, policies, practices, and projects challenge dominant models of development which have largely failed in meaningfully addressing the issues of the Filipino people. This challenge stems from the palpable reality that mainstream development models are laden with narrow vested interests of economic elites and political oligarchies; irresponsible, extractive, and destructive production practices; and, is characterized by disempowering and unaccountable decision-making processes. In general, these stories attempt to answer questions such as: How do actors at the grassroots level address the inadequacies of development? How do they make sense of their difficult situation? What types of strategies did they employ? And, what lessons can we learn from them?

We believe that the task of surfacing and privileging grassroots practices is embedded in the emergence of alternative models of development—models that are based on cooperation, solidarity, mutual benefit, the commons principle, and joint development, not cutthroat competition, the insatiable thirst for profits, and narrow patriotism and chauvinism.

## Why alternative development?

“*Mahirap kayo? Putang ina, magtiis kayo sa thirap at gutom, wala akong pakialam* (“You’re poor? Son of a bitch, suffer hardship and hunger, I don’t care”), said President Rodrigo Duterte in a public statement about the protests mounted by drivers and operators against the government’s jeepney modernization program. While Duterte’s comment was pointed to a specific issue, it serves as a symbolic representation of how development has been implemented, by *hook or crook* modernization and development will be rolled-out—*masagasaan na ang masagasaan* (those who will be run over will be run over). It poses as so-called political will, but is in fact callous, insensitive and, not least, lacking compassion for people who will be most affected. This attitude is no different when we look at the experiences of informal settlers who have been criminalized for their so-called encroachment of urban land, forcibly removed from their homes and emplaced in distant and destitute resettlement sites. The experience of indigenous peoples is not dissimilar to this. Despite laws and policies legitimizing their claim to their ancestral domain, indigenous peoples (IPs) have not only been denied their right to their lands, but are also forcibly displaced in favor of corporate interests. These experiences and other untold stories of poor and marginalized Filipinos were all undertaken and justified in the name of development. How did development assume this character and why?

Development is a peculiar term. Like other terms such as democracy, freedom, and nationalism, it is able to evoke an effervescent and optimistic feeling while simultaneously eluding definition. Broadly, hardly anyone is against development. Development can therefore be widely associated with the pursuit of making life better for all (Peet and Hartwick 2015). However, development can also be invoked to impose order, surveillance, and even legitimizing the deaths of so-called “undesirables” of society. These invocations of development, to cite a few, are not without any problems. In both allusions to development, we may legitimately ask: What is a better life? Who do we refer to with the term “all?” Is order the primary concern of development? Is surveillance and administering of death a necessity to achieve development? All of these questions are just the tip of the contentions surrounding development discourse. Notwithstanding all of these debates and suspending momentarily the pursuit of a definition, what we have affirmed throughout our collective experiences is that development is not a value-free enterprise; it is myth-making where visions of what society—its political, economic, and cultural structure—ought to be are invented; it is a political act where these visions propagated and rolled-out. As development scholar Andrea Cornwall (2007, 1) argues, “development defines worlds-in-the-making, animating and justifying intervention in currently existing worlds with fulsome promises of the possible.” It is this vision of “worlds-in-the-making” that propels the engine of development. In order to understand how development has assumed its contemporary incarnation, we must understand the “myth” behind development and explore its consequences (Rist 2019). It is through this brief exploration that we situate the need for what we call “alternative development.”

Both development historian Gilbert Rist (2019) and post-development scholar Arturo Escobar (1999) claim that development was a product, or rather an invention, borne out of the immediate post-World War II global order. According to Escobar (1999, 382): “One of the many changes that occurred in the early post-World War II period was the ‘discovery’ of mass poverty... this discovery was to provide the anchor for an important restructuring of global culture and political economy.” This task of restructuring the world ostensibly went to the victors of the war as they vied for political influence while securing their economic interests. For Rist (2019), this may be seen with former United States (US) President Harry Truman’s fourth point in his inaugural address. Truman, as cited by Rist (2019, 71), began his fourth point by saying, “we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.” For Rist (2019), Truman’s statement created a world view composed by the developed and underdeveloped nations; it is the former’s moral duty to uplift the latter a la “climbing

the ladder of development” to borrow from neoliberal economist Jeffrey Sachs (2006). This ostensibly created a vertical relationship between what is considered as “developed” and “underdeveloped.” For Escobar (1999), the dynamic between the “developed” and “underdeveloped” entailed the supplanting a model of development characterized by capital formation, the propagation of modern education and cultural values and, the creation of institutions carry out the task of uplifting the underdeveloped world into development. More importantly, this meant for Escobar (1999, 382) that

Behind the humanitarian concern and the positive outlook of the new strategy, new forms of power and control, more subtle and refined, were put in operation. Poor people’s ability to take care of their own lives was eroded in a deeper manner than perhaps ever before.

The sweeping tide that came along development gained both praises and critical reactions. While mainstream development has, in many ways, decreased the number of people living in absolute poverty, improved literacy and health and led to better opportunities, critics were quick to point out that it was not without any adverse consequences. Sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1979) drew a global politico-economic configuration composed of center and peripheral nations. In what he calls the world systems theory, Wallerstein (1979) describes how peripheral nations are extracted of their natural resources only to be processed in capital-rich and industrially developed central nations. For him, this center-peripheral nation dynamic constituted an exploitative relationship as center nations are able to accumulate capital. The surplus value created resulting from the sweeping tide of development, partly marked by the emergence of industry, was not equitably distributed. Drawing from a similar vein, activists in the Philippines pointed out that the brand of development adopted by the state is nothing more than the perpetuation of neo-colonial relations with the US. For post-colonial scholar Edward Said (1978), the center-periphery, first-third world or developed-underdeveloped relations has produced a different type of person—the *other*. The *other* is a marginalized entity produced as a result of a juxtaposition between the West and the Orient, where the latter is populated by “alien cultures.” The *other*, in this dynamic, is ultimately conquered, subdued or transformed to conform with the mold of a modern person. For postmodern scholars, development has created an entire discourse that pathologized underdevelopment. Consequently, development led to the creation of a transnational network of development institutions that, while having humanitarian aspirations, led to rigid and totalitarian regulatory and disciplinary regimes. This has led development scholars like Robert Chambers (1997) to ultimately ask: in the pursuit of the development, “whose reality counts?”

While the criticisms outlined above are rather sweeping and brief, it demonstrates the point that development—its processes, constituent institutions, discourse, and consequences—is problematic. By the 1980s, the skepticism towards mainstream development discourse had grown. Robert Chambers (1997, 1) provides a succinct representation of this skepticism, he wrote:

The beliefs...in linear and convergent development through stages of growth, in central planning, in unlimited growth, in industrialization as the key to development, in the feasibility of a continuous improvement in levels of living for all—these now have been exposed as misconceived and, with easy wisdom of hindsight, naïve.

Alongside the growing disillusionment over mainstream development models, we witness the rise of alternative proposals, many of which represent radical re-imaginings of how development may be achieved. One example would be Korten and Klauss’ (1984) influential claim of putting the people at the heart of development, a concept which they call “people-centered development.” Korten and Klauss, akin to critics of development, began to outline their concept by describing development as “production-centered.” Consequently, this model of development has led to treating people, especially those in the Third World, as mere objects of development. Korten and Klauss (1984) question this logic

by arguing that people are capable of self-organizing and directing their development. This view of people as development agents rely on a framework that puts human values, capacities, and realities at the forefront, rather than the imperatives of the market, achieving full efficiency and growth. Putting people at the forefront of development has resulted in re-imagining how development is implemented through concepts—fairly novel at that time but are common in contemporary development jargon—such as participation and empowerment. In the Philippines, putting people in development was popularized through the works of community organizing scholars such as Angelito Manalili (2012), providing us with maxims such as *kaunlaran mula sa tao, para sa tao* (development for the people, and by the people).

Alternative re-imaginings of development have gained traction by the 1990s. Not only was the concept of people-centered development popularized, other alternative models revolving around notions of increasing people's participation, enhancing their capacities and freedoms, addressing gender inequities, protecting human rights, sustainable development, and ecologically sound models of production and empowerment gained currency. This prompted sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1998, 350) to observe that “forms of alternative development have become institutionalized as part of mainstream development ... to the point that mainstream alternative development (or MAD), might not be an odd notion.” In some ways, Pieterse's (1998) claim is not unfounded. Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, in their book *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (2001), explores how the concept of participation, a concept unheard of prior to the propagation of alternative development discourse, have become a staple in development practice. However, they also observe that participatory development practice has been performed ritualistically and, in many ways, have been co-opted to legitimize undemocratic practices. Does this mean that alternative development or re-imaginings of development are no longer relevant? Or, has it lost its appeal given its unwitting integration to mainstream development? For Pieterse (1998, 348),

Alternative development has been fashionable because it came upon a crisis in development thinking, because it matched general doubts about the role of the state... The ‘alternative’ discourse was a way of being progressive without being overly radical and without endorsing a clear ideology; it could be embraced by progressives and conservatives who both had axes to grind with the role of states. It was a low-risk way of being a progressive and its structural unclarity ensured broad endorsement... Running the risk of flippancy, one might say that the kind of world in which alternative development work is a world that does not need it. Thus, while pertinent as an orientation, it is too unstable and narrow to serve as a ‘model’.

Despite Pieterse's scathing remarks, alternative development discourse and its constituent practice continue to be vibrant, not least due to the continued failure of whether it may be mainstream development or mainstream alternative development. The reality remains that in its slow and glacial iteration, mainstream development has not sufficiently addressed the human condition, especially those in the margins. And so, the re-formulation and re-imagining of development continues to be a relevant project; it is an ongoing endeavor to find solutions that are relevant, timely, and meaningful, especially for people at the margins. However, this project is not geared towards formulating a universal or totalitarian model. Alternative development is not bent on creating another modern behemoth to dismantle and replace the failures of the old one. True, there are many reasons to get rid of the mainstream model. But it is not solved by replacing it with another kind of monster. So, what is alternative development then?

Perhaps, it is the wrong question to ask. To ask a succinct definition of alternative development is to ask for a definite model, a counterpoint to its mainstream counterpart. We contend that alternative development is not defined by any model or a coherent amalgamation of theories, concepts, and

prescriptions. Rather, alternative development is borne out of practice, it is formulated by people—whether through contention or consensus. Alternative development therefore is a platform where a plurality of politics can co-exist; countering or agreeing but are interrelated. Yet, this platform retains its bias; it privileges the epistemic fields of those who have been neglected, ignored, or rolled over by development. The criticality of alternative development’s potency relies not solely on its contrapuntal position against modern development, it is dependent on the capillary and productive power of its practitioners—building connections, solidarity, bettering practices, and creating bases of unity for a better future. This is the reason why we, as co-producers of this volume, have privileged grassroots practices. It is through this exploration of these practices that we hope to amass alternative practitioners so that we could converse and collectively explore a better way forward.

### About the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev)

This inaugural volume is the product of the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev). Established in 2017, AltDev is one of twelve (12) research programs under the Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS), the main policy research unit of the University of the Philippines (UP). The AltDev’s main goal is to document paradigms, policies, grassroots practices, and projects that pose a critical challenge to mainstream or dominant models of development. Its scope expands to various actors within the Southeast Asian region who are undertaking various types of alternative practices. The Program envisions that through its documentation efforts, it can contribute to the linking of peoples and communities in the Philippines and in the rest of the Southeast Asia to form the building blocks of a peoples’ alternative regional integration—a form of integration that puts people first, rather than profits, politicking, or vested interests. Since its establishment, the AltDev has pursued its aims along three contiguous albeit distinct thrusts: documentation of alternative practices; building linkages, partnerships and solidarity; and strengthening exchanges between grassroots organizations.

In the field of documentation, the AltDev has conducted documentation work in the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, Thailand, and the Thai-Burma border. A total of fifty-six (56) case studies featuring various alternative practices have been produced. The AltDev’s documentation work served as the backbone for the Program’s subsequent activities. The participants in the AltDev’s documentation work also served as the delegates for regional conferences, as well as for people-to-people exchanges.

Building linkages, partnerships, and solidarity was initially pursued through AltDev’s documentation work. This was then further reinforced through the conduct of the annual Regional Conference on Alternative Practices in Southeast Asia. Now in its second installment, a total of 107 participants from various parts of the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, and the Thai-Burma border participated in the conference. The first regional conference had a similar representation of Southeast Asian peoples, with 111 participants from Southeast Asian nations. The goal of the conference is for grassroots organizations to showcase their alternative practices and draw parallelisms from the models, issues, successes, and challenges of other organizations. By sharing their experiences and learning from others, AltDev intends to reinforce the solidarity between different grassroots organizations who, in many ways, share similar issues and challenges. Through the conference, three major thrusts were identified/reinforced: the continued need for surfacing alternative practices through documentation; the need for exchanges beyond a conference venue, a real-life and practice-based exchange; and the need to strengthen the network using digital communication technologies.

Finally, drawing from an action plan developed in the 1st Regional Conference on Alternative Practices in Southeast Asia, the people-to-people (P2P) exchange between select participants from

Laos, Thailand, Philippines, Timor Leste, and Indonesia was pursued. The P2P serves as an out-of-conference type of platform where grassroots organizations may learn based on real-life and practice-based experiences. For 2019, the exchange was hosted by the Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia (KPRI; Confederation of Indonesian Peoples' Movement) and its peasant union counterpart, Serikat Petani Pasundan (SPP; Pasundan Peasant Union) in Jakarta and West Java, Indonesia. During the P2P, KPRI and SPP shared and demonstrated various forms of resistance against capitalist and state incursion into rural land and union busting. These forms of resistance were complemented by an integrative production system, tying local produce into the mainstream market—a model which they call solidarity economy.

## About the volume

This volume features eleven (11) chapters highlighting alternative development practices in different parts of the Philippines. Some of the chapters have been written by grassroots organizations, which feature their respective alternative development initiatives, challenges, and successes. Other chapters offer a review and analysis of a program, a project, or a model of development that poses a critical challenge to mainstream practice. Other chapters are a retelling of a personal journey that showcase unconventional, albeit socially relevant, ways of doing things in the field of say, education and architecture. While these chapters are, in many ways, disparate and feature different levels of criticality, focus, or intent, what these chapters do answer is our invitation to surface heterodox and alternative development practices. By surfacing these practices, the contributors of this volume have answered the call to begin a critical discussion on how to approach the future and development, not through a development of a monolithic and grand theory, but through grounded and real discussions about peoples' aspirations, struggles, weakness, and strengths. It is through these chapters that we also extend our invitation to the readers of this volume. By reading through these practices, we hope that this volume could facilitate the connection of peoples and their practices.

We begin this volume with the chapter of Ma-Igting na Samahan ng Panlipunang Negosyante sa Towerville (Igting). Igting's chapter reflects the different realities faced by informal settlers turned relocatees. Written by the women of Igting, a people's organization and a social enterprise established in 2011, the chapter recounts their painful experience of being relocated to Towerville, San Jose Del Monte, and how they persevered in forming their organization and social enterprise. Efforts to organize and establish a social enterprise was largely a response to the absence of state services. Privileging the voices of Igting's members aims to inspire other people's organizations and social enterprises through their experience. It is also a symbolic act of taking ownership of their stories—as protagonists and agents.

The second chapter features the narratives of the women and elders of the Ayta Mag-Indi in Porac, Pampanga. Their narratives is a brief retelling of their history: how they resisted foreign incursions and influence, the difficulties they faced when Mt. Pinatubo erupted in 1991, and how they dealt with its aftermath. Their narratives explain how their own indigenous ways of community organizing served as a means to overcome adversity, reclaim their ancestral domain, and reclaim their culture. Nonetheless, their stories also reflect the continuing threat of corporate interests seeking to steal their land in the name of profit. Central in this struggle are the Aeta women who, apart from performing domestic and reproductive roles, have been one of the leading figures in resisting capitalist incursions in their ancestral domain.

Devralin Lagos, Miguel Pangalangan, Karla Coderes, and Anjanette Dela Peña's chapter was borne out of a four-month intensive community integration and organizing with the Aetas in Sitio Katipunan, Barangay Bueno, Capas, Tarlac. Their article discusses the continuing attempt to improve literacy



through alternative and non-conventional pedagogies. The article asserts that the aim of indigenous people's education (IPEd) is to facilitate conscientization to enable indigenous peoples to transform their own condition in a manner that is consistent with their world view. The article seeks to engage the many institutions engaged in IP education and community organizing. By prioritizing voices from below—that of the Aetas—the authors aim to impart lessons in order to improve IPEd and various literacy programs.

Benjamin Quiñones, Jr.'s chapter highlights and draws lessons from the economic and finance model of the Payoga-Kapatagan Multipurpose Cooperative (PK-MPC). The cooperative was established due to the recognition that charity work was not enough in responding to the conditions of poor peasants constantly threatened by risks arising from natural calamities, exploitative practices of landlords and traders, and not-so-responsible local governance. Since its reorganization, the PK-MPC has adopted the triple bottom line goals of people (community engagement), planet (ecological conservation), and profit (economic and financial sustainability), and endeavored to become a workplace that consciously reconnects with communities, improves and expands the livelihood base of its members, helps them transition from an informal to a formal economy, creates and promotes decent work, and transforms landless peasants into entrepreneurs. Quiñones then uses the case of PK-MPC to illustrate the elements of an economic unit of social solidarity economy (SSE).

Masako Ishii's chapter examines the People-to-People Trade in the Balangon Banana (P2PTBB) project undertaken by Alter Trade Japan, Alter Trade Corporation, and Upper Allah Valley Farmers Inc. since 2004 in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. The chapter presents the direct and indirect impacts of the P2PTBB initiative on banana growers in the area. The examination of the direct impacts indicates that the P2PTBB project is not sufficient for the growers to improve their overall quality of life. However, the project has dampened the growers' marginalization, taking into consideration the socioeconomic context of the indigenous T'boli and Ubo groups. Finally, Ishii's chapter discusses how fair trade movements like the P2PTBB face the difficulties of differentiating its alternative value from the profit-oriented market mechanism, and thus suggests the stakeholders to recognize its indirect impacts.

Erwin Puhawan's chapter presents the holistic approach of Kanlungan Center Foundation (Kanlungan) in handling cases of abuse and violations against Filipino migrant workers. Founded in 1989, Kanlungan has provided various forms of support and services to mitigate the adverse effects of abuse against Filipino migrant workers. This include feminist counseling, legal and welfare assistance, education and training of stakeholders and dutybearers, and community outreach. In his chapter, Puhawan presents the key lessons learned through Kanlungan's nearly 30-year history. Puhawan situates these lessons by presenting case studies on addressing victims of human trafficking.

Freedom from Debt Coalition's (FDC) chapter problematizes the multi-faceted impacts of the Philippines' debt servicing policies. Attuned to the dictates of neoliberal policies, FDC argues that the imperative to improve debt ratios are far less important compared to addressing pressing socio-economic issues that Filipinos continue to suffer. In their chapter, FDC outlines their two-decade long struggle for a transparent and equitable debt servicing policies. This was achieved through convening a broad alliance of organizations and groups against illegitimate debt. In the end, FDC offers a new framework for debt servicing, one that calls for greater accountability for both lending institutions and borrower states.

Jose Monfred Sy's chapter discusses the case of alternative tribal schools for the Lumad and how IPs can pave their way to their own definition of development that counters that of the state and the private sector. Responding to the shortfall of state services, the Lumad—together with the support of academic, religious, and civil society organizations—established schools that allow students to recognize their

potential as shapers of their own lives and future. Sy's case study seeks to map the development of this alternative learning site by situating it in the Lumad peoples' history and struggle for governance over their *yutang kabilin* (ancestral land). The chapter first traces the historical emergence of the Lumad as a political identity of non-Islamized IP groups in Mindanao. It then discusses the development of the alternative schools for the Lumad, and later, the mobile Bakwit School, along with the challenges they face. Finally, the paper delineates the nationalist, pro-people, and scientific pedagogy of the schools that suggest what alternative education could be, one that arises out of the logic of capital and encourages social transformation.

Remedios Nalundasan-Abijan's chapter discusses her initiative on promoting compassion in an educational setting through community engagement. Nalundasan-Abijan performs this through immersion and volunteer work which are, in different ways, transformative. Drawing from the perspectives of participants, Nalundasan-Abijan claims that both volunteers and people in the community view the experience as "life-transforming." Based on continued engagements with volunteers and communities, Nalundasan-Abijan develops the concept of "accompanying a people's movement for compassion" or ACAPMO Caring Spaces. These caring spaces provide opportunities to realize one's capacity to give; that is, the "innate desire to uplift our less fortunate brothers and sisters."

Rosario Encarnacion Tan and Eric Carruncho's chapter provides an alternative model for house construction using bamboo. Encarnacion Tan and Carruncho argue that the bamboo house is the quintessential exemplar of people architecture in the Philippines. They outline its enduring relevance in vernacular architecture due to its suitability to the tropical climate of the Philippines; its resilience in the face of typhoons and other natural calamities; cost-effectiveness and readily available and sustainable supply; ease of use and simple building techniques; and its comparative strength and durability. Beyond its practical advantages, however, the bamboo house offers a pathway to an alternative lifestyle consistent with Filipino culture and values. Once dismissed as a building material for the poor, more and more people are awakening to the unique qualities of the bamboo house, not only in the Philippines, but globally.

Finally, Esperanza Santos's chapter shares the story of Trimona Multi-Purpose Cooperative (Trimona). Trimona was conceived as a "dream space of shared resources, expertise and passion for healthy food and lifestyle, fair food production and trade and a slow food tradition." It was established due to the growing concern over the proliferation of diseases and health problems associated with unhealthy eating habits; doubts in the efficacy of medical treatment and its exorbitant cost; and, the general lack of awareness of the concept of "food as medicine and alternative healing." Now on its eleventh year of existence, Trimona remains to broaden its clientele and in promoting its advocacy for healthy food and lifestyle.

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# 1

## Sama-samang Pagkilos para sa Pagkamit ng Ganap na Buhay

### MA-IGTING NA SAMAHAN NG PANLIPUNANG NEGOSYANTE NG TOWERVILLE<sup>1</sup>

Ang papel na ito sumasalamin ng iba't ibang realidad ng lipunan. Sa isang banda, ito ay naglalarawan ng proseso ng relokasyon at matinding kahirapan na dulot nito. Sa kabila naman, ito ay isang pagbabalik tanaw sa proseso ng pagbubuo ng samahan at negosyo. Ngunit, higit sa lahat, ang papel na ito ay pagsasalamin ng boses ng mga tao—ng mga miyembro ng Igting. Ang Ma-igting na Samahan ng Panlipunang Negosyante ng Towerville o Igting, ay isang grupo ng mga nanay na, simula noong 2011 ay nagsumikap na palaguin ang kanilang samahan at negosyo. Bagaman ngayon, ang Igting ay isang matatag na samahan na may malagong negosyo, ang proseso sa pagkamit nito ay hindi naging madali, ang daan ay hindi palaging direktso.

Ang pagbibigay-boses sa mga miyembro ng Igting sa paglalahad ng kanilang kwento ay maraming pinaggagalingan. Isa na rito ang kagustuhan na maipamalas ang kanilang karanasan upang makatulong o magbigay ng inspirasyon sa ibang mga samahan na nagsisimula pa lamang. Kasama din dito ang pagbabahagi ng mga mahahalagang aral, hindi lamang sa pagnenegosyo kundi pati sa pagbubuo ng samahan. Marahil, ang pinakamahalagang hugot sa pagbabahagi na ito ay kagustuhan ng mga miyembro na ilahad nila ang kanilang kwento mula sa kanilang pag-unawa at pakiramdam. Nakikita ito ng mga miyembro ng Igting na mahalaga dahil sa matagal na panahon, ang kanilang kuwento ay isinulat at inilahad para sa kanila ngunit hindi nagmula sa kanila.

Sa gayon, ang papel na ito ay produkto ng sama-samang pananaliksik at pagsusulat ng mga miyembro ng Igting. Ang mga nilalaman ng papel ay mula sa mga personal na testimonya o talaarawan ng mga miyembro o produkto ng mga *focus group discussion* (FGD). Ang pagbubuo ng papel ay isinagawa sa pamamagitan ng mga *participatory research workshops* na pinadaloy ng Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) ng Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS) ng Unibersidad ng Pilipinas (UP), kasama ang ilang kawani ng Center for Asian Mission for the Poor-Asia (CAMP).

Nahahati ang papel sa tatlong bahagi. Nilalarawan ng unang bahagi ang kanilang buhay bago at pagkatapos ng relocation sa Towerville. Ang paglalarawan ng sitwasyon na ito ay mahalaga dahil ito ang magsisilbing konteksto na gagabay sa kalakhan ng talakayan. Nilalarawan naman ng sunod na bahagi

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<sup>1</sup> Ang kabanatang ito ay naisulat sa tulong nina Regie Anne Placido at Karl Hapal.



**LARAWAN 1.1** • Ang mga kasapi ng Ma-igting na Samahan ng Panlipunang Negosyante ng Towerville (Igting)  
(Larawan mula sa Facebook page ng Igting Towerville)

ang proseso na pinagdaanan ng Igting sa larangan ng pagbubuo ng samahan at negosyo. Kabilang sa pagbabahagi na ito ang simulaing pag-oorganisa, ang mga hamong kinaharap, at pagbangon ng Igting mula sa mga ito. Nilalahad naman ng huling bahagi ang mga mahahalagang aral na natutunan ng Igting sa halos pitong taon ng pag-oorganisa. Ang mga aral na ito ay may kinalaman sa pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga tao, kahalagahan ng pagpapalakas ng samahan, at ang kolektibong pagpapalago ng samahan.

### **May bahay pero walang hanapbuhay: Ang pamumuhay at sitwasyon sa Towerville**

Ang Towerville ay isang programang pabahay ng National Housing Authority (NHA) sa San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. Sinimulan ito noong 1996 alinsunod sa Manila Urban Development Project ng pamahalaan. Kinalauan, ang Towerville ay nagsilbing *relocation site* para sa mga maralitang pamilya. Ang iba sa kanila ay biktima ng mga kalamidad tulad ng bagyong Reming noong 2004 at bagyong Ondoy noong 2010. Ang iba naman ay pinaalis sa kanilang mga tahanan dahil sa ito ay sinasabing nakasagabal sa mga tinatawag na *development projects* tulad ng North at South Luzon Expressway at Northrail Project. Ang mga *relocatees* ay nagmula sa iba't ibang panig ng Metro Manila tulad ng Malabon, Navotas, Maynila, Pasay, at Lungsod Quezon. Ang Towerville ay binubuo ng anim (6) na *phase*. Ang Phase 1 hanggang Phase 5 ay naitayo sa Barangay Minuyan Proper, samantalang ang Phase 6 naman ay nakapaloob sa dalawang barangay: ang Barangay Gaya-gaya at Barangay Graceville. Mula noong itinayo ang Towerville, naging tuloy-tuloy ang relokasyon dito, hanggang sa lumobo na ang populasyon nito sa 70,000 na pamilya.

Kung babalikan, karamihan sa mga na-*relocate* ay mahihirap na nakatira sa lupang hindi nila pagmamay-ari. Ang palasak na tawag sa kanila ay mga *informal settler* o *squatter*. Sila ay karaniwang tutol sa relokasyon. Ang katwiran nila, “Mahirap ka na nga sa pinaggalingan mo, dadalhin ka pa sa

lugar na mas lalong magpapahirap sa iyo. Dito, mahirap man ang kalagayan, malapit naman sa hanap buhay, paaralan, ospital—sa lahat ng bagay.” Ang iba ay sadyang matigas ang ulo; hindi alintana ng iba ang nakaambang panganib sa kanilang kapaligiran. Ang sitwasyong ito ay kahawig ng karanasan ng mga residente sa Bagong Silangan, Quezon City na karamihan ay na-*relocate* sa Towerville matapos ang bagyong Ondoy.

Totoo, ang pamumuhay ng mga residente ng Bagong Silangan noon ay mas kumportable: malapit sa trabaho, paaralan, ospital, at iba pang mga pangangailangan. Subalit noong dumating ang bagyong Ondoy, naranasan ng mga residente ang kalbaryong dulot ng kalamidad. Marami sa mga bahay ng residente ay inanod at nagpalutang-lutang sa ilog; ang iba ay lulan pa ang mga nakatira dito. Maraming namatay dahil sa pagbaha, habang ang iba naman ay umakyat sa mga punongkahoy o sa bubungan ng kanilang bahay upang mabuhay; ang iba naman ay nagpalutang-lutang gamit ang mga galon ng tubig. Kasabay nilang nagpaanod ang mga alagang hayop tulad ng manok, baboy, kambing, at baka, na kinalaunan ay namatay rin. Kalunos-lunos ang sinapit ng mga residente—wala silang pagkain, tubig, at gatas para sa mga bata. Ang mga nakaligtas ay tumira nang tatlong buwan sa *covered court* na ginawang pansamantalang *evacuation center* bago na-*relocate* sa Towerville.

Ilan sa mga dahilan sa pagpayag ng mga tao na mailipat sa isang *relocation site* ay ang pangarap ng bawat pamilya na magkaroon ng maayos na tahanan, sariling lupa, at maayos na kapaligiran at ang pag-iwas sa mga dagok bunsod ng mga panganib sa kapaligiran (tulad ng pagbaha sa kaso ng Bagong Silangan). Kaya naman, sa patuloy na paghimok ng gobyerno sa ilan, napagpasyahang tanggapin ang pabahay sa Towerville. Lingid sa kaalaman ng mga tao na papalalimin ng relokasyon ang kanilang kahirapan at kikipotin ang kanilang pag-asa.

Hindi naging madali ang proseso ng relokasyon para sa mga miyembro ng Igting na kabilang sa mga libo-libong nilipat sa Towerville. Lulan ng mga bus, daan-daang pamilya ang hinatid papunta sa *relocation site* sa San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. Kinailangan ng karamihan sa kanila na i-*demolish* ang kanilang dating mga bahay upang itayo sa lupang nilaan ng pamahalaan. Ang iba ay pinabaunan ng *grocery items* na nagkakahalagang Php 2,000. Ang mga residente naman ng Bagong Silangan ay binigyan lamang ng isang supot ng pagkain. Ang iba ay binigyan ng pinansyal na ayuda, ngunit batay sa karanasan ng mga *relocatees*, hindi ito tatagal at mas lalong hindi ito sasapat.

Nagsimula ang mga dagok sa mga *relocatees* sa kanilang pagpasok sa Towerville. Nadatnan ng mga *relocatees* ang Towerville na walang tubig at kuryente dito at hindi maayos o *substandard* ang pagkagawa ng mga bahay. Ngunit higit sa lahat, wala silang hanapbuhay dito. Marami ang kinailangang bumalik sa kalunsuran. Karamihan dito ay kalalakihan na lumuluwas upang magtrabaho at lingguhan lamang kung umuwi para makatipid sa pamasaha. Ayon sa isa sa mga *relocatees*, mataas pa naman ang kanilang inaasahan sa bagong tirahan, ngunit pagdating nila sa Towerville ay kulang-kulang naman ang mga batayang serbisyong pampubliko. Dahil dito, hindi maiwasang isipin ng mga *relocatees* na para lamang silang basurang itinapon sa Towerville. Ang kalunos-lunos na sitwasyon na ito ay nagdulot ng panunuot ng pakiramdam na wala na silang pag-asa, at kadalasan ay buntong-hininga na lamang ang nangingibabaw. Kwento ni Rowena Osal, miyembro ng Igting na nagmula sa Marikina,

Napakahirap ng kalagayan namin. Kubo lang ang naitayo namin. Wala kaming tubig, walang kuryente, at bababa pa kami sa ilog para maglaba at mag-igib. Minsan, nakikiigib din kami sa mga kapitbahay na may tubig. Kanya-kanya sa amin ang pagpapakakabit ng tubig mula sa NAWASA (National Water and Sewerage Authority). Depende sa layo ng lugar, umaabot ng Php 5,000 ang kailangang bayaran. [...] Kailangan din mag-*stay-in* kami ng aking asawa sa Marikina para sa aming trabaho. At bilang ina, napakahirap sa akin na lagi kong inaalala ang kaligtasan ng mga

anak ko. Paano ang pagluluto ng pagkain nila? Ang pag-aasikaso sa kanila sa tuwing tutungo sa paaralan? Parang laging dinudurog ang puso ko sa pag-aalala sa kanila.

Sabi naman ni Jocelyn Mosende,

nang kami ay malipat dito, walang kuryente, walang tubig, at puro talahib. Ang giniba naming bahay dati ang siyang itinayo namin dito. *Stay-in* ang asawa ko sa trabaho at lingguhan lang siya kung umuwi, kaya kami lang ng anak ko ang magkakasama palagi. [...] Sobra kaming natakot minsan isang gabi nang may nagtangkang butasin ang dingding namin. Simula noon, hindi na ako makatulog. Makaraan ang ilang linggo, nawalan ng trabaho ang asawa ko. Kailangan kong gumawa ng paraan upang matustusan ang pangangailangan ng pamilya ko. Namasukan ako ng katulong sa pinanggalingan naming lugar.

Ayon naman kay Jennifer Macabudbud na biktima ng sunog,

ang trabaho ng asawa ko ay maglalako ng mga istante na ginagamit sa tindahan. Kapag walang bumibili, wala ring kita. ‘Pag walang kita, hindi siya makakauwi kaya madalas nangungutang ako sa tindahan. Kapag hindi kami makabayad, pagagalitan kami ng may-ari. Kapag wala na talagang masaing, manghihingi ako ng kaunting kanin na masasaing sa kapitbahay. Kahit hindi na ako kumain, importante na makakain ang mga bata. Kapag wala namang baon ang mga bata, hindi ko na lang sila pinapapasok. Minsan umabot na sa puntong gusto nang sumuko ng asawa ko dahil sa kalagayan namin dito. Ang lahat ng karanasang ito ay sobrang naging hamon sa mga pamilya, lalo na sa usaping hanapbuhay. Umasa na lang kami sa paggabay ng Panginoon kung paano mairaraos ang buhay sa araw-araw.

Hindi lamang patungkol sa kabuhatan ang idinulot na epekto ng reloksyon sa mga tao. Katulad ng mga nabanggit sa kwento nila Rowena, Jocelyn, at Jennifer, nagsanga-sanga ang epekto nito upang magdulot ng labis na pasakit sa mga pamilya, lalo na sa mga bata. Pinalalim din nito ang usapin ng seguridad at nagdulot ng pagbaba ng dignidad ng mga tao. Naging malalang isyu din ang mga sakit. Hinala ng mga residente, ito ay dahil sa dikit-dikit na pagkakagawa ng bahay at napakainit na temperatura sa loob ng mga ito na parang pugon ng tinapay. Dahil dito, madalas ang pagkakaroon ng mga residente ng mga sakit tulad ng hika, lagnat, at *hypertension*, lalo na sa mga matatanda. Ang sakit sa baga ay malimit na sanhi ng pagkamatay ng mga residente. Malayo rin ang mga *health centers* o ospital para sa agarang medikal na pangangailangan. At dahil kinakailangang manatili sa Maynila ang ilan sa mga tatay o nanay upang magtrabaho, nakapagpalala ito sa pagkasira ng mismong mga pamilya. Ilan sa mga pamilya ay nagkawatak-watak, habang ang iba ay nagkaroon ng ibang mga karelasyon, mapa-babae o lalaki man.

Dahil sa kasadlak-sadlak na sitwasyon sa Towerville, hindi ito kinaya ng ibang pamilya at pinili na lamang na ibenta ang lupa o bahay na ipinagkaloob sa kanila upang bumalik sa Maynila at doon mangupahan. Ang karamihan ay walang ibang pagpipilian kundi ang manatili sa Towerville at umasa na mapapansin at matutugunan ng pamahalaan ang mga kakulangan dito. Kung tutuusin, napakaganda ng tanawin na nakapaligid sa Towerville—maganda ang kabundukan at luntian ang mga halaman. Ngunit ang mas matinding nararamdaman ng mga residente ay kawalan ng pag-asa. Hindi maiwasang isipin ng mga residente kung bakit tila napag-iwanan ang Towerville, gayong maunlad na ang ibang mga lugar at patuloy naman ang paglago ng teknolohiya. Marahil, ito ay may kinalaman sa usapin ng mahina at hindi epektibong pamamahala at politika.



Simula't sapul, ang Towerville ay proyekto ng pamahalaan—mula rito ang panukala at ito rin ang nagsakatuparan nito. At sa larangan ng pagpapatupad, napakalaking kalabihan kung sasabihin na naging sapat ang paggampan ng pamahalaan sa pagsasakatuparan ng proyekto. Sa proseso pa lamang ng paglilipat at pamamahagi ng pabahay ay napakalaki ng pagkukulang ng pamahalaan. Halimbawa, ang ilang pamilya na nailipat ay pinagkalooban ng gobyerno ng libreng pabahay, habang ang karamihan ay tanging lupa lang ang natanggap. Nangyari ito sa kabila ng pangako ng pamahalaan na pagkalooban ang mga *relocatees* ng pabahay. Hindi rin pare-pareho ang mga natanggap na pinansyal na ayuda ng mga taong inilipat sa Towerville. Ayon sa mga residente, ang halaga ng ayuda ay nakadepende sa lungsod o munisipalidad na pinanggalingan at sa dahilan ng pagkaka-*relocate*. Halimbawa, mas malaki ang halaga ng ayuda ng mga residente mula sa mga mayayamang lungsod. Kalimitan ding mas malaki ang natatanggap ng mga taong na-*relocate* dahil sa *infrastructure projects* (tulad ng mga proyektong *road widening*) kumpara sa mga napalayas dahil sa pagiging *informal settler* kahit na sila ay nabiktima ng sunog o baha.

Kagaya ng nabanggit kanina, hindi rin naging maganda ang pagbibigay ng mga batayang serbisyo sa lugar. Sa karanasan ni Rowena Osal, kinakailangan nilang gumamit ng *jumper* (iligal na pagkabit sa linya ng kuryente) upang magkaroon ng kuryente. Pagkatapos makipag-usap ng mga residente sa Meralco noong 2006, doon lamang nagkaroon ng pormal na koneksyon sa kuryente ang mga kabahayan. Samakatuwid, ang mga tao mismo ang gumawa ng pamamaraan upang maisakatuparan ang batayang serbisyon ito. Hindi rin nalalayo dito ang karanasan ng mga residente patungkol sa iba pang batayang serbisyo tulad ng tubig.

Maaaring sabihin na ramdam na ramdam lamang ng mga residente ang pamahalaan tuwing eleksyon. Aktibo ang mga pulitiko sa pangangako ng kung ano-anong bagay tulad ng kaunlaran, trabaho, negosyo, imprastraktura, at iba pa. Sa panahon ding ito, naaalala ng mga politiko sa Maynila ang mga taong ipinatapon nila sa mga *relocation site*. Ang iba ay nagpapadala pa ng sasakyan upang sunduin ang mga tao. Papakainin ang mga ito, bibigyan ng maliit na halaga, at papangakuan ng kung ano-ano. Sadyang importante lang ang mga residente ng Towerville sa kanila tuwing panahon ng eleksyon. Ngunit matapos nito ay mistulang nagiging bulag, pipi, at bingi ang mga politiko sa mga hinaing ng mga maliliit na taong tulad nila.

Upang maging patas, nagbigay din naman ang pamahalaan ng ayuda tulad ng 4Ps (ang Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program) at iba't ibang *livelihood training* tulad ng *tocino-making*, *candle-making*, *soap-making*, at kung ano-ano pang “*making*.” Ngunit hindi ito naging sapat. Halimbawa, sa kaso ng 4Ps, naging tamad naman ang mga tao dahil naghihintay na lamang sila sa mga benepisyo nito. Pagdating naman sa mga *training*, wala namang sapat na ayuda tulad ng paunang kapital, kagamitan sa produksyon, at iba pang pangangailangan sa pagnenegosyo. Kaya naman, hindi rin ito lubos na napakinabangan. Halimbawa, si Rowena Osal ay dumalo sa *tocino-making training* ng munispyo. Ngunit, pagkatapos nito ay wala namang ibinigay na tulong upang makapagsimula ng negosyo. Sa kaso ni Rowena, naging mahirap, kung hindi man imposible, na magsimula ng negosyo dahil wala silang kuryente at *refrigerator*, wala rin siyang kapital upang ipambili ng mga kailangang kasangkapan, at wala rin siyang kilalang *supplier* na mapagkukunan ng mga sangkap. Iba naman ang naging karanasan ni Abby. Sa karanasan niya, ang mga taong may koneksyon sa lokal na pamahalaan ay nakakatanggap ng maayos na *training* at ayuda sa paghahanap ng trabaho. Sabi niya, “ika nga nila, kapag malapit sa kaldero, madaling maulingan.”

Bagaman may panaka-nakang serbisyo, nanatiling hindi ito sapat, o batay sa karanasan ni Abby, ito ay natatanggap lamang ng iilan. Dahil dito, nanatili ang kahirapan sa Towerville sa kabila ng mga pangako ng pamahalaan at ng mga politiko. Kung tutuusin, kung pinakinggan lamang ng kinauukulan ang kalagayan at hinaing ng mga *relocatees* patungkol sa kanilang kabuhayan, maaring naging iba ang kinahinantan na sitwasyon sa Towerville. Kung akma lamang ang tugon ng pamahalaan, maaring

maging produktibo ang mga tao upang maitaguyod nang maayos ang kanilang pamilya at maging modelo sa ibang residente at pamayanan.

Sa puntong ito, dadako ang talakayan sa karanasan ng Igting sa pag-oorganisa. Kinakailangang tandaan na ang konteksto ng kahirapan, kakulangan ng serbisyo, at kawalan ng pag-aasa ang namamayaning sitwasyon na nakaapekto sa simulain ng gawaing pag-oorganisa sa mga miyembro ng Igting simula noong 2010.

### Simula ng pag-oorganisa at pagkamulat sa sitwasyon

Nagsimula ang kasaysayan ng pag-oorganisa ng Igting noong 2010 nang pumasok ang Center for Asian Mission for the Poor–Asia (CAMP) sa Towerville. Nagsimula ang CAMP bilang isang *faith-based organization* na nagpapamahagi ng “mabuting balita” ng Kristyanong pananampalataya. Bagaman nagsimula ang CAMP sa Tondo sa Maynila, ang *exposure* nito sa Towerville ay nagsilbi bilang isang mahalagang kaganapan para sa buhay ng NGO (*non-governmental organization*). Ang kahirapan sa Towerville ang nagtulak sa tagapagtatag ng CAMP na si Rev. Chulyong Lee na tumutok sa lugar upang makatulong sa mga mahihirap na *relocatees*. Nagsimula ang CAMP sa pamamagitan ng isang sarbey kung saan tinanong kung ano ang mga angkop na hanapbuhay para sa mga ina sa Towerville. Ayon sa resulta ng sarbey, lumabas na ang pananahi ang nakikita nilang pinakaangkop na hanapbuhay. Sa pamamagitan din ng sarbey, nakapagtala ng 40 na indibidwal na interesadong sumali sa *livelihood project* ng CAMP. Upang masimulan ang proyekto, kinailangang magkaroon ng *officers* ang unang nabuong grupo at nang naitalaga na ang mga lider, pinag-isipan kung ano ang magiging pangalan ng samahan, at doon nabuo ang pangalan ng grupo na United Towerville People’s Organization. Ang proyekto ay nagsimula noong Hulyo 15, 2011 sa isang *training* ng pananahi. Kinailangang mag-aral ang grupo sa loob ng apat na buwan. Kumuha ang CAMP ng isang *trainer* mula sa Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) upang magturo ng kaalaman sa pananahi sa mga nanay ng Towerville. Sa unang buwan ng pag-aaral ng grupo, nagulat ang lahat na may matatanggap ang bawat isa sa kanila na kaunting ayudang *grocery items*. Dahil dito, lalong nagsigasig ang mga miyembro. Sa patuloy na pagtakbo ng *training*, ang iba ay naging masigasig sa pag-aaral ng pananahi ngunit ang iba naman ay nakatuon lang ang pansin sa nakukuhang ayuda. Dumating ang takdang panahon ng pagtatapos ng kanilang pag-aaral noong Nobyembre 2011, at noong Disyembre 2011, ginanap ang kanilang *graduation day*, kung saan nagtahi ang bawat isang *trainee* ng mga damit na ipinakita sa pamamagitan ng isang *fashion show*. Nagkaroon din ng pagbibigay ng National Certificate II (NC II) mula sa TESDA sa araw na ito. Nang matapos ang *graduation*, dito na nagkaroon ng katanungan ang bawat isa. “Ano na ngayon ang mangyayari sa atin ngayong tapos na ang *training* natin?” banggit ni Daisy, isa sa mga gradweyt ng *training*. Sagot naman ni Ate Weng, “Tiwala lang, siguro naman may mabuting kahihinatnan ang *training* na ito. Ito nga may NC II certificate na nga tayo, ngayon pa ba tayo panghahinaan ng loob?” Sagot naman ni Ate Terry, “Oo nga naman.” Susog naman ni Ate Weng, “Siguro naman ang *training* na ito ay hindi matutulad sa mga unang *training* sa atin na nasalihan, tulad ng *tocino-making*, *soap-making*, *longganisa-making*, at iba pa. Paano tayo lalago kung wala naming sapat na ayuda?”

Makalipas ang isang linggo, nagkaroon ng pagpupulong ang grupo at ang CAMP. At sa pagpupulong na ito, sinabi ng CAMP na ang grupo ay magpapatakbo ng negosyo. “Anong negosyo po?” tanong ng isang *officer*. “Edi siyempre tahian, kaya nga kayo dinan sa masusing pag-*training* upang matutong manahi,” sabi ng CAMP. Nang marinig ito ng grupo, nagkaroon ng kislap ng pag-asa sa kanilang mga mata. May pag-asa nang magkakaroon ng hanapbuhay ang mga residente ng Towerville. Unang sumabak sa produksyon ang grupo noong Enero 2012. Sa simula ay nagtalaga ng *production supervisor*, *cutter*, at *purchaser* sa patahian sa Towerville. Sa unang dalawang buwan ng produksyon, walang natatagong sahod ang grupo at dahil dito, agad na pinanghinaan ng loob ang ilan nilang mga kasapi. Mula sa 40 indibidwal na natanggap sa *training*, dalawampu lang ang nagtiyagang

manatili, dahil ang iba ay ayudang *grocery items* lamang ang hangad mula sa *training* at walang tiyaga sa paghahanapbuhay. Ang iba naman ay talagang hangad ang magkaroon ng hanapbuhay. At dahil dalawampu na lang ang natira sa grupo, kinailangang maming muli ng panibagong *officers* at dito na rin nila binago ang pangalan ng samahan na tinatawag na ngayong Ma-Igting na Samahan ng mga Panlipunang Negosyante ng Towerville, Inc.

Sumapit ang pangalawang buwan at inayos ang *honorarium* ng mga miyembro. Napagpasyahan ng *officers, supervisors*, at ng CAMP na tatanggap ang bawat miyembro ng Php 150 na *daily rate* para sa walong oras na pananahi. At sa pagpapatuloy ng produksyon ay hindi naman sila nagpabaya. Isang beses ay mayroong kliyenteng ni-rekomenda sa patahian at nagpapasadya ng mga *T-shirt*. Dahil dito, kinailangang magkaroon ng sariling *label* o etiketa ang patahian na ilalagay sa likod ng itatahing mga *T-shirt*. Dahil nga Korean NGO ang katuwang ng grupo, at sa panahong ito ay wala pang kakayahang magdesisyon ang grupo, nakaaasa lang ang Igting sa katuwang na NGO. Kasabay nito ay may isang *event* na magaganap sa Korea, kaya napagdesisyunang doon ipagawa ang *label*. Pumunta doon ang CAMP kasama ang isang miyembro na kinatawan ng samahan at doon ay pinag-usapan nila kung ano ang magiging pangalan sa *label* ng Ma-Igting na Samahan ng mga Panlipunang Negosyante ng Towerville, Inc. at nagpagdesisyunan ang pangalang IGTING. Kaalinsabay din nito ang pagsasaayos o pagpaparehistro ng samahan sa Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Bagaman malaking tagumpay ang pagrerehistro sa SEC at pagbibigay-ngalan sa samahan, patuloy na nangangapa ang samahan sa pagpapatakbo ng negosyo. Hindi naging sapat ang apat na buwan na pagsasanay upang maging bihasa sa pananahi at pagnenegosyo. Naging masyadong magulo ang simula ng pagnenegosyo at hindi maiwasan ang araw-araw na kaguluhan, ika nga ay parang sumasabay lang sa daloy ng tubig ang mga miyembro ng Igting. Bukod dito, naging mahirap din ang pananatili ng pagkakaisa ng mga kasapi. Marahil ito ay dahil sa iba-ibang ugali at pinanggalingan ng mga kasapi na ngayon lang nagkaroon ng pagkakataon upang magsama-sama sa iisang lugar at mapabilang sa samahan. Ngunit naging mas masidhi pa rin ang hangarin ng bawat kasapi na pagtagumpayan ang hanapbuhay na ito.

Bukod sa CAMP, isa sa mga naging katuwang ng Igting ay ang College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) ng University of the Philippines (UP). Sa pamamagitan ng Field Instruction Program (FIP) nito, nagpapadala ng mga mag-aaral upang makipamuhay at makipagtuwangan sa pagpapaunlad ng Igting. Isa sa mga naging layunin ng FIP ay ang pagpapayaman ng kaalaman at kasanayan patungkol sa usapin ng samahan at *social enterprise*. Nakapaloob sa proseso ng pagpapayaman ay ang iba't ibang pagsasanay o *trainings* at mga mapanlahok na gawain.

Sa umpisa ng pagkikipagtuwangan sa FIP, nahirapan ang mga miyembro ng Igting na maunawaan ang mga salita o termino na may kinalaman sa pagbubuo ng samahan. Marahil, ito ay dahil sa karamihan ng mga kasapi ay walang karanasan ng pag-anib sa isang samahan. Dahil dito, naging madalas ang pagpupulong sa patungkol dito. Nagsimula ang pagpupulong sa mga simpleng kwentuhan patungkol sa pamilya, mga hamon sa buhay, mga karanasan bilang miyembro ng Igting, at plano upang mapaunlad ang samahan. Ngunit hindi lahat ng miyembro ay nauunawaan ang prosesong pinapanukala ng FIP. Tanong nga noon ni Terry, “Bakit may mga estudyante... ano ang pakay nila dito?” Sagot naman ni Daisy, “Baka mga espiya!” Sabi naman ni Olive, “Bahala na kung ano ang pakay nila... mahalaga may trabaho [tayo].”

Upang mapawi ang mga agam-agam at mas mapalalim ang pagkakaunawa sa mga layunin ng FIP, sinikap ng mga estudyante na makipamuhay sa mga miyembro ng Igting. Isinagawa ito sa pamamagitan ng pakikitulog sa bawat tahanan ng mga miyembro upang makilala ang kananayan ng Igting at ang mga pamilya nila. Umikot ang mga estudyante sa halos lahat ng mga miyembro. Pinalahok naman ng mga kananayan ang mga estudyante sa mga gawaing bahay tulad ng pagluluto, pag-aalaga sa kanilang

mga anak, at pagtulong sa mga takdang-aralin nito. Sinikap ng paglubog na ito na mas maunawaan pa nang lubos ang katayuan ng mga kasapi ng Igting, mapa-personal man o pang-organisasyon na usapin. Ito ay hindi lamang para makabuo ng matatag na relasyon sa mga kananayan, kundi masigurado na ang mapanlahok na prosesong kanilang ipapanukala ay akma at may kabuluhan.

Kasabay ng paglubog sa buhay ng mga miyembro ng Igting ang mga malimit na pagpupulong patungkol sa usapin sa loob ng samahan (tulad ng ugali ng ibang mga miyembro), usaping pampamilya, at mga hamong kinakaharap sa buhay. Nagkaroon din ng iba't ibang mga *orientation* at *workshop* tungkol sa pagbubuo at pangangasiwa ng isang samahan at negosyo. Inilunsad din ang iba't ibang lakbay-aral sa mga mas abanteng mga samahan tulad upang matuto sa kanilang karanasan. Hindi natatapos ang linggo na walang pagpupulong kung saan patuloy na pinaguusapan ang mga gampanin at responsibilidad ng bawat isa. Mula sa mga pagpupulong na ito ay unti-unting nagkahugis ang Igting bilang isang organisasyon.

Marahil isa sa mga susing kontribusyon ng FIP sa Igting ay ang pagbubuo ng mga kumite. Noong una, akala ng mga nanay ay laro-laro lamang ito. Ito ay dahil sa ang prosesong pinagdaanan ng mga miyembro upang mabuo ang mga kumite ay sa pamamagitan ng mga *creative workshops*. Sa isang pagpupulong, gumawa ng mga bilog ang mga estudyante na nagsisimbulo ng mga kumite. Pagkatapos ipaliwanag ang mga gampanin ng bawat kumite, hiniling ng mga estudyante na tumalon ang mga kasapi kung saang bilog nila gusto mapunta. Dahil akala ng mga nanay na laro-laro lamang ito, ang ilan ay tumalon sa mga bilog na hindi nila namamalayan na sila ay pumapasok sa isang kumite. Sa yugtong ito, masasabi na hindi pa lubos na naiintindihan ng mga kasapi ang kanilang ginagawa. Ang kakulangan na ito ay makikita sa problema ng Igting sa kanilang suplay ng mga materyales. Dahil hindi lubos ang pagkakaunawa at paggampan sa gawain ng kumite, tulad ng *marketing*, naging malaking suliranin ang suplay ng materyales at paghahanap ng mga kliyente. Sa huli, naging malaki ang epekto nito sa kanilang kita bilang isang samahan. Dahil hindi malaki ang kita ng samahan, marami ang pinanghinaan ng loob. Ngunit, nagbigay ang ayuda ang CAMP upang makatanggap ng *daily rate* ang bawat miyembro na Php 150 kada araw.

Ang pakikisangkot ng CAMP ay hindi lamang limitado sa pagbibigay ng ayuda sa sweldo ng mga miyembro ng Igting. Sa kabuuan, hawak ng CAMP ang pamamahala sa patahian. Dahil dito, kahit na may gawain o tungkulin ang mga kasapi, takot sila na gumawa ng desisyon para sa kanilang sarili o para sa samahan. Samakatwid, nagpaubaya ang mga miyembro sa CAMP dahil hawak nila ang pinansya at itinuturing nila ang kanilang mga sarili bilang baguhan sa pagnenegosyo. Sa panahong ito, masasabi na mahina ang kolektibong pamumuno sa samahan at hindi aktibo ang karamihan sa mga miyembro. Ang pinansyal na ayuda ng CAMP ay nagdulot din ng pagiging palaasa ng ibang mga miyembro at kawalan ng pakialam sa patahian dahil may tatanggapin pa rin silang kita anuman ang mangyari.

Kung titingnan ang nakaraan, napakalaking pagkakamali ang sistemang ito dahil nagdulot ito ng maling motibasyon para sa mga kasapi ng Igting. Lumalabas na ang motibasyon ng ibang miyembro ay kita at hindi ang pag-unlad ng samahan at negosyo. Dahil dito, naging magulo ang grupo; madalang ang araw na walang nag-aaway. Saksi dito si Rowena na tumatayong *production supervisor* ng samahan. Malimit na ang pag-aaway ay tungkol sa kalidad ng mga produkto. Bilang *production supervisor*, si Rowena ang nagpupuna ng mga gawa ng mga miyembro. Ang pagpupuna na ito ay madalas na hindi maluwag na tinatanggap ng ilang mga miyembro. Kaya naman, nakaramdam ng labis na hirap si Rowena na dumating sa punto na gusto na niyang sumuko. Kaya naman, para sa ilan, mukhang nagkakatotoo ang obserbasyon na bibihra lamang ang mga nagtatagumpay na negosyo na pinapatupad ng isang samahan. Gayunpaman, para sa ilang mga miyembro, kinailangan na lamang nila tibayan ang kanilang loob upang pasibulin ang hanapbuhay nila.



**LARAWAN 1.2** • Ang mga kasapi ng Igting ay nakikinig sa tagapagsalita sa isang aktibidad na kanilang dinaluhan (Larawan mula sa Facebook page ng Igting Towerville)

Ganito ang naging sitwasyon ng Igting mula taong 2012 hanggang 2013: mababaw ang pagkakaunawa sa layunin ng samahan, hindi pantay-pantay ang paggampan sa mga gawain, mayroong kawalan ng partisipasyon ang mga miyembro (hal. kanya-kanyang trabaho lamang), at malimit ang hindi pagkakaintindihan sa pagitan ng mga miyembro. Gayunpaman, hindi sumuko ang ilang mga miyembro. Kasabay nito, nagpatuloy din ang mga pagsasanay at *workshops* upang paunlarin, hindi lamang ang negosyo, kundi pati na rin ang samahan. Sa mga sumunod na proseso, nabuo ang mga *vision*, *mission*, at *goals* (VMGs) ng Igting. Nakita ng mga miyembro na ang mga ito ay maaring makatulong sa pagbubuo at pagpapatatag ng relasyon ng bawat isa sa pamamagitan ng paglalagat ng mga hangaring pinagkaisahan.

### Pagpapalago ng kasanayan at kamalayan

Kung tutuusin, ang karamihan sa mga sangkap upang magkaroon ng maunlad at masiglang *social enterprise* ay mayroon ang Igting. Gayunpaman, malaki pa rin ang mga pagkukulang. Isa sa mga nakita ng samahan ay kinakailangan ng puspusang *capacity building*, di lamang sa mga lider kundi pati na rin sa mga miyembro ng Igting. Ang layunin ng *capacity building* ay hindi lamang upang mapaunlad ang mga indibidwal na *skills* o kakayahan, kundi para hikayatin ang samahan na panindigan ang mga desisyon nito. Sa huli, nais ng Igting na tumindig sa kanilang sariling paa at na maging responsible sa kanya-kanyang gampanin ang mga miyembro nito nang hindi kinakalimutan ang samahan.

Naging dalawa ang pokus ng mga *capacity building activities* ng Igting: pagpapaunlad ng negosyo at ng samahan. Sa usapin ng negosyo, nagkaroon ng pagsasanay sa *social enterprise*, *business management*, paggawa ng mahusay na *business model*, pangangasiwa ng *human resources*, *marketing* at *product development*, pamamahala ng pinansya, at *quality control*. May mga natatangi ring paksa tulad ng *waste management*. Ang mga pagsasanay na ito ay isinagawa sa pamamagitan ng pakikipagtuwangan sa iba't ibang institusyon tulad ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Institute of Small Scale Industries (ISSI) ng UP, at iba pang mga eksperto sa larangan ng pagnenegosyo. Ang pakikipagtuwangan

sa mga institusyon at mga indibidwal na ito ay pinasinayaan ng CAMP. Bukod sa mga nabanggit na pagsasanay na may kinalaman sa negosyo o produksyon, nagsagawa rin ang Training Committee ng Igting ng mga pagsasanay sa mga batayang *skills* o kasanayan na kinakailangan sa pananahi tulad ng *cutting, advanced pattern making, weaving, at basic at advanced machine maintenance*.

Sa bahagi naman ng usapin ng pagpapaunlad ng samahan, naging pangunahing katuwang ng Igting ang FIP. Sa pagpapadalo ng FIP, nagsagawa ng iba't ibang pagsasanay at workshops patungkol sa *values formation, community organizing, community development, social enterprise, gender sensitivity, violence against women and children, at team building*. Nakipag-uganayan din ang Igting, sa pamamagitan ng CAMP, sa lokal na pamahalaan ng San Jose del Monte upang magsagawa ng *orientation* patungkol sa pagkokooperatiba. Kasabay nito, nagpatuloy din ang mga lakbay-aral sa iba't ibang *social enterprise* at kooperatiba tulad ng NOVADECI at Pinagbuklod Multi-Purpose Cooperative. Sa pamamagitan ng mga lakbay-aral, nagkaroon ng pagbabahaginan ng karanasan tungkol sa mga naging hamon ng samahan at mga potensyal na solusyon. Nagkaroon din ng mga lakbay-aral sa ibang mga patahian upang matuto ng mga epektibong sistema at proseso ng produksyon lalo na sa usapin ng *quality control, fabric cutting, at fabric waste management*.

Ang pakikipagtuwangan sa mga institusyon at mga indibidwal ay hindi lamang para sa *capacity building*, ito rin ay isinagawa para sa *networking* o pakikipag-ugnayan. Isinagawa ito upang mapalawak ang *access* ng samahan sa mga oportunidad na maaring makatulong sa kanilang produksyon, samahan, at mga produkto. Halimbawa, ang pakikipagtuwangan sa DTI noong taong 2017 ay nagsilbing daan upang makabahagi ang samahan sa One Town, One Product (OTOP) Program ng nasabing ahensya. Sa OTOP, nagtalaga ang DTI ng mga *designers* upang tulungan ang Igting na magdisenyo ng kanilang sariling produkto. Nakasali rin ang Igting sa Kapatid Mentor ME (KMME), na programa din ng DTI, noong 2018. Ang programa na ito ay nagbibigay ng libreng *business training seminars* para sa mga maliliit na negosyo.

Malaki ang naging tulong ng mga kasanayan at gawaing nabanggit sa bawat miyembro ng Igting. Ngunit hindi naging mabilis ang pagbabago. Marahil ito ay dahil sa iba-iba ang mga naging *trainer* at *speaker*. May mga paksa din na magulo sa umpisa at kinailangan pa ang tuloy-tuloy na *training* at *orientation* upang lubusang maunawaan ang mga ideya tulad ng kung ano nga ba ang isang *social enterprise*. Nagdulot din ng hindi pagkakaunawaan ang hindi pagdalo ng ilang mga miyembro sa mga mga naturang aktibidad. Matingkad ito sa mga pag-unawa sa prinsipyong gumagabay sa pagbubuo ng samahan. Nakatulong din ang pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga institusyon at mga indibidwal sa pagpapalawak ng *access* sa mga iba pang uri ng pagsasanay. Ang mga internal na pagsasanay naman ay nakaambag din hindi lamang sa pagpapaunlad ng kasanayan, kundi pati na rin sa kumpiyansa sa sarili at ugnayan ng bawat miyembro sa isa't isa.

Sa kabuuan, ang lahat ng mga natutunan ng mga miyembro ang siyang naging tungtungan at batayan ng Igting sa pag-aayos nito ng sistema at proseso. Para sa Igting, ang pinakamahalagang natutunan ng mga miyembro ay ang pagbubukas ng pang-unawa patungkol sa isyu ng lipunan tulad ng kawalan ng mga batayang serbisyo at hanapbuhay ng mga mahihirap sa komunidad. Namulat din ang mga miyembro sa kahalagahan ng karapatang pantao at ang importansya ng hindi pag-asa sa tulong ng ibang tao at pagtindig sa sariling paa. Sa mas pagpapalalim ng pag-unawa sa mga isyung ito, natututo ang mga miyembro na rumespeto ng kapwa at makiisa para sa pagbabago. Natutunan din ng mga miyembro na kaya nilang makialam sa mga usaping nakakaapekto sa kanila upang maitama ang mga mali at kung paano magpakatao. Sa huli, mas naunawaan ng mga miyembro ang tunay na kahalagahan ng isang samahan na may pinapatakpong panlipunang negosyo na may pakialam sa pagpapaunlad ng komunidad.

## Pagbangon at pagharap sa hamon

Noong 2014, dumating ang pinakamatinding pagsubok sa Igting. Sa isang pagpupulong, ibinalita ng CAMP na matatapos na ang *funding* na sumusuporta sa Igting. Sa kabila ng masamang balita, nangako naman ang CAMP na ipagpapatuloy pa rin nila ang pagtulong sa samahan, ngunit sa ibang mga bagay. Sa madaling salita, bagaman mananatili ang pagsubaybay ng CAMP, ubos na ang pera na pangtustos sa Igting. Kinakailangan nang tumayo ng samahan sa sarili nitong paa; nakasalalay na sa Igting ang kalakhan ng pagdedesiyon, lalo na ang pamamaraan upang mapagpatuloy ang negosyo. Ngunit bago tuluyang bitawan ang Igting, binigyan ng CAMP ang samahan ng paunang pondo na Php 450,000. Bukod dito, patuloy na pinagamit ng CAMP ang *sewing center*.

Ang kaganapan na ito ay hindi madaling tanggapin. Ayon sa ilang mga miyembro, “Kapag nagkakaran kami ng pagpupulong kasama ang CAMP, ang sabi ay ‘*we are all family*’... may tatay, nanay, anak, apo, at iba pa... saan banda ang Igting sa sinasabi nitong *family*?”. Samakatwid, may pakiramdam ang mga miyembro ng pagkabigo. Ito ay marahil dahil sa pagkakaintindi ng iba na magkatuwang ang CAMP at Igting sa mga proyekto. Ang iba naman ay naniniwala na hindi naman binigo ng Igting ang CAMP, lalo na kung “magbababa” ito ng proyekto. Nariyan din ang isyu ng *sewing center*. Ang *sewing center* ay itinatag gamit ang pondo mula sa mga *donors* at ito ay itinayo sa loob ng *compound* ng CAMP sa Towerville. Bagaman ang *sewing center* ay itinayo para sa kananayan ng Igting, hindi naging malinaw ang isyu ng pagmamay-ari nito dahil ito ay nakatayo sa lupaing pagmamay-ari ng CAMP. Gayunpaman, sa puntong ito ng buhay ng Igting, hindi ito ang pinakamatinding isyu. Ang pinakamatinding isyu ay ang pagkawala ng pondo na sumusuporta sa Igting. Gayunpaman, makikita sa huli na muling lalabas ang usapin na ito.

Ang isa sa mga pangunahing paksa ng mga usapin dahil sa sitwasyon na ito ay ang suweldo ng mga kasapi. Samakatwid, ang usaping ito ay tungkol sa kung papaano gagamitin ang paunang pondo. Ngunit ang mga pagpupulong na ito ay nagdulot ng kaguluhan dahil hindi pa lubos na naunawaan ng mga miyembro ang tamang sistema ng pagpapasahod. Kinalaunan, napagdesisyunan na ang sweldo ng bawat miyembro ay Php 180 kada araw kung maabot ang hindi bababa sa 80 porsyento ng *quota*. Gayunpaman, tatlong buwan lang ang itinagal ng paunang puhunan. Ayon kay Myrna, lumalabas na ang plano na panatilihin ng arawan na sweldo at pagbibigay ng sahod kahit 80 porsyento lamang ang nagawa ay hindi napag-isipan nang mabuti. Dahil dito, naging kritikal na ang sitwasyon ng negosyo; ito ay naghihingalo sa puntong ito. Ang sitwasyon na ito ay nagbunsod ng mga serye ng pagpupulong kung saan pinagusapan ang mangyayari sa Igting. Isa sa malalaking tanong ay: Hahayaan na lamang bang mawala ang hanapbuhay? Marami ang nalungkot sa sitwasyon. Ang iba ay napaiyak. Bagaman kritikal ang sitwasyon, naging matatag ang mga miyembro at nagdesisyon silang baguhin ang sistema ng pasuweldo. Mula sa pagiging arawan o *daily rate*, gagawin nila itong *per piece rate* o kada piraso.

Dahil sa desisyon na ito, maraming miyembro ang umalis. Ang katwiran nila, “Kung kikita lamang ng Php 100 isang araw, mas maganda na umupo na lamang sa bahay.” Ayon naman kay Racel, ang iba ay tumigil dahil inakala nila na tapos na ang paggawa dahil wala nang suporta mula sa CAMP. Kwento ni Glo, “Kaunti na lang ang pumapasok, nangangapa ang lahat kung paano makakarami sa paggawa.” Sa kabuuan, malalim ang agam-agam ng mga miyembro: Tatagal ba ang Igting? Ngunit dahil sa hamon na ito, nagising sa katotohanan ang Igting—o ang mga natirang mga miyembro nito. Kailangan nilang gawin ang lahat ng paraan upang mabuhay at umangat ulit ang samahan; kinakailangan ng stratehiya at plano. Nakita ng mga miyembro na kailangan pang ipatimo ang kahalagahan ng samahan at partisipasyon ng bawat isa.

Mula noong 2014 hanggang 2015, naging sunod-sunod ang mga tinatawag ng Igting na *empowerment workshops*. Pinasinayaan ito ng Training Committee ng Igting kasama ang FIP. Sa

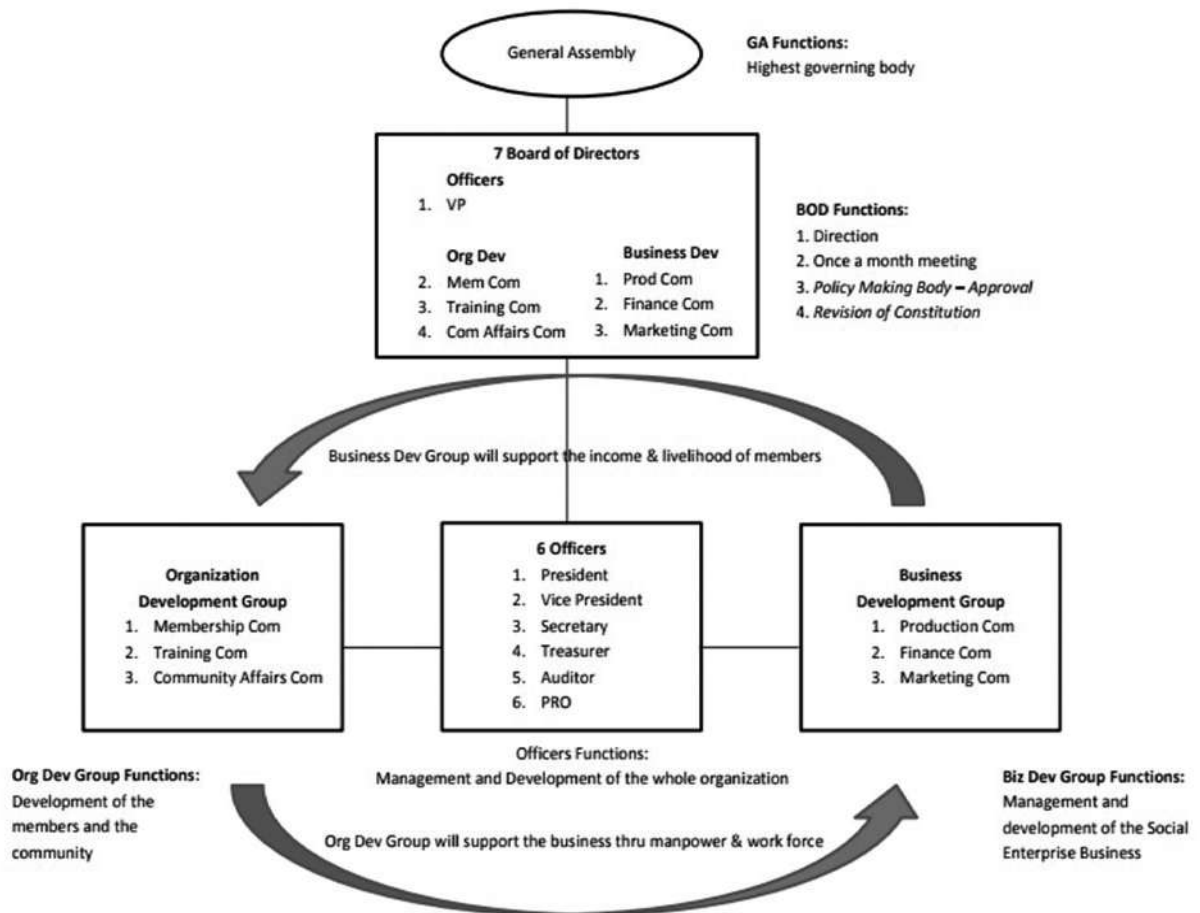
loob ng dalawang buwan, napakaraming *empowerment workshops* ang isinagawa. Gayunpaman, nanatili pa rin ang isyu ng kawalan ng partisipasyon sa ilan ng mga miyembro. Sabi nila, “Kayo na lang diyan, magtrabaho na lang kami dito para may mapala.” Ngunit hindi nagpahatak ang kalakhan sa mga miyembrong ayaw sumali. Tuwing Lunes, mula 8:00 ng umaga hanggang 12:00 ng tanghali, ang mga *workshop*. Bago magsimula ang *workshop*, kailangang magpakilala ng lahat ng kasapi. Ang mga pamamaraan na ginamit sa mga workshop ay maituturing na *creative* at maituturing na mga laro. Ngunit para sa Igting, napakalalim ng mga aral at ng ibig sabihin ng mga ito tungkol sa katayuan ng isang samahan. Pagkatapos ng mga laro, mag-uusap-usap ang mga miyembro upang suriin kung ano ang kaugnayan nito sa kanilang mga gawain sa Igting. Isinusulat ang mga aral na ito sa mga *metacards* tulad ng mga sanhi ng problema, solusyon, at mga aral na tumimo sa bawat *activity*. Ang bawat *workshop* ay nagtatapos sa pamamagitan ng sabay-sabay na pagkain ng tanghalian.

Pagkatapos ng dalawang buwan, nagkaroon ng *evaluation* ang grupo. Sinuri ng mga miyembro ang naging epekto ng mga *workshop*. At sa kabuuan, naging malaking tulong ito, lalo na sa pagbubukas ng pang-unawa ng lahat. Isa sa mga matitingkad na aral ay ang kahalagahan ng pagkakaisa. Ayon nga kay Racel, “Kailangan ng mas malalim na pagkakaisa... sapagkat napakalaking tulong ng hanapbuhay na ito sa pamilya.” Ang iba naman ay nakita ang pag-unlad sa sarili. Sabi ni Tess, “Natuto akong makipag-usap sa ibang tao nang maayos.” Si Gloria Gerardo naman ay kinakitaan ng pagbabago sa sarili. Sabi niya, “Dati mapagmataas ako, ngunit natuto namang magbago. Hindi mabubuo ang samahan kung may maninira. Kailangan pangalagaan ang trabaho kahit kaunti lang ang sahod.” Ang iba naman tulad ni Nelia ay binigyan ng halaga ang pagkatuto sa karanasan ng iba at ng sarili. Ika niya, “Huwag gayahin ang maling gawain ng iba. Patuloy dapat ang paalala ng layunin ng Igting sa mga miyembro.” Ang iba ay binigyang-diin ang sakripisyo at dedikasyon. Sabi nga ni Gloria Artigo, “Dapat maging masipag, matiyaga, may dedikasyon sa trabaho, makisama sa iba, at habaan ang pasensya. Kailangan ayusin nang sama-sama ang Igting. ‘Pag may problema, kailangang bigyan ng solusyon.’” Sinusugan naman ito ni Rose Gabriel. Sabi niya, “[Kailangang] matuto tayo magsakripisyo. Dahil sa Igting, naalagaan ko pa rin ang aking mga anak at malapit pa rin sa pamilya.” Kasama ng sakripisyo ay ang aral na kailangang palawakin ang pang-unawa. Sabi ni Myrna, “Kailangan ng pag-unawa sa mga miyembro, pagsasaayos kaagad ng *conflict*, pakikiisa at pakikisalamuha, pagkakaroon ng *special meeting* kung saan nalalarawan ng lahat ang mga *updates*, at pagkakaroon ng *team building*.” Sa huli, nagkaisa ang lahat na hindi magtatagumpay ang Igting kung hindi magkakasamang kumilos ang mga miyembro nito. Sabi nga ni Abby, “Sama-sama dapat ang pagkilos, sama-samang aangat hindi lang ang sarili, dapat lahat kasama sa Towerville ayon sa VMG ng Igting. Kailangan hatakin ang lahat pataas.”

Kasabay ng mga *workshop* ang pagtutok sa istraktura ng samahan. Nagkaroon ng masusing pagpupulong ang mga *officers*, *board of directors*, at *business development group*. Masusing pinag-usapan ang mga gampanin ng bawat isa, lalo na ang pagsama ng mga *officers* sa mga prosesong may kaugnayan sa negosyo. Dati kasi ay lumalabas na ang mga *officers* ay parang pang-*display* lamang. Upang mas makatulong sa samahan, minabuti ng mga *officers* na paigtingin ang kanilang mga gampanin sa negosyo.

Sa pagpapaunlad ng istraktura, pinagtuunan din ng pansin ang mga kumite at mas pinalinaw ang kanilang mga gampanin. Halimbawa, sa panibagong kaayusan, ang *membership committee* ang tututok sa mga pagpapatupad ng mga polisiya sa loob ng patahian. Kasama dito ang pagmo-*monitor* ng mga pagliban at pagiging tagapamagitan sa tuwing may hindi pagkakaunawaan. Ang *community affairs committee* naman ang tututok sa mga gawain na may kinalaman sa komunidad tulad ng mga *gift-giving activities* at pag-intindi sa mga bisita (tulad ng mga Koreyano). Ang *training committee* naman ang nagsasaliksik ng mga iba’t ibang oportunidad na may kinalaman sa pagpapaunlad ng mga teknikal na kasanayan tulad ng mga *training* sa negosyo o *business development*. Ang *marketing committee* ang patuloy na magtitiyaga sa *pagne-network* at paghahanap ng mga kliyente. Habang ang *product*





LARAWAN 1.3 • Ang istrukturang pang-organisasyon ng Igting

*development committee* naman ang tututok sa pagpapaunlad ng sariling produkto ng samahan na maaring ibenta sa labas.

Nirepaso din ang kabuuang sistema sa patahian. Nagtalaga ng tagatala ng imbentaryo upang maging maayos ang *monitoring* ng paglabas at pagpasok ng mga produkto tulad ng mga materyales sa pamamagitan ng *subcontracting*. Mahalaga ito upang matiyak na kumpleto ang bilang ng materyales at maiwasan ang kakulangan ng materyales. Nagtalaga rin ng *stock room personnel* upang mabantayan ang paglabas at pagpasok ng mga sariling produkto ng Igting tulad ng mga uniporme, *t-shirts*, mga bag, at iba pa. Kasama din dito ang pagsubaybay sa mga materyales tulad ng mga tela, karayom, sinulid, butones, *garter*, at iba pa. Ang pinaigting na *monitoring* ng samahan ay isinagawa hindi lamang para maayos ang sistema, kundi para din maiwasan ang sobra-sobrang gastos dahil sa pagkasayang ng mga materyales, lalo na sa mga tela.

Kasabay ng pagsasaayos ng sistema ay ang pagpapatuloy ng *skills development* na pinangunahan ng *training committee*. Ilan sa mga pagsasanay na kanilang hinatid ay ang *advanced pattern making*. Ito ay upang masigurado na tama ang sukat ng mga materyales at mabawasan ang aksaya. Nagkaroon din ng pagsasanay sa *cutting* upang mas umunlad ang mga teknik sa paggupit ng tela upang maiwasan ang pagkasira nito at upang malaman ng sukat kada latag. Pinaigting din ang kooperasyon sa pagitan ng *pattern maker*, *production supervisor*, at *cutting head* upang mas maging mahusay ang kalidad ng mga gawa.

Pagdating naman sa linya ng pagtatahi, binigyang diin ang sipag at tiyaga upang makarami ng magagawa. Katuwang dito ang mga *line leader* at *production supervisor*. Sa pagrerepaso ng sistema, sinigurado na ang proseso ng produksyon ang magluluwal ng mga kalidad ng produkto sa loob ng tamang panahon. Sinigurado na hindi na kinakailangan na humingi ng gawa ang mga mananahi. Kinakailangan ito ang masusing monitoring ng *line leader* at *production supervisor* upang siguraduhing tuloy-tuloy ang gawa at dekalidad ang mga ito.

Sa lahat ng mga pagbabagong ito, naging mas mabuti at maayos ang sistema ng produksyon sa patahian. Upang mapanatili ang kita ng samahan, nagtakda ang samahan ng *target* na Php 100,000. Naging trabaho ng *marketing committee* dito ang siguraduhin na tuloy-tuloy ang pagpasok ng mga gagawin at mga kliyente, sa tamang presyo. Habang naging gampanin naman ng mga nasa produksyon na abutin ang mga *target* na ito. Sa usapin naman ng pinansiya, pinaigting ang tulungan ng *auditor*, *treasurer*, at *finance administrator* ng Igting. Bago ang 2014, nag-iisa lang ang taong nakatoka sa *finance committee*. At sa patuloy na koordinasyon ng mga kumite at opisyal ng samahan, mas naging maayos ang kalakaran ng negosyo.

Unti-unti nagbunga ang pagsisikap ng mga miyembro ng Igting at napansin din ito ng iba. Halimbawa, napansin ang Igting ng City Cooperative Development Office (CCDO) noong 2018. Dahil dito, nagkaroon ng pagkakataon ang Igting na ipamalal ang kanilang produkto sa Starmall Pasalubong Center. Kinalaunan, naipamalal din ang produkto ng samahan sa iba't ibang *consignment stores* tulad ng DTI Go Lokal Store sa Makati at NAIA Terminal 3 at sa Islas Pinas sa Double Dragon Plaza. Nagbunsod din ito ng patuloy na imbitasyon sa mga pagsasanay sa *business management*, *financial management*, at *basic costing and accounting training for non-accountants* mula sa DTI.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang kalagayan ng Igting ay mas maayos kumpara noong nagsisimula pa lamang ito. Mas nagkaroon ng paninindigan ang miyembro sa kanilang *tasking*, sa pakikiisa, at higit sa lahat, sa pagdedesiyon. Mas pinaigting ang pagiging responsable ng mga *officers*. Katuwang ang *membership committee*, mas pinagtuunan ang pagpapaangat ng disiplina ng mga miyembro. Pagdating naman sa negosyo, patuloy na pinanghahawakan ng *production team* ang *accountability* sa negosyo, katuwang ang *marketing* at *finance committee*. Nakatulong din ang mga *trainings* upang mas lumalim ang kaalaman ng mga kasapi.

Ngunit hindi pa rin sinasabi ng Igting na perpekto na ang lahat. Sa araw-araw, patuloy pa rin ang mga pagsubok na kinakaharap ng samahan. Ngunit hindi ito magpapadaig sa lahat ng mga pagsubok. Sabihin man nating mga simpleng nanay lang ang karamihan ng mga miyembro ng Igting at na hindi talaga sila propesyonal pagdating sa pagpapatakbo ng isang negosyo, ang tuloy-tuloy na karanasan at pagsusumikap naman ang humuhubog sa bawat isa sa kanila. Sa ngayon, nais ng Igting na tumulong sa mga mamamayan sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng oportunidad sa paghahanapbuhay. Kaya naman inilunsad ang tinagurian nilang *home-based sewing project*, katuwang pa rin ang CAMP. Layunin nito na mabigyan ang mga kananayan na malimit ay nasa bahay lamang ng *access* sa hanapbuhay. Balak din ng Igting na ipagpatuloy ang paglago nito sa pamamagitan ng pagbubuo ng kooperatiba. Sa pamamagitan nito ay magkakaroon ng sariling kita ang bawat miyembro bawat taon. Minabuti ng mga miyembro ng Igting na seryosohin ang pagkokooperatiba dahil walang kasiguruhan kung tuluyang ibibigay ng CAMP ang patahian sa Igting.

### Ang paninindigan sa samahan at *social enterprise*

Sa yugtong ito, nailahad na ang kwento ng pag-oorganisa at pagnenegosyo ng Igting. Ano-ano ang mga aral na maaring matutunan dito na marahil ay makakatulong sa mga samahan at *social enterprise* na

nasa parehong sitwasyon? Para sa mga miyembro ng Igting, may tatlong larangan na maaring kapulutan ng matitinding aral. Ito ay may kinalaman sa pakikisalamuha sa mga tao, kahalagahan ng isang matatag na samahan, at pagnenegosyo.

Pakikisalamuha sa mga tao

Hindi naging madali ang proseso ang pinagdaanan ng Igting sa larangan ng pag-oorganisa. Marahil ito ay may kinalaman sa katangian ng komunidad na nabuo sa Towerville, kung saan ang mga residente ay nagmula sa iba't ibang lugar na may kanya-kanyang ugali at paniniwala. Kasama ang napakahirap na buhay sa Towerville, naging sanhi ito upang magkawatak-watak, hindi lamang ang mga pamilya, kundi ang pamayanan. Dahil dito, napakahirap makabuo ng pagkakaisa, lalo na ang paglahok dahil sa kawalan ng tiwala at sa pangangailangang dumiskarte upang mabuhay. Ito ay nagdulot sa iba na maging palaasa sa pagtanggap ng mabilisang tulong o benipisyo mula sa iba. Kitang-kita ito sa karanasan ng Igting. Halimbawa, pagdating sa *dressmaking training*, marami ang nakilahok sa umpisa ngunit marami ang hindi nagpatuloy dahil hangad lamang nila ay ang kaunting ayuda kapalit ng pagsasanay. Ang ugaling ito ay hindi naging maganda para sa pagpapatakbo ng negosyo dahil ito ay sanhi ng kawalan ng tiyaga, pagpapahaba ng pasensya upang pataasin ang kakayahan, at sa huli, pagsuko. Samakatuwid, mas gusto ng iba ang mabilisang ganansya. Ito ay hindi lamang makikita sa karanasan ng Igting; ito rin naipamalas sa pagsama sa mga gawain ng mga politiko kung saan sila ay nagagamit lamang sa pangangampanya. Totoo, nakakatanggap sila ng malaking kita, ngunit ito ay panandalian lamang at hindi pangmatagalan.

Bukod sa iba't ibang katangian at ugali ng mga tao, naging hamon din ang kawalan ng karanasan sa pagsapi sa isang samahan. Sa karanasan ng Igting, ang ilang miyembro ay mistulang balat-sibuyas, mahirap kausap, mataas ang *pride*, o kulang sa disiplina. Marahil ito ay dahil sa hindi pa nila nauunawaan ang sitwasyon at hindi pa mulat sa sistema ng isang samahan. Ang kawalan ng karanasan sa pagbubuo at pamamahala sa isang samahan ay isa sa mga pinagmumulan ng hindi pagkakaunawaan sa grupo. Nariyan din ang mga miyembro na gumagawa ng isyu na nakakagulo sa kaayusan ng lahat. May ilang miyembro rin na hindi marunong tumanggap sa pagpupuna ng kamalian. Ang kawalan ng kamalayan o kakitiran sa pag-iisip ay siyang sanhi upang magpatuloy ang ugaling negatibo. Ito ay balakid sa pagpapaunlad ng isang samahan dahil ito ay may epekto sa daloy at kalidad ng produksyon. Sa huli, napakahalaga ng tamang ugali sa isang samahan at pagnenegosyo—dapat maging propesyonal sa lahat ng bagay.

Gayunpaman, bagaman may mga angking kahirapan ang pagbubuo ng samahan at pagpapatakbo ng negosyo, ang matinding karanasan naman na ito ang siyang nagtulak sa mga tao para kumilos. Samakatuwid, sa hirap ng buhay, bagaman may mga sumuko, marami pa rin ang nagpatuloy sa laban at paghahanap ng solusyon. Ngunit ito ay naisagawa, hindi lamang sa pagsisikap ng Igting, kundi kasama ang pagtulong ng ibang mga tao at organisasyon tulad ng CAMP at FIP. Gayunpaman, ang pagsisikap at pagtitiyaga ng mga miyembro ng Igting ang siyang mapagpasya pa rin sa pagtatawid mula sa kahirapan, papunta sa mas maayos na buhay.

Ang pagsisikap na ito ay makikita sa aktibong pakikilahok sa mga *workshops* kung saan ang mga miyembro ay unti-unting namulat. Sa pakikipag-aralan kasama ang FIP, unti-unting tumimo ang malalalim na salita na naging paksa ng repleksyon tulad ng ganap na buhay, kahirapan sa Towerville, pagbubuo ng samahan, at *social enterprise*. Hindi naging madali na unawain ang mga salitang ito. Ngunit dahil sa ilang taon ng tuloy-tuloy na pag-aaral, unti-unti ring naunawaan na ang bawat tao ay malaking magagawa para baguhin ang kanyang kalagayan. Ang katotohanan na mayroong maaaring gawin ang naging unang hakbang upang matuto ang mga miyembro na makiisa sa isang samahan na nagnanais ng pagbabago. Sabi nga ni Rowena, “Sa sarili ko... bilang isang miyembro... iminulat ko ang sarili ko na hindi porke't mahirap ako at walang pinag-aralan wala na akong magagawa.” Ang

pagsisikap na ito at pagkamulat ang nagbunsod ng pagsasama-sama at pagsasanib ng mga talento at kakayahan ng mga miyembro na may iisang pangarap, misyon, at layunin na mapaunlad ang pamumuhay at maibsan ang kahirapan. Ito ay kinailangan ng may mga taong mangunguna, kikilos, at titindig.

#### Pagbubuo ng samahan

Kagaya ng nasabi kanina, naging mahalaga ang pagtimo ng kahalagahan ng isang samahan para sa Igting. Ngunit, noong nagsisimula palang ito, aminado ang Igting na hindi ito lubusang binigyan ng halaga dahil mas nakatuon ang pansin ng mga miyembro sa pagnenegosyo. Ang kawalan ng malalim na pag-unawa sa kahalagahan ng samahan ay nagbunsod ng iba't ibang isyu. Nariyan ang mga miyembrong ayaw makilahok dahil sa wala naman daw silang mapapala sa gawain ng samahan. Ito naman ay nagdulot ng malaking problema sa proseso ng pagdedesisyon. Ang kawalan ng interes ng iba na dumalo sa mga gawain ng samahan tulad ng mga pagpupulong ay nagdulot ng hindi pantay-pantay na pag-unawa sa pang-araw-araw na gawain ng samahan at negosyo nito. Sa huli, nagdulot ito ng mga hidwaan o isyu. Isa na dito ang proseso ng pagtatalaga ng gawain. Halimbawa, naiintindihan lamang ng ibang mga miyembro na ang konsepto ng pagkapantay-pantay ay may kinalaman sa pagkakaparepareho ng sweldo. Hindi nila naintindihan na ang salitang pantay-pantay ay tumutukoy sa demokratikong proseso sa loob ng samahan, pakikilahok, at pagdedesisyon sa pagpapaunlad ng samahan.

Ngunit mas marami pa rin naman ang nakakaunawa sa layunin ng samahan, lalo na sa mga lider. Patuloy silang umaakay at nanghihimok na makiisa ang mga miyembro sa gawain ng samahan. Ang mga namumuno din ang nanguna upang mas pahalagahan ng bawat miyembro ang hanapbuhay ng samahan. Sa patuloy pagbabahagi ng mga natutunan sa mga *training* at nakuhang kaalaman mula sa mga *workshop* at *seminar*, unti-unting napapatimo sa kaisipan ng mga miyembro ang kahalagahan ng samahan ng Igting. Sa tulong ng mga *partners* ng Igting tulad ng CAMP at FIP, nagkaroon din ng mga *empowerment workshops* para sa mga miyembro na nakatulong upang mapalawak ang kanilang kaalaman hanggang dumating sa pagkakataon na sila na rin mismo ang kusang lumahok sa mga ganitong gawain. Kaalinsabay nito, upang maging mas malakas ang samahan, bumuo ang Igting ng isang mas maayos at demokratikong istruktura kung saan ang lahat ng miyembro ay mayroong gampanin sa samahan at hindi sikil lamang ng iilang tao. Sa pamamagitan ng mga nabuong komite na tumutugon sa iba't ibang gawain sa samahan, mas napalakas ang kolektibong pamumuno sa Igting.

#### Pagnenegosyo

Katulad ng pakikitungo sa mga tao at pagbubuo ng samahan, hindi rin naging madali ang usapin ng pagnenegosyo. Para sa Igting, ang kahirapan na ito ay may kinalaman sa maling kaisipan ng mga miyembro. Halimbawa, noong panahon na may tumutulong pa sa Igting, naging palaasa at kampante ang mga miyembro na, kahit walang *output* ay patuloy pa rin silang makakatanggap ng sahod. Dahil dito, may mga ilan na hindi nagsumikap na iangat ang kanilang kakayahan. Nariyan din ang kawalan ng inisyatibo na palakasin at palaguin ang kanilang sarili at ang negosyo. Kaya naman, naging problema ang pagseseguro ng tamang kalidad ng produkto. Ang mababang kalidad ng produkto ay nakaapekto naman sa kita ng negosyo. Kaya naman noong dumating ang panahon na nawala na ang ayuda mula sa labas, marami ang kumalas dahil sa takot na wala na silang kikitain at baka bumagsak na rin ang Igting.

Ngunit, ito lamang ang simula ng pakikibaka ng Igting sa larangan ng pagnenegosyo. Naging mahirap ang paghahanap ng mga produkto dahil sa mahigpit na kumpetisyon sa negosyo. Tulad ng sa paggawa ng *t-shirt*, mahirap makipag-negosasyon ng presyo sa mga kliyente dahil sobrang baba ang binibigay nilang presyo. Marami kasing mga ibang patahian na bultuhan at pababaan ng presyo ang

kalakaran. Naging mahirap din ang pagkuha ng *market* para sa mga sariling produkto dahil kulang pa sa kaalaman sa stratehiya sa *marketing committee*. Dahil hindi pa rin kilala ang Igting sa merkado bilang tagagawa ng bag at damit, mahirap makipagkumpitensya sa mga kilala at malalaking kumpanya.

Gayunpaman, isa sa mga nakatulong upang maitawid ang negosyo ay ang pakikipagtuwangan ng Igting sa mga iba't ibang mga ahensya at organisasyon tulad ng DTI at lokal na pamahalaan ng San Jose del Monte. Sa pamamagitan ng mga ito, nagkaroon ng mga oportunidad ang Igting na mas mapaganda at mapagbuti pa ang kanilang mga produkto. Sa pamamagitan naman ng iba't ibang pagsasanay, mas lumawak ang kaalaman ng mga lider sa negosyo at mas umangat ng kalidad ng mga produkto ng Igting. Nagkaroon din ng mga lakbay-aral sa ibang mga kooperatiba at samahan na tulad ng Igting, at mula dito ay nakakuha ng mga ideya ang Igting upang mas maiayos ang mga proseso tulad ng tamang paggupit ng tela, tamang pagbabahagi ng gawa, at iba pa. Dahil din sa pakikipagkwentuhan sa ibang mga samahan, nakakuha ang Igting ng mga ideya tungkol sa pagpapalakad ng samahan.

Ang mga oportunidad, *exposure*, at pagsasanay na ito ay nakatulong din upang maisaayos ang proseso ng produksyon, *marketing*, at pinansya. Sinikap din ng samahan na mas paigtingin ang komunikasyon at koordinasyon sa *business development group* upang mas maging maayos ang daloy ng produksyon at madaling nailalabas ang tamang *output* sa tamang *target date*. Hindi nawalan ng kabuluhan ang lahat ng mga pagsasanay, pagsasaayos ng sistema, sakripisyo, pagtitiyaga, at pagsisikap ng bawat miyembro sa pagpapaunlad ng samahan at negosyo dahil nagdulot ito ng malaking pagbabago sa bawat miyembro upang mas magtiwala sa kakayahan ng bawat isa. Kaya nga ang negosyo na pinangangalagaan o pinapatakabo ng isang samahan ay dapat naglalaan ng higit na panahon sa pagpapatibay ng maayos at magandang relasyon ng bawat miyembro, dahil ang negosyo at samahan ay hindi uunlad kung walang matibay na pundasyon ng lakas at puwersa ng mga tao.

Sa patuloy na pagsusumikap ng Igting paunlarin ang samahan, nangunguna na rin ang Igting sa pagbibigay ng mga proyekto at serbisyo para sa komunidad. Kung ibabatay sa karanasan ng Igting, upang maging epektibo ang isang proyekto para sa komunidad, mahalaga ang pag-alalay sa simula lalo na sa usapin ng pagnenegosyo o paghahanapbuhay. Importante ang suporta sa pagsasanay at gamit paggawa tulad ng materyales at pasilidad. Alam naman nating lahat na sa isang komunidad, iba-iba ang estado sa buhay: may nakapag-aral, mayroong hindi; mayroong may trabaho, mayroong wala; pinakakawawa ang walang hanapbuhay. Ngunit mayroong mga taong kahit mahirap ang kalagayan ay pilit pa ring hindi alisin ang pag-asa sa kanilang buhay. Minsan ay dumating din ito sa buhay ng Igting, lalo na noong ang mga miyembro ay bago pa lamang sa Towerville. Kaya ang pagbibigay ng tulong ng CAMP, katuwang ang UP CSWCD, ay tunay na nakakahanga, hindi nila binitawan ang Igting hangga't hindi pa ito nakakatayo sa sarili nilang mga paa. Dati, ang konepto ng *social enterprise* ay hindi pa masyadong maunawaan, ngunit dahil sa walang sawang paggabay ng mga tao sa mga miyembro ng Igting, unti-unti nilang naunawaan ang kahalagahan ng isang samahang nagpatakabo ng isang negosyo. Pinakamahalaga ang iisang hangarin, pag-ambag ng kakayahan at kaalaman, paninindigan, pagkakaisa, malasakit, pag-unawa, at pakikibagay sa iba't ibang ugali sa tagumpay ng anumang layunin.

Sa samahang Igting, ang mga miyembro ay masasabing nasa laylayan ng lipunan na kadalasan ay mga walang boses sa usapin ng kaunlaran. Sabi pa nga ng isang miyembro ng Igting, "Sino ba kami? Langgam lang naman kami kumpara sa dambuhalang mga negosyante." Ang Igting ay binubuo ng mga simpleng nanay na nakaranas ng matinding hamon sa buhay, lalo na sa usapin ng paghahanapbuhay. Mula sa karanasang ito, dito humugot ang mga nanay ng pag-asa at kakayahan upang mapasibol ang hanapbuhay sa Towerville. Hindi naman ito naging madali, kinaya ito ng Igting sa tulong ng mga tao at mga institusyong gumabay sa kanila. Ngunit kasabay ng tulong, importante din ang paninindigan ng lahat na maging aktibo sa lahat ng gampanin at panangutan. Hindi maaaring basta lamang tanggap nang tanggap; kailangan ding sama-samang kumilos. Kung walang pagkilos ay mababalewala lamang

ang lahat ng tulong. Hindi pwedeng nakaasa lamang dahil palaging may mga tumutulong. Anuman ang oportunidad na natanggap ay kailangang pagyamanin. Para sa Igting, ang *social enterprise* ay isang susi para sa mga taong nasa komunidad na kailangang mapamulat sa kalagayan ng buhay—na kahit dinala lang sila sa lugar na naghihikahos sa hanapbuhay, kailangang itaya ang sakripisyo para mas umunlad ang kakayahan at kaalaman. Ipinagmamalaki ng Igting na sa loob ng walong taon ay nagsumikap ang mga miyembro nito na gampanan ang pagpapatakbo ng negosyo. Naniniwala ang Igting na ang kahirapan ay maiibsan kung magmumula sa bawat indibidwal ang pagkilos, pagtutulungan, at higit sa lahat, pagsisikap upang magkaroon ng sama-samang pagkilos tungo sa pag-unlad. Kung ikukumpara sa mga dambuhalang negosyanteng may malalaking kapital, sa isang *social enterprise* tulad ng Igting, pantay-pantay ang lahat ng karapatan ng miyembro, pinapakinggan ang boses ng lahat, at may mga sinusunod na mga polisiya at sistema—na nagmumula rin sa bawat miyembro at pinagkaisahan ng samahan. Nais ng Igting na ibahagi ang kwento ng grupo sa lahat na isa silang buhay na katibayan na ang mga simpleng tao, kahit hindi mataas ang naabot sa pag-aaral, kung gugustuhin, ay kakayanin pa ring umunlad kung sila ay magsisikap at mananalig sa Diyos. Sa pamamagitan ng pagsasanib ng mga kakayahan at kaalaman ng bawat isa at pagkakaroon ng iisang layunin para umunlad, mas kakayanin ang pagsisikap patungo sa ganap na buhay.



## 2

# Ang Pag-oorganisa ng Kababaihang Ayta Mag-indi sa Porac, Pampanga para sa Pagsusulong ng Karapatan ng Kababaihan at Pamamahala ng Pamayanan

NARATIBO MULA SA MGA KABABAIHAN AT *ELDERS* NG AYTA MAG-INDI<sup>1</sup>

Ang Pilipinas ay mayroong iba't ibang katutubong pamayanan. Marami silang katangian na nag-iiba sa kanila sa kalakhan ng populasyon, tulad ng mariin nilang pagtutol laban sa kolonyal na kapangyarihan. Batay sa kasaysayan, ang pagpasok ng iba't ibang dayuhang grupo ang unti-unting nagtulak sa kanila na manirahan at maghanap ng ikabubuhay sa mga kabundukan (Ty 2010). Isa ang katutubong Ayta sa kinikilalang sinaunang katutubong grupo sa Pilipinas. Kinalaunan, ang mga kabundukan ang nagsilbing tahanan ng kanilang salinlahi at itinuring at kinilala nilang lupaing ninuno (Shimizu 2001). Hindi matatawaran ang kahalagahan ng kabundukan para sa mga Ayta. Ayon nga kay Fondevilla (isinangguni sa Shimizu 2001, 7), “ang tahanan nila ay nakaugat sa daigdig, napalilibutan ng kabundukan at mga ilog, nakahulma sa hubog ng kalangitan ng ulap at bahaghari, ng araw at mga bituin...tulad ng minumungkahi ng pangalan nito, ang Pinatubo ay pinagmumulan ng buhay ng mga Ayta.” Ang mga kabundukan na nagsisilbing lupaing ninuno ng iba't ibang grupo ng Ayta ay matatagpuan sa rehiyon ng Gitnang Luzon. Isa na rito ang Ayta Mag-indi na namamalagi sa bayan ng Porac, Pampanga. May lawak na mahigit 18,700 ektarya ang kanilang lupaing ninuno. Nakapaloob sa lupaing ito ang Sitio Pasbul, isang sitio sa Camias, at mga barangay ng Sapang Uwak, Camias, Diaz, Villa Maria, at Inararo na pinapamalagian ng iba't ibang komunidad ng Ayta (James at Paton 2016; Capuno 2018).

### Ang pagputok ng Pinatubo

Bagamat hindi nagpasakop sa dayuhang kapangyarihan, hindi nawala ang mga banta ng pangangamkam at pang-aagaw sa lupaing ninuno ng Ayta at maging sa galit na ipinamalas ni Apo Namalyari.

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<sup>1</sup> Ang kabanatang ito ay naisulat sa tulong nina Micah Magaro, Jette Roldan, Eugene Balbas, at Venarica Papa.

Isang hindi malilimutang kaganapan na lubhang nakaapekto sa pamumuhay ng mga Ayta ay ang pagputok ng Bulkang Pinatubo noong 1991 (Seitz 2004). Bago pumutok ang Pinatubo, mula Abril 1991 ay sunod-sunod ang pagtukoy ng mga *danger zones* sa paligid nito. Ayon sa mga lokal na opisyal at sa *disaster coordinating councils*, ang pagdedeklara na ang isang lugar ay *danger zone* ang hudyat ng mga malawakang paglikas (Tayag et al. 1999). Hunyo nang naging mas madalas ang pagyanig ng lupa lalo na sa paligid ng bulkan, dahilan upang bigyang-diin ang matindi at kagyat na pangangailangan na lumikas, lalo na sa mga nakatira sa loob 10-kilometrong *radius* ng bulkan. Sa simula pa lamang ay tinatayang 2,000 katao na ang lumikas. Dahil sa nagbabadyang pagputok ng bulkang Pinatubo, dumami pa ang lumikas mula sa kani-kanilang mga komunidad. Ang unang pormal na paglikas ng mga komunidad na ito ay naganap noong Abril 1991 (de la Cruz 2015).

Ang lubhang naapektuhan sa pagputok ng bulkan ay ang mga komunidad ng Ayta na naninirahan sa paligid nito. Naging mahirap at masakit sa kalooban na lisanin ang kanilang mga tirahan sapagkat ito ay hindi lamang pinagkukunan ng kabuhayan, kung hindi tirahan din ni Apo Namalyari (Fondevilla 1991).

Ayon sa kwento ng mga Ayta, maaaring may isa pang dahilan sa pagputok ng Pinatubo na daang taon nang nananahimik bukod sa ito ay pinaniniwalaang dulot ng “nakahihigit na pwersa” (*force majeure*). Bago pa pumutok ang bulkan, nagsasagawa na ng eksplorasyon ang Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) dahil sa paniniwala nito na mayroong taglay na enerhiya (*geothermal energy*) ang bulkan. Ayon sa salaysay ni Bienvenido Capuno, isang Ayta na nagtrabaho para sa PNOC, taong 1984 nang magsimula ang kanilang operasyon. Aniya, nagsimula ito sa pagsiyasat ng maiinit na bahagi ng bulkan (panayam ni Lillo, mula sa Shimizu 2001). Matapos ang unang bahagi ng eksplorasyon, nagsagawa ng malawakang pagbubutas ng lupa ang PNOC.

Sa tatlong malalaking butas na kanilang ginawa, tig-iisang tubo ang ibinaon ngunit ito ay nalusaw. Sa puntong ito napagtanto ng PNOC na hindi maaaring mapagkunan ng enerhiya ang bulkan. Sinubukang takpan ang malalaking butas sa pamamagitan ng pagbuhos ng semento at sinubukang pagtakpan ang malaking kamalian ng PNOC kaya hindi ito ibinalita sa publiko. Ang pagbubutas na ito ay pinaniniwalaang naging dahilan upang mapabilis ang pagputok ng Bulkang Pinatubo. Sa gitna ng operasyon ng PNOC, ani Bienvenido Capuno, batid ng mga Ayta na walang magandang maidudulot ang patuloy na pagbubutas sa bulkan, ngunit mahirap nang mapatigil ang proyekto sapagkat sang-ayon ang gobyerno dito.

Sa isang pag-aaral, sinasabi na nagkaroon nga ng paunang imbestigasyon ang PNOC sa Bulkang Pinatubo mula 1982 hanggang 1986 at isang *deep exploratory drilling at well testing* naman mula 1988 hanggang 1990. Napilitang itigil ng PNOC ang proyekto matapos hindi mapatunayan ang kanilang haka-haka labintatlong (13) buwan lamang bago naganap ang unang mga pagsabog ng Bulkang Pinatubo (Delfin et al. 1999).

### Paglikas at paghahanap ng malilipatan

Mas umigting pa ang hirap na naranasan ng mga Ayta dulot ng malawakang paglisan mula sa kanilang mga komunidad dahil sa kawalan ng kasiguruhan sa kanilang hinaharap. Ang kanilang paglalakad at paghahanap ng malilikasan sa gitna ng nag-aalburotong bulkan ay lubhang nakaapekto sa mga matatanda, kabataan, at maging sa mga kababaihan. May mga salaysay kung saan ang mga nanay at tatay ay buhat-buhat ang kanilang mga anak habang tumatawid sa *lahar*. May mga buntis na naglalakad papunta sa kabilang bayan at tumatawid sa mga ilog at bundok upang makarating lamang sa ligtas na lugar. May mga namatay din dahil sa labis na pagkauhaw o pagkahapo sa paglalakad. At may mga



pamilyang nagkahiwa-hiwalay. Ang ilan sa mga nabanggit ay mga patunay lamang sa hirap ng kanilang paglalakbay tungo sa paghahanap ng ligtas, maayos, at pansamantalang malilipatan.

Batay sa salaysay ni Bappa Condring, isang *elder* ng mga Ayta, noong panahon ng sakuna, ang ilan sa mga Ayta ay nagpunta sa kanilang mga kamag-anak sa mga karatig na *sitio* at barangay, habang ang iba naman ay nakisakay sa mga trak at iba pang uri ng transportasyon upang makalikas. Ngunit ang mas nakararami sa Ayta ng Porac ay naglakad patungo sa iba't ibang itinalagang *evacuation centers* sa mga karatig-lugar tulad ng Sindalan sa Angeles at sa San Fernando. Sa *evacuation centers* na ito nagsiksikan ang tinatayang 25,000 na mga “unat” at “kulot.” Matapos nito, kalahati sa mga Ayta ay dinala sa *resettlement sites* na ipinagawa para sa kanila (Seitz 2004).

Ang ibang Ayta naman ay nakaabot pa sa ibang siyudad at probinsya, tulad ng Nueva Ecija, Zambales, at maging sa mga iba't ibang bayan sa tabi ng Maynila. Ang eskwelahan ng Don Bosco sa San Fernando, Pampanga ang unang naging *evacuation center* ng iba't ibang komunidad ng mga Ayta mula sa mga lalawigan ng Pampanga, Zambales, at Tarlac. Matapos silang pansamantalang manirahan sa Don Bosco, lumipat at nanirahan naman sila sa Magalang, sa may gawing Arayat, nang ilang taon bago muling lumipat sa itinakdang *resettlement area* na tinatawag na “Tent City” sa Barangay Planas. “Tent City” ang naging katawagan dito dahil dinatnan ito ng mga katutubo nang walang mga nakatayong bahay. Sila ang inasahan na magtayo ng mga kubo o kubol sa lupain upang pansamantalang tirahan. Dahil sa katagalan ng kanilang pamamalagi sa “Tent City,” sa kalaunan ito ay tinawag na “Katutubo Village.”

Nagdesisyon ang komunidad na manatili sa Katutubo Village sapagkat mas malapit ito sa mga pampublikong serbisyo tulad ng eskwelahan at ospital, at sa bayan ng Porac. May ilang kilometro ang layo nito sa Barangay Camias na siyang bahagi ng kanilang lupaing ninuno. Pagkatapos ideklarang ligtas ng mga kinaukulan, sinubukan nilang bumalik sa Camias at doon na nila nakita kung paano ito natabunan ng *lahar*. Gayunpaman, hindi ito naging dahilan upang sukuan nila ang hangaring makabalik at mapangalagaang muli ang kanilang lupaing ninuno. Pinagtulung-tulungan nila ang paghuhukay sa *lahar* at sama-samang binungkal ang lupa hanggang ito ay maging angkop muli na pagtaniman.

Ang mas marami sa kanila ay nagpasyang huwag lisanin ang kanilang tinutuluyan sa Katutubo Village. Dahil dito, naging bahagi ng kanilang pamumuhay ang pag-akyat sa Camias upang ipagpatuloy ang kanilang pagtatanim at pangangaso na siyang pangunahing pinagkukunan ng kanilang ikinabubuhay sa lupaing ninuno.

Natuklasan din nila na sa kanilang pagbabalik sa lupaing ninuno ay panibagong mga hamon ang asalubong sa kanila sa porma ng panghihimasok ng mga tagalabas na dala-dala ang mga proyektong pangkaunlaran. Ito ay mga kumpanya ng pagtotroso, pagmimina, mga tagapagsiyasat, at iba pang dati nang nagtatangkang manghimasok sa kanilang lupaing ninuno.

May ilan ding mga indibidwal, na karamihan ay “unat,” na nakapagtayo ng mga kabahayan at ari-arian sa loob ng kanilang lupaing ninuno. Ito ang naging hudyat para sa Ayta na makita ang pangangailangan upang higit pang maprotektahan at mapangalagaan ang lupaing ninuno laban sa mga nagnanais na pasukin, angkinin, at lapastanganin ito.

## Mga aral na natutunan

Ang hirap na naranasan ng mga Ayta mula sa pagputok ng Bulkang Pinatubo ay kasama sa mga nagbigay pa sa kanila ng tibay ng loob upang bumangon at pagtibayin pa ang kanilang lakas sa



LARAWAN 2.1 • Pagbabahagi ng mga naratibo ng kababaihang Ayta

pagsasama-sama. Ang nagsilbing inspirasyon para sa mga Ayta Mag-indi upang magpatuloy at bumangon ay ang kanilang matinding pagmamahal at pagpapahalaga sa lupaing ninuno na siyang karugtong ng kanilang buhay. Ang pagkawala nito ay nangangahulugan ng pagkalagot ng kanilang hininga. Kung kaya noong may mga sumubok manghimasok sa kanilang lupaing ninuno, likas sa kanila ang kumilos nang sama-sama upang ipaglaban ito. Namayani ang pagkakaisa ng komunidad upang tumindig para sa kanilang lupaing ninuno. Kapit-bisig ang kababaihan at kalalakihan sa paglaban at pag-oorganisa upang palakasin ang kanilang hanay. Ito ang naging hudyat ng kapanganakan ng mga organisasyon sa kanilang komunidad tulad ng Pagkakaisa ng mga Ayta sa Camias (PAC) at ang organisasyon ng mga kababaihan na UPKC o Ugat sa Pusod ng Kababaihan ng Camias.

Katutubong gawain ng pag-oorganisa

Isa si Angelito Manalili (2012) sa nakapag-ambag upang mapayabong ang literatura ng gawaing pag-oorganisa sa komunidad (*community organizing*). Aniya, ang kaunlaran na makabuluhan ay hindi kaunlaran na pansarili lamang. Ang dapat patunguhan ng pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan “ay [ang] kagalingan ng buong pamayanan, lalo na ng mga mahihirap” (Manalili 2012, 131–32). Para kay Manalili (2012, 134), makakamit lamang ang tunay na pag-unlad kung ang “prinsipal na aktor sa proseso ng pagpapaunlad ay ang mga tao.” Samakatuwid, mababatid lamang ang kabuluhan ng pangkabuuang tunguhin ng gawaing pag-oorganisa at pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan “kapag ninanamnam natin ang patuloy na pagtindi ng karalitaang dinaranas ng higit na nakararami” (ibid., 142).

Sa mga katutubong Ayta, ang pag-oorganisa ay hindi na bago dahil sa kanilang komunal na pamumuhay. Kinagisan nila ang pagiging magkatuwang sa lahat ng aspekto ng kanilang buhay. Lalong tampok ang kanilang pagkakaisa kapag usapin na ng pangangalaga sa kanilang kultura, paniniwala, at pagtatanggol sa kanilang karapatan sa lupaing ninuno. Sa bahaging “Saligang Paniniwala sa Pag-oorganisa at Sama-samang Pagkilos” sa aklat ni Manalili (2012), isa ang panlipunang pagsusuri sa mga batayang gawaing pang-organisasyon at pag-oorganisa. Sa kontesktong ng mga Ayta, batid nila ang napakahalaga ng gawaing pag-organisa at pagpapaunlad ng pamayanan lalo na sa kanilang pakikibaka upang kilalanin ang kanilang karapatan sa sariling pagpapasya (*self-determination*).

Naging susi rin sa pag-oorganisa ang kanilang pakikipag-ugnayan sa iba't ibang organisasyon. Bagamat ang tampok at pangunahing paksa ng pakikipag-ugnayan ay ang pagtatanggol sa kanilang karapatan sa lupaing ninuno, naging bahagi rin ng mga ugnayang ito ang pagdalo sa iba't ibang pagsasanay tulad ng maiigsing kursong magpapataas ng kanilang kaalaman at kakayanan; mga oryentasyon sa pakikipag-uganyan sa mga ahensiya at institusyon ng pamahalaan at iba pang sektor; pagsasanay sa pakikipag-dayalogo at pag-angkin sa mga demokratikong espasyo na maaari nilang gamitin sa pagsusulong ng kanilang karapatan; at marami pang iba na mga pawang naglililang ng kanilang husay at nagpapalawak ng kanilang koneksyon sa iba't ibang institusyon. Lahat ng ito ay nakatulong sa pagpapatibay sa kanilang samahan. Nagbukas ito sa kanila ng mga oportunidad na makipag-alyansa at makipag-aralan hinggil sa mga karanasan at pakikibaka ng iba pang organisasyon at komunidad ng mga Ayta sa Gitnang Luzon. Bunga nito ang pagpapalawak ng kanilang kaalaman at kakayanan sa pag-oorganisa, at nakatulong sa pagsasakapangyarihan sa kanilang komunidad. Ito rin ang nagpapanday at naghahasa sa kanilang kakayahang pamunuan at pamahalaan ang kanilang sarili.

Ang kanilang pagiging komunal ay hindi lamang simpleng katangian. Kaakibat nito ang pagkakaroon ng tiwala sa bawat isa, ang pagkakaroon ng malasakit at pagdadamay, ang kusa at bukal sa loob na pagtulong, at ang pagbibigay-importansiya sa sarili bilang bahagi ng komunidad, at sa komunidad bilang nagbibigkis ng mga indibidwal na interes at kapakanan. Para rin sa kanila, iisa lamang ang laban ng bawat katutubong Ayta kahit sila pa ay nagmula sa iba't ibang komunidad. Naglulan ito ng kagawian kung saan makikita ang kanilang pagpapahalaga sa pagbubuo ng alyansa at pagbuo ng mga *network* sa iba't ibang grupo lalo na sa usapin ng mga kampanya hinggil sa karapatang pantao, pakikibaka para sa lupaing ninuno, kapayapaan, at iba pa. Magandang halimbawa dito ang Paruogan na binubuo ng alyansa ng mga Ayta sa Gitnang Luzon at ng mga organisasyong simbahan; maging ang Mideng Kitamu Ha Lutang Ninunu (Tumindig para sa Lupaing Ninuno) na pawang mga organisasyong niluwal ng kanilang mga pakikibaka laban sa panghihimasok at pangangamkam ng mga dayuhang korporasyon at ilang indibidwal sa kanilang lupaing ninuno.

#### Pag-igpaw sa mga hamon

Ang mga katutubong Ayta ay sadyang matatag at maparaan. May iba't iba silang paraan upang malagpasan ang mga hamon na kinakaharap nila. Sinasamantala nila ang oportunidad na matutunan ang dominanteng kaalaman sa pagpapaunlad ng kanilang katutubong praktika. Ginagamit at inaangkin din nila ang mga demokratikong espasyo kung saan ay naigigiit nila ang katutubong kaalaman at ang kanilang pamamaraan ng paglililang nito. Halimbawa, nakita nila ang kahalagahan ng edukasyon upang maprotektahan ang kanilang lupaing ninuno at matigil ang nararanasang diskriminasyon. Dahil dito ay sinisikap nilang makatapos ng pormal na pag-aaral, lalo na ang mga mas nakababatang henerasyon. At kasabay nito, pinatitibay nila ang pakikipag-ugnayan sa Departamento ng Edukasyon para magawang organikong laman ng kurikulum ang katutubong kaalaman at praktika.

Kaugnay pa rin ng edukasyon, inaral nila ang mga karapatan ng mga katutubo at ilang batas na nagbibigay proteksyon dito at sa pamamagitan ng kaalamang ito ay lalo pang pinagtibay ang pagsusulong at pagtatanggol sa kanilang karapatan.

Nagkaroon din sila ng pagkonsulta at pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga kinikilala nilang kaalyado. Kasama sa mga isinasagawang istrategiya ng tuloy-tuloy na pag-aaral ay ang pagpapasalin ng mga dokumento sa wikang Filipino upang makalahok sa mga usapin na nakaaapekto sa kanila, sa kanilang kultura, at sa lupaing ninuno. Nagkakaroon din sila ng alyansa sa iba't ibang institusyon tulad ng simbahan, eskwelahan, at *non-governmental organizations* (NGOs). May mga sarili rin silang inisyatiba sa pagpapalaganap ng kanilang kalagayan at karanasan. Noong panahon ng agresyon ng isang kumpanya ng pagmimina sa kanilang lugar, sila mismo ang umugnay sa mga unibersidad upang ipaalam ang nararanasan nila. Nagsasalita sila sa mga *open forum* at nang minsan ay nag-imbita ng mga eksperto sa antropolohiya upang pigilan ang pagmimina sa Barangay Camias. Aktibo ang kanilang komunidad sa pagdalo ng mga pagpupulong kung saan tinatalakay ang mga isyung kinakaharap ng mga katutubong Pilipino na tulad nila.

#### Impluwensya ng “unat” sa komunidad ng Ayta

Buhat ng pagbubukas ng kanilang komunidad at pag-aangkin ng ilang unat sa ilang bahagi ng lupaing ninuno ay hindi maiiwasan na meron itong mga naidulot na pagbabago sa kanilang pamumuhay. Ayon sa kanila, ang pagdating ng mga unat sa kanilang komunidad ay hudyat ng kanilang paghihirap.

Bagama't nariyan pa rin ang lupaing ninuno na pangunahing nagtutustos ng kanilang mga pangangailangan, nagkaroon na sila ng iba pang pangangailangan na makukuha lamang kapag natumbasan ng pera. Halimbawa, dahil sa kagustuhang mawala ang diskriminasyon laban sa kanila, mataas na ang pagpapahalagang ibinibigay nila ngayon sa pormal na edukasyon. Dahil dito ay kailangan na nila ng pera upang maipadala ang kanilang mga anak sa paaralan, na naghuhudyat ng dagdag na gastos para sa matrikula, baon, pamasaha, at iba pa.

Nagkaroon na rin ng pangangailangan ang mga lider sa panggastos sa tuwing dadalo sila ng mga pulong at kumperensiya na may kinalaman sa karapatan ng mga katutubong Pilipino. Nariyan din ang tuloy-tuloy na pakikipag-uganayan sa iba't ibang organisasyon at kaalyado na nangangahulugan ng paglabas nila sa kanilang komunidad.

Naghanap sila ng iba't ibang paraan upang kumita ng pera. Ang ilan ay umaakyat pa rin sa lupaing ninuno upang magtanim ng mais, kalabasa, at iba pang maaaring ibebenta sa kanilang pagbaba sa kapatagan o sa pagdating ng sakadora sa kanilang komunidad.

Ang mga pagbabagong ito sa kanilang pamumuhay ay hindi itinuturing na kawalan, bagkus ay kakayahang umangkop sa nagbabago nilang kapaligiran.

#### Pagbabago ng relasyon sa loob ng komunidad

Dulot ng matagalang interaksyon nila sa mga unat, nagkaroon ng mga panibagong tungkulin ang babae at lalaki sa loob ng pamilya. Dahil hindi na nakaasa lamang sa pagtanim ang kanilang kabuhayan, ang ilan sa lalaking Ayta ang naging tagapagtaguyod (*breadwinner*) ng pamilya at napipilitang humanap ng kabuhayan sa labas ng komunidad, habang ang babae naman ay naiiwan upang ituloy ang pagtanim, pag-aalaga ng mga anak, at paggawa ng mga gawaing-bahay. Dahil mas mataas na rin ang kanilang kailangang tustusan, mas mataas na rin ang hinihingi nito sa usapin ng kanilang lakas-paggawa, oras, at sakripisyo na naagaw sa dati nilang komunal at sama-samang pamumuhay.

Dahil din sa mas mataas na hamon sa pagtataguyod ng pamilya, malaki ang nararamdaman presyur ng mga kalalakiang Ayta. Sa mga pagkakataon kung saan hindi natutugunan ng *breadwinner* ang kaniyang tungkulin na tustusan ang pangangailangan ng kaniyang pamilya, nababaling niya sa kaniyang pamilya ang kaniyang pagkasiphayo. Samakatuwid, ito ay nagdudulot ng tensyon sa mga relasyon sa loob ng pamilyang Ayta na dati namang wala. Mayroon itong direktang epekto sa kanilang mga asawang babae na siyang kadalasang napapagbabalingan ng asawang lalaki.

Ito ang hudyat ng pag-usbong ng mga kaso ng karahasan laban sa kababaihan sa loob mismo ng kaniyang tahanan. Sa kasalukuyan, ang ilan sa naitalang porma ng karahasan laban sa kababaihan ay ang pambubugbog, pananakit, pangmomolestiya, at berbal na pang-aabuso ng asawang lalaki.

Ayon sa mga Ayta, ang ganitong uri ng mga karahasan ay hindi likas sa kanilang kultura. Ang kulturang Ayta ay kulturang mapagkalinga, mapagmahal, at may respeto sa kapwa. Ang karahasan sa loob ng tahanan at laban sa kababaihan ay dulot ng impluwensiya ng kulturang labas na unti-unting nakasuot sa ugat ng kanilang mga relasyon, samahan, at uri ng pamumuhay.

Dulot pa rin ng pakikisalamuha ng unat sa kulot ay naging bukas ang Ayta sa ilan sa mga kagawiang hindi likas sa kanila, kagaya ng pagbabarkada, at pag-inom ng alak. Tulad ng sa isang kwento kung saan iresponsableng ginastos ng isang lalaki sa pag-iinom ang pambili ng mga pangangailangan ng pamilya, nagsimula ang pambubugbog niya nang sinita siya ng asawang babae tungkol dito. Ang mga karahasang nararanasan ngayon ng kababaihang Ayta ay hindi nanggaling sa bundok.

Papel ng mga kababaihan sa mga laban ng komunidad

Muli, mayroong diin na ito ay impluwensiya ng kulturang labas. Sa kulturang Ayta, itinuturing ang babae na mahalaga at binibigyang respeto sapagkat kinikilala ng Ayta ang malaking papel ng kababaihan sa kanilang komunidad.

Habang ang mga lider ng komunidad, na karamihan ay kalalakihan, ay abala sa pagtugon sa mga isyung kinakaharap, ang kababaihang Ayta ay hindi nananatiling kimi. Sila ay may malaki at



LARAWAN 2.2 • Isang pagpupulong sa tahanan ni Pastor Benny Capuno

mahalagang gampanin sa komunidad. Halimbawa, sa panahon na pilit inaagaw ang kanilang lupaing ninuno, salaysay ni Marivic Capuno, isang lider-kababaihan, na sila ang unang humaharap sa mga nanghihimasok sa kanilang lupa. Dala-dala at akay-akay ang kanilang mga anak, nagbabarikada sila upang harangan ang panghihimasok ng mga pribadong kumpanya ng pagmimina. Ito ay kasabay ng pagtugon ng mga kababaihang Ayta sa maraming tungkulin sa tahanan at sa kaniyang pamilya. Ayon kay Marivic, hindi hadlang ang pagkakaroon ng gawaing-bahay upang makalahok sa usapin ng komunidad lalo na't tungkol ito sa pagtatanggol sa lupaing ninuno.

Isa pang halimbawa ng papel na ginagampanan ng kababaihan sa kaniyang komunidad ay ang pagsama ng lalaki sa asawang babae sa mga pagpupulong ng komunidad dahil kinakailangan ang kaniyang presensya bilang tagapagmasid at tagapakinig. Sa kanilang pag-uwi, siya ang magsisilbing tagawasto ng mga kamaliang napansin niya sa loob ng pagpupulong. Ito ay patunay lamang na noon pa man ay hindi mapaghihiwalay ang babae at lalaki sapagkat sila ay magkatuwang at nagtutulungan sa mayorya ng aspeto ng kanilang pamumuhay. Walang malaki o maliit na gampanin sapagkat ang tungkulin ng bawat isa ay mahalaga. Kung gayon, maliwanag sa mga Ayta ang pantay na pagtingin sa babae at lalaki. Gayundin ang pagtingin na ang babae at lalaki ay mayroong pantay na karapatan.

Tulad nang nabanggit, ang Ayta ay hindi rin likas na mapanakit sa kapwa. Sila ay mapagmahal at nagtataguyod ng mapayapang pamumuhay. Sa katunayan, wala silang konsepto ng panggagahasa at pagmumura. Ngunit sa panahon ngayon na kung saan ay mayroon nang mga kaso ng karahasan laban sa kababaihan, kinikilala ng buong komunidad ang pagbabago at nais na maging maagap sa pagtugon dito. Dahil ang laban sa pagtatanggol sa karapatan ng kababaihan ay laban din ng buong komunidad.

Dahil sa mga pagbabagong ito, sa kasalukuyan ay pinalalakas ng kababaihang Ayta ang dati nang naitatag na organisasyon ng kababaihan, ang UPKC. Ito ang pagsisimulan nilang tungtungan upang pataasin ang kaalaman ng mga kababaihan sa kanilang karapatan. Ito rin ang magiging daan ng panunumbalik ng katutubong kaugalian sa buong komunidad na may mataas na pagtingin at respeto sa kababaihan. At higit sa lahat, nakikita nilang ang pagpapalakas ng organisasyong ito ay magbibigay-ambag sa pangkalahatang laban ng Ayta para sa pagtatanggol ng kanilang interes at mga karapatan lalo na sa usapin ng lupang ninuno.

Tiniyak na lahat ng datos at pagpapakahulugan sa mga ito ay nagmula mismo sa mga Ayta Mag-indi ng Porac, Pampanga. Sa pagsisikap na makahanap ng paraan upang madokumento ito at matiyak ang pagkadalisyang ng kanilang naratibo, maging sa pamamaraan ng dokumentasyon ay tiniyak ng mga mananaliksik na hindi matatabunan ang mga boses ng mga katutubong Ayta na nagbibigay-salaysay. Ang dokumentasyon sa pamamagitan ng pagrerekord ng boses at bidyo ang pangunahing paraan na itinampok sa pag-aaral na ito sa paglalayon na ipahatid ang mensahe sa paraang pinakamalapit at magpapalakas sa boses ng Ayta Mag-indi ng Porac, Pampanga.

### **Alternatibong pamamaraan ng pag-unlad ng mga Ayta**

Malinaw na ang Ayta Mag-indi ng Porac, Pampanga ay may sariling pamamaraan sa pagpapaunlad ng kanilang pamayanan. Mayroon silang sariling uri ng pamamahala sa kanilang komunidad at pangangasiwa ng kanilang lupaing ninuno. Likas sa kanila ang pagtaguyod ng matiwasay na pamumuhay na may maayos na pakikitungo sa kapwa at pangangalaga sa kalikasan. Naipapamalas nila ang kanilang sariling kultura, kaalaman, at mga sistemang katutubo na pinanday ng kanilang karanasan at kasaysayan, magmula pa sa kanilang mga ninuno, na sa kasalukuyan ay kanilang tinatamasa at maipapasa sa kanilang mga salinlahi.



**LARAWAN 2.3** • Larawang kuha pagkatapos ng presentasyon sa kumperensyang “Rethinking Cross-Border Regionalism” noong 2018

Likas sa kanila ang pagkilos nang sama-sama at ito rin ang kanilang pamamaraan sa pagtugon sa mga hamon na dumarating sa kanila. May kamulatan sila na ang laban ng isa ay laban ng lahat ng Ayta. Naging daan ito sa maayos na pag-oorganisa sa kanilang hanay lalo na pagdating sa mga usaping may kaugnayan sa kanilang pamayanan.

Dahil na rin sa mga nailatag na puntos sa itaas, ang gawaing pagpapataas ng kamulatan ng mga kababaihan sa kanilang karapatan ay idinudugtong sa pagpapahigpit ng kanilang pag-akap sa kanilang pagiging ganap na bahagi ng kanilang komunidad. Sa huli, ang pagpapataas ng kamulatan at pagpapatibay ng samahang kababaihan ay tinitignang mag-aambag sa kalakasan ng komunidad na epektibong pamahalaan ang sarili sa paraang magtatampok at magtatanggol ng kanilang kultura at magtataguyod ng kanilang mga karapatan bilang indibidwal at kolektibong lahi.

Naging totoo ito sa pag-oorganisa sa hanay ng mga kababaihan. Bukod sa pagbibigay-pansin sa mga karaingan ng kapwa nila babae na dumaranas ng karahasan at pagpapalakas ng kanilang paglaban para sa pagkamit ng kanilang mga mithiin at karapatan, ang kanilang organisasyon ay naglalayong patingkarin ang papel ng kababaihan sa pakikilahok sa pamamahala sa komunidad at pagtugon sa mga hamong kinakaharap nito. Sa proseso ng kanilang pag-oorganisa, malinaw ang pamumutawi ng kanilang sariling pagpapasya at pagsandig sa sariling kakayahan at katutubong kaalaman.

May pagpapahalaga sila sa pagsusuri, pag-aaral, at pagpapalalim ng kanilang pag-unawa sa mga bagay na sumasaklaw at nakakaapekto sa kanilang pamumuhay. Sa ganitong paraan nila napapayabong ang kanilang kakayahan upang mapausbong ang nilalayong mabuti at positibong pagbabago sa kanilang kalagayan, at igpawan ang mga hamon na kinakaharap ng komunidad.

Bukod sa kanilang damayan at tulong-tulong na pagpapanday ng kanilang mga kalakasan, naging bukas sila sa pakikipag-aral sa bawat isa para lalong mapagtibay ang mga kasanayan. Naging bukas din sila sa pakikipag-aral sa mga grupo at organisasyong taga-labas upang makapagbahagi sila ng kanilang mga karanasan at makapaghalaw din sila ng mga aral mula sa karanasan ng mga ito para mas mapaunlad nila ang kanilang praktika. Muli, makikita ito sa pagdalo nila sa iba't ibang mga pulong at palihan na inilunsad nila kasama ang iba't ibang organisasyong handang umalalay sa kanila. Kasama na rito ang mga inilunsad na palihan ng mga kababaihang Ayta kaagapay ang mga organisasyon tulad ng GABRIELA at ang UP College of Social Work and Community Development (UP CSWCD). Naging tampok din sa mga palihan at pagsasanay na ito ang naaangkop na proseso na may pagrespeto at pagsasalang-alang sa kanilang katutubong pamamaraan, kultura, at kasaysayan.

Sa patuloy na pagsisikap ng kanilang komunidad upang maipamalas ang kanilang katutubong pamamaraan sila'y patuloy na nakikipag-ugnayan sa iba't ibang institusyon. Magandang halimbawa nito ay ang pagpapamalas nila ng kanilang mga kaalaman sa mga halamang gamot, ang pagpapatampok sa kanilang mayamang kasaysayan, kultura't tradisyon, at maging ang kanilang mga katutubong laro na ibinahagi nila sa mga propesor at mga mananaliksik mula sa iba't ibang mga unibersidad. Ito ay upang maipalaganap ang kaalaman sa kanilang kultura at magkaroon ng pagtanggap dito ang mas nakararami, at maitala ito at ang kanilang kasaysayan para sa mga darating pa nilang salinlahi. Una nang bunga ng mga pagsisikap na ito ang pagkakabuo ng libro tungkol sa kanilang wikang katutubo at mga pag-aaral na naglalarawan sa kanilang mga katutubong laro at katangi-tanging pamumuhay.

Sa kanilang mga pakikibaka makikita natin na sila ang pangunahing gumaganap sa pag-aabot ng kanilang mga mithiin sa kanilang komunidad. Ang katutubong pamamaraan ang siyang nagtataguyod sa kanila. Marahil ang modelong ito ay hindi alternatibo para sa mga katutubo, dahil ito ang natural na proseso nila sa pagtataguyod at pagpapaunlad ng kanilang mga pamayanan at sistema ng pamumuhay. Tunay ngang kahanga-hanga ang modelo ng kaunlaran na ipinamalas ng kanilang katutubong pamamaraan, kung kaya't nararapat at mahalaga na maitala ito sa pinakapayak nitong anyo. Natatanaw lamang ito ng mga taga-labas bilang alternatibong modelo dahil kaiba ito sa palasak na modelo ng kaunlaran na umiiral sa kasalukuyan. Bagkus, ang ipinapabatid at ipinapagagap ng ganitong modelo ay ang alternatibong paraan ng pagbabalik-tanaw sa mga katutubong pamamaraan na kailanman ay hindi nabitawan ng mga Ayta Mag-indi sa Porac, Pampanga.



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### 3

## **Towards a Critical Pedagogy in the Context of Indigenous Peoples' Literacy** The Case of Community Organizing with the Aytas of Sitio Katipunan, Barangay Bueno, Capas, Tarlac

DEVRALIN T. LAGOS, MIGUEL PANGALANGAN, KARLA CODERES, and ANJANETTE DELA PEÑA<sup>1</sup>

[T]hey remain among the poorest and most disadvantaged peoples. The first-ever Report on the State of the World of Indigenous Peoples, issued by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in January 2010, revealed that IPs make up fully one-third of the world's poorest peoples, suffer disproportionately in areas like health, education, and human rights, and regularly face systemic discrimination and exclusion (UNDP 2010, 1).

The population of indigenous peoples (IPs) in the Philippines are estimated to be at 14 to 17 million in 2010 (ibid.). They possess their own languages and customs and can be historically differentiated from most Filipinos because of their resistance to colonization and non-indigenous cultures (IPRA 1997). IPs in the country are categorized into 110 ethnolinguistic groups. Northern Luzon, particularly in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) is home to 33 percent of all IPs, while Mindanao has 66 percent and Visayas has the fewest IPs in the country (UNDP 2010). One of the country's ethnolinguistic groups is the Ayta, who are mainly from Central Luzon (Region III).

IPs are among the poorest sectors in the Philippine society, as they are disproportionately benefitting and even marginalized from development outcomes. They have very low income levels and

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have inadequate access to basic social services such as health and education. IP communities also face higher incidences of morbidity, mortality, and malnutrition (De Vera 2007). These adverse conditions are the consequences of historical injustices and discrimination against IPs, as manifested in the destruction of their homes, displacement from ancestral domains, deception, exclusion, and erosion of traditional practices.

The IPs likewise retain very low literacy rates (*ibid.*). The deprivation of education, in turn, reinforces the cycle of poverty. In recent years, the Philippine government initiated reforms to improve the condition of IPs. Through the combined effort of IPs and IP rights advocacy groups, Republic Act (RA) No. 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act was signed into law on October 29, 1997. The law is an important legal instrument for the recognition, protection, and promotion of IP rights. The rights stipulated in IPRA are rights to ancestral domain; social justice and human rights; rights to self-governance and empowerment; and cultural integrity.

On August 8, 2011, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued Department Order (DO) 62, s. 2011 (“Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework”). This policy framework recognizes that the disadvantaged position of IPs could be also be attributed to their lack of access to culture-responsive education. DO 62, s. 2011 is a significant initiative to respond to IP needs, especially in education. First, basic education, if adequately provided, can enable IPs to claim their rights and to pursue their development. Second, education that is responsive to IP contexts and identities and that promotes cultural heritage can enable them to claim for power and rights. In 2015, the DO was supplemented by another DO, DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2015. This DO promotes “culturally appropriate and responsive curricula, lesson plans, instructional materials, and teaching methods” for IP learners.

These policy reforms could not be enacted if not for the courage and relentlessness of IP groups and advocates that form part of an IP social movement. It is the result of the continuing struggle of the IP sector that was born out of their historical marginalization. The IPs’ struggle for policy reforms and societal change was not a novel occurrence. Historically, IPs were part of the resistance against the Marcos dictatorship. Various IPs have also organized themselves, critically reflected on the roots of their oppression, and exercised self-determination. Examples of these are the Igorot struggle against the Chico Dam in Mountain Province and Kalinga and the Manobo struggle to preserve the Pantaron Mountain Range in Mindanao. Currently, IP groups continue to organize themselves for the assertion and protection of their rights, for self-determination, and for empowerment. Central to their community organizing work are the strategies of community education and conscientization.

### **Barangay Bueno, Capas, Tarlac: A brief profile**

According to the profile of the municipality of Capas in the province of Tarlac, residents of Barangay Bueno are considered the poorest in the municipality. There are six *sitios* that compose Barangay Bueno: Bueno Proper, Canaan, Hotspring Katipunan, Manibukyot, and Bunga. Bueno Proper is composed mostly of non-IP residents, while the *sitios* of Katipunan and Canaan are dominantly Ayta communities. A total of 2,090 individuals or 588 households live in Barangay Bueno. The primary sources of livelihood of the residents are rice farming and planting vegetables.

The barangay is located within a military reservation and is 22.5 kilometers away from the center of Capas. Barangay Bueno has a vast land area and a mountainous terrain conducive for agriculture. The roads and paths in the barangay are not cemented, except for a few ones in Bueno Proper. The main modes of transportation are carts pulled by carabaos, motorcycles, and tricycles. However, the

eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991 caused changes in the local landscape. A river must be crossed to enter Barangay Bueno. During the summer, people can either walk or ride a motorcycle, tricycle, trucks, or carts pulled by carabaos to cross the river. However, during the rainy season, the water level of the river rises, rendering Barangay Bueno inaccessible and isolated from the rest of the municipality. The construction of a bridge has been planned and promised by local leaders. However, until today, the bridge remains unbuilt. The seasonal isolation of the barangay from the municipality has led to the practice of stocking up on medicine, food, milk, and other essentials and necessities before the turn of the rainy season.

Several residents of Barangay Bueno have completed basic education. Most of them work as laborers in neighboring barangays. The few who reached college are able to find work in the capital or abroad. Parents and families aspire for a college education for their children, with the hope of escaping the shackles of poverty.

Wood is the main material used for the construction of houses, while some households have been renovated using concrete because of good harvest after the rainy season. Households have no direct access to water, so members of the community share in communal water pumps located at the side of the streets. Around ten households share in one water pump at Bueno Proper.

The Barangay Hall, which also serves as the community health center, is located in Bueno Proper. Bueno Proper has a public school offering Kinder to Grade 6 and another school funded by a faith-based organization that offers Kinder to Grade 1.

### The Aytas of Sitio Katipunan, Barangay Bueno

While Sitio Katipunan is dominantly populated by Aytas, it is considered a resettlement site, as Ayta residents did not originally come from Barangay Bueno. There are a number of reasons for the forced relocation of IP communities. In the case of the Ayta of Sitio Katipunan, the explosion of Mt. Pinatubo forced them to move from Pampanga to Tarlac. Armed conflict in their former lands also drove them to the lowlands. Unfortunately, the relocation sites are often distant from schools, markets, and livelihood opportunities. Because of this, relocated Aytas have difficulty in accessing education and health services and in finding livelihood opportunities. These conditions result in malnutrition, sickness, and death in indigenous people communities (De Vera 2007).

The Ayta of Sitio Katipunan also face the constant threat of eviction. They reside on a plot of land owned by a local landlord from a political family. Because of this, the residents of Sitio Katipunan are coerced to support the political candidate of the landlord and their family. If members of the community turn against the landlord, they will be threatened with eviction. Adding to this, the borrowed land is mostly infertile land, so the Ayta are unable to farm in the barangay.

Consequently, illiteracy and inaccessible education are exacerbated by the physical distance of schools from the resettlement areas. Adults are forced to either travel further in order to maintain their current jobs, or search for work near the resettlement area which, unfortunately, provides fewer livelihood opportunities.

In terms of their socio-economic life, the Ayta in Katipunan engage mostly in gathering the flower of wild bananas (*pamumuso ng saging*). This is often unstable and insufficient because of very low income from their produce, seasonality, and extreme weather conditions. The Ayta's economic situation is worsened by landlessness, isolation from social services such as water and health, and low levels of literacy. Most of the Ayta residents in Katipunan cannot read and write, and this makes them vulnerable

to deception in trading. The Ayta in Sitio Katipunan are also often excluded and discriminated by non-IPs in Barangay Bueno.

### Critical pedagogy and community organizing

An influential educator, Paulo Freire ([1968] 2000) promoted a radical thought and practice of education, often referred to as critical pedagogy. For Freire, education can either be an instrument that domesticates people to accept the present realities or an exercise of freedom where men and women critically reflect on their reality and engage in recreating it. Ledwith (2017) refers to Freire's critical pedagogy as a theory of power, critical consciousness, and liberation. Critical pedagogy is a way of understanding education and a way of emphasizing the power of people in re-creating the world. As a tool for education, it espouses a progressive political and moral project (Giroux 2011). Critical pedagogy is political as it relates to how people acquire knowledge and power. Finally, it is a form of education that links to people's contexts (Giroux 2011; Ledwith 2017). Learners are directed to think about their everyday lives and examine unequal power and oppressive structures in these realities.

Freire's concept of critical pedagogy is very influential to the theory and practice of community organizing (CO). Community organizing is defined as "a process that enables an individual and community to develop confidence, affirm and enrich capacities, recognize self-reliance, build communities and organizations, strengthen social movements for objectives and goals of community development for people-centered and sustainable development, social justice and empowerment" (Pagaduan 2016). Critical pedagogy is embedded in the process of community organizing. CO uses critical pedagogy to facilitate the formation of critical actors and productive power relations. This involves liberating education, where the poor can realize that they have the power to change their situation.

### Church-based and non-governmental organizations in Sitio Katipunan

Church-based organizations and development agencies have engaged with the Aytas in Sitio Katipunan. One of these groups is a non-governmental organization (NGO) involved in organic farming. The NGO implemented an organic agriculture initiative that entailed training and the provision of a greenhouse and of water supply. The major constraints in the implementation of this initiative in Sitio Katipunan are issues on illiteracy and landlessness. Through the NGO, the Department of Community Development (DCD) of the University of the Philippines College of Social Work and Community Development (UP CSWCD) partnered with Sitio Katipunan for its Field Instruction Program (FIP). This learning program allowed Community Development students to integrate with the Ayta and assist in their community organizing efforts (see next section).

The NGO, together with other faith-based institutions, non-government agencies, and other humanitarian agencies, provided crucial support to the Aytas of Sitio Katipunan. As mentioned earlier, the NGO has provided a greenhouse in Sitio Katipunan and in Bueno Proper. In addition, it has also provided seminars to educate farmers and Ayta community members on organic farming practices such as the utilization of carabao feces in the production of organic fertilizer and the use of mixed plants and gin as pesticide, among others. The initiatives of the NGO positively impacted subsistence agriculture and organic farming in the community.

However, there are limitations to these initiatives. First, the seminars have a limited impact to Sitio Katipunan because the participants cannot read and write, even if notebooks and pens were provided

for free to the participants. The seminars were also highly scientific and required participants to take note of practices in order to ensure proper and sustained use.

Meanwhile, various faith-based organizations have provided infrastructural and material aid to the Ayta of Sitio Katipunan, which included a water pump, cemented bathrooms, a *gusali*, a small building for kindergartners, and a church, which is also used as a shelter during storms. However, faith-based organizations would often provide dole-outs to attract people to attend church-based activities. This tactic promotes the culture of dependency on foreign benefactors. This practice can be argued as oppressive, as it veers the people away from critically claiming their right to basic services, which, in the first place, should be provided by the government. This culture of dependency also disempowers the people from realizing individual and collective capacities to organize in order to attain what they desire. As Austria (2008, 141) observes,

Life in the resettlement site offered a development paradigm outside the social, economic, and cultural practices of the Aeta, and the government official could not understand this. Economic development programs are one of the strategies of NGOs, government agencies, and church-based organizations to increase income. But ignorance of the Aetas' vision of development is one of the reasons most development projects were not successful in the resettlement sites.

One fundamental critique of the work of NGOs and faith-based organizations with the Ayta is their faulty perspectives on development. These organizations do not seem to trust the people as the primary movers of change. They look down on poor people's choices and are less willing to understand their complex social, cultural, economic, and political realities.

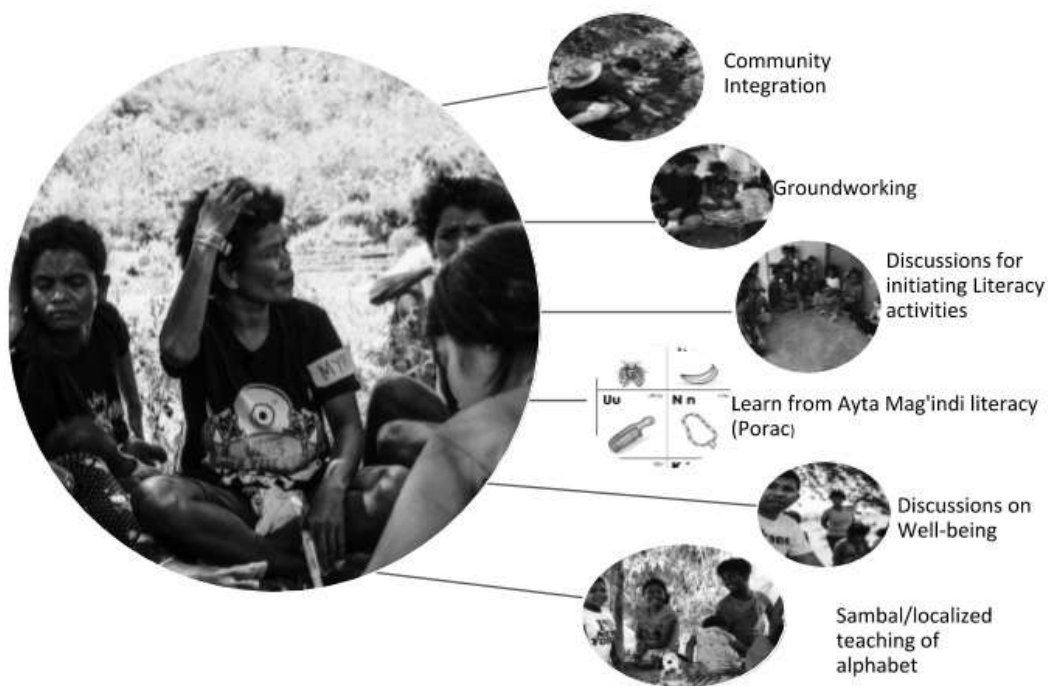
### **The Field Instruction Program (FIP), community organizing, and literacy**

The community organizing process with the Aytas in Sitio Katipunan was undertaken through the Field Instruction Program (FIP), which took place during a four-month period. Its main activities, undertaken mostly by fourth-year Bachelor of Science in Community Development (BSCD) students, include living and working with the people (community integration), participation in economic life, participatory situational analysis, groundworking, discussions on well-being, and compilation of Ayta/Sambal words towards a localization of the alphabet. Guiding these processes in the FIP are principles of critical pedagogy. Moreover, these tasks overlap and are not disconnected from one another.

Community integration is a crucial process for community organizers, especially in the context of working with the Aytas. As such, it was very important for students to participate in gathering the flowers of wild bananas or in gathering *palay* left in the ground from newly harvested fields. By living and working with the people, student-community organizers gained empathy and shared in the aspirations, pains, and experiences of the people.

Embedded in community integration is the process of situational analysis. The students interacted and facilitated conversations with different members of the community, including women, men, children, local officials, IP coordinators, and non-IP members of the *sitio*. Starting from personal narratives up to community stories, the complex social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental conditions were elucidated. Alongside the community integration process, regular groundworking was also undertaken, in which community organizers engage as many persons as possible in individual conversations (Maglaya 2015). It was crucial for rapport-building, informal dialogues, and discussions on the possibility of a literacy project for the community.

The community integration process provided an avenue for dialogue on the possibility of starting a literacy activity. It resulted in the exploration of various forms of collaborations with the local government. This, however, did not push through, because the Ayta community members questioned their sincerity in helping in the literacy project. Likewise, it also prompted the review and revisiting of the lessons from an existing literacy project of a different Ayta group. The FIP team in Tarlac met with a volunteer teacher and learners in Katutubo Village in Porac, Pampanga where Ayta Mag'indi groups have settled. The IP education primers and guide for IP literacy in Porac provided inspiration for initiating future literacy projects in Sitio Katipunan.



**FIGURE 3.1** • The process of community organizing towards literacy initiated by students of the Field Instruction Program (FIP) in Sitio Katipunan

Discussions on well-being were also undertaken. In these conversations, the Aytas shared the realities they have faced as a people, the differences between living in Sitio Katipunan and in the mountains, their understanding and expression of well-being, the issues faced in the community, the roots of these issues, and the possible solutions to these issues.

Armed with an intimate understanding of the history and the current struggles of the Aytas, the students were able to develop a mode of teaching the alphabet using local knowledge. Students interacted with community members to learn Sambal. There was a challenge in identifying the local tongue because the Ayta in Sitio Katipunan came from different places prior to the Mt. Pinatubo eruption and the armed conflicts in their ancestral lands. Sambal, however, is a dominant local tongue. Teaching the alphabet features common words that represent the Ayta's everyday lives.

### Characteristics and outcomes of a nascent critical pedagogy

Though in its nascent form, the critical pedagogy and the community organizing work in Sitio Katipunan was a small contribution in the pursuit of an alternative mode of literacy and education. It



is characterized by the following: the humility of educators; locating critical pedagogy in the struggle of Ayta; educators influencing what knowledge and narratives are produced; and exposing oppressive narratives.

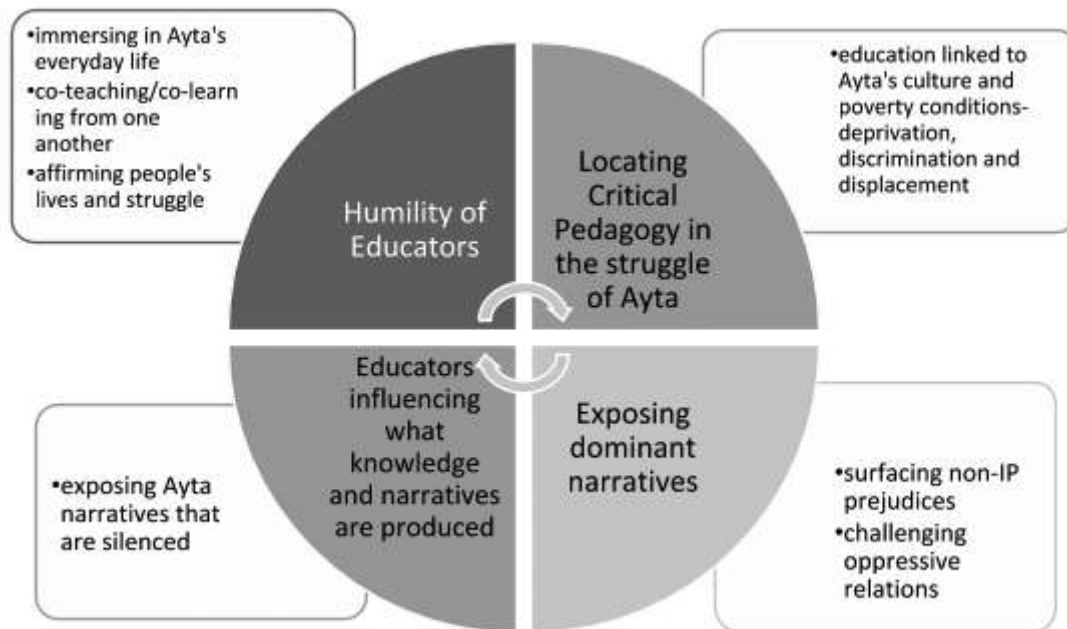


FIGURE 3.2 • Nascent critical pedagogy in the context of community organizing in Sitio Katipunan

### Humility of educators

The development of a nascent critical pedagogy was possible because the student-community organizers allowed themselves to immerse in the everyday life of the Aytas and become one with their experiences, pains, and hopes. As a result, a non-hierarchical relationship between the students and the community members was developed, both becoming teachers and learners about life, complex conditions, and aspirations for development.

Community organizing provided students with an understanding of how the Ayta cope with life's challenges. They dream to make education accessible for their children. "*Kung hindi dahil sa edukasyon ng mga bata, 'di kami pupunta dito sa patag (Sitio Katipunan)*" (If it were not for the education of the children, we would not go down here to Sitio Katipunan), said Tatay Ernie. There are no schools in the mountains. The primary reason why they stay in the lowlands was for their children to have better access to schools. The nearest elementary school to Sitio Katipunan is a thirty-minute walk from the *sitio*, while the nearest high school is in a neighboring barangay an hour and a half away, but they need to cross a river and a mountain range to get there.

Critical education is a process of affirming the everyday courage and resilience of the Ayta in navigating their daily lives amidst extreme deprivations—food insecurity, low income, landlessness, illiteracy, and development neglect.

## Locating critical pedagogy in the struggle of the Ayta

Critical pedagogy cannot be detached from the surrounding realities. The education of the Ayta must be linked to their culture and everyday experiences of poverty. Education is a process of becoming aware of the difficult truths of deprivation, discrimination, and displacement. As an Ayta woman said, “*Kailangan naming isipin araw-araw kung paano kami makakakain ng pamilya namin*” (Everyday, we need to think how our family could eat). Another Ayta woman explained, “*Hindi naman kami makapagtanim kasi wala naman kaming lupang mapagtataniman*” (We cannot plant crops because we do not have land for farming). Another added, “*Paano naman namin mapapag-aral ang mga anak namin kung namumuso lang kami araw araw?*” (How can we send our children to school if our only livelihood is gathering banana buds every day?). Other Ayta men also shared, with one saying, “*Walang karapatang pantao ang Ayta*” (The Ayta do not have human rights). Another one added, “*Walang trabaho para sa amin dahil hindi kami nakapag-aral*” (There is no employment for us because we did not go to school).

Community integration and conversations with the community surfaced the difficult realities of the Ayta. The IPs in Sitio Katipunan face insufficient livelihood opportunities and unequal economic conditions. Entire families, including parents and children, climb the mountains to gather banana buds and return with eight to ten kilograms of these, which are carried in sacks on their backs as they walk kilometers everyday.

The Ayta of Sitio Katipunan have limited capacity to farm and to plant few vegetables and fruits, because the land where they live was only lent to them by the previous *barangay* chairman. The seminars conducted by organic farming NGO capacitated the Ayta. However, without a land of their own, the Ayta are restricted from developing agriculture in their area.

The Ayta also recognize the limitations of their own claims to their rights, because they do not own land. The disempowerment and loss of control over their own lives dominate as local landlords hold political and economic power over the Ayta. Moreover, the women said, “*Hindi namin makuha ang mga pangarap namin dahil sa mga kakulangan namin. Hindi rin kasi kami napag-aral ng mga magulang namin*” (We could not attain our dreams because of certain realities and limitations. Our parents were also unable to send us to schools).

These difficult truths about landlessness, displacement from ancestral lands, hunger, inability to send children to school, and the lack of rights and justice need to be told. Education must problematize personal issues and connect them to broader realities of oppression and structural injustices.

## Educators influencing what knowledge and narratives are produced

Community organizers are popular educators that facilitate discussions of what matters to community members, the issues surrounding their daily lives, and a critical view on these issues. For instance, education should not just be about learning organic farming, but about knowing structural barriers to agriculture, such as landlessness. Instead of merely downloading technical knowledge to ‘passive’ learners, critical education is also a process of exposing Ayta narratives that are silenced.

“*Mawala ang kahirapan*” (For poverty to vanish). “*Magkaroon kami ng sariling lupa*” (To have our own land). “*Mapag-aral namin ang mga anak namin*” (To be able to send our children to school). “*Makapagtapos kami ng pag-aaral para makahanap ng trabaho at makatulong sa pamilya*” (To finish schooling so we can find jobs and help in the family). These are some of the dreams of women, men, and children in Sitio Katipunan. They hope to eradicate poverty and be able to access land, education, and employment. Access to these things can ultimately broaden their opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and a permanent place to stay.

Even before community organizers came into the community, the Aytas already had ways and mechanisms of resolving their everyday issues. Given the opportunity, they can articulate their individual and collective needs. This is why during the process of community integration, the Aytas expressed their want of learning how to read and write. This ultimately became the basis for exploring literacy activities in the community.

The initiative to make a guide for teaching the alphabet using the local tongue was an important process that allowed community members to share their knowledge and their language. In the process, community members became proud of teaching outsiders about their culture, a means to build confidence in their own strengths.

Functional and social literacy, aligned with critical pedagogy, were deployed through the collective production of a Sambal-based alphabet. The participatory process—in which the members of the community contribute to giving meaning to each letter based on their collective experience and understanding of their environment and their social and religious beliefs and practices—is a lesson learned through community organizing. Their stories and hopes are narratives of possibility that will give shape to future collective actions.

**TABLE 3.1** • Sambal-based words to teach the alphabet, compiled through the collaboration of community members and students

Titik	Salitang Sambal	Salitang Filipino
A	Ali	Nakababata
B	Buknot	Buntis
D	Dagi	Daga
G	Gamet (/ga-mut/)	Kamay
I	Indang	Babaeng nakatatanda
K	Ka-en (/ka-un/)	Kain
L	Labay	Gusto
M	Matampa	Maganda
N	Nakalubay	Nakabahag
O	Obat ko halali	Galing ako sa bundok
S	Sapa	Sapa
T	Taka	Tae
U	Utang	Ahas
W	Wa-a	Halika
Y	Yabut	Kugon

#### Exposing oppressive narratives

Critical pedagogy also attempts to pose critical questions. Non-IPs in Barangay Bueno and the few in Sitio Katipunan carry discriminatory and prejudiced notions of the Ayta. Barangay officials and personnel said that “*Tamad lang ang mga kulot*” (The Ayta are lazy) and “*Sila lang naman ang nakakatanggap ng tulong mula sa labas*” (They are prioritized whenever there are donations from outside). According to barangay officials, the Ayta are the only ones getting help from religious groups and NGOs, such as the

United Methodist Church and Korean faith-based organizations. Amidst the prejudices of non-IPs, the Ayta were able to tell narratives that question oppressive relations. “*Yumayaman lang naman ‘yang mga unat dahil sa aming mga Ayta’*” (The non-IPs become richer because of the Ayta), one expressed. “*Hindi natutupad ang mga pangako ng mga politiko ukol sa pagpagawa ng tulay; matagal na nila ‘yan sinabi.*” (The promises of the politicians to build the bridge are not fulfilled; they promised it a long time ago), added another Ayta. “*Walang hustiya para sa mahirap; ang hustisya ay para sa mayaman lamang*” (There is no justice for the poor; justice is only for the rich), another explained.

The Ayta are aware of the injustices that they experience: discrimination, the low status regarded to them, and corrupt governance. The community organizing process provided spaces to question the relationships between the conditions faced by the people and the underlying power and authority perpetuating these conditions.

## Challenges and lessons

Illiteracy contributes to other forms of marginalization and exploitation

Illiteracy greatly diminishes employment opportunities. Because of this, gathering banana buds and selling these between Php 7 to Php 14 per kilogram serves as the best opportunity for the Aytas to make a living. Illiteracy curtails mobility and traps the marginalized Aytas in a disadvantageous position and in an oppressive system. Illiteracy also exposes the vulnerability of the Ayta to exploitation via contracts that they cannot read. These contracts can range from labor and wage contracts, sale of land, votes during elections, and listings for free public education, among others. Contracts are often explained to the Aytas by a third party and are signed through fingerprint. Illiteracy worsens the vulnerability of the Ayta to further exploitation by oppressive agents and an oppressive system. Lastly, this inability to read and write exacerbates their lack of access to social services from local government units.

Literacy issues embedded in interlocking issues of oppression

Literacy is one of pressing problems in Sitio Katipunan, but their fundamental issues are their displacement from their ancestral domain and traditional culture, as well as their deprivation of livelihoods and basic services. IP discrimination is glaring in education, health, and local governance. This constrains sustainability in pursuing IP education in Sitio Katipunan.

Other educational initiatives in Sitio Katipunan may be contributing more to disempowerment

First, education initiatives, whether from public institutions (i.e., public elementary school) or initiatives from faith-based and humanitarian non-governmental organizations, have conducted literacy programs in English. The fundamental instrument used in teaching language in schools is the English alphabet, but Sambal is the dominant indigenous language of the Ayta in Sitio Katipunan. Likewise, a mixture of Kapampangan, Ilocano, and Tagalog are spoken by the people of Tarlac, as do the Ayta.

English as the medium of instruction in schools is a barrier to improving literacy rates in indigenous communities. This is also a manifestation of oppression and epistemicide. The imposition of a foreign language as a default medium of instruction and the outright disregard to indigenous knowledge have oppressed existing knowledge of the IPs. Epistemicide “murders” alternative knowledge(s), erases culture and social practices, and disqualifies and discredits agency of social agents. The social agency, culture, and well-being of the Ayta are under siege as long as the Philippine education system continues to use English as the medium of instruction and limits the use of Filipino and indigenous languages

in formal and alternative education. What the Ayta are facing could be considered as *linguicide*, a term coined by Lorna Williams to refer to the death or near death of indigenous languages.

Working *with*, not for, the people

Development practitioners should be able to *facilitate and build the capacities of people to pursue* development initiatives, rather than to act as experts. As community development practitioners, the four-month intensive integration of students in the Sitio Katipunan entailed building confidence among community members, affirming people's capacities, and explorations of building a community group. Community action in order to address issues are identified and done by the members of the community and not imposed and implemented by external 'experts.'

### Community education and literacy for collective actions

The process of liberating education must be a continuous process where the Ayta of Sitio Katipunan gains greater access to reading and writing competencies, as well as access to increasing knowledge and agency. The following discussions are imperatives for future work with the community in Sitio Katipunan.

- (1) *Persistent conversations.* At first, educators bring up critical questions for people to tell their local issues. Over time, people need to pose their own critical questions. They must continue to question the structures of unequal power and build their capacities to change aspects of their conditions. Community education must encourage the Ayta to resist powerlessness and assign dignity to themselves as they continue to struggle for more equal relations with non-IPs and against the powerful structures in the community. Furthermore, for the Aytas' learning to become more transformative, education must explicitly integrate critical analysis of unequal power and the re-creation of more productive kinds of power. This should translate in increasing people's capacities to engage structures and authorities. The community must persist in discussing hope and possibilities of better conditions.
- (2) *Not just literacy, but liberating education.* Critical pedagogy is not a neutral form of education. Learning to read and write is developmental in the sense that they can significantly increase the possibilities for the Aytas to engage meaningfully in social relations (e.g., trading, accessing services). Literacy activities must revolve around the context of people by integrating basic literacy to their livelihood and culture. For the work in Sitio Katipunan, initiating education should not only be about the employment of strategies and skills to teach the alphabet, sounds, and words. Community educators must assume that the education of the Ayta possesses a certain political and moral agenda. The community organizing reveals that the Ayta can critically reflect on their conditions. This consciousness on the nature of their exploitation can be a resource for their emancipation.
- (3) *Strengthen community organizing with the Aytas.* Community organizing and education are processes where people muster courage and resilience to struggle. Critical pedagogy must continue to link to Ayta's struggle for rights, equality, and social justice. CO must give way for people to identify possibilities and actions to address discrimination, displacement, and neglect. Community organizing with the Aytas means challenging the power imbalance, supporting their self-organization, increasing their access to information, and providing solidarity. Another direction for CO is challenging oppression through dialogues to persuade powerholders to change policies, procedures, and practices, as well as engaging in confrontation and other conflict tactics (Twelvetress 2002).

- (4) *Role of outsiders as community organizers and critical educators.* Community organizers must also be critical educators. This means they need not be politically conservative. Education work is a process of confronting the imposed 'truths.' They need to understand that education has the intention to enable people to realize their power to change their world. Community organizers-critical educators must be equipped with the skill of facilitating the process of posing questions so that people may examine their realities from a critical perspective (Ledwith 2005). Critical reflection of realities is hoped to culminate in the creation of narratives of possibilities (ibid.). Ultimately, reflection must lead people to action.

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## 4

# Collective Enterprise as a Workplace

## The Case of Payoga-Kapatagan Multipurpose Cooperative (PK-MPC)

BENJAMIN R. QUIÑONES, JR.<sup>1</sup>

The objective of this study is to highlight and draw lessons from the economic and finance model of a hitherto charitable organization responding to the distressed conditions of poor peasants in a province constantly threatened by risks arising from natural calamities, exploitative practices of landlords and traders, and not so responsible local governance. Realizing the un-sustainability of its benevolent activities, the charitable organization re-organized into a cooperative and adopted the triple bottom line goals of people (community engagement), planet (ecological conservation), and profit (economic and financial sustainability). Since becoming a cooperative, the Payoga-Kapatagan Multipurpose Cooperative (PK-MPC) evolved as a workplace that consciously reconnects with communities, improves and expands the livelihood base of its members, helps them transition from an informal to a formal economy, creates and promotes decent work, and transforms landless peasants into entrepreneurs. The people's collective enterprise consists of the production and distribution of organic fertilizer aimed at shifting local farming practice from inorganic to organic agriculture, with the accompanying support of financial services, technical assistance, marketing support, and capacity-building organized jointly by the people through the cooperative. Being economically and financially sustainable, PK-MPC has developed the capacity to become a major advocate of organic farming, thereby contributing to lesser carbon emissions in the province, the greening of

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Isabela farms, the creation of new decent job opportunities, and the advancement of sustainable farming.

In this case study, the term ‘collective enterprise’ (i.e., an enterprise co-owned and co-managed by many individuals who jointly establish, work together, and mutually operate the enterprise), is used to portray an economic unit of social solidarity economy (SSE). SSE is a process of economic activation and mobilization of the labor of the impoverished and marginalized sectors to foster alternative solutions to the crisis of employment and the welfare state that is systemic in the neoliberal economy. Lack of financial means on the part of the poor, marginalized, and socially excluded makes labor the main contributory factor to resource mobilization and investment in SSE. In addition to fleshing out the strategic dimensions of SSE through the experience of the PK-MPC, the study also makes an initial attempt to enumerate the contributions of SSE to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### The origins

The Payoga-Kapatagan Multipurpose Cooperative (PK-MPC) was originally a development non-governmental organization (NGO) registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in 1985 as the “Payoga-NGO.” The initiators of the organization were Belgian missionaries who, in partnership with the Parish Youth of St. Rose de Lima Parish Church in Gamu, Isabela, saw that share tenants in the province of Isabela had no voice, as they were under the economic and political control of politicians and big landlords engaged in the business of trading and moneylending. The initiators determined that the mission of the Payoga-NGO was to “strengthen the voice of farmers” and “empower them by providing livelihood opportunities.”

The main intervention of the Payoga-NGO consisted of providing farm households in the municipality of Gamu with stock grants of male and female goats. The farm households were expected to return to the NGO three offspring, regardless of gender, within 12 months. The stock grant, coupled with technical and financial services provided pro bono by the NGO were warranted by the poor conditions of the farmer-beneficiaries and the fact that Isabela is a disaster-prone province. In 2013, for example, Typhoon Lando struck the province causing the loss of Php 33 million worth of crops and adversely affecting 180,000 farmers. A year later, the province was again in a state of calamity, this time a drought, due to El Niño.

However, the stock dispersal program was not sustainable. The farmer-beneficiaries treated the stock grant not as a livelihood opportunity, but as a source of *pulutan* (side dish or appetizer, such as goat meat, that is eaten with alcohol) for special occasions such as Christmas, weddings, birthdays, baptisms, festivals, homecoming of family members from overseas, and other celebrations.

In 1992, the founders, together with some farmers, established the Kapatagan Multi-purpose Cooperative (K-MPC) as an alternative means of combating poverty, and registered it with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) with its own Board of Directors. Initially, only 100 farmers joined the cooperative while the rest continued to rely on the dwindling resources of Payoga-NGO. In 1999, the Board of Payoga-NGO voted to merge with K-MPC, and K-MPC was re-registered with the CDA (as amended in 2011) as the Payoga-Kapatagan Multi-purpose Cooperative or PK-MPC. Today, PK-MPC is a growing organization with a strong membership of 3,408 farmer members spread all over Isabela Province. More than 50 percent of its members are women.

## Features of the collective enterprise that depict the SSE dimensions

Certain dimensions of SSE set it apart from the market-oriented neoliberal economy. Among its strategic dimensions are the following:<sup>2</sup>

Dimension 1: Socially responsible governance

*The collective enterprise is a social-mission oriented organization that recognizes the limits of environmental exploitation for the purpose of sustaining society's ability to meet people's needs.*

In the case of PK-MPC, the marginalized and socially excluded people (landless farmers) are the owner-managers of the cooperative. The cooperative has a bottom-up organizational structure (see Figure 4.1) where the Member Clusters comprise the dominant power blocs in the General Assembly. PK-MPC has evolved into a strong and healthy organization with a responsible Board of Directors (BOD) that is accountable to the General Assembly. It has a highly capable management team and committed members who work together with the cooperative's officers.

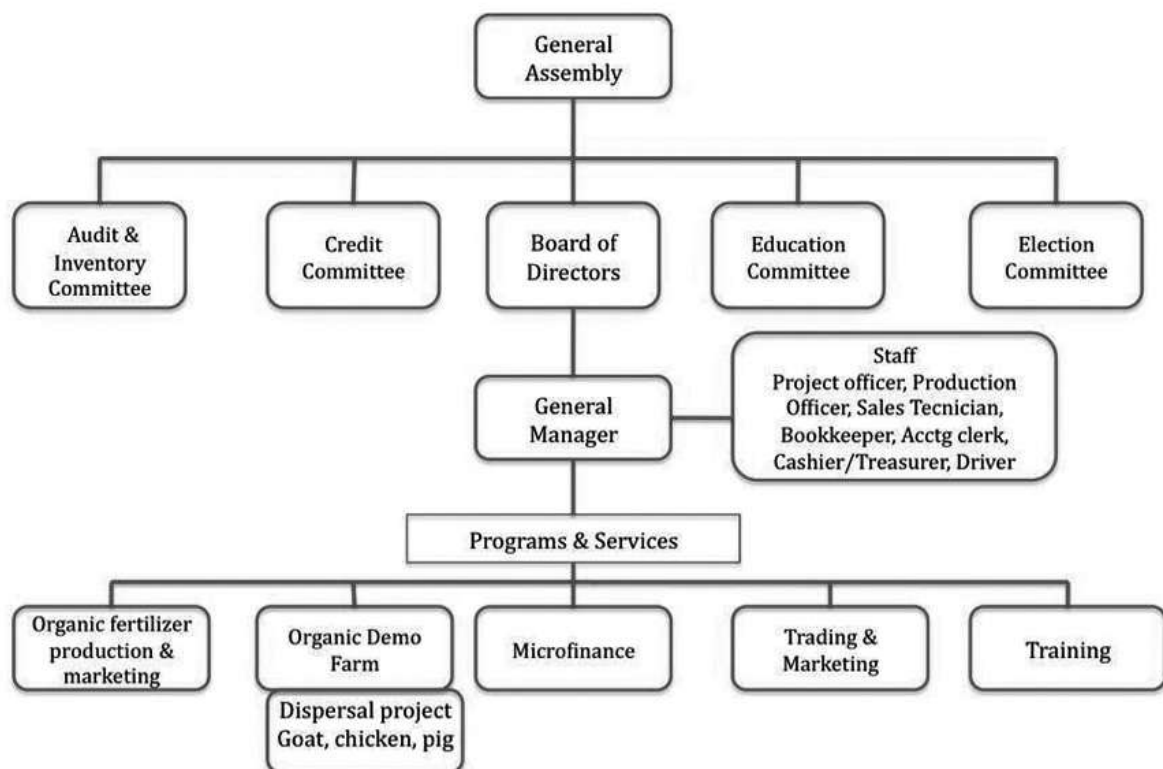


FIGURE 4.1 • Organizational structure of PK-MPC

PK-MPC members are grouped into 225 clusters with 15 members per cluster. Each cluster elects its own cluster leader who, in turn, elects the BOD and the Committee members. If found

<sup>2</sup> For an elaborate discussion of the dimensions of the social solidarity economy, see Benjamin R. Quiñones, Jr., "Social Solidarity Economy (SSE): An Alternative to Neoliberal Economy" (Speech delivered at the 40th Anniversary and Symposium on Solidarity Economy of the Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC), Tokyo, Japan, March 23, 2014), [http://www.alliance-respons.net/bdf\\_fiche-document-123\\_en.html](http://www.alliance-respons.net/bdf_fiche-document-123_en.html).

incapacitated, any BOD or Committee member can be terminated by the General Assembly. The BOD and Committees consult members through the clusters when deciding on policy matters concerning deposits, loans, marketing assistance, and other cooperative services. As a matter of fact, the adoption of organic farming was decided upon by the General Assembly, and only after did the BOD take steps to implement it.

Gender-wise, the General Assembly is composed predominantly of women. Of the total membership, 1,755 (51.5%) are female, and 1,653 (48.5%) are male. The Board of Directors (BOD) is also predominantly female (4 of 5 board members are female). The BOD Chairman is female. Of the eight staff members, six are female, two are male. The General Manager is female.

The cooperative's basic approach to ensure gender equality is PK-MPC's membership policy of non-discrimination when accepting members. Gender equality (i.e., women representation) is actively considered in recruiting members, decision-making, the management/operation of the cooperative, hiring/promoting staff/workers, and training.

Notably, the PK-MPC was born out of a long-drawn process of conflict resolution between the Payoga NGO and the Kapatagan MPC which exposed the membership to sharp contradictions in interests and opinions. Credit is due to the responsible leaders, officers, and committed members for resolving conflicts and rising above the contradictions, thus ushering in a new era for the cooperative. Based on the dynamics of their current governance, it does appear that PK-MPC has learned a great lesson about the profound importance of bottom-up, participatory governance, and participatory dialogue in decision-making and in conducting the cooperative's day-to-day activities.

#### Dimension 2: Edifying ethical values

*The collective enterprise upholds and defends the basic human rights of all community members against injustice, including exploitation and psychological and physical harm.*

The socially responsible practices of the collective enterprise reflect the edifying ethical values of its leadership and management. The edifying ethical values inculcated by the cooperative among its members include: *bayanihan* (solidarity, cooperation, working together); respect for the rights of others; rejection of all forms of violence and discrimination; people and planet over profit; self-management of the collective enterprise, people's participation in decision-making, resource allocation and wealth redistribution; responsibility, accountability, reliability; and efficiency, viability, and sustainability.

There were initial objections from local farmers, among them hitherto non-members of the cooperative, to the adoption of the organic farming method. Many of them thought they could not achieve good harvest if they discontinued the use of chemical fertilizers. Instead of ignoring the objections, the coop's Board and management worked hard educating the farmers about the necessity and benefits of protecting the environment through organic farming.

In addition, the cooperative diligently provided technical and marketing assistance and financial (deposit and loan) services to the farmers in support of organic farming. With more local consumers patronizing organic farm produce, PK-MPC eventually proved that organic farming is capable of raising farm productivity. It is more profitable and acceptable to local consumers.

Thus, the education campaign eventually paid off. To date, 2,650 rice and corn farmers from the total 3,408 farmer members of PK MPC have shifted to organic farming and are able to increase their



FIGURE 4.2 • The collective enterprise at work (Photo courtesy of the Foundation for a Sustainable Society)

farm yields and incomes. Subsequently, the production of Greenfriend organic fertilizer increased from 45,000 bags (50 kilograms (kg) per bag) in 2006 to 350,000 bags in 2016.

### Dimension 3: People-centered development

*The collective enterprise builds its own capacity to produce and/or access products and services that address human needs and contribute to the general well-being and social protection of community members.*

**Promotion of organic farming.** The main business enterprise of PK-MPC is the production and distribution of organic fertilizer with the view to shifting agriculture in the Gamu municipality from the rampant use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to the more sustainable and socially responsible practice of organic farming. The use of organic fertilizer also better prepares farm households for the effects of climate change.

PK-MPC produces its own brand, Greenfriend, made up of local biodegradable raw materials such as chicken, bat and carabao manure, and rice straw mixed with carbonized rice hull, agricultural lime, legume, and enzymes in 80 percent water. It is processed and stored in a concrete warehouse with the capacity to store 500,000 bags inside a seven-hectare farm owned by the cooperative along the highway of District 3, Gamu, Isabela.

**Pooling of community savings to provide sustainable financial services.** Instead of relying on donor funds, PK-MPC embarked on mobilizing community savings by offering deposit services not only to cooperative members, but also to the public at large. While access to donor funds encourages dependence of households on outside help, the mobilization of local savings enabled PK-MPC to reconnect with the local community and provide an alternative use for local resources. Many depositors

opted to become members of PK-MPC because of the opportunity to access productive loans which, according to the Cooperative Law, can be made available only to members.

Any PK-MPC member, male or female, can avail of production loans from Php 10,000 (USD 200) to Php30,000 (USD 600) payable within a minimum of six months to a maximum of two years. Loans are primarily for the purpose of purchasing organic fertilizer, thus supporting the cooperative's organic fertilizer business. Instead of cash, farmers get organic fertilizer at the standard quantity of 15 bags per hectare. PK-MPC sells its organic fertilizer for Php 230 (USD 4.60) per 50-kg bag, much lower than the prevailing market price of Php 300 (USD 6.00) to Php350 (USD 7.00) per 50-kg bag.

Members who prefer to use chemical fertilizers do not actually lose their borrowing privileges. However, with the cooperative's interest rate policy geared towards supporting organic farming, loans for the purchase of organic fertilizer are on a preferential basis of 1% interest per month, while loans for the purchase of chemical fertilizers are charged a higher rate of 2.5% per month. In effect, those who use chemical fertilizers have to pay more for the cost of damage to the environment.

***Integrating farm households into the collective enterprise's value chain.*** PK-MPC integrates farm households into the value chain of its collective enterprise by providing further incentives to both members and non-members who can supply raw materials for its organic fertilizer business. Rice straw costs Php 500 (USD 10) for 250 kg, and animal manure (chicken, bat, or carabao) fetches Php 30 to 45 (USD 0.60 to 0.90) for 50 kg.

Individuals (members or non-members) who gather the raw materials and mix them in the fertilizer factory can earn Php 4 (USD 0.08) per 50-kg bag. Those who volunteer as sales agents for the cooperative can earn Php 20 (USD 0.40) for every 50-kg bag of fertilizer they sell.

PK-MPC also hosts the "Summer Jobs for Kids" Program for young people aged 10 to 11 years old during summer vacation in partnership with the Department of Education (DepEd). The students are assigned to work in the PK-MPC Organic Vegetable section of the coop's demo farm. "This helps our youth appreciate and love organic farming," said PK-MPC General Manager, Ms. Madrid.

PK-MPC distributes native pig and free-range chicken to deserving farmer members (i.e., members with excellent credit and savings records and have shifted to organic farming). The livestock dispersal program is not on pro bono basis. The livestock grant must be repaid in kind.

***PK-MPC's support to groups at risk: Anecdotal evidence.*** Among the 70 seasonal workers of the organic fertilizer production, the oldest are female—Clara Beronia, 85, and Villamor Lintao, 74. The youngest, who is 20 years old, does the same work as the senior citizens. Explaining why PK-MPC hires senior citizens, Ms. Madrid said, "It is one way of recognizing their valuable contribution to agriculture, and keeping them in our workforce enables them to maintain their vigor. There are many Claras and Villamors among our members, but hiring them is not a viable option because they reside far from our plant and transportation will be a big problem for them. Senior citizen workers also receive an additional incentive of Php3 for every bag of fertilizer they make."

#### Dimension 4: Environmental conservation

*The collective enterprise deliberately chooses the products and services it offers to serve the needs of community members, while it is constrained by its social responsibility to protect and enhance the local ecosystem and biological diversity.*

The environmental conservation measures undertaken by PK-MPC include the following:

- (1) An active campaign against chemical fertilizers and pesticides through the promotion of and support for organic agriculture.
- (2) Provision of a loan facility geared towards supporting organic farming. A lower interest rate is offered to borrowers who shift to organic farming and use the loan for the purchase of organic fertilizers/pesticides. But borrowers who use the loan for the purchase of chemical fertilizers/pesticides are charged a higher interest rate.
- (3) Use of locally available waste materials (animal manure, farm waste, etc.) as raw materials for organic fertilizer production.
- (4) Conduct of seminars on environmental conservation in partnership with government agencies and environmental NGOs.

As a result of PK-MPC's dedicated advocacy towards the greening of Isabela province, it is now the official representative of all farmers organizations in Region II (Cagayan Valley Region) to three Regional Councils: Organic Farming, National Disaster, and Small and Medium Enterprises. Being economically and financially sustainable, PK-MPC has become a major advocate of organic farming, thereby contributing to the lessening of carbon emissions in the province, the greening of Isabela farms, the creation of new decent job opportunities, and the advancement of sustainable farming.

Dimension 5: Socio-economic sustainability

*The collective enterprise achieves economic and financial sustainability by producing products and services that address people's needs and are therefore valued and patronized by the community members.*



**FIGURE 4.3** • The products made in the collective enterprise seek to address the needs of community members (Photo courtesy of the Foundation for a Sustainable Society)

***The collective enterprise gives new meaning to work in society.*** Being both owner and worker of the cooperative, members view their work as a creative and productive endeavor to meet/serve their own needs and ends.

To the extent that tenant farmers wisely use the financial and technical resources provided by the cooperative, the crucial option is wide open for them to rise above being tenant-workers and become entrepreneurs.

The concept of “cooperative work” is attractive and liberating for tenant farmers who do not own the land they till and who henceforth must work hard in order to make others live. The cooperative enables the asset-less tenant to accumulate wealth and achieve financial independence by helping him establish off-farm enterprises that add revenues to the family income.

Compared to a for-profit enterprise, the collective enterprise integrates and reconciles in one person the functions of worker, owner and manager, which, under capitalism, is assigned to three persons. The for-profit enterprise pays a higher salary to top management and lower wages to workers, and distributes the profits to shareholders. However, the collective enterprise pools capital resources from members and transforms these into loans to support a common undertaking—organic farming. Profits of the organic farm are fully retained by the members while PK-MPC retains only the cost of capital. Furthermore, the members enjoy the benefits of patronage refund plus a share in the profits of the cooperative.

In the field of contract growing (considering livestock dispersal as an old form), for-profit enterprises charge contract growers for the cost of raw materials (e.g., pigs, goats, chickens), while PK-MPC gives them out as stock grant to its members. For-profit companies buy the matured livestock generally at low farmgate prices. In contrast, PK-MPC gets paid in kind in the form of weaned pigs, goats, and spring chicken—the market value of which are comparatively lower than that of the matured livestock that was earlier dispersed.

***The collective enterprise reconnects workplaces with communities.*** One of PK-MPC’s strategic actions to reconnect with communities is to offer deposit services to the public at large, and not only to members. Depositors eventually opt to become members of the cooperative to take advantage of its loan services.

The cooperative’s financial services enable tenants to shift from monocrop production to integrated farming (i.e., combining crop production with livestock raising). Furthermore, access to cooperative loans helps tenants upgrade their livestock enterprise.

Another strategic action is livestock dispersal, which is reserved for “deserving members”. To a neighboring asset-less tenant family who happens to be a non-member, becoming a livestock owner-operator is a come-on to join the coop as members because the program provides a means by which the family can create and grow wealth.

A third strategic action is job creation in support of the organic fertilizer business. Not only cooperative members but also non-members are welcome to earn extra money by selling raw materials required for organic fertilizer production to the cooperative and selling “Greenfriend” products to farmers in neighboring municipalities.

A fourth strategic action is the exposure to organic farming of youth, ages 10 to 11 years old, during school summer vacation.



**The collective enterprise promotes decent work.** All PK-MPC staff work a standard eight-hour day, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. They receive regular pay at salary rates required by law. They enjoy a social protection package that include: Social Security System (SSS) benefits, access to low cost-housing finance through Pag-ibig, medical and hospitalization benefits through Philhealth, and 13th-month pay.

In addition, the staff/workers enjoy profit sharing, performance incentives at the end of the year, rice allowance in cash, and a 10% sales commission.

**Engagement with social impact investors.** PK-MPC actively engages and enters into partnership with social impact investors such as the Foundation for a Sustainable Society Inc (FSSI), ICCO Cooperation, HEKS (an ecowaste coalition), the provincial government of West Vllanderen (Belgium), the Philippine Center for Agricultural Research and Rural Development (PCARRD), and the Department of Agriculture (DA).

**Engagement with the government and private sectors.** PK-MPC helps members market their organic produce in local markets, as well as to private companies and government agencies at marked-up prices. Payment for the organic produce is coursed through the cooperative, which enables the latter to deduct the amount of loans outstanding from the sales proceeds. Compared to the traditional system where farmers sell their produce at a very low price, the cooperative ensures that farmers are paid reasonable prices for their quality organic crops. On top of marked-up prices, members are given patronage refunds and dividend shares equivalent to around 70 percent of the total earnings of the cooperative at the end of the year.

Regional branches of government agencies such as the DepEd, the DA and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) have entered into partnership with PK-MPC to buy seeds and organic fertilizer on a regular basis. At the municipal level, PK-MPC is actively involved in the implementation of the municipality's environmental conservation policy.

**Total assets, liabilities, and net worth.** In terms of financial capacity, the total assets generated by PK-MPC increased from the Php 1 million start-up capital in 1999 to Php 68.87 million in 2016, of which Php 47.6 million are liabilities (see Table 4.1). PK-MPC's net worth as of end of 2016 registered at Php 21.27 million, or more than 21 times its original capitalization.

**TABLE 4.1** • Total assets, liabilities, and net worth of PK-MPC (in Php), 2014–2016

	2014	2015	2016
Total assets (% increase)	36,810,213.70	60,555,219.85 (64.51)	68,868,299.63 (13.73)
Total liabilities (% increase)	18,989,902.98	36,256,315.04 (90.92)	47,598,706.51 (31.28)
Total net worth (% increase)	17,820,310.72	24,298,904.81 (36.36)	21,269,593.12 (-12.47)

Source: Payoga-Kapatagan Multipurpose Cooperative

**Sources of funds.** PK-MPC finances its operations mainly from internal funds and revenues of its organic fertilizer business, which accounted for 99.9% of its total revenues in 2014, 2015, and 2016. PK-MPC typically sells organic fertilizer on credit to members. The other sources of income for PK-MPC

(accounting for 0.1% of its total revenues) are service charges from training, membership fees, income from bank deposit, and tractor services.

**Financial sustainability.** PK-MPC's revenues increased from Php 40.94 million (USD 818,900) in 2014 to Php 70.54 million (USD 1.4 million) in 2015, against total expenses of Php 34.86 million (USD 697,246) in 2014 and Php 52.81 million (USD 1.05 million) in 2015. Over 97% of the expenses were administrative and selling costs. Net revenues amounted to Php 6.08 million (USD 121,620) and Php 17.73 million (USD 352,617), implying a return on investment (ROI) of 14.85 percent in 2014 and 25.12 percent in 2015.

## Contributions to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations regularly monitors the contributions to SDGs of the State and private companies. While SSE is initiated not by the government or by private corporate entities but by local citizens, and since SSE sets itself as an alternative development model, it is imperative to identify and measure the cooperative's contributions to the SDGs. It cannot be overemphasized that SSE achievements are, in fact, contributions to sustainable development of organized groups of ordinary citizens, thus representing a third pillar for SDG realization.

The SDG indicators are selected from among the various indicators developed by the United Nations (UN). Only qualitative information is provided in Table 4.2 below since quantification of SDG contributions is beyond the scope of the study. It can be deduced from the tabulated information below that collective enterprises of ordinary citizens do contribute to sustainable development and their contributions have great potential for achieving the SDGs.

**TABLE 4.2** • SDGs addressed through the SSE features of PK-MPC

Feature of the collective enterprise	SDG being addressed	SDG indicators
Socially responsible governance	SDG 5 (Gender equality)	Higher proportion of female than male in: (a) total membership of the cooperative; (b) Board of Directors; and (c) management and staff
	SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions)	Members are satisfied with the leadership & management of the cooperative; members actively participate in decision-making
Edifying ethical values	SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions)	Women are empowered, resulting in reduced proportion of women subjected to physical, psychological, or sexual violence
People-centered development	SDG 1 (No poverty)	Decrease in the proportion of community members with income below the poverty line
	SDG 2 (Zero hunger)	Decrease in the proportion of community members who are undernourished
	SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities)	Decrease in the number of community members who have no access to finance
Environmental conservation	SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth)	Decrease in the number of unemployed among community members
	SDG 13 (Climate action)	Increase in the proportion of community members engaged in organic agriculture, waste recycling, and use of renewable energy

TABLE 4.2 • SDGs addressed through the SSE features of PK-MPC (continued)

Feature of the collective enterprise	SDG being addressed	SDG indicators
Socio-economic sustainability	SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities)	Higher proportion of community members with access to basic services (e.g., housing, water, electricity, public transport)
	SDG 12 (Responsible production and consumption)	Higher proportion of community members who practice waste sorting, recycling/use of waste materials for composting, organic fertilizer production and use

## Challenges

At the present stage of their development, SSE initiatives such as the collective enterprise of PK-MPC, are small in scope and largely localized. A number of challenges have to be overcome if SSE is to be mainstreamed as an alternative development model. A few of these are enumerated below:

- ***Inculcation of long-term perspective and development.*** PK-MPC members need to have a longer-term perspective of developing their community and not focus only on short-term production goals. They need to have access to long-term finance to enable them to make substantive investments in infrastructure and capital assets. In particular, PK-MPC needs to develop a plan for the effective transfer of ownership of land to the tillers.
- ***Awareness of the kind of economy co-created by cooperative members.*** There is a need to foster greater ideological understanding and awareness among cooperative members and the local citizens in general about the relevance of building SSE as an alternative to the neoliberal market economy.
- ***Mapping of SSE initiatives.*** It is important to identify SSE stakeholders at the provincial and regional levels—who they are, what their business models are, what they do/what products and services they produce. Such information is needed for networking among SSE stakeholders and for scaling up SSE initiatives.
- ***Building synergies among SSE stakeholders.*** Collaborative partnerships need to be promoted among stakeholders doing similar activities in the same strategic part of the value chain (e.g., production, financing, logistics, marketing/trading, capacity-building, research/advocacy, etc.).
- ***Support continuing studies on linkage-building for scaling up.*** Linkage-building among SSE initiatives need to be supported for the development of value chains at the national and international levels, that are owned and operated by the marginalized and socially excluded sectors of society.





## 5

# The Impacts of the People-to-People Trade in the Balangon Banana Project in Lake Sebu

MASAKO ISHII<sup>1</sup>

This article examines the People-to-People Trade in the Balangon Banana (P2PTBB) Project undertaken in the municipality of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, Philippines by Alter Trade Japan Inc. (ATJ), the Alter Trade Corporation (ATC), and the Upper Allah Valley Farmers, Inc. (UAVFI) starting in 2004. The study was conducted as part of the Balangon Future Project initiated by the ATJ and aims to work with its Filipino counterparts to review the P2PTBB in order to reassess its base concept and restructure the content for the future. In order to review their P2PTBB project in Lake Sebu, the ATJ commissioned the author to conduct field research in the area from February 16–23, 2015 (see Figure 5.1 on next page).<sup>2</sup> This article was written by reorganizing the findings of the field research.

Results found that the income earned from the P2PTBB project was insufficient for the growers to improve their overall quality of life. In this way, the impact caused directly from the income earned or from the direct impact of the project itself was limited. However, there were also some positive indirect impacts that prevented the growers from being at risk of severe marginalization within the wider socioeconomic structure surrounding the indigenous T'boli and Ubo peoples of the region. A distinguishing characteristic of the Balangon banana growers in Lake Sebu Municipality compared with other production sites of the P2PTBB is that the majority of them belong to the indigenous peoples.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In line with the Balangon Future Project, the ATJ outlined the following purposes of the field research: (1) to investigate how P2PTBB has affected growers within the context of socioeconomic changes in the region; (2) to determine the extent to which P2PTBB has contributed to increasing growers’ self-reliance; and (3) to review the significance of P2PTBB and make recommendations for its future.

<sup>3</sup> Other production sites of the P2PTBB project are located in Northern Luzon, Negros, Panay, and Bohol. In Mindanao, aside from Lake Sebu, they are located in Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, the municipality of Makilala in North Cotabato, and the municipality of Tupi Municipality in South Cotabato.

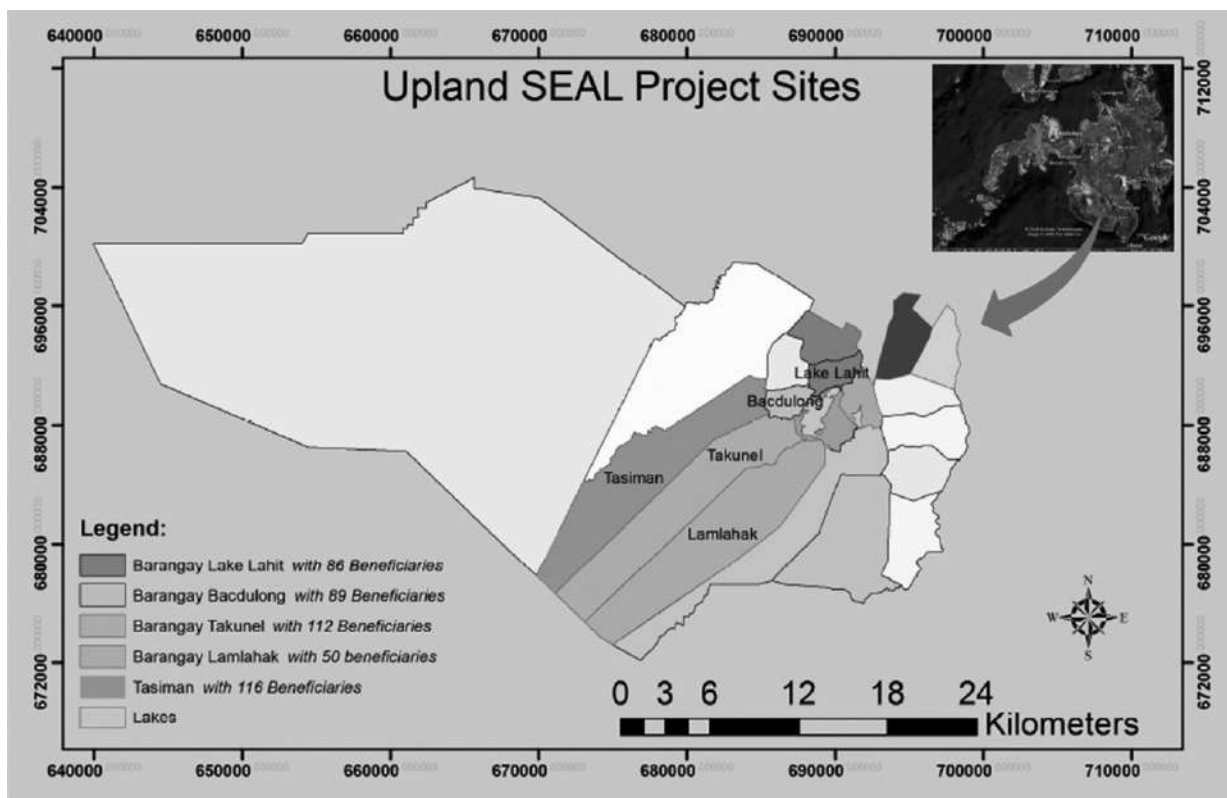


FIGURE 5.1 • Map of the municipality of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato  
(Source: Upper Allah Valley Farmers, Inc.)

As shown in Section 2, the P2PTBB project was started to make vulnerable farmers self-reliant by establishing a people-to-people trade between the growers and the consumers, i.e. an alternative trade to profit-oriented “economism” (Ohno 1998, personal communication). In South Cotabato, multinational corporations (MNCs) have been expanding their banana production sites upland to produce higher value “highland cultivated bananas.”<sup>4</sup> In the neighboring T’boli Municipality, some T’boli landowners signed a lease contract with the Upland Banana Corporation (The AMS Group of Companies) in 2004, whose operation was taken over by Sumifru in 2009. Sumifru started aerial spray of chemicals without the consent of the lessees and residents, causing them environmental and health problems.

Therefore, if the indirect impacts are recognized, then the P2PTBB project in Lake Sebu produces an alternative value to the exploitative banana production of Sumifru in T’boli Municipality (cf. Ichihashi 2014, 15). However, the positive indirect impacts are not translated to the level of growers. In addition, as the MNCs have also started to grow and export organic and low-chemical bananas (De Leon and Escobido 2004), the alternative value of the P2PTBB, that is trading chemical-free bananas produced by sustainable circular agriculture and promoting self-reliance of the growers, is less conspicuous to Japanese consumers today.

Based on the field research, this article aims to examine both direct and indirect impacts of the P2PTBB in Lake Sebu, and holds that there are positive indirect impacts that contribute to growers’

<sup>4</sup> *Kochi saibai* banana or “highland cultivated banana” is sold more expensive than lowland cultivated banana as it is sweeter than the latter. In the highlands, it takes a longer period for banana fruits to grow than in the lowland as the gap of temperature between the daytime and nighttime is larger there. The lengthened cultivation period allowed banana plants to produce more starches in their fruits, making them sweeter.

self-reliance within the wider socioeconomic context. However, these indirect impacts are difficult to discern for both producers and consumers. In this way, the paper discusses the situation where the fair trade movements like the P2PTBB face the difficulties of differentiating its alternative value from the profit-oriented market mechanism, and thus suggests the stakeholders to recognize its indirect impacts.

The P2PTBB project has been referred to in several books and categorized into that of fair trade (Arias 2003; De Leon and Escobido 2004; Cabilo 2009).<sup>5</sup> However, few discussions have been published based on the empirical case studies of the P2PTBB (Otarra 2014; Sekine 2017). Otarra's (2014) discussion was based on the survey of 64 T'boli and Ubo growers in three sitios in Barangay Tasiman, Lake Sebu. Based on the survey results, Otarra argued that most of growers were able "to afford to spend money on their own basic necessities and needs," and that the P2PTBB project "has helped to improve the respondents' economic well-being" (Ohno 1998, personal communication). The author agrees with this trend. However, in this article, the author also highlights the limitations in uplifting the quality of life and argues that it is important to pay attention to the indirect impacts, which can be recognized when considering the socioeconomic situation of the indigenous groups in Lake Sebu.

Sekine (2017) conducted a field survey on the P2PTBB project in Makilala Municipality, North Cotabato Province, and along with secondary data from statistical analyses and existing studies and documents, examined the issues and challenges. Sekine found that although it is certain that the P2PTBB project had improved the socioeconomic conditions for growers, the idea of a people-to-people trade concept had not been shared with growers and consumers. This article reveals similar findings, and their implications will be discussed in the conclusion.

This article is based on the author's short field research in Lake Sebu and thus the findings and discussion that unfolds within this article is preliminary in nature. Though the author obtained the permission to publish it from the ATJ, the views expressed in this article are those of the author's own, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the stakeholders involved.

## Field research

The field research was conducted by visiting the Balangon banana growers in their villages (*barangays*). The author visited five out of the six villages housing the Balangon banana growers who sold their products to the ATC (see Table 5.1 on next page). Barangay Klobe was not visited as it was far from the center and only a few growers lived there. In order to understand their general experiences, the author interviewed 16 of the growers using a questionnaire. However, when sensing that six of the growers felt uncomfortable from the questionnaire-based questions, they were interviewed through oral conversations partly with my interview questions in mind. In Barangay Takunel, a focus group discussion was conducted with seven growers.

The ethno-linguistic groups of the 16 households are listed in Table 5.2 (also on next page). The T'boli and Ubo are the main indigenous peoples in the region, while the Cebuano and Ilonggo, in contrast, are settlers who originally came from the Visayas region along with their descendants.

Aside from the growers, the following selection of stakeholders were interviewed: Two founders, and two T'boli with eight and six years of experience, respectively, in packing the Balangon banana from the UAVFI stakeholders; alongside a representative from the Allah Valley Development Foundation,

<sup>5</sup> The ATJ and ATC do not claim the P2PBB project to be either fair trade or organic and it was not certified as such by a third-party certification body.

**TABLE 5.1** • Number of the Balangon banana growers interviewed in each village and their related characteristics (unit = persons)

Barangay (Village)	Sitio (Division)	Questionnaire	Conversation and FGD <sup>a</sup>	Population (as of 2015) <sup>b</sup>	Main ethnolinguistic groups <sup>c</sup>
Tasiman	Siete	6	N/A	2,927	Ubo: 47.0% T'boli: 41.0% Ilongo: 6.7%
	Dweled	5	N/A		
	Lamsual	N/A	2		
Lam Lahak	Center	2	1	4,110	T'boli: 97% Ilongo: 1.5%
Bacdulong <sup>d</sup>	Center	N/A	2	2,112	T'boli: 92%
Takunel	Center	N/A	FGD	2,562	T'boli: 98%
Lake Lahit	Center	N/A	1	2,331	N/A
	Malipayon	1	N/A		
	Takenfung	1	N/A		
	T'boli	1	N/A		
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6+FGD</b>	<b>14,042</b>	<b>N/A</b>

<sup>a</sup> FGD stands for focus group discussion.

<sup>b</sup> Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), "Municipality of Lake Sebu," Philippine Standard Geographic Code, accessed on February 29, 2020, <https://psa.gov.ph/classification/psgc/?q=psgc/barangays/126319000>.

<sup>c</sup> Data obtained by the author in 2015 from the Municipal Government of Lake Sebu.

<sup>d</sup> Growers in Bacdulong had stopped growing the Balangon banana as the soil had become acidic and inhospitable.

**TABLE 5.2** • Ethnolinguistic groups of the 16 households

Ethnolinguistic group	Number of households
Ubo	3
T'boli	3
T'boli or Ubo*	5
Ubo / T'boli	1
T'boli / Ilonggo	2
Cebuano / Ilonggo	1
Ilonggo	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

\* Five households in Sitio Dweled, Barangay Tasiman informed the author that they were T'boli. However, Datu Alas, a traditional leader of the Ubo, claimed that they belonged to the Ubo tribe.

Inc., (AVDFI) stakeholders; and a traditional leader of the Ubo tribe.

The stories of the Balangon banana growers in Sitio Siete, Barangay Tasiman were translated from the T'boli language to Cebuano or English through a local daycare teacher. The stories of those in Barangay Dweled were translated from T'boli to Cebuano through a farm assistant and a technician of the UAVFI. The rest of the growers were interviewed in Cebuano by the author, and responded in



Cebuano, Ilonggo (Hiligaynon), or Tagalog, with translations when necessary. Ilonggo is widely spoken in Lake Sebu Municipality and belongs to the Visayan language group, which is the same group as Cebuano. The author has a good command of Cebuano and therefore was able to understand a simple Ilonggo conversation.

### General profile of Lake Sebu Municipality

According to the 2015 census of the Philippine Statistics Authority, the population of Lake Sebu Municipality totaled 87,442 people. The main industries are farming, inland fishing, cottage industries, and rattan furniture production, with rice, corn, and tilapia being produced. Handicrafts are mainly those crafted by the T'boli.<sup>6</sup> The major lakes in the municipality are Sebu, Seloton, and Lahit, all of which are picturesquely surrounded by hills and forests (see Figure 5.2 below). There are also seven waterfalls located around these lakes with magnificent views. The center of Lake Sebu Municipality is located at approximately 700 to 800 meters above sea level and provides relief from the heat to lowland visitors. The area previously attracted many domestic and international tourists until the 1990s, after which point the security situation deteriorated. There are several handicraft shops around the lakes that



FIGURE 5.2 • Lake Sebu, February 2015 (Photo by Masako Ishii)

are mainly for tourists, but the industry was suffering due to the decrease in international tourists as of 2015.

<sup>6</sup> According to data obtained by the author in 2015 from the Municipal Government of Lake Sebu.

According to 2015 data from the municipal government, the ethnolinguistic composition of the population is as follows: 58% are T'boli and related groups, 32% are Ilonggo, 6% are Cebuano, 2% are Muslim, and 2% are from other groups (see Table 5.1).

The remainder of this paper is divided into three parts. In Section 2, an outline of the stakeholders and the P2PTBB project is provided. In Section 3, the article describes the socioeconomic context of the indigenous peoples on Mindanao and in Lake Sebu Municipality. In Section 4, the results of the field research are reported separately in terms of the direct and indirect impacts. In conclusion, both direct and indirect impacts are examined to show that the latter plays an important role in preventing further marginalization of the indigenous groups. However, it is discussed that its positive impacts are difficult to be appreciated by both growers and consumers, as MNCs have been appropriating the values of the fair trade in producing export bananas.

### THE ATJ, ATC, UAVFI, and people-to-people trade

This section introduces the organizations that are involved in the P2PTBB project in Lake Sebu, namely the ATJ, the ATC (later incorporated as the Alter Trade Philippines Inc. in September 2016), and the UAVFI.

The ATJ was formally a non-government organization (NGO) that was previously referred to as the Japan Committee for Negros Campaign (JCNC). The JCNC was established in February 1986 to respond to the serious famine that plagued Negros Island due to the collapse of sugar prices. When they began their assistance to the victims of the famine, the committee members realized that providing relief to the victims would not solve the root causes of vulnerability to the small-scale farmers. They also noted that their assistance was dependent upon donations from the Japanese people and was not sustainable (Ichihashi 2018).

These findings led the JCNC to start importing the *muscovado* sugar produced by Negros farmers in March 1987 from the ATC, which was established in the Philippines in the same year, thus bringing forward the concept of “trade-not-aid” as a sustainable solution to the crisis. In 1989, the JCNC was formally organized into the ATJ using several Japanese consumers’ cooperatives as its main stockholders, and began to engage in the P2PTBB project.

The initial idea of the P2PTBB project was to support the concept of self-reliance among vulnerable small-scale farmers such as those on Negros Island. The idea was to establish the people-to-people trade between the growers and the consumers and aimed to provide an alternative trade to profit-oriented “economism.” The project added what its leaders termed a “solidarity value” to the banana trade by directly connecting growers and consumers and creating opportunities for them to share one another’s difficulties and challenges. In this way, they tried to differentiate the P2PTBB project from the market-oriented banana trade, which provides only user and commodity values to consumers (Hotta and Akiyama 2005, 40).

The P2PTBB project also sought to question the general concept of the superiority of Japan as a developed country over a “third-world country” like the Philippines by emphasizing the fact that part of Japan’s own development had been achieved by previously exploiting the Philippines (Hotta 1998, 83). From Japan’s liberalization of its banana market in 1963, the export-oriented and mono-cropping of the Cavendish variety of banana had been established by the MNCs in “typhoon-free” Mindanao. The volume of imported bananas from the Philippines rapidly increased in the 1970s and replaced the expensive Taiwan bananas in the Japanese market. By the mid 1970s, Philippine bananas had become a fruit that could be purchased all year round in Japan. It is at this juncture when the Philippine bananas

became so popular in Japan that Yoshiyuki Tsurumi's 1982 book, *Bananas and the Japanese*, raised awareness of the problems involved with the MNC's banana production, such as the fact that they rarely enabled workers to improve their lives by making them sign onerous contracts, increased their dependency on the company, and damaged their health and environment through use of agricultural chemicals. The P2PTBB project's approach tried to respond to these issues by establishing an alternative trade in bananas thus protesting against the exploitative banana production of the MNCs.

However, in November 1990, a giant typhoon wreaked havoc on the banana farms in Negros Island. Worse still, in 1994, the banana bunchy top virus had spread and caused severe damage to the Balangon banana plants. In order to constantly supply the Balangon banana to the consumer's cooperatives (the trade in which generated funds for projects for the small-scale farmers), the ATJ and ATC launched the "Balangon Renewal Project" in 2000 and started to look for new production sites outside Negros Island. The aim of the Balangon Renewal Project was to attain a stable supply, ensure quality improvement, and receive a fair and reasonable price.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, in South Cotabato province, a group of former priests and seminarians gathered to form a fraternal community in 1998. This formation was brought about by the group's desire to reach out to the poor, especially those in indigenous communities. Lake Sebu Municipality was identified as one of the project areas. The AVDFI, established in 1989, had already intervened in the area through various projects. In July 2002, the key personnel of the AVDFI and the fraternal community formed the UAVFI in order to manage economic projects and raise funds for social development work. They sought a suitable project to involve the indigenous peoples of Lake Sebu Municipality, whose economic situation had deteriorated during the 1990s (UAVFI 2005).

During the 2000s, the ATJ was looking for a production area that could export the Balangon banana to Japan in order to stabilize the quantity supplied to customers. In November 2004, the ATJ and UAVFI forged an agreement relating to the implementation of an experimental Balangon banana project. This pilot project yielded positive results and the two entities agreed to expand it. The role of the ATC was to buy bananas from the UAVFI and export them to Japan. The general objective of the project was set out in 2005 to "build and strengthen the economically and politically empowered Ubo communities which are able to manage and sustain development interventions/projects in the area" (UAVFI 2005).

### The indigenous peoples of Mindanao and Lake Sebu

In southern Philippines, the population of indigenous peoples (both Muslim and non-Muslim) has become minority compared to the settlers from Luzon and Visayas and their descendants.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the American colonial government and the Commonwealth government implemented land laws that were unequal to the indigenous peoples. In October 1903, the Philippine Commission enacted the Public Land Act No. 926, which prescribed the maximum hectares of land for homestead settlers to own as sixteen hectares.<sup>8</sup> An individual was allowed to purchase maximum 16 hectares and a corporation or like association was allowed to purchase or lease maximum 1,024 hectares of the public land. A native was entitled to have a patent of land not exceeding 16 hectares. However, around a half year before the 1903 Public Land Act was enacted, the colonial government basically nullified all Moro and non-Christian land and property rights by adopting the

<sup>7</sup> A brief history of the ATJ may be found in the English language at [http://www.altertrade.co.jp/english/01/01\\_02\\_e.html](http://www.altertrade.co.jp/english/01/01_02_e.html).

<sup>8</sup> However, the 1903 Public Land act was not extended to the Moro Province until 1905.

Act 718, entitled “An Act Making Void Land Grants from Moro Sultans or Dattos or from Chiefs of Non-Christian Tribes When Made Without Governmental Authority or Consent.”

In 1919 and 1936, the Public Land Act No. 926 was amended and provided that the 16 hectares previously allowed to homestead settlers was to be increased to 24 hectares, while non-Christians were only allowed to have a permit of occupation for any tract of land of the public domain reserved for them not exceeding four hectares. Therefore, the indigenous peoples of Mindanao gradually lost their rights to their ancestral domains (Rodil 2010, 5).

Along with the introduction of the land ownership system, policies were implemented to send homestead settlers from the Luzon and Visayan regions to Mindanao Island. Between 1913 to 1917, seven agricultural colonies had been founded on the Island. In 1918, the Interisland Migration Division of the Bureau of Labor was established and was later replaced by the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA) in 1939. General Santos City, where the port of exporting Balangon banana is located, is named after the manager of the NLSA and former Chief of Staff of the Philippine Army, Major General Paulino Santos. General Paulino Santos led the first group of settlers from Manila with a number of employees, and landed in Dadjangas (changed to General Santos City in 1968), and brought them to Koronadal Valley in South Cotabato Province (Wernstedt and Simkins 1965, 87–88; Pelzer 1983, 141–42). The NLSA resettled a total of 8,300 families mostly in the relatively empty areas of the Koronadal and Allah Valleys (Wernstedt and Simkins 1965, 92). As a result, major market towns sprung up from the migrant settlers from the central and northern Philippines, which brought settlers and the administration closer to the T’boli.

During the Second World War, opportunities for further settlement were interrupted when Japanese troops occupied the lowland regions. Although some T’boli were forced to work in the Japanese camps, the war had a minimal impact on the T’boli in the Lake Sebu area (Mora 2005, 13). After the war, the Independent Philippine government continued its migration policies. In 1950, the NLSA and the other agencies concerned with resettlement and agricultural development were merged to form the Land Settlement Development Corporation (LASEDECO), and in 1954, the Magsaysay administration reformed the LASEDECO into the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA) (Wernstedt and Simkins 1965, 92).

Along with the influx of settlers, roads were constructed in the Koronadal and Allah Valleys. Many landless poor people, who voluntarily migrated south in the hope of obtaining land, outnumbered the settlers that arrived under the government programs. As a result, Christians outnumbered non-Christians in Cotabato Province (of which South Cotabato Province was a part) by the 1960s. The indigenous peoples were unfamiliar with land ownership registrations. Consequently, land disputes between settlers and the original inhabitants of Mindanao began to frequently occur.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the logging industry was rapidly expanding and the value of wooden exports peaked in 1979 (Krinks 2002, 136). The logs were exported to Japan, which was experiencing a period of high economic growth. The deforestation negatively affected the indigenous peoples, whose livelihoods depended on the forests.

With Japan’s liberalization of its banana market in 1963, the MNCs such as Dole, Del Monte, and United Fruits had entered the mono-cropping of the banana production and export and was joined by the Sumitomo Corporation in the late 1960s. The penetration of this large-scale capitalism was backed by the State, especially under the Marcos regime (Hawes 1987), and the Armed Forces of the Philippines and paramilitary groups were often mobilized to support these developmental endeavors. As a result, the indigenous peoples of the southern Philippines experienced severe marginalization. Reacting to the alienation of their land by the influx of

Christian settlers and their marginalization through the penetration of the capitalist economy, the Moro (mainly Muslim indigenous peoples) were motivated to wage an armed separatist movement and the non-Moro indigenous peoples began to unite under the name of the Lumad to assert their rights (Rodil 2010, 8), culminating in the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997.

### Socioeconomic change in Lake Sebu since the 1960s

According to Manolete Mora, who conducted an ethno-musicological study among the T'boli in the 1980s, the first Visayan settlers arrived in Lake Sebu along with a Protestant missionary group in the late 1950s. In 1961, the Catholic Santa Cruz Mission (SCM) was established in Lake Sebu under the leadership of an American priest, Father Rex Mansmann, and exerted a significant influence on the T'boli in the lake areas and outlying regions until the mid-1990s (Mora 2005, 14). According to a founder of the UAVFI, the SCM consistently hired 200-300 staff consisting mainly of T'boli and implemented various projects that were aimed toward socioeconomic development. They also established schools and health clinics (Mora 2005, 192 fn. 21), and as a result, invigorated the local economy in the 1980s.

However, by the mid-1990s, due to a change in the SCM's leadership, activities had dwindled. Other factors had also adversely affected the Lake Sebu economy in the 1990s such as in 1995, when the Abu Sayyaf Group, a breakaway group of the separatist Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), abducted 16 people (including four U.S. citizens) at Traankini Falls in Lam Lahak village (GMA News 2009). Since then, the number of international tourists dramatically decreased. In 1996, there were instances of cattle rustling in Sitio Siete, Barangay Tasiman, which developed into fighting with the 27th Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, forcing many residents to evacuate their homes. In 1997, the influence of the Asian Financial Crisis was felt in the region through rising commodity prices and the El Niño-related climate events damaged agricultural products. By the end of the 1990s, Lake Sebu had been contaminated by the over-cultivation of tilapia, and a so-called "fish kill" caused damages for fishpond owners. This series of events negatively affected the regional economy, and some of the T'boli residing along Lake Sebu and the main roads began to sell their land. These events spurred the UAVFI to seek projects that would support the livelihoods of the impoverished, especially the T'boli and Ubo peoples.<sup>9</sup>

In the early 2000s, lakes were polluted from the opening of the surrounding banana plantations. The awareness of the importance of lake environments led Lake Sebu Municipality to adopt an ordinance that restricted the opening of agricultural plantations around the lakes. Around the same time, a paved road connecting Surallah Municipality to Lake Sebu Municipality was opened, facilitating the flow of goods, commodities, people, and information both to and from Lake Sebu Municipality. The new road brought an increasing number of local tourists to Lake Sebu and enabled the markets to expand beyond the municipality for cash crops and fruits. With the establishment of the paved road, the UAVFI was also able to engage in the export of the Balangon banana from Lake Sebu as they could now be transported from Lake Sebu to General Santos City within a day. At the same time, amid an influx of entrepreneurs from the lowlands, some of the indigenous peoples were hired as low-paid laborers. The other indigenous peoples were pushed further inland after selling their land, which had increased in commercial value.

It was in this context that the ATJ and UAVFI began the experimental cultivation of the Balangon banana in 2004 and began exporting to Japan in 2006. As of 2015, a road connecting Lake Sebu

<sup>9</sup> This was based on an interview with a founder of the UAVFI on February 22, 2015.

Municipality and Maitum Municipality in Sarangani Province was under construction. When finished, this road will accelerate the flow of goods and people in and out of the municipalities.

### Direct and indirect impacts of the P2PTBB Project

This section describes the results of the field research by separately examining the direct and indirect impacts of the P2PTBB project. The direct impacts refer to those caused by the income earned through the P2PTBB project, whereas the other broad and long-term impacts are considered as indirect, such as the impacts on maintenance of environment and subsistence economy.

#### Direct impacts

**Regular income.** The average profits earned by the fifteen growers (of the sixteen interviewed) ranged from Php 150 to Php 3,000 (USD 3.4 to USD 67.4 in 2015) per fortnight. One grower mentioned that they did not have any profits as a result of landslides from the heavy rains in 2013, and at the time of the interview they were looking to restart the growing of the Balangon banana. The minimum wage for the agricultural sector in South Cotabato was Php 257 per day, and the salary of Php 3,000 every fortnight was almost the same as the minimum wage.

Fifteen growers also grew cash crops such as abaca, coconut, or corn and 11 growers have non-agricultural incomes. The large differences of profit from Balangon banana among the respondents indicates that it constitutes a substantially large household income but is also one of many sources of income.

However, when compared with seasonal crops such as corn and abaca, the Balangon banana plants bear year-round fruit. The UAVFI visited the pick-up point for each sitio and bought the Balangon banana from growers every fortnight at the price of Php 1 per piece (see Figure 5.3) as of 2015.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the growers received regular cash incomes every fortnight and benefitted from a stable market at which they could sell the Balangon banana. Though the amount of income was small, it helped households to buy household necessities such as rice, side dishes, condiments, cooking oil, soap, shampoo, and detergent.

**Limited contribution to improvement of education and health conditions.** The Balangon banana production generated little surplus income to contribute toward elevating the household's quality of life, or to invest in improving the quality of the Balangon banana's production.

The author asked about the growers' household situations in terms of food consumption, health, and education. Seven growers mentioned that they sometimes could not eat rice three times a day due to cash income shortages, and ate root crops or bananas instead.<sup>11</sup> With regard to health maintenance, when a grower's family member was in poor health they first tried to cope by going to the barangay health center. When they suffered from severe illnesses that needed special treatments, they went to the emergency hospital in the municipality of Surallah, only if they had the transportation and money to pay for the hospital fees. Five growers mentioned that even though they needed to be treated at the emergency hospital, they had been unable to go because of a lack of money. This indicates that their households were economically vulnerable to severe illnesses.

<sup>10</sup> At the time of the writing of this article in February 2020, the price per piece has increased to Php 1.60.

<sup>11</sup> Crops such as cassava, sweet potato, taro, and banana are also staple foods in the area. However, answers such as "when we harvest Balangon we can buy rice, but when we have no harvest, we just eat cassava" indicated that the growers preferred to eat rice when they had sufficient money.



FIGURE 5.3 • A pick-up point for the Balangon banana, September 2016 (Photo by Masako Ishii)

With regard to education, eleven out of the sixteen growers had school children between grades one and six, and there was no mention of them being unable to send their children to school at the time of the interview. However, many were supported by the 4Ps program which refers to the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, and is the Aquino III government's flagship anti-poverty program that provides conditional cash grants to the poorest of the poor in order to improve the health, nutrition, and education of children (Department of Social Welfare and Development). At least 10 of the growers (out of the 12 who were asked) were 4Ps members. According to the principal of the local national high school, very few T'boli and Ubo youth attended university or college.<sup>12</sup>

**Low investment, low risk.** For growers, the advantage of growing the Balangon banana was that it did not require much capital to grow, maintain, or harvest. In the beginning, growers were required to attend an orientation seminar on how to grow the Balangon banana without using chemicals, a result of which meaning that they did not need to buy pesticides or chemical herbicides. When they started cultivating the Balangon banana, some needed the initial capital to obtain stems known as “suckers,” and clear land. For example, the growers in Sitio Siete, Barangay Tasiman were provided with suckers by the UAVFI in installments, while growers in Sitio Dweled, Barangay Tasiman obtained free suckers from neighbors. Some of them also needed to hire laborers to clear the land.

However, once they started growing the Balangon banana, little cash was needed to maintain the crop. The UAVFI provided free plastic bags to cover the bananas, and growers did not have many

<sup>12</sup> This is based on an interview with the principal of the national high school in Lake Sebu on February 23, 2015.

expenses aside from the labor for cleaning land and maintaining plants. Therefore, growing the Balangon banana was a low investment and a low risk and growers acknowledged this advantage. When compared with corn, the growing of corn requires the regular use of pesticides and fertilizers and sometimes achieves poor harvests despite their usage.

**Low productivity.** Regarding the number of “mats” (a genet formed by a parent plant and its suckers) as maintained by the growers, five growers had increased their numbers of mats since they first started, while six had maintained the same number, and three had decreased the number (out of the fourteen asked).<sup>13</sup> This decrease was mainly due to a lack of plant maintenance. In Barangay Bakdulong, growers had stopped growing bananas because the soil had become acidic and the bananas no longer grew well. The other issue affecting the growers was a large number of rejects. One grower mentioned that some of his bananas had fallen down before they were ripe. He did not know the cause, and needed technical advice to solve the problem. The lack of technical support is one of the reasons for the low productivity of the Balangon banana in Lake Sebu.

In sum, the direct impacts from the Balangon banana trade enabled growers to obtain a stable income and to meet their daily necessities. However, it is not sufficient to improve their overall quality of life. Little production and labor costs are an advantage, but at the same time, they are causes of low productivities. In Lake Sebu, the growers do not have access and knowledge on farm techniques to grow bananas without using chemicals to increase the yields. The P2PTBB has limitation in enabling growers to be economically sufficient and they feel constant shortage of cash income.

#### Indirect impacts

**Maintenance of the environment through the growing chemical-free bananas.** Some of the Balangon banana growers learned that the growers and laborers from corporations such as Dole and Sumifru suffered from various ailments such as skin diseases, coughs, visual disorders, and so on as a result of being exposed to chemicals, making the disuse of chemicals a more advantageous alternative. In the neighboring T’boli Municipality, the lessees and residents have been protesting against the aerial spraying of chemicals by Sumifru.<sup>13</sup> Dr. Romeo Quijano, a faculty member of the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology at the University of the Philippines Manila warned of the possible contamination by harmful chemicals of the water resources in South Cotabato due to the aerial spraying activities of banana plantations in several municipalities, including the municipality of T’boli (Templonuevo 2015). For the people in Lake Sebu, their livelihoods depended on the lakes and the experience of the “fish kills” due to pollution made them aware of the value in maintaining clean lakes.

**Maintenance of the subsistence economy.** The significance of growing a native banana variety. In the area, the Balangon banana was generally intercropped with other crops such as corn, abaca, cassava, yam, and various fruit trees. Because the Balangon banana could be produced through intercropping, it did not prevent households from growing other crops both for sale and household consumption in a small scale at the same time.

The fact that the Balangon banana is a native variety that had previously been grown and is a local staple food, and thus part of the subsistence economy, has also contributed to the growers’ self-reliance.

<sup>12</sup> One grower lost all of their Balangon banana plants from landslides, and the author failed to ask one grower how many mats they had when they started growing the Balangon banana.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the following short video clip, entitled “Poison Rain,” produced by Interface Development Interventions Inc., (IDIS), a Davao-based NGO, at <https://youtu.be/aCwMhqTWWao>.



In short, the people did not introduce alien cash crops just to sell them to external markets, but rather extended the range of subsistence crops and sold them to earn cash income, and any remaining or rejected bananas could then be consumed at home.

This characteristic of the Balangon banana as a cash crop was different than, for example, coffee, whose production rejects cannot be substituted as a staple food source for household consumption if the household was unable to buy rice. Thus, there is less risk involved from the rejected Balangon banana. The fact that its production is not totally market-oriented prevents the growers from being vulnerable to the market, and does not run the risk of greatly reducing the local household subsistence economy.

*An alternative to marginalization.* The introduction of the cash-based capitalist economy pushed the indigenous peoples to sell their ancestral lands in exchange for cash. Where a large MNC introduced a banana plantation, many people who owned a few hectares of land either became contract growers or leased their land in exchange for an initial sum of cash and other rewards, such as assured employment and scholarships for their children from the company. However, some ended up heavily in debt due to onerous contracts and had a technical dependence on the company (Krinks 2002, 123; Oxfam in the Philippines 2016; Dalabajan and Dinglasan 2018). In 2017, the lessees of Sumifru in T'boli Municipality conducted a protest against the company as the rent was not paid regularly as stipulated in the contract. Besides, they were not provided with medical support and scholarship that had been verbally promised.

In this context, the cash income from the sale of the Balangon banana allowed growers to fulfill their basic needs and overcome acute crises when they needed cash. However, as the cash income from the P2PTBB is not enough to improve their living standard, a few growers mentioned that they would welcome MNCs on the condition that they grew bananas organically, without knowing the risk of the consequences that had befallen some of the growers within the T'boli Municipality.

*Other issues and the meaning of people-to-people trade.* The core idea of the P2PTBB project was not shared by its stakeholders. When the author asked growers about their knowledge of the ATC and ATJ, the respondents knew that these entities were the buyers of their products, but nothing more. The growers in Lake Sebu Municipality did not know the meaning of people-to-people trade, nor have the chance to understand it.

Though the UAVFI set the initial objective of the Balangon banana project in 2005 as empowering indigenous communities, very few activities have geared toward such endeavors. As of 2015, the UAVFI would buy a piece of the Balangon banana from a grower for one peso, and sell a box (containing around 100 pieces) to the ATC for PHP 190, at a margin of PHP 90 per box. Since the UAVFI sold 350 to 400 boxes to the ATC every fortnight, they made a profit of approximately Php 31,500 to Php 36,000 per fortnight which was not enough to cover operational costs. Therefore, the core UAVFI staff members were working for the project voluntarily, and the UAVFI, much to its staff members' regret, could not produce a surplus to fund socioeconomic or welfare projects for the growers.

The expansion of the Balangon banana to Mindanao Island was driven by the necessity to attain a stable supply to the Japanese consumer associations. Both the ATJ and ATC, though they desired to, could not spare their limited resources to realize the idea of the P2PTBB project within Lake Sebu Municipality. Besides the act of buying and selling, no other social welfare activities were offered to the communities. Therefore, the growers' only request of the ATC and ATJ was to increase the price of the Balangon banana; no other ideas were mentioned.

In short, there were many indirect impacts that prevented growers from being at risk of severe marginalization within the wider socioeconomic structure. The Balangon banana cultivation was seen

as being a low investment and a low risk. However, some of the positive indirect impacts were not explicitly recognized by the growers, such as the fact that the Balangon banana cultivation could allow households to maintain their environment and subsistence economy, increase their income without high opportunity costs, and create an alternative value to the MNC's banana production.

## Conclusion

As indicated above, the significance of the indirect impacts of the P2PTBB project can be understood when considering the situation of the indigenous peoples within the socioeconomic context of Lake Sebu Municipality. In the context of regional socioeconomic change, the T'boli and the Ubo were marginalized by the influx of migrants, the collateral introduction of cash, and the capitalist economy. As a result, some of them sold their ancestral lands which resulted in the disintegration of their communities and a breakdown of their cultural heritage. Engaging in the Balangon banana trade, in this sense, had a symbolic and significant meaning in terms of resisting the exploitative model of production and the process of marginalization.

However, these indirect impacts are not recognized among the growers. In Lake Sebu, much to the regret of UAVFI, there was no technical support for chemical-free farming as well as socioeconomic or welfare projects for the growers. The growers do not feel that they are directly connected to the consumers. Growers in Lake Sebu Municipality did not know the meaning of "people-to-people trade" nor have a chance to understand it. Consequently, the alternative value of the P2PTBB project has been reduced to trading non-chemical bananas that are no longer exclusive to the P2PTBB project.

When the project started in 1989, it was the only one that provided non-exploitative and chemical-free bananas to Japanese consumers through the consumers' cooperatives. However, as more consumers in Japan prefer to buy "low-chemical," and "organic" bananas, the MNCs have started to grow and export those (De Leon and Escobido 2004, 44). MNCs obtain certification such as organic JAS (Japanese Agricultural Standard) issued by Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries or Good Agriculture Practices (GAP), a program administered by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization for their bananas. Japanese consumers can buy organic bananas at supermarkets nearby without becoming members of a cooperative to buy chemical-free Balangon bananas. Though the residents and lessees of land to the Sumifru suffer from issues caused by chemical drifts from aerial spraying in T'boli Municipality, the fact is hardly known to the Japanese consumers. On the contrary, the website of Sumifru-Japan, the importer of bananas produced by Sumifru, uses the image to highlight their practices of growing banana environmentally friendly.<sup>14</sup>

In this way, MNCs are appropriating the values of fair trade into their commercialization. As such, both the P2PTBB project and the organic bananas as traded by the MNCs have become the "alternative" to the synthetic banana production. However, as Sekine (2017) argues, the original idea of P2PTBB was to seek alternatives from profit-oriented market mechanisms, and it was fundamentally different from seeking an alternative value within it.

Based on this discussion, the author holds that if the P2PTBB project pursues its original concept, it is important to recognize the indirect impacts. A focused social preparation, for the growers to understand the indirect impacts of the P2PTBB is necessary, along with the implementation of

<sup>14</sup> Sumifru (Philippine) Corporation used to be the subsidiary corporation of Sumifru Singapore Pte. Ltd Corporation. In 2019, Sumitomo Corporation sold its 49 percent stake in Sumifru Singapore Pte. Ltd Corporation to its joint venture partner, Thornton Venture Limited. Sumifru-Japan, which used to be the subsidiary corporation of Sumitomo Corporation is owned by Sumifru Singapore Pte. Ltd Corporation.



FIGURE 5.4 • Home page of the Sumifru-Japan website (<https://www.sumifru.co.jp/reason/gogreen/>)

technical supports for chemical-free farming as well as socioeconomic or welfare projects. However, further research and examination is needed to understand if the growers agree with the existence of these indirect impacts. The growers' agreements will be important when sharing these values when reconsidering the P2PTBB's concept and content in the future.

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## 6

# Kanlungan's Holistic Approach in Handling Migrant Cases

## Good Practices in Direct Service and Case Management

KANLUNGAN CENTER FOUNDATION<sup>1</sup>

Since the early 1970s, millions of Filipinos have been deployed to many parts of the world to fill the need for cheap labor in the developed countries in the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Europe, and the Americas. However, as many Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) would attest, working abroad is often mired with labor issues and exploitative employment arrangements. By the late 1980s until the early 1990s, under the administration of Corazon Aquino, the increasing “feminization” of OFWs have become palpable. Based on official estimates of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), 54% of the deployed workers in 1991 were women, working mainly in the domestic, service, and entertainment industries. Corollary to this is the worsening exploitation and abuse of Filipino workers.

In response to the worsening situation of Filipino migrant workers, five Philippine-based organizations—Friends of Filipino Migrant Workers (KAIBIGAN); Kapisanan ng mga Kamag-anak ng Manggagawang Migranteng Pilipino (KAKAMMPI); GABRIELA; National Council of Churches in the Philippines-International Desk (NCCP-ID); and the Women's Resource and Research Center (WRRC)—and three individuals—Sr. Mary John Mananzan, the late Dr. Mary Vita, and the late Ms. Virginia “Gina” Alunan—saw the need to strengthen the support services for migrant workers, especially those who are victims of illegal recruitment, contract violations, and other forms of sexual discrimination and exploitation. Gina Alunan later founded the Kanlungan Center Foundation (Kanlungan) in 1989, and served as its first executive director. Kanlungan is a non-stock and non-profit organization engaged in direct service, advocacy work, research, and policy interventions for Filipino migrant workers who are survivors of human trafficking, illegal recruitment, workplace abuse, and non-payment of wages, as well as their families and their communities. Overall, Kanlungan's goals are:

- (1) To empower OFWs and their families by increasing their awareness on national and global issues affecting migration, their rights and entitlements, and their role in governance;

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is written by Erwin Rayoso Puhawan.

- (2) To facilitate a gender-responsive community-based structures of care (SOCs) and governance that may provide preventive, remedial, and developmental services to migrant workers and their families;
- (3) To forge strong collaboration between and among advocates, service providers, and other stakeholders to provide holistic and gender-sensitive services to OFWs and their families;
- (4) To contribute to the formation of a critical mass of advocates that actively lobby at the national and international level for pro-migrant policies, programs, and services that promote and protect the rights and welfare of OFWs and their families and address other migrant issues and concerns; and
- (5) To strengthen the ability of overseas Filipinos to assert their rights—individually and collectively, to deepen their nationalism, and enhance participation in the local economy and national development.

### Kanlungan's Direct Support and Development Program

Over the past twenty-nine (29) years, Kanlungan has provided legal and counseling services to over a thousand Filipino migrant workers who encountered problems and crisis situations. Such problems range from illegal recruitment, recruitment violations, contract violations, racial discrimination, deportation, and other security risks. Violence against women migrant workers—in the form of physical abuse, rape, trafficking, and violent deaths—are very real and present dangers, especially for domestic workers and entertainers. Families that migrant workers leave behind are also faced with various problems such as economic difficulties due to failure of remittances to arrive on time, abandonment by spouses, and other fears and doubts because of family separation, and security risks faced by their migrant relatives abroad.

In its monitoring of news articles (from five major newspapers and two tabloids) from January to December 1995, Kanlungan compiled 40,971 cases of Filipinos involved, in one form or another, in harassment and other difficulties as migrants, as workers, and as women. The trend of abuse and violations of workers' rights has continued since. While government programs and services to address the welfare needs of migrant Filipinos and their families were expanded relative to the early years of Kanlungan's operations (a result of advocacy efforts by peoples' organizations (POs) and non-government organizations (NGOs)), these are still insufficient and are often ineffective and palliative. Government programs do not at all address the causes of such violations. For Kanlungan, the Philippine government will never be able to adequately protect the rights and interest of migrant Filipinos if it continues to put the overseas employment program high on its economic and development agenda. The labor market will always dictate its priorities and labor will always be used as marketable products. Thus, it is imperative for Kanlungan to continue to provide alternative services so that migrant Filipinos and their families who have been victimized by the trade in labor, can seek justice for violations committed against them, and to provide other support and empowering mechanisms that facilitate their full reintegration into society and their participation in the development process.

International labor migration (ILM) is a result of the prevailing socio-economic situation. ILM affects millions of Filipinos and impacts greatly on the individual, family, community and the entire nation. While efforts must immediately be made to address the factors and causes of migration, the effects and immediate impact of migration must also be addressed. Kanlungan's services aim to mitigate the issues borne out of ILM. In providing these services, Kanlungan is recognizes that:



- Filipino migrant workers are among the most exploited and abused sector in Philippine society.
- The prevalence of violence against migrant Filipino women and its devastating effects on them.
- That the Philippine government cannot protect the rights and interests of the Filipino migrant workers as long as it continues to pursue the overseas employment program (OEP) as one of the pillars of its development agenda.
- That alternative support interventions are necessary to address the immediate and practical needs of Filipino migrant workers.
- That to attain total human development, persons and/or groups of persons should have the right to determine the course of their own development.
- The capacity of the migrant Filipinos and their families can affect social change through individual and collective actions.

## Services

Majority of the departing and returning migrant workers are victims of recruitment and contractual violations. They are often shortchanged by their recruiters and employers. Many women migrant workers who have returned from overseas have survived very traumatic and stressful situations. They need help to overcome the trauma and gain their self-worth. Families of migrant workers who are in problematic situations such as maltreatment and stranded, also need support to be able to cope and facilitate the necessary claims and government action. Altogether, they are victims of a system that has been unfair to them and they need support to be able to cope and assert their rights. They need guidance in processing their experiences and relating these within a broader framework. They are agents for change who should be harnessed.

Kanlungan's Direct Support and Development Program (DSDP) provides direct assistance and reintegration services to Filipino migrant workers and their families who have been victims of unfair labor practices and have survived other forms of violations of their rights. Furthermore, the program provides support services that aim to raise their critical consciousness to enable them to act decisively in defending their rights and effecting social change, individually and/or collectively. In particular, Kanlungan's DSDP aims to:

- (1) To respond to the immediate needs and problems of returning and departing Filipino migrant workers and their families through legal, counseling, shelter and other welfare services;
- (2) To conscientize and organize the migrant Filipinos and their families into self-help and pressure groups toward the collective resolution of cases and advocacy of migrant issues and concerns;
- (3) To pursue impact cases and launch campaigns to influence jurisprudence and effect changes in policies; and
- (4) To tap and mobilize a network of professionals, volunteers and various community, regional, and national and international agencies (GOs and NGOs) to assist in the delivery of services and in the advocacy of migrant issues in general.

The DSDP provides a range of integrated program and services to address the immediate and practical needs of Filipino migrant workers and their families and hone their individual and collective

strengths to advance their interests and participation in development. The DSDP provides legal assistance, counselling and welfare services, shelter services, education and support group building, accompaniment services, documentation and case analysis, and referrals.

**Legal assistance.** Kanlungan's legal assistance services provide representation and processing the legal requirements of migrant workers/families wanting to pursue cases in courts and quasi-judicial bodies. It is guided by the developmental legal aid approach where the role of lawyers and paralegals is to inform migrant workers/families of their legal rights and work in partnership with them in their quest for justice. Cases handled by Kanlungan's legal services ranged from illegal recruitment, contract substitution, recruitment violations, illegal dismissal, and the like. Specifically, it shall undertake the following:

- (1) Interview and document cases of migrant workers, assess legal requirements, and determine possible course of action;
- (2) Provide legal advice and counseling to migrant workers and their families with legal problems;
- (3) Orient migrant workers and their families on their legal rights and legal procedures and requirement;
- (4) Assist migrant workers and their families in the procurement of documents and other materials necessary in the pursuit of legal action;
- (5) Facilitate legal procedures in the filing and adjudication of the case to include drafting of affidavits, assignment to lawyer, documentation, legal research, representation, monitoring, and follow-up;
- (6) Build a pool of volunteer lawyers and paralegals to assist the program in the conduct of its legal services and conduct regular meetings where strategizing and assessment in handling of cases will be done;
- (7) Conduct legal research to aid the program in the defense and processing of each case; and
- (8) Explore and utilize other forms of meta-legal remedies in addressing problems of migrant workers and their families and facilitate resolution of cases.

**Counselling and welfare assistance.** Through counseling and other welfare services, Kanlungan aims to address the immediate and social needs of migrant workers and their families. The services give special attention to returning migrant women, many of whom have been physically or sexually abused and are suffering from emotional and psychological trauma. In addition, it also facilitates the legal claims of migrant workers and their families for government support and assistance. It also acts on reports and complaints of families regarding difficult situations faced by their migrant relatives abroad (e.g., for location or repatriation), as well as difficulties faced by the families themselves as a result of the separation. Counselling and welfare services also inform the determination of workers who wish to pursue cases in courts.

In providing counseling and other welfare services, Kanlungan is guided by the principle of helping the client help themselves. Assistance and counseling are offered but never imposed and the relationship between the caseworker and the client is that of peers. Based on Kanlungan's experience a multidisciplinary approach is the most effective way of dealing with the complex problems faced by Filipino migrant workers. Alongside the provisions of direct and professional support to the client, interventions at the family and the community level also play a very important role in the total recovery and development of the person. The specific types of services to be provided include:

- (1) Counseling that is gender fair and sensitive, never imposed, and family- and community-centered;
- (2) Temporary shelter and homecare for women clients, particularly those suffering from temporary dementia, escaping from violent situations, and/or preparing to return/reintegrate with her family, shall be provided; temporary shelter for men clients' needs to be explored as well;
- (3) Assistance in filing for welfare claims and other services, such as medical benefits, insurance, location and repatriation of workers, etc., with different government agencies;
- (4) Assistance in the reintegration process of the migrant worker into the family and community and in exploring alternative sources of livelihood and social activities;
- (5) Conduct of other therapeutic programs and activities that would aid the migrant worker in regaining her/his self-worth and strengths;
- (6) Airport assistance, homecare, family communications, medical assistance, transportation assistance, financial assistance, and other crisis-intervention services, as needed;
- (7) Conduct of regular monitoring and communication with clients to determine the status of the case and to gauge the impact of services; and
- (8) Development of a network of psychiatrists and other medical practitioners, social workers, social welfare institutions, NGOs, and POs as referral agencies for other professional and social needs of the migrant workers and their families.

**Shelter services.** Kanlungan provides two types of shelter services: temporary shelter and home care services: For temporary shelter services, housing/accommodation services are provided for women clients and/or relatives (for a maximum of three days) who have no place to stay in Manila for reasons such as attending court hearings, or are unable to make a connecting trip from the international airport to the home province. On the other hand, home care services entails providing accommodation for returning women in crisis while in the recovery process. Other than lodging, this implies provision of multi-disciplinary services such as medical intervention, counseling, and other services necessary to get the client back to her “functional state.”

**Education and support group building.** Kanlungan provides regular education and training for clients to enable them to develop and enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary in their pursuit of justice. Self-help support groups from among the clients are also to be encouraged and facilitated. They may be grouped or clustered according to the commonality of their problems, their country of work, job category, gender-based, or any grouping that would be most ideal and facilitative. These groupings have served as pressure and lobby groups that draw attention to the cases being pursued and generate actions/resolutions from the government. These groups are also mobilized to join and support broader concerns and issues of migrant workers in general and/or the activities of Kanlungan. They also serve as self-help groups that look into their individual, social and community needs. Specific areas of work of this service are the following:

- (1) Conduct of regular training needs analysis (TNA) and social investigation of the center/program's clientele;
- (2) Development of education and training modules as identified (e.g., Basic Migrant Orientation Seminar, Crisis Management, Gender Sensitivity, Women's Orientation, and Magna Carta for Migrant Filipinos);
- (3) Actual conduct of education and training sessions;



FIGURE 6.1 • Booth of the Kanlungan Center Foundation in Baclaran Church to promote the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers (Photo by Erwin Puhawan)

- (4) Facilitation of client/group meetings, planning, and assessment of programs of action for cases at hand;
- (5) Facilitation of the formation and organization of self-help support groups from among the clients; and
- (6) Mobilization of individuals/groups of clients towards case resolution and advocacy of migrant issues and concerns.

**Accompaniment services.** Most often than not, this type of service is provided to clients who are either in a crisis state/situation or their security is at risk. In this case, the caseworker/case handler accompanies the clients, for instance, in the procurement of medical and other related documents necessary in the intervention process, if s/he needs to appear in court or go to the police or barangay to report a case, and the like. The role of the caseworker is to provide moral and emotional support, and in some cases, if the client is not yet capable of expressing herself/himself, speak on behalf of the client.

**Documentation and case analysis.** Kanlungan maintains a comprehensive, systematic and regular system of documentation, monitoring, updating and analysis of all cases being handled. The purpose is to have an in-depth knowledge and insight into the nature of the cases, the well-being of the clients, and a well-planned and manageable program of action (POA) for each case. It is from these records and experiences that the program and the institution can draw lessons and determine future

courses of action. Confidentiality of such information is always upheld; but disclosure of information vital to the resolution of the problem is encouraged among clients. Specifically, it shall undertake the following:

- (1) Conduct of first level interview (in-take stage) where the caseworker elicits and notes down all pertinent information (in the standard form) specific to the case and other background information about the client;
- (2) Orientation and briefing of the migrant workers and their families on the role of Kanlungan and expectations from one another and possible actions to take;
- (3) Assignment of case number, recording of insights/observations/recommendations of caseworker, and filing of case for easy retrieval;
- (4) Recording of all additional information pertinent to the case and regular updating of case status;
- (5) Active monitoring and follow-up on the status of the case with the worker, concerned agencies, etc.;
- (6) Encoding of all data and status reports on the database system developed for clients and production of quarterly, semi-annual and annual statistical reports and analysis of trends in case handling; and
- (7) Conduct of regular case review and conferences to collectively discuss the status of cases, identify problems in case handling, and determine alternative courses of action to take.

**Referral.** Other needs of the clients which the program has limited capacity to address will be referred to its network.

### Cases of Kanlungan's holistic approach

By using the holistic approach in handling cases, Kanlungan was able to mobilize migrant workers and their families in resolving their cases. The Direct Service and Development Program of the foundation ensures that the migrants will not be passive actors but active partners in resolving the challenges they are facing, either overseas or when they return from the country of origin. In this section, three cases will be presented where Kanlungan was able to utilize its services and programs and create spaces where migrant workers and their families are able to actively participate and eventually empower themselves.

Seeking legal redress and protection: the case of 19 migrant workers from Irosin, Sorsogon

In July 2005, 19 migrants from Irosin, Sorsogon learned through a television advertisement that HIM, a recruitment agency, would be conducting a job fair on July 22 to 26, 2005. Eager to secure better jobs and a chance to work abroad with good pay, the migrants went to the job fair. They were interviewed and recruited by a certain "AD" and "V" who introduced themselves as authorized agents of HIM. During the interview, the migrant workers were offered work at Palm Oil Harvesters in Sandakan, Malaysia with a salary of Php 17,000 per month plus overtime pay, potentially increasing their earnings up to Php 30,000.

Believing these promises, the migrant workers went to the office of HIM in Manila to apply. The migrant workers were told to undergo a medical examination. After the exam, the owner of HIM, "Mr. IT" told the migrant workers that they must pay Php 17,000 each as down payment for the placement

fee, the remaining Php 18,000 would be paid in the form of salary deductions. The migrant workers were surprised by the amount being required of them. However, they were really bent on finding employment abroad. They had no choice but to pay Php 17,000. Instead of issuing official receipts which the migrant workers demanded from “Mr. IT,” they were given petty cash vouchers as proof of payment.

On August 25, 2005, after paying the placement fees, the migrant workers asked “Mr. IT” for their contracts. Instead of answering them directly, “Mr. IT” lambasted and told them in Tagalog: *“Ito usapang lalaki. Kung ayaw ninyong umalis, bahala kayo sa buhay ninyo. Yung kontrata du’n na lang ninyo pipirmahan sa Malaysia”* (This is a matter of honor. If you don’t want to leave, that’s your problem. You will sign your contracts when you get to Malaysia). The migrant workers had no choice but to proceed because they had already paid “Mr. IT” their placement fees. That same day, the migrant workers were ordered by “AD” to buy airline tickets going to Zamboanga. The migrant workers, although reluctant, bought tickets amounting to Php 2,207 each. The following day, the migrant workers were escorted by “V” and “AD” to Pier 15, North Harbor in Manila. Before leaving, they were made to sign promissory notes as a guarantee that they would pay the balance of Php 18,000. In addition, “V” gave the migrant workers three sealed brown envelopes which, according to one of them, contained papers in relation to their work that they would sign when they reached Zamboanga.

On August 28, 2005, the migrant workers arrived at Zamboanga where they were fetched by “Mr. IT.” There they were ordered by “Mr. IT” to check-in at Paradise Hotel. The following day, “Mr. IT” told the 19 workers that they would go to Malaysia as tourists, and they would be given their working visas upon arrival. The migrant workers were also asked by “Mr. IT” to produce Php 1,000 as “show money.” Later that same day, the migrant workers were told by “Mr. IT” that they would be leaving for Malaysia in the afternoon. “Mr. IT” even showed the migrant workers a copy of their job order in Malaysia. That afternoon, the migrant workers boarded the ship *MV Danica Joy*. While waiting for their passports to be cleared, the migrant workers were approached by some Marines who told them that they could not leave for Malaysia because they are undocumented.

On August 30, 2005, the migrant workers went to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) in Zamboanga to find out why their departure was delayed. POEA Zamboanga told them that they must be “reprocessed” before they could be allowed to leave. The migrant workers had no choice but to follow the instructions of the POEA. The following day, the migrant workers underwent a Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) given by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) representatives. The following day, they were given their Overseas Employment Certificates (OEC) by POEA Zamboanga.

On September 1, 2005, the migrant workers were finally able to leave Zamboanga bound for Malaysia aboard *MV Danica Joy 2* and arrived in Sandakan, Malaysia the following day. From the port, the migrant workers were escorted to the job site by “AD” and a certain “R,” who introduced themselves as partners of “Mr. IT” in Malaysia. Upon arrival in Malaysia, they were surprised to know that their visas were only for one month’s stay, up to October 2, 2005. Later that same day, the migrant workers were brought to the job site. There they met their employer, “Captain SPL,” a Singaporean national, who gave instructions for them to rest for two days.

On September 5, 2005, when the migrant workers were called to work, they were surprised that aside from working as palm harvesters, they were ordered to perform other jobs such as sticking and slashing. There were also times when they were ordered to work as cement porters for 12 hours. Worse, the migrant workers were not given protective boots in the job site. They also found out that the cost

of the tools they were using was to be deducted from their salaries. Their quarters had no beds or mattresses. To make matters worse, the migrant workers also had no access to clean drinking water. Instead, they drank rainwater collected from the roof through a drainage pipe attached to a water tank. They bathed on a water puddle fit for carabaos. The migrant workers tried to complain and voice out their grievances to their employer, but the employer just ignored their pleas.

On September 8, 2005, the migrant workers sought a dialogue with “Captain SPL” and “Mr. IT.” During the negotiations, the migrant workers asked for their contracts, “Mr. IT” told them that they had no contract to speak of, as the one he submitted to the POEA was only a formality. When the migrant workers asked about their salary, “Mr. IT” told them that their salary was Php 17,000. However, through the diligent efforts of the migrant workers and with help from concerned fellow Filipinos working in NPC Resources Berhad, they were able to secure a copy of the contract.

On September 12, 2005, “AR,” a representative from NPC Resources Berhad, acting as its General Manager, met with the migrant workers and asked them about their grievances. According to “AR,” the migrant workers would work daily, and each would receive a salary of 8 (RM) ringgit, or an equivalent of Php 112 pesos per day. The migrant workers were shocked. They were told by “AR” that “Mr. IT” had misled them and advised them to go home. The migrant workers decided to stay, hoping that “Mr. IT” would still comply with his promise. However, for three months, the migrant workers did not receive any salary. They had no choice but to demand to be repatriated. On December 7, 2006, the migrant workers were finally repatriated.

Back in Manila, the migrant workers sought the help of Kanlungan. They filed an administrative complaint before the POEA for disciplinary action against the agency HIM. The migrant workers also filed a separate case for large-scale illegal recruitment against their recruiters. Another separate special civil case for money claims was filed before the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC).

While the case was ongoing, the migrant workers were provided paralegal training. During the hearings, the migrant workers actively secured the documents needed for the case. Due to limited funds, Kanlungan and the migrant workers jointly developed the plan on how to sustain the case and raise the necessary funds to support it. Due to the distance between Sorsogon and Manila, part of the plan was to educate the community and by doing so, some of the migrant workers were able to negotiate with bus companies travelling from Sorsogon to Manila to subsidize some of the migrant workers’ transport costs.

Kanlungan also partnered with the Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (Saligan), an NGO providing legal representation to marginalized sectors, to handle the case. Besides the legal intervention, Kanlungan provided psychosocial intervention to the migrant workers. Some of them felt betrayed and humiliated because of the experience. The psychosocial intervention provided the necessary support and taught them to look at their case in a different light. The migrant workers even referred others who were victims of illegal recruitment to Kanlungan for assistance. This demonstrated that migrant workers could help themselves. Thus, the concept of migrant workers helping other migrant workers was reaffirmed. Later, this became one of the campaigns advocated by Kanlungan—giving the migrant workers a voice.

In the end, the POEA ruled in favor of the migrant workers and revoked the license of HIM. The NLRC also awarded monetary claims to the migrant workers. Finally, a warrant of arrest was issued against “Mr. IT,” although he remains at large.

## Going back, moving on: The case of economic and social empowerment of migrant workers

Another notable case of Kanlungan's holistic approach was its social and economic reintegration project implemented in the provinces of La Union and Pangasinan from May 2011 to March 2012.<sup>2</sup> This project was informed by Kanlungan's experience in working with abused women migrant workers, many of whom struggle to face a new beginning in their lives. Many of them were abused, maltreated and raped by their employers or experienced terrible experiences. When they return home, many manifest signs of (chemical) imbalance, physical illness, and psychological trauma. Their situation abroad has also brought strain with their relationships with family members and the rest of the community, which may result in conflicts. Some show a lack of enthusiasm; nothing excites them, nothing interests them, nothing energizes them. It is apparent with other women migrant workers that they do not only suffer from psychological and/or physical disorders but also from "spiritual" devastation. Nonetheless, there are others who have shown that they were able to cope with the traumatic experiences they faced.

With this multi-dimensional problem, how did Kanlungan approach its reintegration project? A biblical passage suggests that if these women migrant workers were to move on with their lives, they needed to be "fully clothed" again. To achieve this, they must demonstrate or show signs of economic or productive enthusiasm and psych-spiritual renewal. Hence, the reintegration process, as understood by Kanlungan, involves a process of accompanying these women as they re-integrate with themselves, family members and their communities.

Evidently, the presence of support systems from the family and community was critical in facilitating the migrant worker's recovery and renewal. The support of the family often becomes the key to their speedy recovery from their harrowing experiences. However, it also became apparent that familial support must also be complemented by other support systems as well. Kanlungan found an effective support system between and among the migrant workers themselves where peer education, socialization and community organizing became important activities in the reintegration process. The organizing component between and among migrant workers made it clear that Kanlungan's reintegration program must not only address the individual victim-survivor, but also to their empowerment as a group. This involves raising their consciousness on the roots of migration; organizing and mobilizing their ranks; advocating their issues and concerns to the public; and pushing for the realization of a fully sovereign nation. In many ways, the transformation of the personal experience to social and political action is reflective of the very essence of the intervention towards the victim-survivors' empowered selves.

Yet, in many cases, victim-survivors are still trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. Their economic upliftment is their primary agenda. What matters most to the victim-survivors is that the family will not experience the pain of having nothing to eat, of having nothing to wear, of having nowhere to rest their weary bodies. Hence, aside from individual healing and collective empowerment, Kanlungan identified another important component in the reintegration process—the mitigation of the migrant workers' economic situation.

Through the collective efforts of Bannuar Ti,<sup>3</sup> Kanlungan and local partners, around 150 victim-survivors were identified; many of which participated in individual and collective healing and empowerment activities. Among these 150 victim-survivors around thirty 30 in La Union and

<sup>2</sup> This project was supported by the European Union (EU) and the International Labor Organization (ILO). Local advocacy initiatives were supported by the Provincial Government of La Union.

<sup>3</sup> Bannuar Ti is a local organization of migrant workers and their families in La Union. For more information, see <http://phdf.org.ph/partners/btlu.html>.



Pangasinan were provided start-up capital for their individual home-based micro enterprises. After a series of individual and group processing, most of the victim-survivors decided to move on and do something to make their lives productive. However, a few remain on the shelf, staying in their darkened rooms and afraid to see the light. But a significant number of victim-survivors in La Union and Pangasinan decided to meet and share their experience with one another. They opted to form an organization that would bind them as one. The ad hoc formation of Balabal, a fledgling organization of victim-survivors of human trafficking and illegal recruitment was then established in La Union and Pangasinan.

*Balabal* is a Tagalog word for shawl, a rectangular mantle used mostly by women on various occasions. It serves as protection from inclement weather, cold, raining and windy, or simply when the weather is balmy. The allusion to notions of protection and comfort was one of the reasons why *balabal* was chosen as the name of the organization. More importantly, the binding effect of the *balabal* reflects the women who, despite experiencing adverse situations resulting from labor migration, are committed to claim their dignity as humans. The establishment of *Balabal* was a welcome development for Kanlungan. In many ways, *Balabal* has served to amplify Kanlungan's services and advocacies by providing peer-to-peer support and a mass base for mobilizations and lobbying activities. Kanlungan sought to support this initiative and has facilitated the organizing of *Balabal* to become a venue for women victim-survivors to serve as a refuge for self-rediscovery for empowerment, share compassion and solidarity. In particular, Kanlungan aimed to: OFW victim-survivor of trafficking and women advocates under *Balabal*, as an organization of solidarity; provide a venue for the women's rediscovery of selfhood, and thereby regain their self-worth, and dignity; and, provide a venue to awaken women's inherent spirituality.

Based on their experience in facilitating the reintegration of victims of human trafficking, local advocacy work and organizing, Kanlungan has identified five good practices:

- (1) Good practices are predicated on the recognition of the invaluable importance of human dignity and dignity of work. Protecting dignity of work and the human person could only come about through the social, economic and political empowerment of the victim-survivors and their families. The engagement of the human spirit becomes all the more critical in the realization of the empowerment process.
- (2) Second, good practices are only solidified through the orientational and directional unity and organizational cohesion of the stakeholders. The constant immersion into the life and struggle of the victim-survivors further fortifies the resolve and zeal of Kanlungan and Bannuar Ti to be involved in the project. Evidently, the mode of implementation is more transformative rather than transactional. It is guided by action-reflection-action that becomes truly effective in the healing and reintegrating work, especially among women migrant workers whose rights and dignity have been blatantly violated.
- (3) Third, good practices are defined by objective and politically correct analysis of international and national labor migration. An objective reading of the situation of labor migration in the Philippine setting and the dynamics of migration in the province of La Union, could provide the strategies and methods of work for the attainment of the stated goals and purposes of the project. The methods and strategies are culled from the social and political conditions of labor migration and on the personal aspirations of women victim-survivors of human trafficking.
- (4) Fourth, good practice emanates from defining the long term and tactical direction of migration and development as points of convergence. The direction explicitly admonishes all stakeholders to promote and defend the rights and welfare of the women and men migrant



**FIGURE 6.2** • Kanlungan takes its advocacy for migrant rights in the streets  
(Photo courtesy of the Kanlungan Center Foundation)

workers; to prevent and prosecute human traffickers and illegal recruiters; to further develop and enhance the productive capacities of the victim-survivors as a contribution to the advancement of local economies; to expand the organization of migrant workers and families as an expression of the social movement of migrant work.

- (5) Fifth, good practices involve the tooling and re-tooling of victim-survivors towards economic and social reintegration. The training and learning activities of victim-survivors pave the way for the rediscovery of the motivational forces and principal orientation of their personal liberation and its relation to an oppressive and exploitative labor migration. Initially, the victim-survivors understood the dialectical relations between personal transformation and socio-political action for the rights and welfare of migrant workers. The historical perspective drives the victim-survivors to identify the contradictions and patterns of their participation in personal struggles and eventual reintegration in the family, community, and society.

However, the effectiveness of the different practices or interventions could only be measured through the development of the victim-survivors' social and political consciousness. Or it could be advanced if the history of every victim-survivor or migrant worker is linked to the history and situation of Philippine society and its place in the emerging global economic order. However, the correctness or validity of the learning and reintegration processes could also be qualified and appraised through the critical awareness and decisive action of the victim-survivors to change or transform the oppressive

conditions and exploitative systems in society, and to defend the rights and welfare of migrant workers. On the other hand, the integration of migration and development concerns for the benefit of migrant workers could be made concrete and practical through the collective will and determination of the elected officials. Although the programs of migration and development require material, organizational and technical requisites, the local government units need to see the social, economic, and cultural contributions of migrant workers in the on-going transformation of local society.

What makes the good practices relevant and valuable to the defense of the most vulnerable among women migrant workers are the ideological, socio-political, and organizational underpinnings of the methods and approaches. These helped in carrying out the personal and social healing and reintegration of the victim-survivors. The standpoint, viewpoint, and methods of the social and economic reintegration of victim-survivors had to be very succinct among the different facilitating and principal forces of the project.

Moreover, the ideological component of the projects is translated into the social, political, and cultural dimensions of the stakeholders. To the victim-survivors of human trafficking, the practical and operational expressions are demonstrated through a potpourri of interventions. These interventions include psychosocial, legal, and welfare services in order to make their lives fruitful and productive. To the local government units, the social and political expressions should be demonstrated in the actual formation of migrant programs and services relative to the promotion and defense of migrants' rights and welfare.

In relation to the internal and external organizational components of the project, the victim-survivors had to form and develop an organization (e.g., Balabal) that would serve as the voice of women migrant workers as victim-survivors while the local government units had to establish and install systems and mechanisms for greater cooperation and coordination to meet the growing demands and challenges of migration and development. Thus, the complementarity of various stakeholders could be further formed, enhanced, and intensified.

### **Kanlungan's challenges**

Despite Kanlungan's successes in working with migrant workers, particularly those who have been victims of human trafficking, it continues to face challenges. Kanlungan has identified three pressing challenges:

- (1) The depleting resources of NGOs working in either migration or trafficking is a potential challenge. Kanlungan needs to be self-sustaining. For the past five years, Kanlungan has not had foreign funding; Kanlungan relies on its volunteers and migrant workers who donate their time and resources for the services and programs of the foundation to continue.
- (2) The threat to the security of both the migrant workers and Kanlungan is a reality. We file cases against illegal recruiters and human traffickers who have the capacity and resources to harass and impede the foundation's work.
- (3) The political divide sometimes is a hindrance to building solidarity among migrants. We need to raise their consciousness by not being paternalistic, but by providing them safe spaces where they can harness their skills and capabilities.





## 7

# Forwarding Alternatives to the Decades-old Debt Debacle of the Philippines

## A Case Study of the Freedom from Debt Coalition's Debt Auditing Initiatives

FREEDOM FROM DEBT COALITION<sup>1</sup>

The debt problem continues to hound Philippine society. Debt payments still get the first cut in the national budget before appropriations are made for social and economic programs. This practice is entrenched in the budget process by a provision in a law mandating automatic appropriations for principal and interest payments of public debts. This does not only seriously impair the Congress' power of the purse, it also constricts fiscal democracy. According to experts, the Philippines may be the only country in the world that has such a statute.

Without an official audit of public debts, people are denied transparency on government's loans and how these are utilized. With the law on automatic appropriations, payment of debts, including those of questionable legitimacy, escape public scrutiny. Many tainted loans have been paid in full mostly through refinancing or "successor" loans. This includes the US\$ 2.2-billion Bataan Nuclear Power Plant which has been deemed unsafe and has never produced a single kilowatt of electricity. New borrowings are made to pay for maturing loans. In effect, the burden of paying for debts they do not owe and have not benefited from is transferred to future generations.

Since its establishment in 1988, the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) continues to be at the forefront of advancing progressive changes in the government's debt and public finance policy through innovative campaign strategies anchored on popular education, lobbying and mobilization. It has also proactively engaged in the development of alternatives to debt-inducing policies such as privatization, liberalization, and deregulation, leading towards comprehensive economic policy reform. For the past twenty years, the coalition has also been an important significant actor in the social movement arena, and, in various historic moments, the center of advocacy of progressive economics. Broadening its mandate to include development in the early 1990s, it was able to ground its call on tangible and specific

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter was written by Christine Joy "CJ" Galunan.

needs of the people. The coalition's twin praxis of involving grassroots communities and articulating a sharp critique of mainstream policy contributed to it becoming a major player in the shaping of the national socio-economic discourse.

This chapter begins by discussing the decades-old debt problem of the Philippines—a problem that has been perpetuated by gross misuse and abuse of public funds and the adoption of neo-liberal policies. The discussion of the Philippine's debt problem is then counterpointed by a recounting of FDC's debt auditing initiative, a sharp criticism of the country's debt servicing policies. In this section, the chapter will retrace the coalition's initiative from its early beginnings until the advent of the Duterte administration. In revisiting the coalition's initiative, significant milestones and events will be discussed. The chapter ends by presenting lessons learned from the 20-year struggle and the persistent challenges that still need to be addressed.

### **The decades-old debt debacle of the Philippines: Why pay the debts we don't owe?**

When former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos was ousted in 1986 he left the country with a USD 26.39 billion debt. This was a consequence of Marcos' infrastructure-driven economy. This development paradigm required enormous funding which he raised by incurring massive foreign debt from 1970 to 1983, including the assumption of liabilities of corporations owned by his cronies. Behest loans proliferated during this period, with the Marcos government guaranteeing the procurement of borrowed capital even without complying with regular banking rules and procedures. This practice was formalized in 1977 when Marcos issued Presidential Decree No. 1177 that mandates automatic appropriations for debt service—an assurance to lenders of the country's intent to pay. This started the practice in the Philippine budget process of prioritizing principal amortization and interest payments before budget allocations are made for social and economic services.

Alongside Marcos' debt servicing policy, trade and financial liberalization began in 1980 under the first Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of the Philippines imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This was done in exchange for the infusion of \$200 million that year and another \$300 million in 1983, which were badly needed to cover the impact of trade deficits and the sharp increase in the cost of servicing the government's short-term loans due to the "interest rate shock" in 1979-80 (Boyce 1990, 15–16). According to Boyce, the moratorium was extended until a "\$608 million stand-by agreement with the IMF was finally concluded in December 1984", which was the country's second IMF stabilization program. This was followed by a May 1985 "rescheduling agreement with the country's 483 foreign bank creditors" (1990).

Due to the popular uprising that toppled the dictatorship, the succeeding presidency of Corazon Aquino was at an opportune historical moment to declare the country's refusal to service debt that it was unable to utilize due to Marcos' kleptocracy. Despite this, President Aquino declared in September 1986 that the Philippines will honor all its debts. This strategy failed miserably. Renegotiations of the debt were undertaken by the administration which resulted in the rescheduling of a few loans and availing of new ones from the IMF and World Bank, which facilitated the further implementation of neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation and liberalization.

Both the Aquino and Ramos administrations participated in the 1992 Brady Plan of the IMF and several commercial banks. The plan allowed the government to use funds from the IMF, World Bank and other sources to repurchase \$1.31 billion of government debt at a 50 percent discount, thus reducing the debt by \$650,000 million; and reschedule its debts that were due in 1990 to 1994. It also allowed 80 banks to subscribe to \$700 million worth of new loans.

These critical policy decisions by the Marcos, Aquino, and Ramos governments laid the foundation for succeeding administrations to follow suit in contracting loans consistently featuring two policies: the “honor all debts” policy as guaranteed by the Automatic Appropriations Law; and, the “honor all SAPs” policy which has stifled the growth of our economy due to shallow export orientation, and has trampled on people’s rights and welfare due to the privatization of and limitations on budget allocations for social services.

By 2006, Arroyo emerged as the biggest debtor among post-Marcos presidents with her total gross borrowings from 2001 to 2006 amounting to P3.09 trillion—almost twice the combined P1.51 trillion borrowings of Aquino, Ramos, and Estrada. She also registered the highest interest payments and principal amortization at Php 3.24 trillion, which is again almost twice the P1.81 trillion aggregate debt service of her three predecessors. Despite its attempt to balance heavy borrowing with the pre-payment of IMF loans in 2006–2007, the Arroyo administration continued to contract questionable loans in its latter years, including the controversial ZTE-NBN deal.

The Aquino III administration boasted about the sustainability of the public debt during its time, using the declining debt-to-GDP ratio as its primary indicator. The government’s success in bringing down the debt ratios, shift from an external to domestic capital market, refinancing maturing and short-term liabilities with long-term securities, and lower deficit spending, effectively shielded the country from foreign exchange risks that could result in a sudden increase in the value and servicing of its outstanding debt. Borrowing costs were within manageable levels especially with the reaffirmation of the country’s investment grade credit rating by major credit rating agencies in the world. Despite this, the Aquino III administration continued the trend of borrowing heavily from multilateral agencies to finance loans for reconstruction efforts from climate change-caused disasters and civil conflicts.

What the debt metrics do not show are the socio-political conditions affected by the government’s debt policy. Debt sustainability levels do not reflect the impact of the successive administrations’ adherence to neoliberal policies in exchange for access for new lending and are not an indication of future trends in government’s fiscal management and priorities. What the improved debt ratios appease are not the hungry stomachs of those whose lives were neglected when debt servicing ate up huge portions of the national budget, but the lenders’—the elites’— hunger for profits and domination through the power wielded by their accumulation of capital, while escaping impunity on their accountability in fraudulent and onerous lending activities.

Because of this limitation, debt campaigns in the South, and now also in the North, have asserted another framework which considers the issue of impacts, but broadens the discourse to raise other critical questions about debt. This framework refuses to reduce the rationale for debt cancellation to an issue of affordability even if this is set on higher human development and human rights standards. Debt campaigns are now working to change the terms of the debate to a broader framework that raises the issue of “illegitimate debts.”

For the above-mentioned loans contracted by the different administrations, FDC argues that debt that did not benefit the people directly (or indirectly through uneven development in the context of regressive taxation) and violated social and environmental standards must be investigated, declared “illegitimate,” and cancelled.

### Early years of the FDC debt audit initiative

As part of a global effort to conduct debt audits in various Southern countries, FDC began to concentrate its efforts on the Comprehensive Official and Citizens’ Debt Audit campaign in 2004. At the

height of the fiscal crisis in September 2004, the House was pushed to pass Rep. Edcel Lagman's House Joint Resolution No. 1 calling for a comprehensive audit of all public sector debt and debt policies, but the lack of strong championship of the counterpart Senate Joint Resolution No. 1 (SJR No. 1) by Sen. Rodolfo Biazon allowed then Finance Committee Chairperson Sen. Manuel Villar to focus instead on the proposed 2006 budget and shelve the debt audit bill. Instead, Sen. Villar filed in January 2005 Senate Bill No. 1928 calling for the creation of a Debt Relief Council which FDC actively reviewed and critiqued.

In 2007, taking off from its 2006 experience, FDC intensified its efforts on individual illegitimate debts reflected in the proposed budget, particularly because of their potential to highlight calls for a debt audit (in order to produce more illegitimate debts). As the call for a debt audit was shifted to illegitimate debts cases, in 2007, FDC decided to call for the suspension of payments of illegitimate debts in House Bill 2454, the proposed 2008 General Appropriations Bill. FDC, in partnership with the Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI), called for the reallocation of these payments to the social services ABI proposed, binding Congress to the suspension of debt payments.

Because of the Coalition's timely and intensive lobby-mobilization efforts in both chambers of Congress, the viability of the policy proposals presented, and close coordination with ABI, Congress adopted the proposals of FDC on the 2008 Budget and even raised the amounts. Based on the ratified Bicameral Report, the reduction in interest payments for foreign loans, totaled Php 25.9 billion. There was also a special provision listing 13 cases of illegitimate debts FDC identified with a statement that "pending renegotiation and/or condonation, no amount shall be used for interest payments on debts which are challenged as fraudulent, wasteful and/or useless, like but not limited to, the following." It was the first time the Congress of the Philippines recognized the existence of illegitimate debts that the government should suspend payments for.

FDC was able to push for a substantive change in the policy behavior of the House of Representatives and the Senate beginning with the 2008 budget. If in the previous Congresses legislators were reluctant to touch debt service on the issue of illegitimate debts, they explicitly reduced illegitimate debt payments in the 14th Congress. However, Malacañang vetoed the proposals, citing the automatic appropriations provisions. This had the effect of making the executive again accountable on the issue of debt, which provided an opportunity for FDC to target its political energies back to the executive.

As part of a global movement on debt audit, FDC also endeavored to create a citizens' debt audit group. It is for this purpose that FDC formed in 2005 the Citizens' Debt Audit Convener Group composed of progressive economists, civil society leaders, environmentalists and legal experts. But it was in 2008 that FDC was able to form an operation called Independent Citizens' Debt Audit Commission (ICDAC), later the Citizens' Debt Audit Commission (CDAC). CDAC later released a preliminary study of 20 illegitimate debt cases, an executive summary of preliminary reports on eight debt cases and a series of briefing papers regarding particular debt cases.

CDAC was able to position itself well on the issue of loan-financed projects, partly due to having some prominent personalities as its members which includes former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Jr. CDAC proceeded to conduct its public hearings, which were attended by government and bank officials. Among the prominent public hearings conducted by CDAC were on the Small Coconut Farms Development Project (SCFDP); Austrian Incinerators; Northrail Project; and, Second Social Expenditure Management Project (SEMP2) by the World Bank. The public hearings were important initiatives in making the government accountable in its borrowing and spending practices. For instance, the CDAC's hearings on the SCDFP were instrumental in exposing the gross misuse of funds in the Php 721-million fertilizer scam. CDAC's report was cited by then Senator Alan Peter Cayetano a Senate Blue Ribbon Committee investigation.



### Broadening the movement against illegitimate debt

The presidency of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo saw the perceived onslaught of illegitimate debts starting with the NBN-ZTE deal, the Cyber Education Program, National Road Improvement Program Phase 1 (NRIMP-1) and the railways projects. These cases pushed FDC to further substantiate its claims on specific illegitimate debt cases. This necessitated the creation of a movement against illegitimate debts with constituencies that are outside FDC membership. This widened FDC's constituency even among non-members and broadened the debt movement as a whole.

Instrumental to this was the convening of People Against Illegitimate Debt (PAID), which at the time was the broadest group of individuals and organizations against illegitimate debt. PAID later paved the way for the creation of Task Force Diskaril (TFD)—a movement against the illegitimate debts of the North and South Luzon Railways Project (NLRP/SLRP) and the North-South Linkage project. The earlier network FDC and the Ecowaste Coalition created for the Austrian Medical Waste Incinerator, the Stop Toxic Debt! Coalition became a standing group inside PAID. Even the Youth Against Debt (YAD) shifted its campaign from mere debt and education to highlighting the World Bank-funded SEMP2-SEDIP textbook scam. The Faith-based Coalition against Immoral Debts (FCAID) also joined PAID.

For the TFD, it was able to establish itself as the broadest coalition that merged all the corollary issues surrounding the PNR railways project, including the privatization scheme which caused retrenchment and the ensuing demolition which rendered communities homeless or with no basic services in their relocation areas, and the illegitimacy and illegality of the debt itself. It was able to register its message during mobilizations in the PNR and the Chinese consular office.

The debt repudiation/cancellation campaign reached a high point when the Parliamentarian's petition (by 84 representatives) was presented to Austrian Foreign Secretary Lopatka whose initial response was welcomed by the Department of Health, the National Economic Development Authority, and the Department of Finance.

### The FDC Debt Audit Initiative in the time of Duterte

Despite its continued engagement, FDC faced several roadblocks during the Aquino III administration with regard to the audit, as it was not considered a priority of the administration which painted a rosy picture of the Philippines' debt problem. Early in its six-year term, the Aquino administration and its allies thwarted FDC's efforts for Congress to address the lingering issue of debt through an official audit of government loans, the review of existing policies on debt, and the suspension of interest payments on loans challenged as illegitimate. Led by Aquino's Budget Secretary, Florencio "Butch" Abad, and several allies in the House of Representatives, the administration blocked FDC's legislative advocacy on debt because, supposedly, it would delay the approval of the national budget.

The debt audit initiative gained traction again in 2016, when Rodrigo Duterte was elected to the presidency. Amid the fluid political situation, one solid handle for FDC is the return to Congress of its long-time ally and champion during the 2004 and 2008 legislative advocacy against illegitimate debt. In addition, several allied party-list groups won seats in the Lower House. Friends of FDC who have direct contact and even influence on the Duterte administration were also seen as possible effective messengers of FDC's agenda.

In pursuit of its legislative agenda for a debt audit and repeal of the Automatic Appropriations Law (AAL), FDC took a two-track approach of lobbying the lawmakers and influencing the President in consideration of the "supermajority" in both chambers of Congress and the President's veto power

on bills passed by Congress. Similar to earlier tactics employed by the Coalition, the ongoing national budget process was used as an entry point to get the attention of the legislators and the Executive on the issue of Philippine debt. A petition for a debt audit and repeal of the AAL was circulated, with its online version automatically sending emails to target decision-makers every time someone signed the petition. In September 2016, the initial compilation of signatories was handed to Cabinet Secretary Leoncio Evasco who met with FDC's representatives on behalf of the President. Copies of the petition were also provided to target champions in Congress.

During this time, FDC strengthened its compilation of questionable loans that would be presented to Congress to establish the urgency of a debt audit. Twenty cases of illegitimate debts, with interest payments for 2017 amounting to P909 million, were submitted. FDC's lobbying efforts bore fruit in the Upper House with Senator Risa Hontiveros championing the agenda for a debt audit and to hold in trust the interest payments on 20 questionable loans pending the result of such audit, which would have the same effect of a suspension or a moratorium. The words "suspension" and "moratorium" were intentionally avoided to skirt arguments that a suspension would violate the AAL.

As a result, FDC was able to push for the inclusion in the general provisions of the 2017 General Appropriations Act of a section mandating the Congressional Oversight Committee on Official Development Assistance (COCODA) to conduct a debt audit of 20 loans contracted by the Philippine government; and the introduction by Senators Aquilino Pimentel and Hontiveros of a resolution directing the appropriate Senate committee to inquire, in aid of legislation, into the foreign loans contracted by the Philippine government in the last 15 years, by way of a debt audit.

During the first half of 2017, the Debt and Public Finance program pursued its work on the debt audit by initiating meetings with key stakeholders and participating in the Senate Committee hearings chaired by Senator Sherwin Gatchalian. Due to the challenges encountered by the Coalition in its harmonization of frameworks with the Commission on Audit (COA) and the committees in Congress, the audit did not push through in 2017 but a similar provision was successfully included in the 2018 General Appropriations Act for the continuation of the official debt audit initiative.

## Challenges and Lessons

Throughout its decades-old campaign on illegitimate debt, and more specifically, its engagements in the debt audit initiative during the administration of Presidents Arroyo, Aquino III, and Duterte, FDC has observed three recurring challenges and learned two significant lessons.

First, FDC is part of the broader civil society in a debt-dependent country where there are several roadblocks to demanding accountability from the government. One of these is the delegative powers relegated to the executive branch, the sole authority in the Philippines for the approval of loans. This delegative role extends to lawmaking, where both Houses of the Philippine Congress are dependent on the President for his legislative and budgetary priorities. Thus, if the administration decides to continue an "honor all debts" policy, the legislative branch is sure to follow without scrutiny. Additionally, even if the Congress does take a step forward as in 2008, this can easily be vetoed by the President.

A second challenge faced by the Coalition is the Congress and attached agencies' inability to sustain prolonged discourse on complex issues such as the debt and budget policy, and its vulnerability to the intense lobbying of lenders and pro-lender groups and individuals. The FDC suspects that this could partially be because their class interests may directly or indirectly lie in preserving the automatic appropriations provision (as they may have been directly or indirectly connected to the holders of Philippine securities), or they may have archaic notions on "honoring" debts, convinced of the

“impropriety” of not recognizing “obligations”, and well-meaning but misplaced fear of lender backlash. For instance in 2017, there were problems encountered in reaching consensus on an audit framework for illegitimate/odious debts among the Congress, the Commission on Audit and other stakeholders.

A third challenge is the continued influence that multilateral institutions and bilateral creditors hold over the country’s policy decisions. Although the country may have withdrawn formally or has supposedly gained higher bargaining power through sound macroeconomic management in these institutions, the relative permanence of policies in accordance with structural adjustment programs (SAPs) remain a significant roadblock to people-centered reforms that the debt campaign, in broader terms, attempts to forward. As long as the existing policy paradigm on debts does not change, FDC expects that this challenge will always be present in future debt audit campaigns.

However, FDC recognized that its most successful efforts involved the broadest possible sectors in civil society, beyond the Coalition through network-building (e.g., PAID, YAD, FCAID). This ensured that public pressure could be felt by legislators and the executive branch, especially since it involved powerful actors such as the different Christian denominations. It also enabled the campaign to take on several channels and levels of accountability: from protests by different groups to high-level dialogues with World Bank representatives who have a direct responsibility over the possible cancellation of the debts. The information campaigns held by the various networks also broadened the acceptance of the framework being put forward by FDC.

Second, FDC sees the particular importance of the civil society counterpart of its debt audit campaign. In 2008, the unique contribution of the CDAC was its ability to incorporate the inputs of civil society, particularly communities and people’s organizations involved in the areas where the fraudulent projects were taking place. This provided concrete examples where social and environmental standards were clearly violated, such as in the cases of the coal-fired power plants Calaca I and II. This was absent in the initiatives in 2016 and 2017, which involved mostly desk research and interviews with concerned agencies and is perhaps one of the reasons why the campaign had the limited involvement of communities in the areas involved. This is also one of the reasons behind the difficulty of examining and forwarding new debt cases which can still be actionable (as most of the cases in the 20 outlined in the 2017 and 2018 GAA have already been fully serviced during the administrations of Presidents Arroyo and Aquino).

Through the debt audit initiative, FDC was able to put forward in the national discourse its alternative framework with regard to debt and development, particularly on “illegitimate debt” and its proper allocation. It was also able to build a constituency through its broad networks and citizen-led debt audit commissions.

For movements like the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) and its regional network, the Asian Peoples’ Movement for Debt and Development (APMDD), the “illegitimate” in “illegitimate debts” refers to how and why the particular debt violated some of the common principles we all uphold as peoples. Thus, this illegitimate debt concept broadly touches the principles of human rights and sustainable human development, justice and fairness, accountability and responsibility, sovereignty of peoples and nations, and democracy (democratic rights, processes).

In June 2009, with the participation of FDC and Jubilee South-APMDD, organizations from around the world signed “Transforming the International Financial System: Sovereign, Democratic and Responsible Financing”, a set of principles that acknowledges the accountability of both lender and borrower governments in the contraction of external debt as well as the responsibilities that are entailed by such accountability. FDC strives to incorporate these principles into its own alternative development paradigm, particularly for the Philippines and through its specific campaigns.

One of the recommendations made by the platform is the “conduct [of] comprehensive participatory and regular audit of all debts claimed from South countries. Immediate cancellation, repudiation and/or non-payment of all illegitimate debt,” a strategy that was successfully undertaken by the Freedom from Debt Coalition from 2004–2017. However, this must be broadened even further by looking towards possibilities for structural change in the Philippine political economy—ushering in FDC’s *People’s Economy* alternative as the next crucial step.



## 8

# Teaching “Pangiyak Ki!” The Lumad School as a Struggle for Land, Life, and Liberation

SAVE OUR SCHOOLS NETWORK<sup>1</sup>

Despite national and international laws, treaties, and initiatives that seek to promote their rights, indigenous peoples (IP) across the world continue to be sequestered to the fringes of society. Abetted by local compradors and the bureaucratic elite, the transnational market—in its search for cheap raw materials and human resources—subject IP communities to land grabbing, resource dispossession, forced removal or relocation, and socio-cultural denial, accompanied by violence by way of threat, intimidation, or even death (Belisario 2019, 77; IBON 2018, 13; UNPFII 2018, 3). A veneer of economic development veils states’ abandonment of the lands and resources of its indigenous population to the hands of a destructively technocratic world (Escobar 1995, 44). Threats against these communities’ material and cultural existence are further exacerbated by the paucity of state support for basic social services such as health, safety, and education in the countryside. The lack of access to education discourages IP communities from scrutinizing and organizing against these attacks, rendering them more vulnerable to corporate business intervention in their ancestral domains (Belisario 2019, 72; Lahoy and Roc 2019, 12).

It would be wrong, however, to frame IP communities as passive actors in the face of these challenges (Canuday 2009, 3). Historically, IPs have demonstrated and sustained alternative strategies to pave their way to their own definition of development parallel to or against that of the state and the private sector. The establishment of alternative tribal schools for the Lumad of the Philippines is an exemplar attempt at responding to the incompetence of the state to provide educational services in the farthest reaches of the country. Emerging from the endeavors of religious groups to uplift the high incidence of illiteracy in Mindanao, such schools integrate indigenous knowledges and technologies to what would be the “mainstream” design of formal education homogenously implemented in state schools. As of now, there are around 219 Lumad schools in four regions in Mindanao operated with the efforts of Lumad communities, religious and civil society groups, and activist organizations (Salugpongan n.d.). For the

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Lumad, these schools become alternative spaces for the development of critical consciousness as their very existence acknowledges (and resists, as I shall show later) the systemic nature of oppression and injustice based on the Lumad's lived experiences as targets of violence (Serrano and Xhafa 2012b, 4).

Unfortunately, over the recent years, the operation of these schools has been disrupted by heavy militarization as part of the Philippine government's counter-insurgency program. As reported by the Save Our Schools Network (2019, 1–2), a campaign network for the right to education of indigenous Lumad children, “the rising number of attacks, child rights violations, and the use of schools for military purposes has effectively denied and continues to deny [almost 4,000] Lumad children [from] their inherent right to education.” These attacks forcibly evacuate Lumad communities out of their ancestral domains. Most recently, in July 2019, Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Leonor Briones signed the temporary closure of 54 campuses of Salugpongan, a tribal school, “invoking baseless and recycled accusations that [they teach] children to mount ambushes against the military,” affecting 1,133 Lumad students (Belisario 2019, 72; SOS 2019a, 1).

From 2017 and 2018 up until the writing of this case study, about a hundred Lumad students, parents, teachers, and volunteers have mounted a Bakwit School in Metro Manila, a makeshift school for displaced indigenous children from Mindanao. Garnering support from allies in the academe, the church, non-government organizations (NGOs), and human rights defenders, the alternative learning venue allows the Lumad evacuees to continue their formal schooling and, at the same time, to hold protest actions around the capital region's centers of political power. It moves from one refuge to another in order to ensure its students, faculty, and staff's security. The Bakwit School stands as a testament to the unyielding struggle of the Lumad not only for education, but also for their ancestral land, the site of their lifeways' flourishing.

This paper seeks to trace the historical and political conditions that necessitated the creation of tribal schools for the Lumad of Mindanao, and later the Bakwit School. After detailing major points in the development of these schools, I shall discuss their pedagogical foundations and objectives to highlight their interrogation of state-sponsored education. This case shows that the schools do not only respond to the shortfall of state services but are also a form of protest. Writing from the perspective of a teacher in the Bakwit School, I shall pin down the challenges that these schools and its supporters have been facing in the recent years, particularly under the Duterte regime's martial rule in Mindanao. Through this, I wish to reveal how such alternative learning spaces aid the Lumad's fight for land, life, and liberation.

## Land and the Lumad: A short history

The successful establishment of alternative tribal schools is backgrounded by a grim history of land and resource dispossession and military violence in the ancestral domains of IP communities in Mindanao. A short historical review of Mindanaoan political economy positions the nascence of the Lumad identity in conflict and struggle for land. Non-Muslim ethnic groups have already settled in Mindanao and several parts of Visayas even before Spain reached our shores in the 1500s. Beginning with Spain in the 16th century, colonial powers have attempted to subjugate these groups in the name of socio-political and economic expansion. Spanish settlement and internal migration in the Mindanaoan lowlands drove the tribes that would later become the Lumad to the hinterlands (Tan 2003, 25–26; Zapico et al. 2015, 138).

The 19th century witnessed the earnest rise of the United States as an imperial and economic power in the globe (Canuday 2009, 11), and with it the gradual decline of Spanish rule. Armed clashes in Mindanao between the US military and resistant Islamized polities continued to transform and

complicate the area’s demography and territorialities (Gowing 1977, 21–29). The ability of upland peoples to maintain control over their communal territories in the hinterlands became key to the protection of their lifeways (ICHRP and IBON 2018, 42). The collaborationist and puppet governments that followed the disruption of US power due to the Great Depression in the 1930s and the World Wars in the 1940s saw demographic shifts that minoritized the IPs of Mindanao, transforming migrant Filipinos as the new (lowlander) majority in the island (Rodil 2004, 46–55; Tan 2003, 29).

The Marcos regime following the Third Republic marked a decisive turn not only in the Philippine mining industry but also in the lifeworlds of many IP communities. Pressure upon IP communities’ land base was compounded by a national economy that became increasingly foreign-dominated and export-oriented (Molintas 2004, 273). Superpower countries targeted nations impoverished by the Wars for social and political intervention (Escobar 1995, 23). International markets and private banks offered cheap interest rate loans for developing countries in pursuit of state-led industrialization (Harvey 2006). At the level of policy, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos sought a state-led mining regime through an aggressive promotion of domestic firms’ mineral exploration in peripheral regions (Camba 2015, 8). Nevertheless, such state-facilitated incentives and large-scale mining activities were propelled by low-interest US commercial loans (Holden 2005). Presidential Decree 1559 of 1978 opened the gates of the countryside for the entry of foreign capital by declaring that cultural minorities and other occupants of public lands may be ejected for the “best use” of a territory in question (ICHRP and IBON 2018, 43). Infrastructure projects in the 1980s such as the Chico Dam, the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, and state-supported mines expelled entire populations from their settlements (Camba 2015, 10). Through bribery and/or violent coercion, leaders of IP communities were made to surrender their lands to compradors and agents of either or both the national government and foreign corporations. The illiteracy prevalent in some areas rendered such communities more vulnerable; some of them have even been deceived into signing documents in exchange for what should have been given free as relief humanitarian assistance.

National development defined by the fascistic state only provoked and empowered resistance movements. Peoples’ organizations and IP groups launched protests against the expansion of mines during Marcos’s rule (Thompson 1996). Collectively asserted by several groups belonging to these tribes, the Lumad identity we know now emerged during the martial law regime to affirm and assert governance over their ancestral domains, what they call *yutang kabilin* or land of heritage (Canuday 2009). The autonym “Lumad” is a Cebuano shorthand for *Katawhang Lumad*, literally “people of the land” or “native of the land.” This collective political identity is composed of the Ata, Bagobo/Ubo, Banwaon, B’laan, Kalagan, Kaulo, Dibabawon, Higaonon, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Mangguwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Matigsalog, Subanen, Talaandig, Tiboli, and Tiruray (SOS 2019a, 3). At that time, several IP groups in Mindanao fortified their stance against the Marcos dictatorship to lobby for self-determination over their lands, which are targets of the government’s resurrection of a failed mineral regime (Camba 2015, 8). It was on June 26, 1986 during the Lumad Mindanaw People’s Federation (LMPF) founding assembly that the identity was affirmed by the same groups.

The downfall of the Marcos dictatorship did not end the Lumad’s struggle for land and life. 1997 saw the ratification of the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA), or Republic Act No. 8371, which was touted to echo the “progressive” provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution that recognizes customary laws governing property rights and relations and their validity with regard to the ownership and extent of ancestral domains (Molintas 2004, 295). Likewise, IPRA upholds the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Indigenous Peoples, which underscores the collective rights of indigenous communities (*ibid.*, 296). While considered a landmark in legislation for marginalized peoples, IPRA has not been effective in protecting the IPs’ rights over their land and self-governance, especially given its conflict with other existing laws such as the Philippine Mining Act of 1995. This conflict

spells a difference in the conceptions of land ownership and management between IP communities and the Philippine state, allowing the massive land grab of ancestral domains (ibid., 292–94). The formal registration system—indeed a Western concept of land ownership and management (Huggan and Tiffin 2010, 8)—only served to transform communally-owned lands to individually-titled private lands, easing the process of transferring property (Molintas 2004, 292). The Mining Act of 1995, in the same vein, facilitates the entry of large foreign and local mining corporations into the IPs mineral-rich territories, opening up the national mining sector to foreign control (ibid., 294). Such laws and tedious administrative procedures only provide formal legitimacy for the government to declare untitled land to be (sellable) state property and thereby undermine ancestral rights (ICHRP and IBON 2018, 42–43).

Under the iron fist of President Rodrigo Duterte, mining, logging, and other foreign corporate ventures remain to be a behemoth threat to the Lumad. Today, Mindanao stands as one of the last frontiers of natural resources and fertile soil in the Philippines (SOS 2019a, 3). Ironically, its peoples suffer the highest poverty incidence in the country (PSA 2019). Living in remote forests and mountains, the Lumad people, which now comprise 61% of around 14 to 17 million IPs in the country, remain one of the poorest with very little access to basic social services (Belisario 2019, 72). Even with IPRA, big plantations and mining corporations still manage to encroach over their *yutang kabilin*. As of 2016, most of the 23 priority mining projects under the government’s mining revitalization program in Mindanao lie within or nearby the ancestral domains of the Lumad (Villareal 2016). Some of the largest mining companies in the world are presently operating in Mindanao as well. These include the BHP Billiton, Anglo American Corp., Sumitomo, St. Augustine Gold and Copper, Apex Mining, Toronto Ventures Inc., Indophil, and others. There are also 15 coal operating contracts (COCs) in one of the regions in Mindanao encompassing 42,000 hectares as of 2015. Mindanao has 166 mining tenements as of July 2019 as reported by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) (Olea 2011). Aside from mining tenements, about 500,000 hectares of land in the five regions of Mindanao are now covered with agro-industrial plantation crops primarily for the export market. This is equivalent to 12 percent of Mindanao’s agricultural land. Another 1,000,000 hectares are targeted for oil palm expansion by 2022. Over the years, more than half of the Lumad’s ancestral domain have been grabbed by foreign, large-scale mining corporations, with around 700,000 hectares converted into cash-crop plantations by the same or related multinational companies (SOS 2019a, 3).

Publicized as a response to the Marawi crisis of 2017, Duterte’s imposition of martial law in Mindanao, along with the counter-insurgency scheme Oplan Kapayapaan, has only inflicted unfathomable terror on the Lumad people. With 75% of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) deployed in Mindanao, the Lumad’s ancestral land continues to be denuded, partitioned, and secured for the highest bidders (SOS 2019a, 4). Recent cases of intensifying militarization and the prosecution of Lumad territories across the Pantaron Range and the Andap Valley Complex only exposes how the Duterte government champions its economic interests over the welfare of its people and their lands. Harboring the headwaters of major rivers in Mindanao, the Pantaron Mountain Range straddles across the Davao region up to North Cotabato and Bukidnon. In 1994, the indigenous group Talaingod Manobo successfully fended off the encroachment of the Alcantara and Sons Incorporated, a big logging concessionaire, from ravaging one of the last remaining intact rainforests in the Range (Umil 2018a). However, in 2014, Kerlan Fanagel, secretary general of the Confederation of Lumad Organizations in Southern Mindanao (Pasaka day Salugpungan Kalimudan or PASAKA), learned that the Aquino government plans to build a Php 9 billion (USD 200 million) mining highway that leads up to Pantaron Range, hence the increased military encampment in Lumad communities and the renewed presence of military-organized paramilitary group Alamara to counter resistance against the project (Ayroso 2014). Years after, facilitated by martial rule in Mindanao, the



56th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) set up checkpoints that gridlock the paths to Sitio Bulyan, Brgy. Palma Gil, Talaingod, beefing up its surveillance over the community on the premise of countering insurgent or rebellious acts, which includes those against big logging operations (Malayao 2018).

A similar bolstering of military presence in the Caraga region can be explained by the treasure chest that is the Andap Valley Complex. Straddling the towns of San Miguel, San Agustin, Marihatag, Cagwait, Tago, and Lianga, Andap Valley has been targeted for extractive projects by mining corporations such as Benguet Corp., Abacus Coal Exploration and Development Corp., the Chinese-owned Great Wall Mining and Power Corp., ASK Mining and Exploration Corp., and CoalBlack Mining Corp. In 2018, the 75th IBPA built a patrol base beside the community starting with more than 30 soldiers who would later stay in people's houses at daytime and follow farmers on their way to the fields to harvest vegetables (Moderno 2018). Likewise, the Lumad farmers in Opol, Misamis Oriental and Kalabugao, Bukidnon are withheld from tilling their ancestral lands due to the palm oil plantations A Brown Energy and Resources Development Inc. (ABERDI) and subsidiary Nakeen Corporation. In this case, it is the 4<sup>th</sup> IBPA that protects the corporate plantation by driving away any resistance from the Lumad communities displaced from the area (Miller 2019).

While the global movement for the codification of IP rights at the turn of the century appear to be a boon for the welfare of the Lumad, the conflict-ridden history of the Lumad's emergence and ongoing uphill battle for ownership over their ancestral domains suggests that there is little change between the past and the present. These notable cases of land grabbing and military attacks only prove how the current regime and its martial rule in Mindanao follow the footsteps of Marcos and the precursive colonial regimes in sequestering the indigenous population to the margins in the name of profit and power. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, many IP groups have been countering these attacks by (1) engaging with policymakers, (2) launching protests and demonstrations, and (3) acting on the shortfall of state services in the hinterlands. In the case of the Lumad, a successful initiative that encompasses all three strategies is their alternative tribal school.

### **It takes a movement to build schools**

That marginalized communities are denied access to basic social services such as education has made the Lumad people all the more vulnerable to the extractive and extortive neoliberal projects of the state. About 9 out of 10 Lumad did not have a proper education, and most, if not all, have no access to adequate health services (SOS 2019c, 3). Children needed to travel miles only to attend classes in town centers. Many students are forced to drop out due to the burden of the high cost of transportation, food, lodging, the discriminatory treatment against IPs as second-class citizens, and military surveillance and harassment (Belisario 2019, 72).

These challenges prompted several communities among the Lumad to cultivate a site for educational services with the objective of uplifting the lives of indigenous youths. Starting as outreach missions, literacy and numeracy projects were conducted by religious organizations in Surigao and North Cotabato way back in the 1980s. Through those years, with the help of non-government and peoples' organizations, such programs grew into formalized alternative learning institutions. In 2019, a total of 219 alternative tribal school campuses has been established all over Mindanao with the efforts of the Lumad people, religious institutions, and civil society groups, serving up to 9,000 students from indigenous and peasant communities (Salugpongan International n.d.). The long list includes the campuses of Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development (ALCADEV, Inc.) and Tribal Filipino Program of Surigao Sur (TRIFPSS) of Caraga; Rural Missionaries of the Philippines' Literacy and Numeracy Schools for Indigenous Children in Northern Mindanao;

Center for Lumad Advocacy and Services, Inc. (CLANS) in SOCCSKSARGEN; and Salugpongan Ta Tanu Igkanogon Community Learning Center Inc. (STTICLC), and Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation, Inc. Academy (MISFI) in Southern Mindanao (Umil 2018b).

Alternative tribal schools for the Lumad respond to the constitutional right of all Filipino citizens to access education. Article XIV, Section 2, Paragraph 4 of the 1987 Constitution states that the “state shall encourage non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school study programs particularly those that respond to the community needs.” The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the IPs also enshrines the Lumad’s right to establish and control their educational systems in a manner appropriate to their lifeways (UN 2007). Most if not all of these alternative tribal schools had also secured permits to operate and have complied with the requirements of DepEd Indigenous Peoples Education Office (IPSEO) for learning institutions. The Salugpongan schools, for instance, had reached recognition status as set by the government. ALCADDEV Inc. had likewise been recognized by DepEd’s Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) as a duly recognized alternative learning institution. ALCADDEV also provides self-learning and out-of-school study programs that are sensitive to the needs of Lumad communities (SOS 2019a, 7).

The program of these schools revolves around the needs of indigenous communities. The schools aim to provide an education relevant and sensitive to the Lumad peoples’ culture and needs by offering academic, technical-vocational, and alternative farming skills in coordination with DepEd, local government units, other schools, and civil society organizations (Belisario 2019, 73). Three dimensions of IP survival are triangulated in this design: academics, agriculture, and health. Their academic curricula emphasize basic literacy and numeracy; sustainable agriculture, technology and livelihood education; indigenous languages, Filipino, and English; and the appreciation of indigenous arts and culture (SOS 2019a, 5). Students are segregated based on their grade level, and recently, some tribal schools have adopted the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum by adding a two-year Senior High School component as a requirement for graduation. Primacy is given on sustainable agriculture, the lynchpin of life and livelihood in their ancestral lands, as a subject where other topics could be studied, such as mathematics (weights and measurements, inventory, calendaring), nutrition (selection of crops to be cultivated), communication (reading agricultural texts, interpersonal communication during farming), and values (cooperation and collective labor). These schools’ health component involves training in various levels of first aid and the use of indigenous assets for medical purposes. Agricultural practice in schools also sustains the health of the community as it becomes the source of food for teachers, students, and staff. Thus, the use of their ancestral territories to sustain their struggle for education and self-determination also lays claim over the land sought after by mining, logging, and agro-industrial corporations.

For striving to provide an education to the unserved, Lumad schools have been awarded the Most Outstanding Literacy Program in Caraga. ALCADDEV in particular has been recognized as the 5th Most Outstanding Literacy Program in the Philippines (de Santos 2018). Despite these accolades, alternative tribal schools for the Lumad have been targeted by harassment, threats, and other forms of attacks through the years, hindering the students’ education. Upon the installation of Briones as DepEd Secretary, the vilification of alternative tribal schools has been more adamant. DepEd, the AFP, and other government institutions have maliciously tagged Salugpongan, ALCADDEV, Inc., and CLANS as illegally operating on the basis of a “refusal to comply with the requirements of the Department of Education and of teaching subversive doctrines to their students” (SOS 2019a, 6). In the case of CLANS, documents for their operation have long been submitted to DepEd but a permit has yet to be tendered despite successive follow-ups, curtailing classes (SOS 2019a, 7). Government officials also alleged that Lumad schools teach students how to hold and fire a gun and how to sing the “rebel’s



**FIGURE 8.1** • A view during one of the classes at the Lumad school  
(Photo courtesy of the Save Our Schools Network)

version” of the Philippine national anthem. While still unproven in any court of law, these allegations echoed by paramilitary elements acting as Lumad leaders have been used to justify the “temporary” closure of schools (Sambalud 2018). The 1,333 Lumad students of 54 Salugpongan campuses cited earlier are victims of this black propaganda (SOS 2019a, 1).

Violence inflicted by the AFP and its paramilitary organizations is legitimized by the AFP Directive Letter No. 25 dated July 15, 2013 and through DepEd Memorandum No. 221 dated December 13, 2013. These orders allow the invasion of military elements in schools and communities, infracting Republic Act No. 7610 (Anti-Child Abuse Law), which stipulates that schools must be zones of peace for the youth. On the premise of extinguishing communist insurgency in the Philippine countryside, they have also given way to a number of horrendous cases of attacks including extrajudicial killings of students, teachers, and members of Parent-Teachers-Community Association (PTCA); sexual harassment of students and teachers; threats and harassment; use of students and other civilians as guide and shield during military operations; physical assault and torture of students; fake and forced surrender (as rebels) of PTCA members, teachers and students; arbitrary detention and illegal arrest; forcible evacuation; and the forcible closure of schools that alarmed human rights institutions and the media, both local and international.

Recent cases of attacks this decade have forced students and their communities out of their ancestral land. As early as May 2015, Alamara has already fully occupied multiple villages in Talaingod and in Kapitalong, Davao del Norte. The anti-communist group’s vilification and indiscriminate firing displaced more than 700 Lumad from their communities, depriving students their right to attend classes in at least 24 primary and secondary schools operated by the Salugpongan Ta Tanu Igkanugon Community Learning Center and Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation Incorporated Academy. Parents and teachers who opposed the group were threatened to be killed (Manlupig 2015). Until 2017, thousands of residents of Kapitalong found refuge in evacuation centers in Davao City due to Alamara’s continued harassment (SOS 2019a, 8).

National and international media has also covered the Lianga massacre, what may be one of the most horrendous cases of attacks on schools this decade. Later in 2015, another paramilitary group organized by the AFP known as Magahat-Bagani launched an attack against Manobo communities in Lianga, Surigao del Sur. Magahat-Bagani rounded up the villagers to force them to stop the operations of schools in the area. Community leaders Dionel Campos and Jovillo Sinzo and the director of the local tribal school Emerito Samarca were beaten and shot at close range after resisting the paramilitary's demands. These murders sparked the mass exodus of about 3,000 Lumad from the provincial capital of Tandag. The villagers, with the assistance and protection of several humanitarian organizations, believe that the Magahat-Bagani displaced them to prepare the Andap Valley Complex for upcoming mining and logging ventures (Go 2018).

In the three years of the Duterte administration, the Save Our Schools Network has documented 671 cases of attacks on alternative tribal schools, 584 of which were inflicted after the declaration of martial law in Mindanao in 2016. The President himself publicly declared in his 2017 State of the Nation Address that “[he] will use the Armed Forces, the Philippine Air Force. *Talagang bobombahin ko ‘yung mga... lahat ng ano ninyo* [I will really bomb all of it]. Because you are operating illegally and you are teaching the children to rebel against government” (Lingao 2017). Indeed, the leader of the Philippines’ bombing threat against Lumad children has materialized into barbarity in the Lumad’s ancestral domain. Table 8.1 collates these cases as of July 2019, listing the number of incidents and victims (individual students, teachers, and community members) before and during the implementation of martial law in Mindanao. One can notice the sizeable upswing of incidents upon the enforcement of

**TABLE 8.1** • Documented attacks on Lumad schools before and during the implementation of martial law as of July 2019 (most recent collation of data)

Cases of attacks on Lumad schools under the Duterte administration	Pre-martial law		During martial law		Total victims
	Incidents	Victims	Incidents	Victims	
School-related extrajudicial killings	6	6	6	7	13
Frustrated killings	2	2	3	3	5
Sexual harassment	–	–	3	8	8
Trumped-up charges	3	9	14	40	49
Aerial bombardment	–	–	5	2,350	2,350
Indiscriminate firing/strafing	3	141	11	789	930
Forcible closure of schools	9	172	126	3,461	3,633
Forcible evacuation	4	1,383	36	16,866	18,249
Threat, harassment, and intimidation	37	9,079	236	35,533	44,612
Fake and forced surrender	1	3	31	3,062	3,065
Arbitrary detention/illegal arrest	1	8	21	97	105
Military encampment in schools and communities	13	3,941	35	9,208	13,149
Use of civilians as guides and human shields during military operations	3	1,409	8	650	2,059
Denial of humanitarian access	–	–	19	3,578	3,578
Physical assault	–	–	10	34	34
Violation of domicile	5	2,049	20	3,962	6,011

Source: Save Our Schools Network

martial law in Mindanao, which endorses and facilitates the bolstering of military presence in much of the Lumad's domain. The most numerous of which are cases of threats, harassment, and intimidation, which in turn sets up conditions for extrajudicial killings, military occupation, indiscriminate strafing, and others. Martial law seems to have expedited the use of aerial bombardment to destroy schools as well. Accompanying the premise of counterinsurgency, many of the students, teachers, and parents who were illegally detained were also forced to confess that they are surrenderees of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Their false confessions have been used to justify more attacks on schools, spinning more fervently a cycle of violence in the Lumad's ancestral domain.

Many of these attacks have happened only a few months after the imposition of martial rule in Mindanao. In February 2017, gunshots were indiscriminately fired in Sitio Midpanga, Barangay Hinalaan, Sultan Kudarat, forcing more than 60 Dulangan Manobo students and volunteer teachers of CLANS to evacuate. At that time, 30 Lumad schools were closed to protect more than 1,745 Lumad children and 80 volunteer teachers. Three of these schools were also victims of a series of air bombings carried out in Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat (SOS 2019a, 7). Teacher Jolita Tolino, an active campaigner against plantation and mining companies entering the Dulangan Manobo lands, has since then been illegally detained. On June 20, 2017, Rodel Butanlog, CAFGU operative and former Ala re more than 60 children were holding classes. A grade 7 Manobo student was grazed by a bullet as he, his mara member, indiscriminately fired gunshots at the school building of Salugpongan in Sito Nasaliban, Talaingod where classmates, and teachers were evacuating the classroom. On July 6, 2017, continuing military operations in Surigao del Sur also disrupted the classes of ALCADDEV and TRIFPPS as 2,000 Manobos including 545 children were forced to evacuate after elements of the 75th IBPA interrogated villagers and threatened them of launching bomber planes (*ibid.*, 8). Later that year, two Lumad students, aged 16 and 22, were tortured from November 30 to December 2017 in the camp of the 71st IPBA. After being burned alive, the two managed to survive by playing dead.

Attacks against schools have only worsened in the following year. On November 28, 2018, facilitated by the 56th IBPA's encampments and checkpoints nearby, Alamara and elements of CAFGU gathered the communities in Talaingod, Davao del Norte and accused their leaders and children of aiding the insurgent NPA. Community members were coerced to sign petitions testifying to such "crimes" and endorsing the effective closure of nearby Lumad schools. Harassments and violent threats ensued, forcing several families to leave the area (Malayao 2018). The first ever Salugpongan school campus along with 16 others in Talaingod were temporarily shut down for being targets of military encampment (SOS 2019b, 2). This attack began a series of forcible closure of schools that culminated the following year with DepEd's decision to stop the operations of the remaining Salugpongan schools. The link between these closures and the mineral exploration proposals submitted by Metalores Inc., One Compostela Valley Minerals, and Phil. Meng Di Mining Development Corp to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is evident. These explorations would cover 31,180 hectares of heavily forested ancestral land of Talaingod Manobo and other Lumad groups in the Pantaron Mountain Range.

In 2019, two years after the Lianga massacre, ALCADDEV and TRIFPPS were once again attacked. In the morning of April 28, the 75th IPBA and the 401st Infantry Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division of the AFP, along with Marcos Bocales, leader of Magahat-Bagani, assisted the unwarranted intrusion of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), Indigenous People's Peace Panel of OPAPP and the Committee on Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples (CICCIP) between ongoing classes. Classrooms were forcibly opened, and the unexpected visitors took pictures of students and teachers without consent. Lumad community leaders condemned the lack of notice and

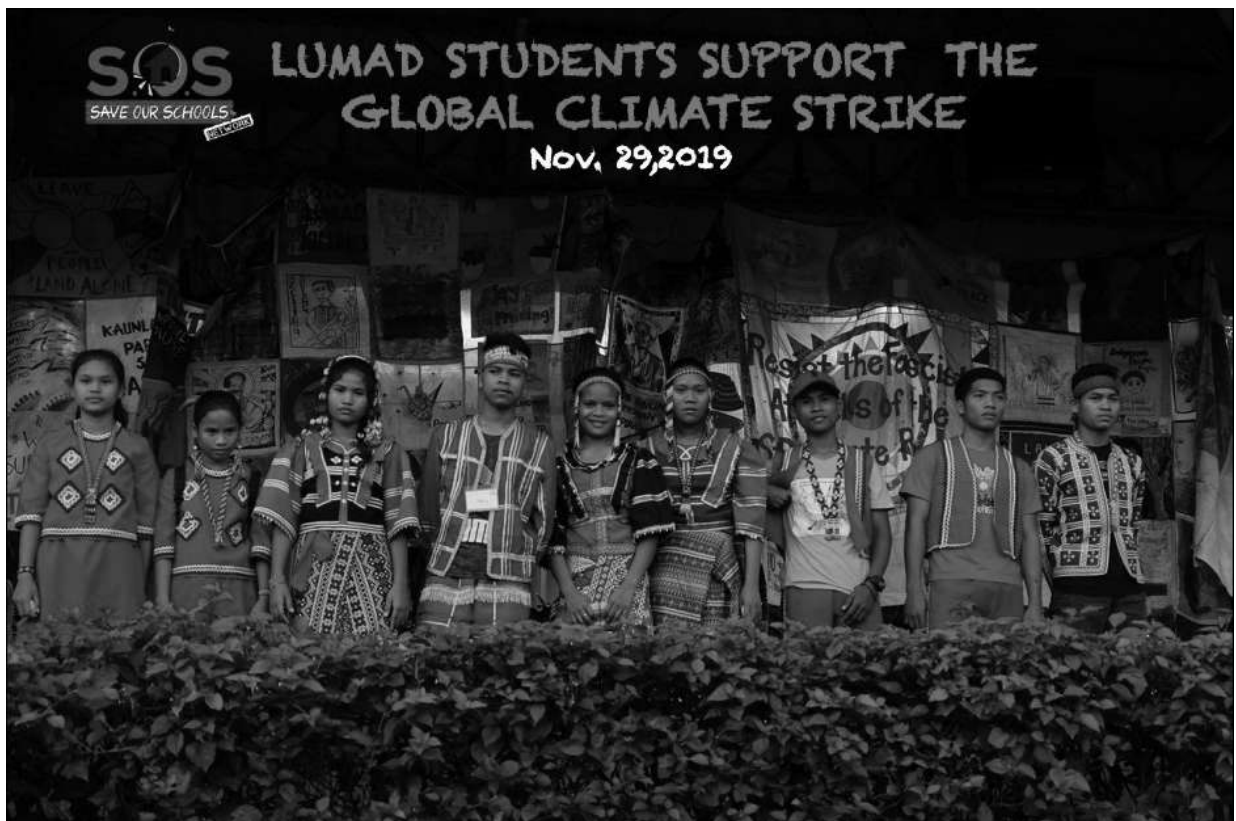
absence of local representation in the visitors' team. According to Lumad organization Malahutayong Pakigbisog Alang sa Sumusunod (MAPASU), the reason behind the invasive and pernicious attack is to find proof that the schools serve as training grounds for NPA members. Some children were terrified to recognize Bocales, whose involvement in the 2015 Lianga massacre left a mark on the students of Samarca. Residents have been forcibly evacuated from their homes due to the heavy military occupation of the 4th Infantry Division (Belisario 2019, 71).

From 58 schools that were shut down in 2018, there are now 135 Lumad schools forcibly and effectively closed in Mindanao, affecting almost 4,000 students and hamleting hundreds of communities (SOS 2019b, 2). Given these attacks, the military has become synonymous to the divestment and destruction of school properties. The now mythic use of counterinsurgency as an excuse to harass Lumad students and handicap their schools further occludes the primary motive behind the communist insurgency in the Philippines: poverty and the effective denial of the poor, oppressed, and marginalized from their democratic rights and state services. Responding to the press, Fanagel clarifies that the presence of elements of the NPA in the Mindanaoan hinterlands is already a given, especially with the historic and geographical significance of Lumad territories in the armed struggle of the CPP. The displacement of Lumad communities, however, covers up the military's human rights violations in commitment to the implementation of the government's counterinsurgency programs (Ayroso 2015). Ensnared by accusations and experiences of armed conflict, the Lumad's successful strides towards affording themselves access to education are eclipsed by hindrances beyond their campaign for governance over their *yutang kabilin* and a share of state services.

### *Og Eskwela A Puron (To school I wish)*

Dangerous accusations and violent attacks launched against Lumad children, tribal leaders, and their supporters can only propel their resistance further. In light of these challenges, many Lumad communities *bakwit*. Appropriated from the verb "evacuate," to *bakwit* is not simply to cope or to survive. Albeit a dreaded part of the indigenous Lumad life, necessary evacuation in urban centers such as Davao City and Cotabato City saves themselves collectively from military and paramilitary violence in the countryside. It is also a persistent and creative capacity of the displaced to deal with the destructive force of displacement (Canuday 2009, 1). Through *bakwit*, they carve a means of preserving their culture, strengthening their unity, and defending their ancestral homes through a promise of return (Ayroso 2015). It defends the land by leaving. *Bakwets* (the evacuees themselves) bring their campaign from evacuation centers in Mindanao to other parts of the Philippines. In 2014, the Lumad and other IP and Moro communities launched the Manilakbayan (now called Lakbayan), a protest caravan to the heart of Manila in order to bring the capital's attention to minorized challenges like landlessness and military occupation in the countryside.

To sustain the learning of the Lumad youth, *bakwets*, parents, teachers, and supporters mounted the Bakwit School, a refuge classroom that moves from one site to another to facilitate the staging of their protests and to ensure the security of participants (SOS 2019b). More than 3,000 Lumad students disenfranchised by martial law's havoc to their schools study in refuges in Metro Manila and other capital cities to expose the situation of alternative tribal schools in Mindanao. Under the Save Our Schools Network, churches, seminaries, universities, and colleges open their doors to the transient Bakwit School (SOS 2019a, 15). From 2017 to 2018, and from April 2019 until today, around 700 Lumad students, teachers, and parents from all over Mindanao have already travelled to Manila, mostly by land, to seek justice for human rights violations in the form of attacks against schools, communities, ancestral land, and resources (Belisario 2019, 78). The evacuation centers in UCCP Haran Center in Davao City and at the Tandag Sports Complex in Surigao del Sur also house Bakwit Schools to let the Lumad continue their studies.



**FIGURE 8.2** • The Bakwit School's campaign for climate justice  
(Photo courtesy of the Save Our Schools Network)

As the fruition of the Lumad's annual Lakbayan, the Bakwit School aims to drum up the demands of the Lumad people to end the military attacks in their schools and communities and to end the national government's all-out-war in the Mindanaoan countryside (SOS 2019a 15). Hence, the alternative learning venue's thematic campaign is “*og eskwela a puron*,” the Manobo phrase for “to school I wish,” which embodies the Lumad children's aspiration to attain education. The campaign was developed in response to the first extension of martial law in Mindanao in 2017, which warranted more years of struggle for the Lumad.

The Bakwit School holds classes even with little human and material resources. Given that there are only a handful of Lumad teachers in the School, volunteers are enjoined to teach subjects the students need to take in order to move up to the succeeding level. Volunteers need not be licensed teachers; most of them are undergraduate and graduate students from different disciplines, homemakers, religious people, professionals, and activists. Teachers also undergo educational discussions that relate the Lumad's current situation, culture, and, ultimately, their historic struggle towards emancipation (SOS 2019a, 15). Classroom materials were hardly salvaged from attacked schools, so teachers and students rely on donations by other volunteers and external institutions.

A day in the Bakwit School usually begins with vernacular songs and exercises that the Lumad children would have normally conducted in their original schools, giving students and teachers a semblance of home. In between classes, older students and teachers assigned that day would cook meals to be shared by everyone in the School, including volunteers.

To ensure the maximization of resources, students, teachers, and staff are grouped into committees that are assigned to household duties such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Some are relegated to

creative tasks, such as in the visual arts and the publicity committees where members craft placards for protests and other artistic materials that may be used in the activities of the Bakwit School. In light of multiple office raids and unwarranted detentions of human rights defenders in the last quarter of 2019 under the whole-of-nation counterinsurgency approach of Duterte's Executive Order 70 of 2018, security measures in the Bakwit School are being bolstered by assigning older students, teachers, and volunteers as sentries during the night.

With the Save Our Schools Network, the Bakwit Schools across the Philippines have led successful mobilizations over the years, including the National Children's Day protest every 14th of November. While an emphasis on rescinding martial rule in Mindanao was made during the 2018 protest, the National Children's Day protest in 2019 also called for climate and environmental justice, underscoring the fact that the youth of this generation shall be answering to the ecological impacts of climate change in the years to come. Bakwit School students, together with Moro and other Christian children invited to the event, formed a human tree sizing the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman's Sunken Garden as part of the protest, catching the attention of both local and international media. Students and teachers of the Bakwit School also join public demonstrations staged by other sectors, such as peasants, workers, women and LGBTQ+, and the urban poor. In every protest, students carry their most fundamental call "Save our schools! Stop Lumad killings!" to urge the government to withdraw military presence in their communities so that they can return to their *yutang kabilin*.

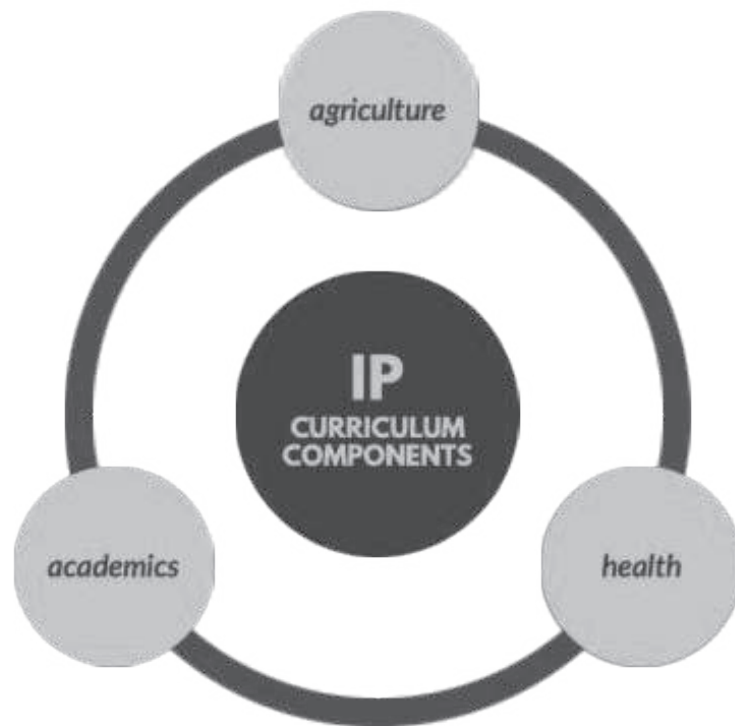
It was on March 29, 2019 at the University of the Philippines Integrated School (UPIS) that the Bakwit School's first milestone was celebrated. With allies from the church, the academe, and civil society organizations, a moving up ceremony was held to recognize the students' one year of struggle for education in the School. It also saw the moving up of Grade 11 students as the first batch of Grade 12 in the Bakwit School. As said by a Grade 10 Lumad student from MISFI Academy in a speech akin to a valedictory address, "*kaya naman, sa kapwa kong mga estudyanteng Lumad, nagtapos man ang isang taon, dapat magpatuloy tayo sa ating mga nasimulan* [that's why, to my fellow Lumad students, one year may have passed, but we must continue what we have started]." Indeed, no amount of threat could break the spirit and determination of Lumad students in asserting their right to education, and through which defend their *yutang kabilin* for the next generation.

### Learn to struggle, dare to win

As alternative learning sites for IPs, the pedagogical foundations and design of tribal schools for the Lumad and the Bakwit School address the most immediate concerns of students. While DepEd used to recognize these schools as part of the state's alternative education framework, Lumad schools differ from the objectives and operations of the Alternative Learning System (ALS). The ALS features a ladderized, modular non-formal education program intended for elementary and secondary school dropouts, out-of-school youths, and adults with difficulty in literacy and numeracy (DepEd n.d.). The DepEd specifies as target of the ALS the "group of marginalized learners consists of street children, indigenous peoples, farmers, fisherfolks, women, adolescents, solo parents, children in conflict areas not reached by the formal school system, rebel returnees, and others" (ibid.). Despite this objective, ALS schools remain logistically inaccessible to many Lumad communities across Mindanao.

Conducted either in formal schools, community halls, or private places, ALS classes follow *uniform* lesson modules for all academic subjects. While it is touted by the government as an *alternative* to mainstream education, its focus on livelihood skills training with basic reading and writing still anchors itself on a homogenized set of learning objectives molded by the state. In other words, the ALS program does not seek to empower students in determining and solving challenges faced by their communities. As neoliberal capitalism extends the market to all areas of life, curricular uniformity





**FIGURE 8.2** • The Bakwit School's campaign for climate justice  
(Photo courtesy of the Save Our Schools Network)

in mainstream education responds to the needs of the global market for labor by saturating students with skills training and basic literacy and numeracy, which are common qualifications for low-paying, short-term, and unprotected working arrangements (Lanuza 2015, 105–08). With labor development at its core, conventional civic education shepherds the youth towards more productive uses for large profit-making enterprises (ibid., 105; see Giroux 2009).

Community- and civil society-led schools for the Lumad become an alternative modality of education as they arise out of and beyond the logics of capital and profit (Serrano and Xhafa 2018, 2). As the Save Our Schools Network insinuates, at the core of these alternative schools for the Lumad and the Bakwit School is a “nationalist, pro-people, and scientific pedagogy supplemented by conscious social practice” (SOS 2019a, 5). With a nationalist thrust and a popular orientation, the principles of this curriculum works around learning and exit outcomes that can bolster necessary competencies and eventually specific subjects through agricultural practice, a “skill training” that directly responds to the food security of participating communities and renders the *yutang kabilin* productive not for profit but for the well-being of students, teachers, and staff. Exposed not only to the issues but also the culture, traditions, and lifeways of the Lumad, students are likewise encouraged to serve in local or neighboring communities as a way of giving back to the efforts of everyone involved in establishing and sustaining the schools. This pedagogical foundation fosters the students’ holistic development that provides access to life skills that are useful in their daily lives and to their IP communities.

“Nationalist, pro-people, and scientific” may be shorthand in the liberatory concept of *critical pedagogy*. These alternative schools for the Lumad and the Bakwit School answers Paulo Freire’s call for a transformational education that can respond to institutional and ideological domination under capitalism (Freire 2005; Gruenwald 2003). As an alternative and critique of this system, Freirian critical pedagogy is best understood as “an effort to work within educational institutions... to raise questions

about inequalities of power, about the false myths of opportunity and merit for many students, and about the way belief systems become internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life” (Burbles and Burke 1999, 50). This modality of education promotes a materialist consideration of socio-economic position vis-à-vis the ideologies and institutions that gridlock social mobility, including, as mentioned, the uniform and state-defined education and the rationale behind it.

For the schools, their critical pedagogy enables the children to understand social realities and stand up for their ancestral lands and their human rights (SOS 2019a, 5). In the first place, it is impossible not to discuss activism and militancy in the Lumad classroom given that threats to students and teachers’ lives linger. More interestingly, this political education even involves their social practice on the ancestral land itself. As connoted by the etymology of the term “Lumad,” that land is life is fundamental to the worldview of IPs (ECIP 2008, 113–20). The lifeworld of IP is moored to their ancestral land where their lifeways form and is formed by the endemic environment. Equipped with indigenous knowledge of their immediate ecologies, students demonstrate agricultural stewardship over land, interrogating the commercialized development aggression that looms over their *yutang kabilin*. Their productive usage of lands that the state would construe as “idle” in order to render them convertible (and thus sellable) meshes with the Lumad’s decades-long struggle for their ancestral land. Students are thus intimated to learn critical consciousness, the ability to understand and analyze the systemic nature of day-to-day problems and the interconnectedness of various struggles (Serrano and Xhafa 2012b, 26).

Agriculture as a social practice and source of critical consciousness seems inapplicable to the circumstances of the Bakwit School. However, as explained earlier, *bakwit* articulates the Lumad’s deep personal-political attachment to land. Defending the land by leaving, the political act of *bakwit* endeavors to bring the social realities of Mindanaoan IPs to the fore and closely engage with policy and humanitarian institutions, from the government to the academe, in city centers. Parallely, the critical pedagogy of the Bakwit School lies in its mobility, which ensures the safety of the *bakwet* and, by extension, their access to education. The School is a key venue for the internalization of the consequences of oppression (Freire 2005), such as landlessness and homelessness. In a way, learning in the Bakwit School is the inexorable learning of the oppressive structures that necessitate the Lumad struggle.

The critical pedagogy of tribal schools for the Lumad and the Bakwit School demonstrate what alternative learning could be. Even though it seeks to serve marginalized communities, the DepEd can only subsume students to the state’s mold of civic education through “alternative” non-formal classroom spaces. Alternative schools for the Lumad give DepEd a good run for its money as they locate education in the very political struggle of the Lumad people, transforming students in the process, and thus providing an alternative to the capitalist logic of the formal school system (Serrano and Xhafa 2012a, 289). Education defined by the Lumad people hammers the “understanding of the need to resist the underlying causes of peoples’ oppression and exploitation” (Serrano and Xhafa 2012b, 4).

As demonstrated by the case of these schools, the struggle for education for the Lumad people firmly roots to the IPs struggle for self-determination over their *yutang kabilin*, the right to independence, in the political sense, from the “oppressor nation” (Longid 2010, 3). The long history of the Lumad struggle for land and liberation from colonial powers at first and the authoritarian state today keys in students, teachers, and supporters’ everyday resistance of operating these schools. The mobile Bakwit School further testifies to how IPs forge alternative strategies to pave their way to their own vision of development despite the challenges posed by mining, logging, and other foreign corporate ventures and the state itself. Knowledge of reality is attained in these tribal schools through common reflection in the classroom and constant action in the form of protests and civic engagement, helping students be critically conscious of their potential as the “re-creators” of their lives and history (Freire 2005, 73).

Ultimately, what these schools teach the next generation of the defenders of their *yutang kabilin* is *pangiyak ki*, to shout out in the Manobo language, and in their case, to reclaim a future withheld from them.

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## 9

# Education for Compassion From the Academe to a Movement for Caring Spaces

REMEDIOS NALUNDASAN-ABIJAN<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I discuss my initiative on education for compassion through community engagement as an integral part of my course program in the graduate school of education. My academic approach for addressing development issues in the courses that I teach is by reaching out to the marginalized sectors of our society and leaving no one behind. With the multiplier effect of the volunteers' work, we can only imagine how many lives have been transformed at different levels.

The feedback from both the volunteers and the community dwellers is overwhelmingly life-transforming. Indeed, this educational practice is becoming a transformative praxis for changing lives—both for community dwellers and for young professionals who have the capacity to lead and give. From this experiential learning beyond the classroom, I have evolved an emerging people's movement I aptly call ACAPMO CaringSpaces.

The acronym stands for accompanying a people's movement for compassion. I have defined the framework of this movement based on what my students and I have realized from our community engagements in the last eight years. Basically, we realized that each of us have the capacity to give; we have the innate desire to uplift our less fortunate brothers and sisters in so many ways, not only materially, but also socially, emotionally and spiritually.

### Background

I have been teaching Curriculum and Instruction and Foundations of Education in the Graduate School of Education in a premier university in the City of Manila for almost a decade now, long enough to tinker with the traditional course content and its delivery system. With my classes, I have explored the viability of infusing community engagement as part of learners' activities towards a deeper understanding of the connection of the students' programs or the courses they take to the bigger world and to society at large. This approach to complement teaching in the graduate school was borne out of my drive to make learning meaningful by going beyond the classroom so

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**FIGURE 9.1** • Qualitative inquiry is encouraged so that people’s stories and discourses are captured and interpreted

that students may be sensitized to the plight of economically, socially, and culturally marginalized community dwellers.

This teaching–learning approach is my positive response to alter the claims of many scholars that our present educational system is largely fragmented and disconnected from reality (Miller 1999; Cajete 1999; Samples 1999). I also found it quite unbelievable that modern education simulated the outside world inside the classroom and captured the learner as its hostage (Gardner 2000). So, I broke the conventions in graduate school teaching while I was in this university. I evolved an approach I called “initiative for community engagement.”

My teaching scheme is basically rooted on the principles of holistic learning and experiential learning. At the outset, my exploratory endeavor to send my graduate students for community engagement and come face-to-face with community dwellers was meant to document the transmission of roles and values in pre-selected marginalized communities. The more I journeyed into this exploration of community learning, the more I believed that there was something worthwhile to be gained.

### Conceptual orientation

Community engagement builds on the processes and principles of Rendon (2000)’s “academics of the heart” and the developing principles of education for wholeness and connectedness. Along this line, qualitative inquiry is encouraged for community engagement where people’s stories and discourses are captured and interpreted, and reflected upon to find our interconnectedness on planet Earth.

Our personal stories connect us to one another and we communicate with one another through our stories. Even our silences make up our story. By providing a context on which our stories are told, we find wisdom in our ordinary experiences. The modes of storytelling may have changed over time, from oral tradition to print,



to mass media, to movies, to television and to research, but the story as a vehicle for understanding and as a repository of knowledge has never been outmoded. (Abijan 2008, 63)

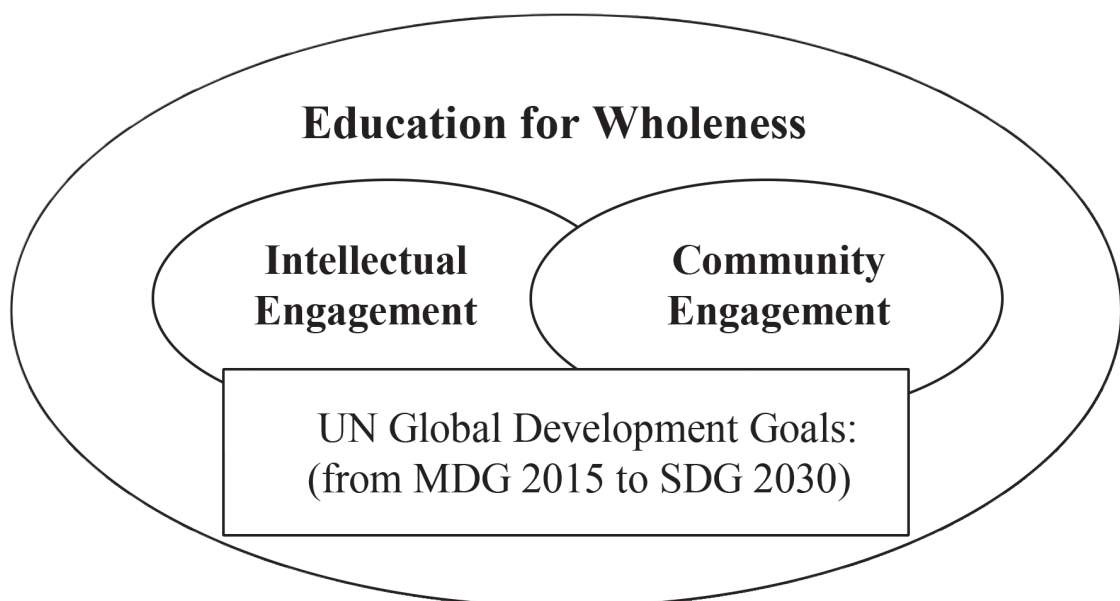
To promote wholeness, Rendon (2000) urges higher education to balance scientific inquiry with the artistry of the spirit, in other words, to explore other ways of knowing the truth without quantitative inquiry monopolizing the search for truth. In espousing a new format for research that she dubbed as “academics of the heart” (AH), Rendon (*ibid.*, 12) calls us to

train a generation of researchers who understand concepts such as the relationship between the brain and emotion, the evolution of consciousness, the wisdom of indigenous peoples, diverse ways of knowing, mind/body interactions, and the connection between reason and faith.

The emerging conceptual framework for this paper as shown in Figure 9.2 below is education for wholeness, which consists of balancing intellectual engagement with community engagement. In community engagement, we seek to find the heart and soul in education by connecting with people and demonstrating compassion to the marginalized, notably the economically and culturally challenged community dwellers. We seek to promote other ways of knowing, through qualitative inquiry, to balance quantitative research that has been privileged, over other ways of finding the truth. The issue of content relevance is at the heart of this approach for it directly informs teachers and practitioners about the global issues that take the world’s attention.

### Relevant education: The UN’s MDG 2015 and SDG 2030

In September 2000, at the turn of the 21st century, 189 UN heads of state signed the now famous MDG (Millennium Development Goals) consisting of eight international development goals that are to be achieved by 2015. These developmental goals are: (1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2)



**FIGURE 9.2** • Education for wholeness balances intellectual engagement with community engagement while addressing development issues like those identified by the UN global goals (from MDG 2015 to SDG 2030)

achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (4) reduce child mortality; (5) improve maternal health; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) develop a global partnership for development. In a show of how the economic giants around the globe could alleviate the plight of the less fortunate countries locked up in the issue of sustainable development, the UN's MDGs come into the frame.

When the MDGs expired in 2015, the UN came up with another declaration called the SDG 2030 or Sustainable Development Goals, which should be achieved by the year 2030. A new set of developmental goals was negotiated as intergovernmental panels of participating governments and civil society organizations reviewed and gave the former MDGs another lease in life beyond 2015. The new document is called *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)*, better known as SDG 2030. This document consists of 17 goals with 69 targets and the following five elements: (1) people; (2) planet; (3) prosperity; (4) peace; and (5) partnership (Abijan 2015, 39).

### The questions

I posed the following questions for educators and future community leaders to ponder as they embark on building and re-building community life:

- (1) What knowledge and perspectives of development should teachers and community leaders embrace?
- (2) What values and skills shall we teach educational and community leaders so they can really make informed decisions to promote justice, peace and dignity of creation to ensure quality life in the culturally and economically challenged communities?
- (3) What gains do students get when they engage in some marginalized or challenged communities?

I went further to probe that the answers to these questions lie in our ability to innovate or to initiate, and even to take risks and change the existing models in our system of teaching the next generation of teachers and community leaders.

### Methodology

Students in graduate school, most of them professionals in their own right, were asked to step into some pre-selected marginalized communities and/or cultural groups to inquire into people's stories of coping with the challenges of development, the dreams and aspirations of their children, and the meaning of a better life for them. The principles of team building and fieldwork in a naturalistic study were liberally applied by the students as they explored people's challenges in pre-selected communities.

More than doing an inquiry, my students brought to the community dwellers interventions to alleviate the people's plight. These interventions were in the form of activities like: (1) socialization; (2) empowering seminars to deliver knowledge, attitudes, and skills; (3) feeding; and (4) gift-giving.

I urged my students to use the latest technologies for documentation purposes. And I encouraged them to create and express their findings through digital means (e.g., a ten-minute video production, PowerPoint presentation, or movie). Finally, I asked them to make sense of the cultural data they

gathered by writing a reflective essay, the idea being to develop among students a sense of preparedness to live ethical and reflective lives.

### Tentative results

With my Initiative for Community Engagement (I4CE) from 2006 to 2011 and from 2013 to 2014, in a span of nine semesters, we have engaged the volunteerism of about 150 graduate students, among them teachers, health workers, social workers, psychologists, and church workers, who attended my classes in education and psychology.

We covered twenty-three (23) different economically, culturally, and socially marginalized communities. Among them are fishing, farming, indigenous, informal settler, urban poor, rural poor, and resettlement communities around Metro Manila and in the nearby provinces of Cavite, Rizal, Laguna, Batangas, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Zambales, and Baguio City.

The communities visited: Issues, concerns, and interventions

In this portion, I would like to present what my students have uncovered as remarkable issues of development and sustainable living which make life in each of these communities ever challenging:

- (1) A fishing village: Saving the lake's resources in the face of abject poverty and the will to survive through technologically-driven jobs (Ambulog, Tanauan, Batangas; 2006)
- (2) A cultural community (the Dumagats): A modern school is phasing out the last vestiges of an ethnic culture and confronting the challenges of development (Montalban, Rizal; 2006)
- (3) A farming village: The cycle of poverty lives on for the land tillers/land watchers from generation to generation (Sitio Balagbag, Lipa, Batangas; 2006)
- (4) At the foot of a mountain: The dwindling forest resources and the lost people's oral tradition of the legend of Maria Makiling (Mt. Makiling, Laguna; 2006)
- (5) The swamps: The dwindling land and water resources pushes mobility and relocation for better or for worse (Candaba, Pampanga; 2006)
- (6) A farming town: Who will plant the lands when the new generation opts to be industrial workers or be migrant workers offshore? (Baras, Rizal; 2007)
- (7) The material recovery facilities in Metro Manila: Is there quality life for the garbage diggers ('*halukay* boys')? (Payatas, Quezon City; 2007)
- (8) The coal mines: The promised economic goods that compromise ecological and health issues (Semirara, Antique; 2007)
- (9) Fishing for a living in the polluted waters of Manila Bay: Young boys dive for economic survival as they dream of education and a better life (Barangay Digman, Bacoor, Cavite; 2008)
- (10) Relocated informal settlers: Education is a far-fetched dream due to poverty and gender bias, especially for girls, because of the notion that they will marry anyway (Gawad Kalinga, Gapan, Nueva Ecija; 2008)

- (11) A day with an ethnic community (the Ifugaos): Efforts to preserve their cultural heritage (Baguio City; 2008)
- (12) Fighting hunger and poverty: An educational intervention for kids and adults (Tagaytay City, Cavite; 2009)
- (13) Promoting maternal health and reducing child mortality: Investigating practices and providing information campaigns (Laram, San Pedro, Laguna; 2009)
- (14) Gender equality and women empowerment: A barangay seminar (Bacoor, Cavite; 2009)
- (15) Challenges towards environment sustainability and food resources in a remote mountain area (Barangay Tubigan, Alfonso, Cavite; 2009)
- (16) Wood carving: A dying craft and livelihood due to dwindling forest resources (Paete, Laguna; 2010)
- (17) Fishing as a livelihood: A question of sustainability (Castillejos, Zambales; 2011)
- (18) Teaching and feeding in a faith-based organization (Antipolo, Rizal; 2011)
- (19) Waste management in a newly emerged community, the Gawad Kalinga Enchanted Farm (Barangay Enkanto, Angat, Bulacan; 2013)
- (20) Conversations with the Dumagat Tribe: Health and sanitation and building dreams with an indigenous community (Barangay Daraitan, Tanay, Rizal; 2013)
- (21) Hope and dreams beyond poverty in a rural community (Lipa, Batangas; 2013)
- (22) Values formation: Managing change with resilience (Barangay Sta. Mercedes, Maragondon, Cavite; 2014)
- (23) Delivering “sunshine and hope” to a neighborhood of informal settlers (Barangay Malinta, Valenzuela City; 2014)

### Reflections and realizations

The graduate students who undertook the above community engagements are educators, health professionals (nurses and physicians), and psychologists. They realized that it is not enough to know about the issues and concerns of the marginalized and challenged community dwellers by reading narratives. The students acquired a new level of understanding of the plight of these people through first-hand contact.

More than the experience of producing documentaries, a skill which takes time and dedication to perfect, students gained new insights and candid realizations as expressed in the following commentaries:

- (1) “Now I understand the reality of poverty in this country. How can education deliver?”
- (2) “Poverty has a culture of its own and it afflicts the weak at heart.”
- (3) “I can stop complaining about my problems, they are nothing compared to the problems of the *halukay* boys (garbage diggers) in Payatas.”
- (4) “I commit to go back to the community and help rebuild lives and broken dreams, even after this project in this course.”

- (5) “Some parents lost hope because of poverty. I believe we can break the cycle of hopelessness. [...] Let us be sensitive to the needs and feelings of our learners. There are reasons why they are not performing well.”
- (6) “After talking to the underprivileged fishers at Brgy. Digmaan, Bacoor, Cavite, I realized our present formal education alienates them rather than takes care of their needs.”
- (7) “I firmly believe that the marginalized communities I engaged with—new settlers of Gawad Kalinga and the indigenous tribe of the Dumagats—have hopes in their heart and willingness to move through with their dreams. They just need our help to push and guide them. [...] Sharing our resources is an act of compassion ... no matter how little we have, still it seems to be our greatest contribution.” (Jovelyn, 2013)
- (8) “I pledge to continue doing this community engagement by joining other organizations that foster awareness and commitment to help people. I now embrace the idea of Mahatma Gandhi that goes: ‘Be the change that you wish to see in this world.’” (Ferdie, 2013)
- (9) “I learned to appreciate the faintest of smiles, the possibility of friendship, the spark of laughter, the warmth of a hug, a shy but heartfelt ‘thank you *po*’ (as the people received our gifts) [...] Why is it that in the middle of poverty these people are happy? I reflected on the question myself. [...] Am I really happy when in the city I am boxed with so little? Yet with this community engagement, I was able to give?” (Aniel, 2013)
- (10) “After my community engagement in a poverty stricken area in the city, I realized that I should be thankful to God for what I have in life. All the small things that I never appreciated before, I now begin to appreciate them because there are people who never experienced having what I have—all the pleasures that life can offer.” (Mariel, 2014)
- (11) “I felt relieved that in my own little way I have done something to transform people, to empower them by improving their coping mechanism to meet the various adversities in life. This is self-satisfying and I became skilled in communicating with people as well. Making people happy, content and become successful is beyond academic learning.” (Tess, 2014)

### Education for compassion

Through time, the patterns of engagement used by my students have evolved from mere “community-visits to extract information” to the more compassionate gestures and lively encounters of gift-giving and an information and educational package for the community dwellers.

There is education for compassion caught and internalized by graduate students as a result of their community engagement. In particular, the community engagement translates into action for compassion. Kay Warren (2007) defines compassion as a decision, a deliberate choice that one makes to act, to carry the burden, and or to share the burden of those who are hurting and suffering.

My students found stories of how people are surviving with limited resources, battling poverty and hunger from day to day; or how people have ruined their environment in pursuit of dear life; of how children dream about a future of education and/or employment to escape poverty; of how development has become frustrating to some in the eyes of the ‘victims’—the so-called depressed and underprivileged in society.



**FIGURE 9.3** • An intervention for children and adults aimed at fighting hunger and poverty is one of the outcomes of this project

## Conclusion

This exploratory study suggests some answers to these questions earlier presented in this paper.

- (1) What knowledge and perspectives of development shall teachers embrace?

Through community engagement, educational and community leaders can learn and experience real-time challenges in society and embrace new perspectives of development like the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; the promotion of universal primary education; sustainable living and environmental security; gender equality and women empowerment; improved maternal health and reduction of child mortality; and prevention of HIV/AIDS through education and information campaigns.

- (2) What values and skills shall we teach our educational and community leaders so they can really make informed decisions to improve peace and quality life in the culturally and economically challenged communities?
  - (a) Community engagement is one approach that would complement traditional teaching in graduate school so that students can confront face-to-face the development issues in society. Students can attain new levels of understanding and awareness of the development goals as they acquire the competencies for sustainable living and co-existence with other life-forms through meaningful learning derived from their first-hand experience.
  - (b) Through community engagement, there is human capacity development (HCD) among learners, where they develop organizational skills and attitudes to pursue a mission and take care of themselves as a “community” working together in the pursuit of common goals. Learners develop competencies for expert thinking and collaboration with community organizations and local government units.

While the students' learning groups naturally confront organizational glitches in their initial steps, they are able to overcome issues of confusion and lack of structure in the process as they learn to develop faith in their evolving leadership. They transcend barriers of personality issues and build a functional "community" among themselves, able to pursue a targeted goal.

- (3) What gains do students get when they engage with some marginalized or challenged communities?
  - (a) As students engage and interact with community dwellers, they see the faces of poverty and hunger, inadequate education, environmental degradation, poor maternal health and increasing child mortality, gender bias, among others. The community activities that students have engaged in are: conducting community seminars for awareness and information and for rebuilding hope and aspiration into people's lives; conducting in-depth conversations and focused group discussions with community dwellers to enlighten them on development issues; and, on the part of the students, the experience and exposure to community engagement becomes a springboard for them to address meaningfully, in their own professional and personal practices, how to initiate and participate in sustainability and growth.
  - (b) Through community engagement, there is "education for wholeness" because students do not only learn knowledge and new perspectives in education through intellectual engagement, but also through social and physical engagement. On one hand, students can affect people's lives in order to raise the community dwellers' level of aspirations in re-building self and community consciousness for peace and quality of life. Students also get the opportunity to act with compassion towards the marginalized in society.

### Implications to education

This pedagogy on community engagement features a learning process I call A-I-C. A is for awareness, I is for involvement, and C is for commitment.

When the students present their documentaries in class, they reveal their insights from these first-hand experiences, demonstrating their deep understanding of the developmental issues. This is the first step of their learning: awareness of the issues or challenges. The process of their awareness did not come from reading narratives "about" the issues. It came from a direct "engagement with the community dwellers" which makes their awareness meaningful.

The second step in their learning is involvement. This step may come in two forms, directly and indirectly. Direct involvement is when these students may go back to the same communities or similar communities to do community service. Indirect involvement is done when these students, on account of their awareness of the issues at hand, formulate programs and activities in their capacity as educational leaders, curriculum developers, or curriculum implementers, in order to address some of the issues in delivering the content of the curriculum in their respective stations.

The third step of this learning, which is the most difficult to come by, is commitment. Some students make commitments to help alleviate the plight of the challenged community dwellers, not necessarily by giving monetary help but in developing educational perspectives that would address the issues in wider scales. A deeper commitment comes in the form of joining a movement to live by the tenets of compassion and love for humanity. The discussion that follows is the resulting movement that

I have sketched, borne out of education for compassion, indeed a deeper implication of this educational practice.

### The resulting movement: ACAPMO CaringSpaces

I have evolved an emerging people's movement I aptly call ACAPMO CaringSpaces from the experiential learning beyond the classroom that I adopted in my classes. The acronym stands for "accompanying a people's movement for compassion." I have defined the framework of this movement based on what we have realized from our community engagements in the last eight and a half years. Realizing that each of us has the capacity to give and we have the innate desire to uplift our less fortunate brothers and sisters if given the opportunity, I thought of developing a structure for a people's movement. This movement seeks to deliver many ways of reaching out to the marginalized in society within the context of compassion and justice, not only to those who are economically challenged, but also the socially, emotionally and spiritually challenged.

ACAPMO implies a hug, sounding similarly to the Filipino phrase "*akap mo*," which literally translates to "your hug" or "your embrace." True to its acronym, ACAPMO volunteers deliver hugs to create caring spaces: warm, loving, and caring hugs to poor families from pre-selected marginalized communities through a one-day program experience of social, spiritual, physical and cognitive nourishment. The ACAPMO CaringSpaces experience consists of activities like: socialization; empowering seminars to deliver knowledge, attitudes and skills; feeding; and gift-giving.

**Goals and objectives.** The long-term goal of this movement is to plant seeds of peace and harmony among community dwellers and grow in them a consciousness for hope and responsibility for their lives, despite poverty and ugly realities.

The immediate objective is to give community dwellers a day's experience of hugs and care through feeding and gift giving, and most especially through seminars that can feed the mind, awaken a new consciousness, and empower the poor to uplift themselves and take a journey away from poverty.

To the teachers and other volunteers in the movement, the objective is for them to experience and demonstrate compassion as an act of duty.

**Our philosophy.** Compassion can grow in us by immersing ourselves—mind, heart, body, and soul—in the living experiences of the community, where a process of unfolding awakens in us a sense of being, a sense of connectedness, a sense of community, and a sense of humanity.

**Our guiding principles.** We believe that:

- (1) The struggle for peace is a struggle for justice and righteousness. Giving and caring for the poor could lessen their sense of injustice built by our social and economic structures.
- (2) People have an innate desire to share their gifts and blessings and get connected to others if given a chance to demonstrate through the movement ACAPMO CaringSpaces.
- (3) The ACAPMO hug is simply doing good and demonstrating small acts of unconditional generosity in order to experience the blessings of giving and to encourage other people to do the same.
- (4) The ACAPMO hug is more than physical. It has a built-in spirituality that finds a soul and a heart far beyond the boundaries of today's religiosity.



- (5) Voluntarism is the key to spreading the gospel of ACAPMO CaringSpaces. Because people care, they are willing to create caring spaces, relying on the bounty of their own blessings and gifts from the original source of everything.

*Our motto.* Sharing gifts, celebrating life.

### Our living testimony on sharing gifts and celebrating life

There is so much that we can give and so many we can help if we can only develop a kind of consciousness of “giftivism” and volunteerism. This is the concept behind ACAPMO CaringSpaces. Indeed, we can create caring spaces in our own little ways by using our personal resources. I would like to mention that as an offshoot of my initiative for community engagement that has as its centrepiece the UN Millennium Development Goals we have even launched a movement on HIV awareness.

On February 22, 2012, together with my former graduate student at PLM, Eric (who got inspiration from my class approach), we launched “Joining the Global Conversation on HIV” in the city of Muntinlupa, at the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Muntinlupa along with 200 psychology students who later spearheaded community engagements to advocate HIV conversations and awareness.

On November 11, 2011, in my own school in the City of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, together with a faith-based organization, we launched Academia Project Compassion and went on to deliver gifts of attention, time, food and health kits to children from challenged social and economic situations in the communities near our school. In the summer of 2012, my mobile team of volunteers (teachers from my school) went to Polangui, Albay to help build a church and deliver life-changing interventions to a poor community in Brgy Basud. And the multiplier effect lives on for those whose lives have been touched by ACAPMO CaringSpaces.

In its formative stage, the future of ACAPMO CaringSpaces as a movement is very challenging, as I expect to spread the gospel of giving for the sake of experiencing the blessedness of unconditional generosity. There shall be no structural organization at the helm, but a group of self-motivated, self-led people who know and can demonstrate how to care. I shall provide the umbrella with the key concepts and philosophy that shall guide the movement. We expect to reach a good number of people who can carry out life-changing missions because we care enough for the sick, the poor and the needy. Then shall we be able to celebrate life in its fullness, true to our motto of sharing gifts and celebrating life.

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10

# The Bamboo House as Pathway to Alternative Living

## One Architect's Experience

ROSARIO ENCARNACION TAN and ERIC CARRUNCHO<sup>1</sup>

Bamboo architecture may be a strong point for the Filipino's survival because bamboo can be readily harvestable in just five years' time. And this material can be constructed into houses by the people themselves.

The Philippines and its inhabitants are blessed with at least 2,300 years of rich, traditional bamboo architecture (quoting from Dr. Fernando N. Zialcita). Though a grass material and seemingly non-permanent, why then do we say that bamboo houses have been on our land for these thousands of years? It must be because of a strong oral tradition that has been passed on from generation to generation.

Until today, it is a familiar technology in areas where bamboo houses are present. Apart from men, women and children actually can build with the material, as we learned from interviews with residents of Panay Island.

Bamboo does not just grow on its own. To flourish, bamboo has to be planted by man, which was done so by our forefathers. And so, one anthropologist has described, when they look for archaeological sites in the Philippines and they see bamboo growing, they surmise that at one point, there was a settlement there.

### Embedded in the Filipino's DNA

Through vernacular architecture, I contend that building with bamboo is actually "embedded in the Filipino's DNA."

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This is the thesis of this article: that bamboo architecture is people's architecture. I will be relating insights from research, from building bamboo houses for my husband and myself, from building bamboo houses with clients, from interactions with engineers, artisans, and workers, and from training on bamboo construction. These all point to the phenomenon that the core capabilities and techniques of building with bamboo come from the practices of people's architecture.

Second, there is a lot to learn from the spaces that sustain bamboo housing. And indeed, bamboo architecture gives age-old solutions to the constant calamities in the Philippines.

Third, vernacular bamboo aesthetics of walls, intricate latticework, floors, and openings still hold as modern-day designs.

### Research on folk architecture (1979–1990)

Right after I graduated from Architecture, the book publisher and writer Gilda Cordero Fernando commissioned me to be the main researcher for the book, *Folk Architecture* (GCF Books, 1990). The second section of the book was dedicated to the bamboo houses of Panay.

This section was the idea of Prof. Honorato G. Paloma, a faculty member at the UP College of Architecture. In the summer of 1980, together with Patricia (Wendy) Fernando, we went around the island of Panay and discovered at least a hundred bamboo houses in its four provinces: Iloilo, Antique, Capiz, and Roxas. For the most part, we took the scenic route by sea, but we also travelled inland into the farms, especially in the province of Iloilo.

When it became clear that Prof. Paloma could not do the writing, Gilda Cordero Fernando commissioned me to be the writer.

Apart from library research, I went back to the province once to live in a town in Antique. And we went back again in 1989 to do the research once more around the island.

From the field interviews, the following data was gathered: the costs of the houses, house rituals, age of the houses, and floor plans. And of course, there were hundreds of pictures and interviews from the research on these houses.

It was very interesting to note that the bamboo houses have sustainable qualities. They are well ventilated, with high-pitched roofs, usually surrounded by an edible garden, and stilted to avoid floods.

The book was published ten years after, in 1990.

### My bamboo house in Del Monte, Quezon City (1991–1996)

In 1991, my husband Juju and I decided to build our house that would be a combination of bamboo, concrete, and lumber. My confidence came from the fact that I had four years of intensive training in construction, and by then, eleven years of design experience.

My uncle, Virgilio Encarnacion, introduced me to his good friend Dr. Domingo Alfonso, who had started planting a 23-hectare bamboo farm in the 1980s. He was successfully exporting bamboo furniture.

When I asked Dr. Alfonso if he would use bamboo as building material, he thought it was a preposterous idea.



FIGURE 10.1 • The strength of a bamboo structure is best analyzed as frame—or a network of connections—rather than focusing on a connection of a member to the other

I asked if I could buy bamboo from him but he refused saying that I should plant bamboo myself and harvest it on my own (I did plant, but this will be talked about in a later section).

I did not have land to plant bamboo in so I decided to look for bamboo on my own. I asked Roberto (Bert) Gallano who I have worked with in construction since 1985, to help me look and we found a supplier in Morong.

When we began to build, I just employed the carpenters we would work with. There was a very good carpenter who hailed from Iloilo (I only remember him as Peralta) who immediately took on the bamboo—slatting, weaving, flattening, studding. Within two weeks, other workers took on Peralta's technique. Bert, who also hails from Iloilo, took to working well on bamboo right away. It was as if it was natural for the men to build with bamboo.

We were able to make bamboo floors, railings and balusters, and the traditional *tadtad* walls. *Tadtad* walls, which are commonly seen in Panay island, are made by framing flattened bamboo poles into panels with vertical and horizontal weaves.

### Putting Bato Sustainable Farm Project (1991–1993)

Sr. Catherine Serafica, SFIC (Sr. Cathy) asked me to head a Sustainable Farm and Livelihood Project on a 1.7-hectare lot with a community of about thirty members. We attempted to farm peanuts organically, cook sampaloc candies, and fabricate soil cement blocks as building material (in lieu of concrete hollow

blocks). But the big dream of the community was to build their own houses there, starting with a bamboo house.

Finally, I was able to convince Dr. Alfonso to sell me some of his bamboo poles for the proposed bamboo house, but not before we bought 100 bamboo seedlings which we planted on the periphery of the land in Puting Bato.

Dr. Alfonso advised us to plant the bamboo just at the onset of the monsoon rains (*siyam-siyam*) so that the seedlings would shoot up quickly. We followed his advice and indeed, the one-year-old bamboo seedlings would shoot up its full length of twelve to fifteen meters in two days, after just being transplanted two weeks past.

We were on our own, without any technical expertise on building the bamboo house. I knew nothing about how to build with bamboo. I relied on the people's knowledge of building vernacularly. And I could only fall back on my eleven years of knowledge of construction.

Somehow, we were able to build the bamboo structure. This was a first experience for me in building with bamboo using traditional skills and techniques.

### Center for Ecozoic Living and Learning (CELL) (1999–2000)

In 1999, Fr. John Leydon and Elin Mondejar were part of a team that commissioned me to build two big bamboo structures: a seminar space and a two-story dormitory, each roughly 8 meters by 12 meters in size.

Erning Cariño was the contractor. The bamboo parts of this construction were the posts, beams, flooring, walling, and trusses. The roof was made of *anahaw*. After much discussion, the roof eaves were done using halved bamboo or *calaca*. Unfortunately, this did not last and was replaced with nipa shingles.

From their experience in the Del Monte house, the workers easily adapted to the techniques of working with bamboo. Gypsum screws were used instead of nails. In later projects, we found out that the best nails were made of bamboo itself, fashioned by hand.

Another important discovery was the use of nylon twine, which is similar to fishing twine, as bamboo lashing. I discovered lashing with nylon when I observed that the bamboo outriggers of the bancas used this for fastening. Upon inquiry, the boatmen told me that the nylon lashings were at least 30 years old. I surmised that nylon lashings are strong because it could take salt water and the UV of the sun's rays. This was another vernacular lesson that I learned.

Through years of using nylon, I made another discovery. Nylon lashings tighten their grip over time. I surmise that the UV and heat exposure makes the nylon, like any plastic, compress.

In the meantime, after fifteen years, the beams of the center rotted due to exposure to rain and UV and these were repaired in 2017. The center still stands, eighteen years later. Many visitors come for permaculture farm training or retreats, and learn about sustainability.

It is interesting that from this experience, the CELL administrators have built their own bamboo structures: small cottages, a two-story administration office, and a chapel, mostly with bamboo or bamboo combined with other materials. They constructed these buildings without commissioning architects or engineers. These structures are expressions of people's architecture.

By this time, another heartening realization from building with bamboo was that the ratio of materials to labor is inverted. In bamboo construction, labor is 65 to 70 percent of the cost, while bamboo materials are 30 to 35 percent of the cost. And with bamboo, the processing mostly goes to labor cost.

Moreover, bamboo is a non-pollutive material to work with. And it builds good muscles.

### San Juan bamboo residence in Ampid, San Mateo, Rizal (1997–1999)

My uncle and aunt, Tony and Luming San Juan, decided to build a bamboo house in preparation for building a much larger house in Ampid, San Mateo, Rizal. Like our Del Monte bamboo house, the structure would be of concrete, the roofing of GI sheets. But some of the flooring, windows, and ceilings were to be made of bamboo.

Foreman Rudy Encinares mobilized his small team and started to fashion the bamboo into its different parts. Rudy was very good in shifting from the conventional modern materials to the traditional bamboo materials. We bought ready-made bamboo panels from Medy Singh and Mely Bersalona.

Tony started to design the bamboo parts of the house. With Rudy, it became a craft exercise; an example of building one's own home. My role as architect/designer was fused into becoming a member of a vernacular architectural team.

### Harvesting bamboo from farmers' backyards

Through my 37 years of experience of building with bamboo, the biggest farm that we could harvest from was the Kawayan Farm at Pililia, Rizal. Otherwise, we had to look for bamboo from farmers who grow their clumps as a secondary plant.

In 1991, when harvesting from Morong, we bought bamboo for Php 50 per pole. In 1999, when harvesting from Calatagan, Batangas, the farmer sold it to us for Php 100 per pole. Today, when farmers find out we are using the bamboo for construction, they raise the price to Php 200 per pole. The Kawayan Farm sold their bamboo from Php 80 to around Php 140 per pole.

Through the years, while bamboo was being harvested, we made sure to treat the poles immediately with a solution with 10% borax. This would be accomplished by first cutting the pole, then immediately lifting it into a gallon of the borax solution. This process of cutting and soaking should be done within 30 minutes. We did not remove the leaves and branches on the pole. The branches and leaves would suck up the borax solution. The solution would gradually disappear from the container into the pole, usually within 24 hours.<sup>2</sup>

Borax is an anti-*bukbok*, anti-wood borer, anti-fungus, anti-termite, and anti-cockroach treatment. This treatment process would add about Php 100 per pole.

Since 2010, by the time the poles are trucked from the farm to the construction site, the average cost of a bamboo pole—including harvesting, treating, and trucking—would be Php 550.

<sup>2</sup> One can buy borax from Alysons' Chemicals at Roosevelt corner Del Monte Avenue, Quezon City. Their telephone number is 8712-2266.

A note on trucking: there are a lot of checkpoints to go through. Since neither the police nor military personnel are familiar with the classification of bamboo, we usually have a hard time negotiating with them. Bamboo is grass, not timber. Currently, it is under the care of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as a forest product.

### Research with the Oxford Center for Disaster Studies (1995)

Nick Hall and Roger Bellers of the Oxford Center for Disaster Studies (OCDS) in Oxford, United Kingdom contracted me and Juju to help them look into bamboo houses and whether these are typhoon-resistant.

Nick and Roger outlined several conditions: that the houses are traditional, that they are located in an old town, that there are no warlords there, and that there are women leaders in the community. Juju and I found these in Igbalangao, a very old town along the delta of the Antique River.

For a week, we surveyed the town and dealt with a woman leader, Josephine. We interviewed carpenters on their building techniques. The turning point of this research was when we asked the carpenters how bamboo is joined together. What were the connectors? The carpenters had difficulty expressing themselves.

They asked us to come back after three days. When we came back, the carpenters had built a full house, showing all the house parts, and the connections. Nick and Roger concluded that the building system of bamboo is holistic. It could not be explained in parts, but as a whole. And because of this, all the structural parts share compressive and tensile stresses with each other. The sharing of stresses gives the bamboo structure its superior strength.

Also, Nick and Roger concluded that the bamboo houses are typhoon-resistant. From the interviews, they learned that well-built bamboo houses could resist the wind (of up to 180 kph). One theory is that the rain and wind just go through the structures. They also noted that the bamboo houses are stilted, and thus are protected from sudden floods.

But what if the houses tumbled from the strong winds? This phenomenon occurred, but within days, because of the relative lightness of the small bamboo houses, they were made to stand again, with the help of the community. That the problems after the typhoon were solved right away spelled good mitigation against typhoons.

Nick and Roger concluded that traditional knowledge, people's architecture, and the holistic nature of building bamboo houses made it superior and typhoon-resistant architecture. This was a validation of what we already knew, instinctively.

### FSSI Conference Center (1999–2000)

The Foundation for Sustainable Society, Incorporated (FSSI) commissioned me to build a training center under the leadership of Eugene Gonzales and the supervision of Carlos S. Encarnacion. This was to be a training center for teaching about making coconut coir hemp, which is used to help stop erosion.

The training center had the same character as the CELL building, but there was a big difference. While CELL's structures were immediately inhabited and occupied, the FSSI Conference Center was not. And in a matter of a few years, the bamboo structure began to rot. This tells a very important lesson: the bamboo house has to be inhabited, if not maintained and cleaned regularly.



Another example, in CELL, after the construction team packed up, there was a week or two when no one used the structure. The whole building was infested with a film of fungi. Immediately, the CELL administrators cleaned up and maintained the structures regularly.

### Beach house in Bataan (2001)

A couple, Steve and Maritess, commissioned me to build their house by the beach in Bataan. It was similar to the design and construction of the Del Monte house and Erning Cariño was the contractor.

From the area, we were able to buy *buhô* bamboo, slimmer poles that are about 0.05 meters (about 2 inches) in diameter, that we installed as the ceiling.

After the house was done, a very distressed Maritess called me to complain that rainwater had entered the house. I explained to her that yes indeed, bamboo houses can get soaked in rain. Steve and Maritess learned to adjust and live with this phenomenon. Until the present, they continue to enjoy the bamboo beach house.

### Interiors for Sheila Coronel and Dr. Mike Tan (ca. 2002–2005)

It is very easy to build with bamboo as interiors. The journalist Sheila Coronel had a bamboo loft built over her bedroom. Meanwhile, Dr. Mike Tan had his house renovated with bamboo flooring, bamboo joints, bamboo balusters, and bamboo walls and windows. Even the main doors of his house are made of a combination of bamboo and wooden frames.

It is interesting that people who believe in Filipino culture support vernacular or traditional bamboo construction.

### Bamboo modular house at the exhibit *The Bamboo Advantage* (2003)

Creating a modular bamboo house was a confluence of factors. My husband, Juju, and I did not really know where we would settle next. Dr. Joven Cuanang, the owner of Pinto Gallery, then asked if I could do an exhibit on bamboo.

We thought of a bamboo modular house. This became a 65-square meter house made of 2 meter by 4 meter bamboo modules. I was confident that Rudy Encinares could bring this idea to fruition. Rudy and I had worked on other conventional projects. By this time, I realized that Rudy was not only an able foreman; he was brilliant in both conventional and bamboo construction, apart from the fact that he was hands-on, doing neat and wonderful carpentry.

The most talented workers on bamboo are the ones who have an artistic bend. Aside from carpenters, welders also easily handle the material. Perhaps it is because welders handle round pipes.

Rudy had all these qualities, and more. So it was a no brainer that he could lead this project.

While Rudy was a star player, Bert Gallano is a master bamboo carpenter. Bert may not be as brilliant as Rudy, but his constancy creates very good bamboo pieces.

Modular meant that the structure could be assembled and disassembled. Rudy led the men in working out the parts, the panels, and the system of connections, especially the lashing. With him, we successfully transferred this modular bamboo structure, assembling then dismantling it five times.

Initially, the structure took two weeks to be assembled for *The Bamboo Advantage* exhibit at the Pinto Gallery. After four exhibit extensions, from two months to eight months, it took one week to disassemble the structure. By the fourth time the house was transferred, it only took three days to dismantle and one week to assemble it. This shows that the team had created a system where the construction became 50% more efficient.

### Residence at Ayala Greenfields (2004–2007)

Inspired by the vision of the bamboo modular house, Angel and Deon were more than willing to incorporate as much bamboo as they could in the home that they were building at the exclusive Ayala Greenfields Subdivision in Laguna.

The deed restrictions of the subdivision encouraged vernacular architecture. However, when we indicated that we wanted to build with a thatch roof, the subdivision disapproved this specification. But it did allow the use of bamboo for the floors, joists, walls, balusters, railings, and roof framing.

The construction was headed by Jose Nacu and Mang Peping. Mang Peping was a contractor who started as a helper who rose from the ranks and now had his own construction team. He more than agreed that Rudy Encinares should lead the areas of bamboo construction.

Rudy took charge of two challenging features of the house. One was the construction of a four-story bamboo staircase topped with a dome made of bamboo and polycarbonate skylight. The staircase was made completely of bamboo, except for the landing, which was fastened to the wall with steel angle bars. The other feature was a stilted gazebo connected to the house by a bamboo bridge.

During the inspection for occupancy, the engineer of the subdivision said that the structure was going to collapse because it was made of bamboo. I asked him, “What is the crushing strength of bamboo?” He could not answer. I informed him that the crushing strength of bamboo, which was computed at the UP laboratory, is 10,000 psi (pounds per square inch). The crushing strength of concrete is about 4,000 psi. This proves that bamboo’s compressive strength is as strong as, if not stronger than, concrete. The engineer allowed the gazebo structure to remain.

It is interesting to note that all these structures were done with people’s architecture; and not guided by professional engineers. By this time, I had met a structural engineer named Allen Rilloraza who knew how to compute loads of bamboo structures. But about 95 per cent of the creative and construction efforts was a teamwork among Mang Peping, Rudy and myself. And again, interestingly, the men of Mang Peping easily took to building with bamboo.

### Three-story bamboo house in San Mateo (2007–present)

In our journey to simplify our lifestyle, Juju and I decided to see how it is to live in the province. After four years of rural living, we decided to return to Manila. We purchased a 600-square meter lot on which to build our three-story bamboo house. As usual, we rented a six-wheeler and loaded all the pieces, including the *anahaw* roofing onto the truck.

We purchased 500 pieces of bamboo and began to build the house on Patiis Road in San Mateo. The modular bamboo house panels would be integrated into the house.

I observed that Patiis Road would flood and the water on the street would swell up to half a meter high. And higher than that, the flood waters would start to enter the lots around. An existing

concrete house that had been robbed of its roof and everything that could be taken away from it, stood about half a meter lower than the road. A major step then was to fill up the land one meter high, which would make it 0.50 meter higher than the road. This was done after the deep foundations were planted.

Then Juju and I took on the big challenge to build a three-story house made of 30-foot bamboo poles which would measure at 0.1 meters (about 4 inches) in diameter at the bottom and diminish to about 0.06 meters (about 2.5 inches) at the top. Rudy was very good at bundling the bamboo into posts. Each story was 8 meters by 9 meters.

The first floor was the *silong* which was 0.50 meters higher than the road. The *silong* is a vernacular concept of a stilted space usually for multipurpose outdoor activities. Through the years, I realized this was a wise thing to do as the floodwaters during Ondoy in 2008 only reached the floor level of the *silong*. Our house was flood-free. From this, I also realize that flood mitigation means integrating *silong* designs in Filipino dwellings where floods occur.

The second floor is the living space: a kitchen, dining, and living area with a balcony that overlooks an empty 1.3-hectare lot and beyond, the San Mateo mountains. The third floor was the workroom, the bedroom, and a complete bathroom on a flooring made of bamboo slats.

The whole house in fact has a lot of bamboo features. Aside from the posts, most of the other structural parts—beams, joists, nailers, slat flooring, and roof framing—are made of bamboo. Walls, windows, and *banggerahan* are also made of bamboo.

All these construction features came from lessons picked up from the vernacular houses in Panay, during my research in the 1980s for the book *Folk Architecture*.

Connections of bamboo are done mostly with nylon lashing. Other connections are done using pegs, metal bolts, and washers.

## The bamboo situation in the Philippines

As we were building with bamboo more and more, it became acutely apparent that like lumber, bamboo supply has diminished greatly.

The Philippines had four million hectares of bamboo at the turn of the century. Note that our land area is 30 million hectares, about 20 million of which is forested land. Our forest cover is now down to 5 percent or one million hectares, and bamboo is down to 100,000 hectares—or even less. Enviably, Vietnam has four million hectares of bamboo farms; Indonesia has five million hectares; China, ten million hectares; and India, five million hectares.

According to the leading expert bamboo botanist Elizabeth Widjaja of Indonesia, bamboo species around the world number 1,030, of which around 203 are found in Southeast Asia.

The most common and very reliable material to construct with is the *kawayang tinik* (scientific name: *Bambusa blumeana*). Other species that can easily be used for construction are *kawayang bayog* (genus *Dendrocalanus*), which is good for shorter structural members; *kawayang botong* (scientific name: *Gigantochloa levis*) is ideal for posts (but not for beams) and it is also best for walls, doors, windows, floor slats, and the *banggerahan*; and *kawayang buho* (scientific name: *Schizostachyum lima*) is best for fences and ceiling treatment.



FIGURE 10.2 • Workers learned cutting, skinning, slatting, flattening (or “*tinadtad*”), and jointing of bamboo for construction

The good news is that it only takes three to five years for bamboo to be harvestable. And it can be planted anywhere, even on subsoil. So planting bamboo is a very logical thing to do. It is now being pursued by the DENR and the Department of Agriculture.

There are also private initiatives to plant more bamboo. Dr. Flor Tesoro, the head of the Bamboo Roadmap of the Philippines (2016) said that CS First Agri Industrial of Pangasinan is selling treated bamboo. CS Agri planted bamboo on 300 hectares of land in 2016, which will be ready for harvest by 2021.

The growing interest in bamboo globally, which is rising exponentially, has buttressed the interest in the capacities and creativity of bamboo architecture. Bamboo structures are reaching great heights around the world, especially in the latitudes where bamboo is grown. This global interest will definitely infect the interest of our local architects and the public in our already living tradition here in the Philippines.

### Maasin’s bamboo forests and present livelihood

Bamboo plants dominate the forests of Maasin, Iloilo, the watershed of Iloilo City. There have been many advances in bamboo culture under the leadership of Mayor Mar Malones and his direct assistants Crisel Lope and Engineer Rentoy.

Some fifteen years ago, Maasin had 12,000 hectares of forest, 6,000 hectares of which were planted with bamboo. With political will, Maasin has planted more bamboo, reaching 9,000 hectares. The Mayor's leadership has attracted a lot of bamboo enthusiasts and government initiatives.

Maasin's bamboo harvests and market are flourishing. There is a thriving *sawali* enterprise. It is said that one industry there makes millions of pesos a month by supplying all the barbecue sticks of the Mang Inasal chain of restaurants. But more than that, the availability of bamboo allows the people to build with this material at a very low price.

Bamboo houses are a common sight in Maasin. Their vernacular building tradition is alive and thriving.

Mayor Malones is fully aware of the many potentials of bamboo and bamboo construction. He has led the town in holding a bamboo festival every December. And Maasin has honed the musicality of its citizens with the use of bamboo instruments in shows they call "Tultugan."

### Malungon Center, General Santos City (2010–2011)

A Christian group under the leadership of Ruth Callanta asked me and Juju to train former street dwellers of Manila to build with bamboo. They transported the people to a 15-hectare property planted with beautiful Mindanao bamboo. These workers had no prior knowledge on building with bamboo. So it was, for me, a very bold endeavor.

Leading them was the very capable Engineer Rod. And as we worked together, it was clear that Rod understood how the knowledge could be transmitted. We also asked Rudy and Bert to help us with the project. We were in luck. The Malungon land was planted with 200 clumps of the best kind of *kawayang tinik*.

With Rod, Rudy, and Bert, Juju and I trained the men in harvesting, treatment, storage, and building. The men easily learned all these construction activities. Within three months, the construction was going very well until Engineer Rod went AWOL and was replaced by someone who was not sympathetic to our team and we were eased out.

### Smart Communications Bamboo Workshop Project (2015–2016)

Smart Communications, under the leadership of Darwin Flores, sponsored a bamboo workshop in Antipolo where Juju and I were asked to facilitate. We had 25 participants and a budget of approximately Php 200,000 for the four-day workshop.

The first part was to teach them how to harvest. The salient points were to make sure that the poles are three to five years old and that harvest time is after a week of no rain so that the bamboo poles are ready to suck up the treatment solution.

We worked on a guardhouse and for three days, they experienced cutting, skinning, slatting, and flattening (or *tinadtad*). Then there were also techniques on jointing. The three easily learned connections are through lashing with nylon fishing twine, bamboo pegs of different sizes, and bolting.

The workshop really boosted confidence. Some months after, a potential client asked me to look at a lot which needed to be cleared. The person who was clearing turned out to be one of the participants in the Smart Communications training. He led us to a bamboo house that he helped build in the same subdivision and proudly showed us two gazebos that were fused to bedroom and living spaces. Each

gazebo was the usual bamboo house that one buys by the highways, but he was in charge of constructing its extensions—the kitchen and the bathroom. At this point, I realized that bamboo construction can be transmitted easily to people who are willing to work with their hands.

### The house of Ipat Luna and Howie Severino (2014–2015)

It is a great boost when home owners possess a nationalistic vision and are willing to go far to attain a sustainable lifestyle. Bamboo construction is part of the equation in this sustainable lifestyle. This happened when we built the house of Ipat Luna and Howie Severino, made mostly of bamboo but with mixed materials.

First, Ipat and Howie tapped the inventive and creative potential of Nato Espiritu, a foreman, artisan, and inventor who is passionate about bamboo. Previously, Nato, on his own, had built a bamboo treehouse for Ipat and Howie. It costs Php 200,000 or roughly Php 32,000 per square meter. Ipat and Howie rented it out through AirBnB, and currently, it has more than 70 percent occupancy.

For this house project, I would come in once in three weeks as architect, but specifically to mentor and to draw details and estimates with Nato. We built a 10-meter spanned structure with the support of steel beams. With it, we recycled materials and built bamboo floors, roofing, and framings.

There were times I could see that Nato was frightened to use bamboo structurally. I pushed him and pushed him, which was my role. The four of us were totally in sync in this project. Ipat and Howie's total commitment for the environment, sustainability, and an alternative lifestyle gave a totally new angle to building with bamboo. Nato and I were in a cusp of high motivation, encouragement, and creativity.

What added information did Nato learn from the experience? He learned the strength of bamboo—that bamboo is stronger than concrete in compressive strength and stronger than steel in tensile strength. Nato also learned how to fashion long bamboo nailers that are much stronger than the usual wood nailers. I would teach Nato techniques, and not to be outdone, he created his own.

The chemistry of leadership, encouragement and motivation resulted in pride and originality to the structure.

### Important lessons in bamboo construction through the years

Perhaps, the most important fact about people's architecture or bamboo architecture is that bamboo houses continue to be built and are still standing in the Philippines. I have related the following in many, if not all, of my lectures.

I was assigned to be the Philippine delegate to an International Bamboo Conference sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). When I showed slides of bamboo houses—traditional and contemporary—the international audience gasped in shock. When I inquired why they were shocked, they said they were surprised that we were “living in bamboo houses.” It was my turn to be shocked. I took it for granted that it was natural for us Filipinos to live in bamboo houses.

Throughout my 38 years of first researching, then building with bamboo, I have listed construction notes that are very helpful. Apart from the ones mentioned above, they are the following:

- *Kawayang tinik* grows up to 40 feet. The diameter of bamboo can be as small as .05 meter to .075 and .1 meter and it can be harvested until it is .15 meter in diameter in lush areas of bamboo groves.
- I gradually experimented with embedding bamboo into the foundation, which works. The other is to embed cylinders into concrete pedestals and insert the bamboo poles into the pedestals.
- Right now, I am observing the 10-meter poles I used for a three-story building in 2007. So far, it is still standing, even though I can see splits and some poles fibers are getting soft.
- One can adopt other foundation and pedestal techniques from other countries. For whole pole bamboo beams, they have to be supported every four meters. Effective beam lengths are usually up to 8 meters.
- One interesting development is hand laminating bamboo to produce very strong girders. Another is creating very long beams through lamination as well.
- Bamboo works very well as trusses. It has the particular advantage of being lighter than steel. Diagonal bracing, posts, or beams are crucial for putting rigidity to the structure. If one leans the posts, it can have a post-beam effect.
- When bamboo splits, it loses its strength. So that it does not split, bamboo should not be nailed. And like any structure, bamboo is best combined with other materials like wood, steel, concrete, glass, and plastics.
- The strength of a bamboo structure is best analyzed as a frame or a network of connections, rather than focusing on a connection of a member to the other.
- A full bamboo structure is earthquake-proof. It can also take winds and rains from our usual storms and typhoons (up to about 180 kph). Although I am still not sure how it will perform under Yolanda-like conditions.
- For traditional structures, the wind and rain can affect and wet the interiors. But bamboo surfaces, precisely because they are air-dried, are the first to dry out.
- Varnish, enamel, latex paints, epoxy paints, and even sadolin are not effective on bamboo. The best that I have tried is silicon water repellent.
- The basic carving tools for working with bamboo are different types of chisels with straight or curved edges.
- To keep bamboo in good lasting condition, it is very important to keep the bamboo shaded. UV damages the bamboo immediately. After many tries, I find that bamboo is not a good roof tile material. Within one year, the UV of the sun cracks it and it rots very quickly. Another is to keep the bamboo from being waterlogged, and do not let bamboo rest on soil.

### The cost of a bamboo house

How much does a bamboo house cost? I have built two for my husband and me, and over 22 other houses and structures to date. Our second home in San Mateo, with the ground developments and minimal plumbing and electrical works and the bamboo harvested and trucked from Southern Luzon, costed me Php 20,000 per square meter. When completed, it could cost up to Php 30,000 per square meter.

The most economical bamboo construction that I have encountered so far is by Dr. Beni Santi. After just a day of consultation with me, he was able to build bamboo structures for only Php 5,000 per square meter. His secret weapons were accessibility to nearby bamboo and a forester named Rem. Rem had attended a workshop on harvesting, treatment, and building with bamboo with us. Also, the houses mimicked vernacular forms which probably was very familiar to the foreman who built it. This example (among so many) proves that bamboo construction technology is easily transferable.

The next point is that when bamboo invokes tradition, the bamboo structures become more economical. A strong example are the bamboo cabanas or mini houses being sold by the highways in Luzon and the Visayas. The costs vary from Php 5,000 to Php 10,000 per square meter, including delivery to your home. I think with orientation to healthy building and additional treatment techniques, these cabanas will last another ten years on top of the guaranteed five years that they sell it for. To compare, conventional houses in the city cost about Php 25,000 to Php 45,000 per square meter.

### Bamboo houses as expressions of space

One thing to take notice of are the spaces that the bamboo can create. This is where the celebrated statement of Fr. Bobby Perez about “space surrounding space” takes hold. I realize that this goes further into the statement, as “space surrounding space surrounding space, *ad infinitum*.”

The spaces of the *bahay kubo* flow into each other. This is made possible by the gaps in the walls, floors, and openings. There is a connection between spaces; there is openness between spaces. Usually, the spaces of the bamboo house are connecting, open, and welcoming. Light and air flow through a bamboo house, making it cool and well-ventilated.

Be prepared to share the bamboo house with many living beings. And because of its capacity to be shared, it could be said that the bamboo house is a hearty space.

Perhaps one of the very important undergraduate theses on bamboo architecture is the study of five Tanay bamboo houses done by Architect Ages Dizon in the 1970s. Early in the game, Agnes was able to describe the classic design of a *bahay kubo*. It is for me, a classic section of a Filipino house—stilted, has a multipurpose room with extensions, and has a steep roof. The *bahay kubo* is prevalent in all the regions of the Philippines. In this sense, it is in the DNA of our culture.

Lastly, the bamboo, as material, can produce many surfaces. It can be flattened, woven, laminated, carved, and layered. And the entire poles add a unique dimension to it. All these create various layers of surfaces, enabling subtle expressions of the enclosure of space. It is common to see at least four or five textures of bamboo in a single elevation of the house.

### Engr. Allen Rilloraza affirms the use of reinforced bamboo in lieu of reinforcing steel bars (2018)

I first met Engr. Allen Rilloraza around 2006. By chance, he mentioned that he had a program for designing with bamboo structures called RAAB 3D. I was elated.

To date, Allen has designed over a hundred structures. He started working in construction with his father, whose business was housing. At one point, his father built a swimming pool using bamboo as reinforcement. This is another vernacular practice. Allen’s father encouraged him to look into analyzing this structurally.



In my own experience, I have been using bamboo reinforcement for slabs, beams, and suspended slabs on my personal projects. The usual practice is to use steel for reinforcement with concrete. But the use of bamboo as reinforcement in old buildings and in provincial structures, is not uncommon. For example, old churches used bamboo reinforcement for their limestone walls. Provincial fences would usually employ bamboo as reinforcement. Prof. Rene Mata, in his research on a 100-year-old government capitol building in Pangasinan, was surprised to see that the building's roof framing was made of bamboo.

Most recently, in October 2018, Renee Perrine's workers, who were digging out the old foundations of a piggery structure in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, were amazed that it was reinforced with bamboo.

In July 2018, as Allen Rillaroza and I were discussing how a concrete structure combining bamboo parts will produce a very strong and stable structure, he showed me his latest personal and personally-funded project: a two-story 5 × 6 meter house using bamboo reinforcements (instead of steel). I was amazed. Now I know for sure that bamboo reinforcement can replace steel reinforcement. This will lower construction costs by Php 2,000 per square meter. I have to really study this fearless forecast, but I think it is now safe to offer bamboo as a workable alternative to reinforced concrete construction.

However, there is still no bamboo code in the Philippines. And if I employ this, it is because of my full faith in Allen's talent and capacity as a pioneering engineer in bamboo construction. Allen uses *botong* treated in borax for 15 days. He says that the fibrous bamboo clamps to the concrete better and that the chemical reaction between bamboo and cement makes the concrete stronger.

Again, this is validation of the fact that bamboo is as strong as steel in tensile strength and vernacularly, people's architecture has known this for generations.

### Voluntary simplicity versus poverty

Should we really be that scared of the vulnerabilities of bamboo? Or should we celebrate its existence?

Living with the vulnerabilities of bamboo has made me less "panicky." I have come to accept the rain coming in, the shaking of the floor, the leaning of the posts, and the unlevel surfaces. But of course, I take great effort to keep improving on the technology. I have taken E. F. Schumacher's adage from his *Small is Beautiful* very seriously, and for at least 35 years now, I have consciously practiced voluntary simplicity. Working with bamboo has strengthened this resolve.

Bamboo construction is low-technology but high-value construction work. I believe in the tenet that to be truly modern and avant-garde, one must fully understand tradition and work from that base.

Bamboo construction and tradition suffer from the perception that bamboo is a poor man's material. This is not necessarily true. However, it is the biggest block to developing bamboo as a 21st-century material.

### Bamboo architecture is sustainable architecture

Interestingly, bamboo is a purely benevolent material that provides the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. For shelter, bamboo fulfills all the criteria for sustainability.

Even on subsoil, bamboo grows quickly and reforests, locks carbon, registers a negative carbon footprint, is totally recyclable, and goes back to the earth. On the other hand, concrete, steel, glass, and metal are all extractive materials that harm the earth.

Bamboo expert Fatima Tangan tells that she has effectively helped in Philex Mining's environmental rehabilitation efforts by planting bamboo. Part of this success is that bamboo helps absorb lead and other mining deposits. Moreover, the income from bamboo harvest, treatment, processing, and people's architecture goes directly to the local population, which helps in establishing self-sustainability in communities.

### The Bamboo Theater with Arch. Fuminori Nousaku of Japan (2016–2017)

In November 2016, renowned curator Dr. Patrick Flores of the UP Vargas Museum and the Japan Foundation commissioned me to work with the award-winning Japanese Architect Fuminori (Fumi) Nousaku. Fumi was chosen to do an installation using Philippine culture, but integrating with it his soul as a Japanese architect.

At first Patrick said, "Why not the Philippine jeepney as a starting point?" But Fumi, as a Japanese, could not relate to the Philippine jeepney. When they ate rice for lunch, Fumi saw a connection and asked Patrick to bring him to a rice farm. They went to Tarlac where he saw bamboo structures and implements. It was there that Fumi gave birth to the vision of the installation: a bamboo structure with rice sacks as the roof.

It is notable to point out that Fumi's inspiration, again, came from vernacular sources. And this time, the vernacular influences of another Asian country resonated with ours.

### John and Renee Perrine's vision for bamboo (2008–present)

In May 2018, John and Renee Perrine commissioned me to design four bamboo structures for their farm in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon. They needed meeting areas, houses, and cottages, and the Perrines found the bamboo structures useful for marketing one of their products, the giant bamboo (scientific name: *Dendrocalamus asper*).

The Perrines have created bamboo treatment plants. They can sell 4,000 pieces at eight meters length per month at the cost of Php 100 per meter. They have an international company taking orders for 2,000 pieces a month. Together with the indigenous peoples (IPs) of Bukidnon, they can provide as much as one million pieces of bamboo poles to the market per year.

The IPs and the Perrines have been in constant communication for more than a decade, discussing food security and livelihood for the communities in Bukidnon. Part of this is planting giant bamboo as a source of livelihood in 2008. Giant bamboo is in great demand worldwide and Bukidnon has the ideal elevation and soil conditions to grow this species.

The IPs and the Perrines believe in a partnership as an enterprise. They provided seedlings for each IP family/partner to plant a quarter of a hectare of giant bamboo. Now, after ten years, they are ready to buy the products from the IPs.

This visioning is pivotal.

It has become very obvious that bamboo has become an acceptable building material—in whole poles, wall panels, floor slats, and laminates. There are a number of Filipino architects who would like to take on bamboo designing. And the next generation of Filipino architects are separately working with Southeast Asian architects to "compete" as the leaders in bamboo design. For example, one young

lady architect I know is now Project Manager of a resort in El Nido, working alongside a well-known Indonesian bamboo architect.

The Perrines admit that it is highly unlikely that the corporate world will be able to step up to this kind of egalitarian partnership. But it is a start, and it is possible that it can create a movement. To push this further, the Perrines and the IPs would like to see that Filipinos go back to building their (vernacular) homes with their own hands, harvesting bamboo from their backyard farms. That, for me, would spell the real revolution.

This is so different from another economic model of an investor planting bamboo in hundreds of hectares of farmland, paying the farmers to grow them, and buying the bamboo from them for a low price. The bamboo will then be used for biomass or engineered bamboo, and most of the profits will end up with a very few.

Perhaps, an important fundamental activity in vernacular or people architecture is the word “share.” In my almost forty years of researching and working with bamboo, I have experienced how the people easily share what they know, for almost no cost at all.

As a professional, one advocacy of working with bamboo architecture is to show that bamboo houses can be lived in, and I have been blessed with clients who share this view.

It is clear that my role is to show how bamboo architecture and construction works vernacularly. And the best pace of sharing this knowledge is at the comfortable level and pace of those who are interested.

The interest in learning about bamboo is growing exponentially. Local and international workshops are constantly happening. But again, the most important thing is to remind Filipinos that four generations ago, we had the capacity to build our own houses from bamboo that were accessible from where we lived and that building with bamboo used to be common knowledge, a skill that can be easily learned.

Today, bamboo architecture speaks of an alternative lifestyle. But bamboo architecture will be given a boost once we realize that it has been around for thousands of years. And it is a matter of a paradigm shift to harness this wisdom of people architecture as we move the world forward in the 21st century.

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## 11

# Trimona Multi-Purpose Cooperative Slow Food as Medicine

### TRIMONA MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERATIVE<sup>1</sup>

In 2007, a group of activists opened TriMona Healthy Dining—a dream space of shared resources, expertise and passion for healthy food and lifestyle, fair food production and trade, and a slow food tradition as a way to address the pervasive lack of access to healthy, organic and safe food and the proliferation of health problems resulting from unhealthy diets and lifestyle choices.

To register the restaurant, the group organized as the TriMona Multi-purpose Cooperative (TMPC) whose members were limited to persons belonging to three non-government organizations (NGOs): Peoples' Global Exchange (PGX), Integrated Pastoral Development Initiative (IPDI), and Kaalagad Katipunang Kristyano (Kaalagad).

TriMona Healthy Dining offered a healthy menu of fresh, organic, and natural food with no artificial flavoring and synthetic taste enhancers. It became a favorite venue for meetings and parties of friends and colleagues in the development field, and their caterer of choice for healthy food. TriMona Healthy Dining was a melting pot, a hub for various advocacies where development workers, artists, healers, health enthusiasts, and environment lovers converge. It later evolved as a wellness space—a venue for health and wellness events, seminars, and healing sessions.

In 2017, to address the challenge of sustainability and growth, the restaurant was rebranded as the TriMona Co-op Café (TCC), and the cooperative opened its membership to all Filipino citizens who are interested in a healthy lifestyle. This attracted many new members who were inspired by the example of the original members who remained healthy and strong in their senior years, without maintenance medications.

What began as a spoof of the TriNoma Mall which opened at about the same time in Quezon City, TriMona—a homonym of “try *mo na*,” a *Taglish* phrase meaning “try it”—evolved as a battle cry for slow food as medicine—an alternative lifestyle and consumer movement based on food as medicine, slow food, alternative healing, and fair production and trade.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter was written by Esperanza A. Santos, the Marketing Officer and General Manager of TMPC from 2007 to 2018.

The idea to set up a health food restaurant initially emerged in answer to the question on what to do with the extra and quite expensive space in the new location of the PGX Solidarity Center on Anonas Extension, in Brgy. Sikatuna Village, Quezon City.

Vim Santos of PGX and singer/composer Gary Granada of Kaalagad, both coffee lovers, wanted to open a coffee shop where their activist friends could hang out and jam. But Pangging Santos, Vim's sister, who was invited to manage the coffee shop, had a different idea. Having embarked on the path of healthy eating herself in response to her trauma over the illness and early loss of their father, suggested opening a health food restaurant instead.

The concept of a restaurant serving healthy food, that adheres to the slow food tradition, serves good coffee, and equipped with an open mic was decided—not only for the unique value proposition of providing healthy food in the area and a cozy hangout for activists and friends, but also to address basic human rights issues adversely affected by the dominant capitalist food culture (see Figure 11.1).



FIGURE 11.1 • The entrance of TriMona Co-op Café at 112 Anonas Extension, Sikatuna Village, Quezon City

### A response to a problem

The TMPC, mainly through the coffee shop, responds to the following problems:

- limited access to healthy, organic and safe food;
- proliferation of diseases and health problems associated with unhealthy eating and lifestyle;
- doubtful efficacy and exorbitant cost of medical treatments; and

- lack of awareness of food as medicine and alternative healing.

The previous list covers two very basic human rights: the right to food and the right to health.

Limited access to healthy, organic and safe food

Most food offered in restaurants, especially fastfood eateries, contain preservatives, artificial, and synthetic taste enhancers (PASTE). The most widely used of these is monosodium glutamate (MSG), a flavor enhancer commonly added to food, canned vegetables, soups, and processed meats. MSG has been popularly linked to various health problems, such as headaches and allergic reactions, and is considered a factor in infantile obesity. As an increasing number of people become aware of the harmful effects of MSG, manufacturers resort to creating new brands that confuse the buyers, such as the heavily advertised “Magic Sarap” that contains a high amount of MSG on top of other questionable ingredients such as iodized salt, refined sugar, and chicken fat.

Most farmed fish and animals are injected with antibiotics and growth hormones, and are fed with grains that are genetically modified organisms (GMOs). A common practice in the Philippines is feeding farmed fish with chicken manure in the food mix. Most eggs are produced by chickens raised with antibiotics and growth hormones. Antibiotics fed to food that humans eat are linked to antibiotic resistance in humans. Growth hormones that are fed to animals that humans eat are linked to certain cancers, such as prostate, breast, and colon cancers.

Most vegetables are sprayed with synthetic pesticides and are grown with synthetic chemical fertilizers that are harmful to humans and animals that eat these crops. They are also harmful to the soil and the environment.

An increasing volume of crops are GMOs. Human consumption of GMOs has not been tested for long-term safety, as it would require decades of study of a huge number of GMO consumers and non-consumers. Thus, the risk of dangerous side effects has not been ruled out. Consumers are not aware which food are GMOs because there are no regulations in the Philippines that require GMO labelling.

Organic and naturally farmed food, or food caught in the wild, remain the only safe option, but these are more expensive, and are available only on limited supply in the local market.

Rise of health problems associated with unhealthy eating and lifestyle

In the current generation, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have become the top killers in the Philippines. The incidence of NCDs, also known as degenerative or lifestyle diseases, has overtaken communicable or infectious diseases. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of deaths in 2008 were due to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory disease—the “fatal four”—35 to 50 percent of which occur before the age of 60 (WHO n.d.).

The shift in the typical Filipino diet—from the traditional diet of rice, vegetables, and a little meat—can be attributed to colonization by the United States and its resulting colonial mentality. Filipinos embraced the standard American diet (SAD), characterized by high amounts of red meat, processed meat, pre-packaged food, fried food, refined grains, and high-sugar drinks. With excess amounts of sugar, refined carbohydrates, saturated fat and trans fats, SAD is a primary cause of obesity and diabetes (Galland 2015). Poor diet and obesity are considered not only risk factors for NCDs, but the major cause of NCDs themselves (World Cancer Research Fund International 2014).

### Doubtful efficacy and exorbitant cost of medical treatment

Conventional medicine routinely treats NCDs with synthetic maintenance medications for the remainder of the patient's life. This means these diseases cannot be cured by prescription drugs, but only managed until such time that the disease can no longer be managed due to complications arising mainly from prolonged use of these drugs and from drug interactions. Long-term use of synthetic drugs puts the patient at higher risk of health decline, with adverse side effects on the major organs, particularly the kidneys and liver. Expensive and invasive hospital procedures then become necessary to save the patient using the approach of cut, poison, and burn (i.e., surgery, synthetic drugs, and chemotherapy). Often, the quality of life of the patient suffers.

Among the findings of osteopathic physician and researcher Dr. Joseph Mercola (2008) on synthetic drugs for NCDs are:

- nearly all anti-diabetic drugs cause overweight and dependence on insulin;
- all cancer chemotherapy drugs result in tumor resistance;
- asthma drugs sensitize the body to triggers that worsen this condition; and
- cholesterol-lowering drugs actually cause heart disease.

As more people experience the pain and financial distress to the entire family brought about by how NCDs are treated by conventional medicine, they begin to look for natural alternatives.

### Lack of awareness of food as medicine and alternative healing

With the advent of instant processed foods like baby food, cereals, and noodles, most modern parents are not conscious of proper nutrition for their children. Schools also fail to instill healthy food choices. Most food business owners, motivated by profit, produce and sell unhealthy food that most people choose to buy—creating a vicious cycle of demand and supply of unhealthy food resulting in the proliferation of health problems on a massive scale.

With lack of awareness, people are disempowered. When they get sick, they rely on doctors of conventional medicine who prefer medicating instead of educating. Only when doctors give up on the patient as a hopeless case, with a grim prognosis of a short remaining time to live, do people start looking for alternatives. Most of the time, it is too late.

## Overarching argument

Capitalists dominate the Filipino food culture and health care system. Big players of the agrochemical industry (“Big Agra”) and the pharmaceutical industry (“Big Pharma”) operate mainly for profit, without regard for human rights, particularly the right to food and the right to health. They produce and promote food that is unsafe to eat and contaminate our environment, and medicine whose efficacy is doubtful and poisons us.

The right to food includes the right to adequate food, which inherently implies the availability of the needed quantity and quality that is free from adverse substances and is acceptable, accessible, and sustainable (CESCR 1999).

The right to health is a claim to institutional arrangements and environmental conditions for the highest attainable standard of health. Aside from timely and appropriate healthcare as an inclusive



right, it includes other determinants of health, such as food and nutrition, water, a healthy environment, and access to health-related information and education (CESCR 2000).

Instead of upholding our right to food and right to health, the government enables the capitalists' foothold by not providing adequate support for organic farming and the rehabilitation of the soil and for preventive health care and holistic health education relating to healthy lifestyles and nutrition.

To claim our rights, we challenge both the dominant capitalist food culture and dominant capitalist healthcare system by building a consumer movement for slow food as medicine, towards achieving a critical mass, through TMPC and TCC.

### Addressing the problems

TMPC's strategy to address these problems is guided by the inter-linkage of food and health, best articulated by the "Slow Food as Medicine" slogan. Slow food is nourishment that maintains good health and well-being. When health is compromised, slow food is medicine that can bring a person back to health, with the help of alternative energy-based healing modalities that can restore normal functioning and energy levels.

#### Addressing limited access to healthy, organic, and safe food

TMPC opened a healthy food restaurant that provides access to safe and nourishing food, without PASTE (preservatives, artificial and synthetic taste enhancers). Opening this restaurant in 2007, when people were only starting to be conscious of the food they eat, was timely. TriMona Healthy Dining was among the very first few places that served healthy and organic food in Quezon City.

The restaurant sourced its supplies from the co-op members' networks. The regular demand for organic and natural ingredients helped organic farmers of rice, livestock, and vegetables and herbal medicine producers who ensured regular supplies.

#### Addressing the rise in health problems associated with unhealthy eating

The restaurant offers a menu of healing food, such as raw food, and natural vegetable juices. Raw food items include Davao *kinilaw*, *ampalaya* salad, radish salad, and garden salad. Fresh vegetable juices include cucumber juice, carrot juice, and *pandan* juice. Green juice, a green smoothie consisting of blended leafy vegetables, is recommended by Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan as an immune system booster and a preventive food against cancer. Green juice is made from vegetable leaves that are locally available, such as *kamote*, *kangkong*, *saluyot*, *malunggay*, and *sili* (see Figure 11.2 on next page).

Another way of addressing the proliferation of health problems is organizing and sponsoring health seminars, mostly by Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan, former Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH). Among the health seminars he has conducted are "Food as Medicine," "Be Cancer-free Naturally," "Aging Gracefully," and "Food for Depression and Other Mental Health Issues." Dr. Jesucita Lao Sodusta, a health researcher and anthropologist, gave a seminar titled "Health on Zero Budget: How to Prevent Disease Naturally," based on her book with the same title.

#### Addressing doubtful efficacy and the exorbitant cost of medical treatment

In mid-2017, the Wednesday Acupuncture Clinic at TCC was launched to provide regular acupuncture treatment at affordable rates, offering discounts to TMPC members. This service was advertised through



FIGURE 11.2 • Fresh vegetable juices are part of the menu, such as cucumber, carrot, and green juice

word of mouth among members and posted online on the Facebook page of TriMona Co-op Café (see Figure 11.3).

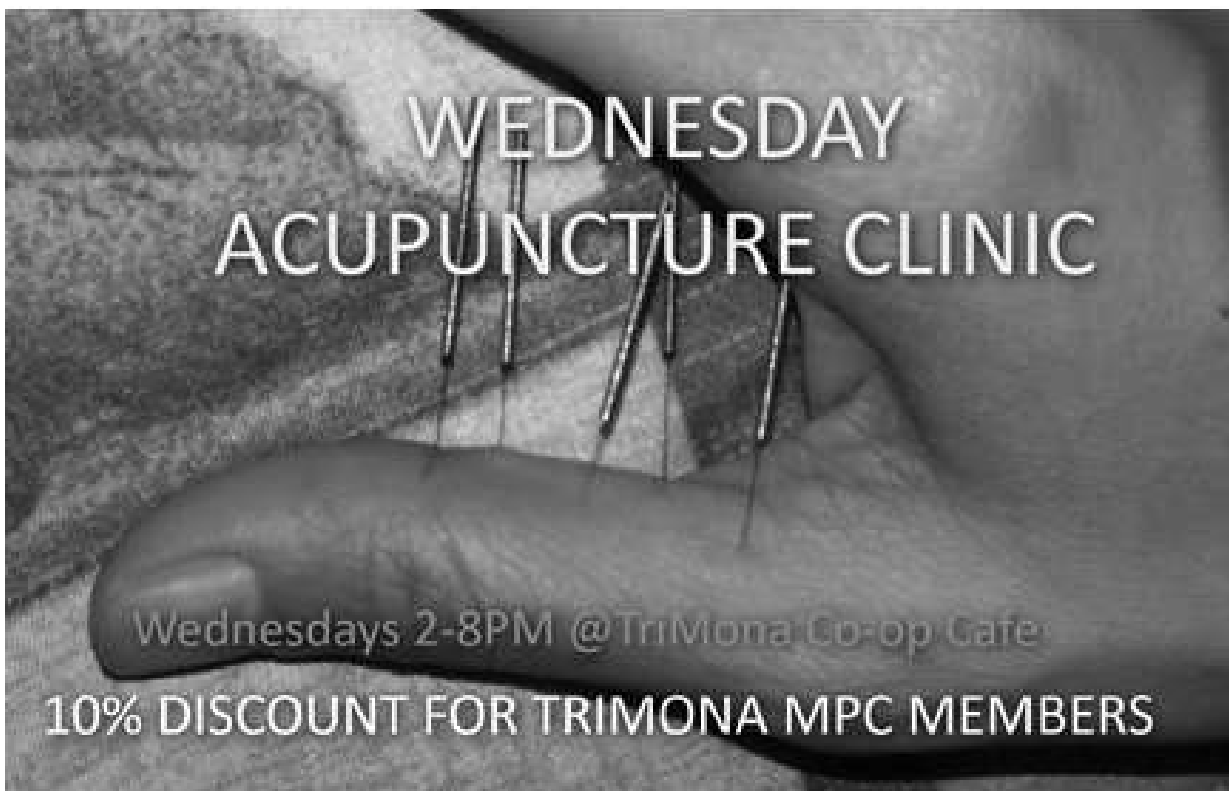


FIGURE 11.3 • Event poster of the Wednesday Acupuncture Clinic in TriMona

Healing sessions of energy-based healing modalities are organized and offered at affordable rates. These modalities include: *Pinoy hilot*, sound healing, reiki, crystal reiki, intuitive healing, space healing, sacred activations, and craniosacral therapy. These modalities are also available by appointment.

A reiki session can be arranged on-site and on home service by several reiki practitioners affiliated with TriMona. One of these is Ms. Candice Sumandrino (see Figure 11.4), who is also an intuitive healer and space healer.



FIGURE 11.4 • A reiki session with Ms. Candice Sumandrino, one of our on-call reiki practitioners

### Addressing lack of public awareness of food as medicine

Various activities are conducted with the aim of increasing public awareness of the value of food in maintaining good health and preventing diseases; as well as to help recover from disease. These include:

- health and wellness seminars and events, promoted online;
- community outreach programs like feeding missions, and demos on healthy cooking for mothers (see Figure 11.5 on next page);
- free mass media exposure by getting featured on TV shows; and
- providing information on proper nutrition and alternative healing to the diners in the restaurant.

### Activities

The following activities chronicle the evolution of TMPC from the beginning when the restaurant was first launched as TriMona Healthy Dining up to the present, as TCC:



FIGURE 11.5 • Cooking demonstration on preparing vegetarian burger for mothers from Brgy. Tandang Sora, Quezon City

#### Opened a healthy dining restaurant

Singer-songwriter and composer Gary Granada of Kaalagad suggested the name TriMona, a play on words for the newly opened Trinoma Mall in North Triangle, Quezon City. TriMona Healthy Dining positioned itself in stark contrast to Trinoma Mall as a hole-in-the-wall enterprise versus a conglomerate, socialist versus capitalist, and slow food versus fast food.

The first customers of the restaurant were fellow activists and friends in the development field. A couple of days after the restaurant opened, Ms. Joan Bondoc wrote an article about TriMona in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, titled “Not the Mall” (see Figure 11.6 on next page).

Pangging Santos, the general manager of TMPC, who is also the chief cook, focused on the quality of the food being served. Initially, she was the only one who was passionate about healthy food. Eventually, as more people discovered that healthy, nutritious food could also taste good, word about the restaurant’s food offerings spread in the network.

#### Organized as a cooperative to register the restaurant business

As socialists, the activists that conceived TriMona Healthy Dining set up a cooperative to register the restaurant business, consistent with the principles that they practice and preach. They invited friends from three NGOs: Peoples’ Global Exchange (PGX), Integrated Pastoral Development Initiative (IPDI) and Kaalagad, to join the cooperative and came up with a list of 20 members from the three NGOs needed to register as a cooperative (see Figure 11.7 on next page).

The members pooled their resources and came up with a total shared capital of Php 150,000. As this was not sufficient, the members also donated kitchen utensils, pots, tables and other things needed for the initial operation of the restaurant.



FIGURE 11.6 • A clipping of Joan Bondoc's "Not the Mall" article on the opening of TriMona in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 2007



FIGURE 11.7 • Logos of the three NGOs that founded TriMona Multi-Purpose Cooperative

TriMona Healthy Dining opened on July 7, 2007 at the PGX Solidarity Center in Brgy. Sikatuna Village, Quezon City. The Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) released the certificate of registration of TMPC as a multi-purpose cooperative in January 2008.

Developed a menu of home-cooked healthy food

A menu was developed offering dishes made from fresh, local, and natural ingredients, cooked and prepared in the slow food tradition.

Heirloom recipes from family and friends were offered, such as chicken adobo with natural cane vinegar from Davao, *kinilaw na isda* (fish ceviche) with radish, cucumber and a generous amount of ginger and onions; *minanggahang manok* with grated green mango, and *humba* with banana blossoms.

The recipe for fried tofu came from Barbara Fortunato; the *bacalao* (an appetizer made from shredded dried *labahita* fish) is Viol De Guzman's family recipe; fish tofu roll came from Jess and Lina

Sison; the *adobong manok* cooked with *achuete* and without soy sauce is from Pangging Santos; and the Davao *kinilaw* (see Figure 11.8) is from Pangging and Vim's father.



FIGURE 11.8 • Davao *kinilaw*, a heirloom family recipe from Pangging and Vim Santos

Innovated on the menu to appeal to a wider market

A target market for TriMona are mothers who are mostly unaware of the harmful effects of fast food and beverages on their children's health, and millennials who grew up in the fast food era. Another target market is families who dine out together.

Innovations on the menu were triggered by young family members who, when their families came to the restaurant for a meal, opted to go to the fast food restaurant nearby, because they could not find something they liked in the menu. The current menu (see Figure 11.9 on next page), has many items to offer to young children and millennials.

Natural and nutritious ingredients were explored in innovating the menu. Coconut milk is used instead of commercial cream; non-GMO tofu instead of pork or chicken raised with cancer-causing synthetic growth hormones and antibiotics; and unpolished organic brown rice instead of polished white rice that increases the risk of diabetes.

A TriMona bestseller, Bicol Express Tofu (see Figure 11.10 on next page) is an innovation on the popular Bicolano dish Bicol Express that uses non-GMO tofu instead of pork belly.

Advanced advocacy by walking the talk

TriMona crafted, with the help of a writer friend, and launched its slow food manifesto, called *Mani't Pesto ng TriMona* (see Figure 11.11 on page 158), which captures the essence of what slow food healthy dining at TriMona is all about—basically all of the good stuff, and none of the bad.

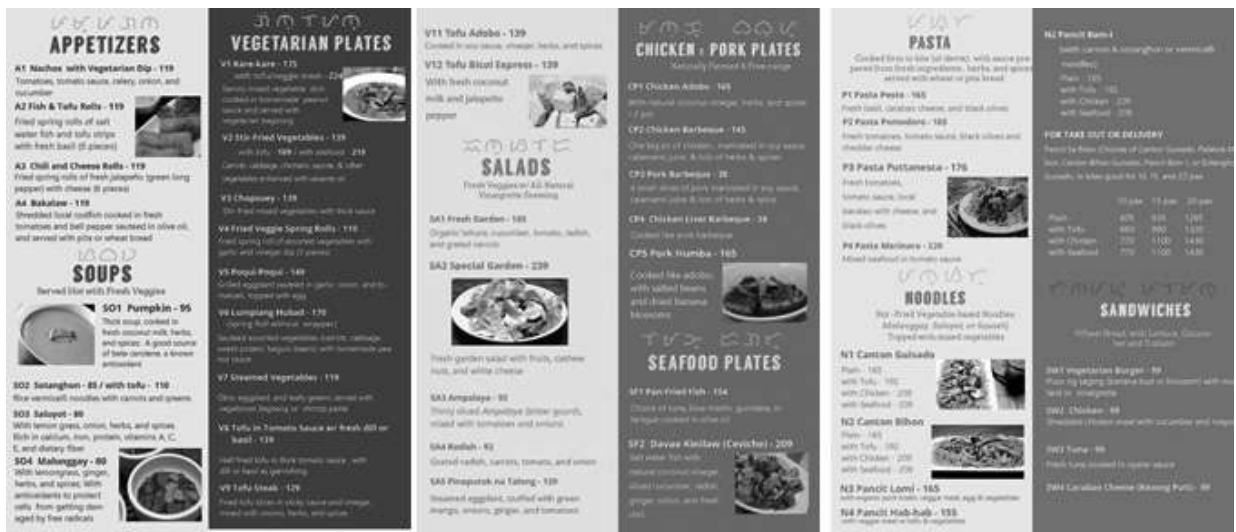


FIGURE 11.9 • Portion of the current menu showing vegetarian and non-vegetarian options



FIGURE 11.10 • TriMona's Bicol Express Tofu uses non-GMO tofu and coconut milk

The members of the cooperative were encouraged to start eating organic and healthy food and growing their own food at home, even just in pots. They started by eliminating the use of PASTE. They shifted their preference from pasteurized vinegar that is readily available in supermarkets, to naturally fermented vinegar; from iodized salt to rock salt or sea salt; from Magic Sarap artificial seasoning to natural herbs and spices.



FIGURE 11.11 • Mani't Pesto ng TriMona or TriMona's Slow Food Manifesto

Catered for various events and provided food delivery services

TriMona provides catering services to government agencies like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Commission on Human Rights (CHR), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC). These clients were mostly referred by the network of friends of TMPC members.

Clients from the academe are mostly from University of the Philippines Diliman (UP Diliman), particularly from the College of Arts and Letters (CAL), College of Music (CMu), Center for Integrative Development Studies (UP CIDS), and the UP Men's Football Varsity.

One of the big events in 2017 was the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples Forum PH 2017 that contracted TriMona for buffets and packed meals prepared at TCC with the help of volunteers (see Figure 11.12 on next page).

Aside from institutional clients, TriMona also caters for parties and events, such as a reunion party at Villa Paraiso in Antipolo City.

Co-sponsored advocacies of various groups

One way to attract friends in the development field is to offer TriMona as a venue for meetings and events. TriMona co-sponsored some of these events and helped invite participants for their public events and activities, such as WIKAIN, in partnership with FLOW, a group of writers, to celebrate unity through food and language (see Figure 11.13 on next page).

Convened a pool of healers and organized healing sessions

As more people who are interested in natural healing meet at TriMona, alternative healers have started to come forward and offer their alternative healing modalities which include acupuncture, reiki, crystal bowls sound bath, sound healing, *Pinoy hilot*, Tuina massage, sacred activations, angel healing, space healing, intuitive healing, craniosacral therapy, electron therapy, and graphotherapy.





FIGURE 11.12 • TMPC secretary Ms. Edina Almodal helps prepare vegetarian packed lunches for the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum 2017 held in the Philippines



FIGURE 11.13 • Event poster for WIKAIN, an event in partnership with FLOW

Healing events are organized as a complement to healthy food in the management of various health conditions. Among the first of these was Healing Sessions with Sound Healer Yeyette San Luis and Other Healers—a crystal bowls group sound bath, a healthy set lunch, followed by simultaneous healing sessions offering a menu of therapies at very reasonable, affordable prices. The healers are members of TMPC and friends. Details of this healing event are shown in Figure 11.14. Healing sessions are also available at the PGX Solidarity Center, by appointment.

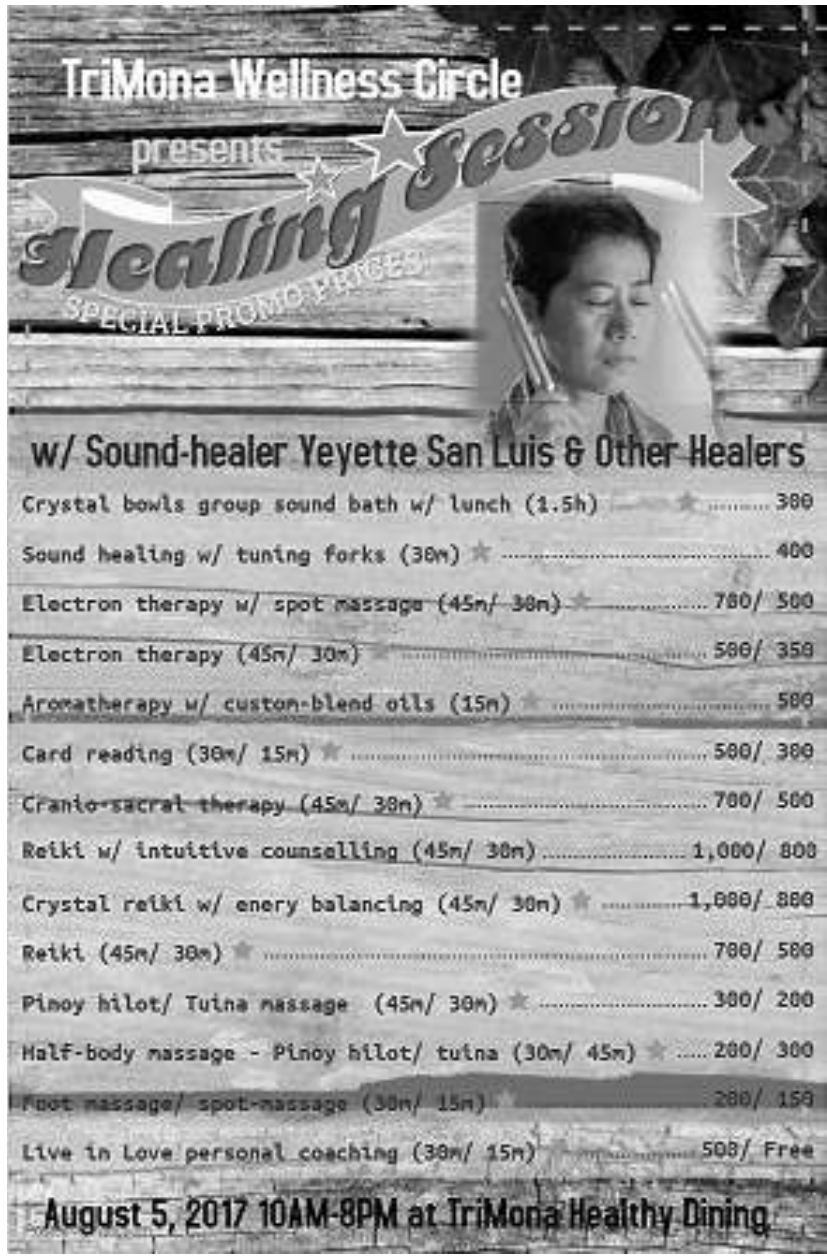


FIGURE 11.14 • Event poster for Healing Sessions with Sound Healer Yeyette San Luis and Other Healers

Sponsored health seminars

TriMona offers health seminars at a very low price —just enough to cover the cost of a simple healthy meal and a small token for the resource person who usually offers his or her services *pro bono* to the TriMona community.

Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan, a medical doctor and holistic healer who prescribes food as medicine, acupuncture and other natural means to recover one's health, is a favorite resource speaker at TriMona organized, sponsored, and hosted health seminars.

One of Dr. Tan's seminars at TriMona is *Paano Maging Puno ng Tuwa at Saya Ngayong Pasko* (How to be Joyful and Happy this Christmas) which introduces the natural way of staying in good health by tuning it into joy, particularly during the Christmas season. He provides expert information and guidance on how to manage and treat one's self in a holistic, integrative, and natural way, and to help support the healing journey of loved ones by helping them manage their emotions.

Other seminars by Dr. Tan at TriMona are "Aging Gracefully: Resolving and Preventing Common Health Issues of Seniors Naturally" (Figure 11.15), "Food as Medicine," "Be Cancer-free Naturally," "Healing Food for Depression and Other Mental Issues."

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FIGURE 11.15 • Event poster of Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan's seminar, "Aging Gracefully"

Dr. Al Lagaya, the first Director-General of the Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC) of the Department of Health (1999–2004), is an acupuncturist and wellness advocate and practitioner. He gave a seminar on “The Scientific Basis of Wellness: Cancer Management, Support, and Prevention” when he visited Manila in 2012.

Anthropologist Dr. Jesucita Lao Sodusta, author of the book *Health on Zero Budget: How to Prevent Disease Naturally*, gave a seminar of the same title on how to maintain peak health naturally at minimal or even zero budget. She shared cutting-edge information on preventive medicine from about 630 evidence-based researches, medical reviews, and her personal experience as a survivor of thyroid cancer. Dr. Sodusta holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Opened membership to the public

In 2017, the membership of TMPC was opened to the public, specifically for those who are interested in a healthy lifestyle. This was done to address sustainability and growth. As an increasing number of people with an interest in natural healing and healthy lifestyle converged in TriMona, the Board of Directors and management sought the help of Ms. Lilibeth Liguden (Figure 11.16), a co-op advocate and health enthusiast, to help amend the Articles of Cooperation and By-laws of TriMona to reflect the reorganization for expansion and to comply with the requirements of the Philippine Cooperative Code of 2008 (Republic Act No. 9520). In line with her advocacy to help cooperatives thrive in general, and her special interest in health and wellness in particular, Ms. Liguden has been offering top-notch consultancy services to TMPC *pro bono*.



**FIGURE 11.16** • Ms. Lilibeth Q. Liguden, TriMona’s volunteer co-op consultant, also volunteers at the registration desk of Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan’s seminar

The number of members increased from fifteen (15) when membership was opened in 2017 to thirty-nine (39) as of November 2018. Among the new members is film actress Ms. Maria Milagros Serna, popularly known as Snooky Serna, who was introduced to TriMona by Mr. Rasti Delizo, National Coordinator of Laban ng Masa. Even prior to becoming a member, she had been frequenting the restaurant with her family.

Strategized on moving forward

Strategic planning sessions were conducted in 2017, facilitated by Ms. Lilibeth Liguden, to set the new direction of TMPC. TMPC's vision, mission, and goals were updated, incorporating new elements such as health and wellness and financial intermediation. The updated vision, mission, and goals are shown in Figure 11.17.

VISION	MISSION	GOALS
TriMona Multi-Purpose Cooperative is a center for cooperation, learning, and financial intermediation for a sustainable and healthy living.	To develop a platform for knowledge and resource sharing and a strong convergence and linkage among community of health and wellness advocates and practitioners	(1) To provide a profitable & competitive venue (healthy dining resto-café) where members and potential members converge; (2) To provide accessible, affordable credit facilities; (3) To actively advocate and share expertise and knowledge on healthy lifestyle; (4) To serve as a distribution outlet of organic and healthy products; and (5) To strengthen and develop the membership and organizational structure

FIGURE 11.17 • Articulation of TriMona's mission, vision, and goals

A business planning session was conducted in 2018, which was facilitated by Mr. Earl Parreño, to strengthen the business case of TMPC.

Launched more services and renovated the space

With the infusion of more share capital from new members, more than double the original amount collected at the start of operations, the interior of the restaurant was renovated to make the place cozier and dusty advocacy posters were removed from the walls. The advocacy posters which used to be an important element that set the ambience of TriMona as an activists' hangout, were moved to the restaurant's restroom walls. The new cozy look and feel of the restaurant is shown in Figure 11.18 (on next page).

More share capital also translated to more services. To comply with a CDA requirement to offer more than one service, two services were added: credit and consumer goods. The credit service is limited to TMPC members.



FIGURE 11.18 • TriMona was refurbished by clearing the advocacy wall of posters for a cozier feel

## Major Outcomes

For the past eleven years, TMPC has shown sustainability, expansion, and evolution as a wellness space. Its evolution as a wellness space, in fact, helped drive its sustainability and expansion. The major outcomes of its evolution are the following:

TMPC has remained liquid

From a small capital of Php 150,000 in 2007, TMPC's assets and net worth have more than doubled. It has remained liquid, without acquiring any loans, and even posted a modest profit in 2017. Although TMPC has been operating mostly at break-even in the startup years, it has provided steady employment and benefits to its full-time staff. As of November 2018, TMPC has employed four full-time staff and a part-time bookkeeper, general manager, and marketing officer (see Figure 11.19 on next page).

TCC expanded its client base

The TCC expanded its client base beyond its regular clientele of CSOs and activists from Laban ng Masa and private individuals with health issues. It now serves government agencies (e.g., DENR, DSWD, CHR, NCIP, and NAPC), the academe (e.g., faculty from UP Diliman), and showbiz artists and their families (e.g., Snooky Serna, Pepe Herrera, Antoinette Taus, and Rafael Rosell) (see Figure 11.20 on next page).



FIGURE 11.19 • TriMona restaurant staff in 2017 headed by chief cook Liza Dela Paz (center), with PGX Fairmark staff Kinda Laxina (right)



FIGURE 11.20 • Showbiz personality Ms. Snooky Serna (4th from left) with TriMona staff, members, and friends

TCC has become a hub of alternative healing

TCC has evolved as a wellness circle, a convergence space of healers, patients, and farmers, and producers of various health products.

Sound healer Yeyette San Luis (Figure 11.21) is among the healers in the wellness circle. She offers crystal bowls, sound bath, and sound healing through a tuning fork. Her sound healing technique incorporates chanting with the sound of the crystal bowls. She offers these therapies at her clinic in Oyayi Hall, 100-A K-6th Street, East Kamias, Quezon City and at the TCC upon request.



FIGURE 11.21 • Sound healer Ms. Yeyette San Luis gets her crystal bowls ready for the crystal bowls sound bath

Healers of other modalities who hold their clinics elsewhere or do home service are also available by appointment at TCC. Patients of alternative doctors like Dr. Susan Balingit visit TriMona, upon referral by their doctors. Dr. Balingit, Chair of the Center for Complementary and Integrative Medicine of the De La Salle Health Sciences Institute in Cavite, is an expert in traditional Filipino healing diet. She holds consultations at her clinic in the neighborhood of TriMona.

Some patients of Dr. Farrah Agustin-Bunch of the Dr. Farrah Agustin-Bunch Natural Medical Center in Victoria, Tarlac found their way to TriMona in November 2018. Dr. Farrah is a medical doctor and natural medical practitioner whose alternative clinic was raided and closed on the orders of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in August 2018, in response to complaints filed by medical societies. This group of patients, who used to meet at a restaurant in Quezon Memorial Circle,



expressed delight at having found a space in TriMona that resonates with their journey to recovering their health naturally (Figure 11.22).



**FIGURE 11.22** • Patients of Dr. Farrah Agustin-Bunch with TMPC officers Vim Santos and Pangging Santos (center)

Old members remain healthy and strong

Most of the original members of TMPC, already senior citizens, continue to enjoy good health without doctor-prescribed maintenance medications. They continue to be active in their advocacy work and personal lives. By their example of aging gracefully, they are able to attract more people to adopt healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle, and join TMPC in its advocacy of slow food as medicine.

TMPC has inspired many people to adapt a healthy lifestyle

A good percentage of TriMona customers who have visited the restaurant since it first opened in 2007 have been inspired to make healthier food choices. Many of them incorporate healthy food as part of their preventive maintenance protocol in maintaining good health. Many also provide healing food as part of the protocol in caring for their sick family members.

TMPC's advocacy continues to gain ground with the continuing operation of TCC, recurring health and wellness seminars and events, and active recruitment of new members through regular Pre-Membership Education Seminars (PMES) held on the last Saturday of every month.

## Lessons and challenges

Among the top lessons learned by TMPC is the feasibility of making a good business out of advocacy. Long-term sustainability can be secured by addressing challenges such as lack of business acumen among members and by mobilizing members, staff, and other activists to walk the talk. There is momentum in TMPC's advocacy of "Slow Food as Medicine" via TCC, but for it to continue and prosper, hindering factors, such as the lack of a roadmap and set key metrics, need to be addressed.

### Significant lessons

Three significant lessons were identified:

- It is possible to do advocacy and earn. TMPC has been successfully run as a business enterprise to advance the advocacy of "Slow Food as Medicine" even without the benefit of rigorous business planning due to the members' lack of business and finance expertise, and without outside financing. Since it started operating TCC, TMPC has not acquired any loans, operating only within its means. This was possible through sheer determination and a significant amount of voluntarism from its members and friends who believed in the cause. However, the reach and growth of TCC and the advocacy has been limited.
- There is a need to focus on the business case. For long-term sustainability, there is a need to tap the expertise of people outside the organization for business planning, organizational development, financial management and control, among others.
- There is a need for continuous innovation. Innovations on the menu offerings and on the promotion of products and services, particularly online, are essential in significantly improving revenues and attracting regular and new clients.

### Challenges

The following challenges were recognized:

- ***Offering a fully organic menu at affordable prices.*** Given the lack of cheap sources of organic and naturally farmed food, offering a fully organic menu has been a challenge from the beginning. The high cost of organic and natural food, coupled with high operating expenses, make the food unaffordable for development workers and low-income groups that the restaurant wants to serve.
- ***Convincing members, staff, and advocates/development workers to walk the talk.*** Development workers/advocates generally could not afford the food at the TCC with their meager salaries, but they can access healthy food during meetings or events held at TCC paid for by their organizations. It is important that TMPC members and TCC staff walk the talk, yet some of them still have food choices that are not healthy, which works against the advancement of the advocacy.
- ***Lack of business acumen among co-op leaders.*** TMPC leaders have no business background; thus there is no in-house capacity to undertake business modeling, business planning, and financial management and control.
- ***Mobilizing co-op leadership to take a more active role.*** TMPC leaders are committed advocates who hold key positions in their respective organizations. They cannot fully focus on their role as officers of TMPC.
- ***Delays in payment collection from government clients.*** Inefficient bureaucratic controls in

government make it difficult to deal with them as clients, with respect to the changing and varying interpretations of their requirements among their staff. Collection of receivables from government agencies also takes time.

#### Contributing factors

Factors contributing to the successful outcomes are the following:

- ***Having friends who are willing to help.*** TMPC has access to volunteers from its network of members. Friends find time to help in between their busy schedules, from preparing poster layouts and taking photos for posting on social media, to organizing and promoting events. TMPC has a widening circle of friends and volunteers including artists, healers, entrepreneurs, architects, and even actors.
- ***An increasing awareness of food as medicine.*** Because of mainstream conventional medicine's failure to provide a cure for people with NCDs, despite the high cost of treatment, more people now buy herbal medicines, organic brown rice, and vegetables.
- ***TriMona is known by word of mouth among CSOs.*** TMPC's network of friends are mostly from CSOs, many of whom have offices in Quezon City, near the restaurant's location. Many come to TCC to hang out with fellow advocates or hold meetings. As they got to try the dishes on the menu, they began to develop a taste for the quality and natural flavors of fresh, organic, and natural food, and experience slow food dining with their friends.
- ***Google listing of TRIMONA as among the top places for healthy food.*** A Google search for "healthy food in Quezon City" lists TriMona among the top places to visit. Several customers looking for healthy food online have found their way to TCC via this manner.

#### Hindering factors

These factors have hindered the progress of TMPC:

- ***No roadmap.*** The TMPC, as an organization, only had a sense that it was going in the right direction, without a strategic view and an operational plan. What was available was a day-to-day plan for running the enterprise.
- ***No key metrics.*** TMPC has been concerned primarily about its advocacy, the day-to-day struggle to find customers, and the sustainability of the staff and the place.
- ***Prohibitive overhead cost.*** A huge part of the revenues of TMPC goes to overhead expenditures like salaries, rentals, and utilities. There are no subsidies from the city government for business permits and licenses.
- ***Inefficient government bureaucracy.*** Compliance with government requirements through various agencies, such as the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), the Social Security System (SSS), CDA, and the local government of Quezon City (e.g., for business permits and health and safety clearances), has been time- and resource-consuming and needs a dedicated person for these processes.

#### An alternative model for entrepreneurship and lifestyle

Alternative development is an approach that uses participatory action and people-centered development. It has the following key elements: participatory; endogenous, meaning development is from within the culture; self-sufficient; and objective-oriented. Operating within all these four parameters, TPMC is an

alternative development practice, with huge potential for effecting change through policy reforms and building a consumer movement towards sustainable natural food production, holistic health care, and healthy living. The elements of TPMC's alternative development practice are seen through the following:

- **Participatory:** As built into TPMC's Articles of Cooperation and By-Laws and in practice, members are involved in the governance of the organization—in planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. One member is entitled to one vote, in a democratic process of decision-making, no matter the level of his or her investment.
- **Endogenous:** TMPC takes pride in being a counter-food culture, challenging the dominant capitalist food culture. It is an organization that believes, lives by, and manifests its own cause—the advocacy of “Slow Food as Medicine.” In the context of Philippine culture, TMPC takes pride in promoting local traditional dishes, using local ingredients that are part of Filipino regional cuisines.
- **Self-sufficient:** The co-op is owned and run by its members. It generates its own capital and pools its resources. Members contribute time, treasure, and talent towards invigorating various aspects of the business. TMPC runs without outside grants or loans, and has operated using what is available and within its means.
- **Objective-oriented:** TMPC is focused on the delivery of value and advancing its cause over profit, acknowledging that profit must be generated in order to further advance its cause, starting with its members, and extending its reach to the staff, fellow advocates, friends, families, locality, country, and beyond.

TMPC's potential for effecting change presupposes its transformation into a sustainable learning organization to fully engage the new generation of advocates who are attracted to its cause. These new co-op members bring in needed fire, competencies, networks, life experiences, and abilities to bring in resources for the next leg of the advocacy work. The TMPC can take two tracks in effecting change.

First is advocating policy change for an integrated framework for development. TMPC is in a strategic position to make policy recommendations towards addressing lack of access to organic, natural, and safe food that responds to emerging health, nutrition, economic development, and agriculture challenges, and to converge agriculture and health in the context of climate change, human rights, and sustainable agriculture. Drafting such a policy requires engagement with government agencies like the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Agriculture (DA), the DOH, and the Department of Education (DepEd) and with CSOs. Women must specifically be engaged not only because women's health is crucial, but because there is great benefit to the family and the community when women are empowered.

Second is building a consumer movement towards a critical mass stemming from TMPC's advocacy “Slow Food as Medicine.” TMPC, by its very existence, is challenging the dominant capitalist food culture and Big Pharma's foothold on our healthcare system. The challenge is how to reach the critical mass that can effect change. Walking the talk, as employed by TMPC cooperators (founding members), remains the best strategy for drawing people to their cause. And as more healing modalities are made available within the means of members, they come closer to the “enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”—the essence of the right to health. In this state, they will have the inspiration and energy to reach their goal.

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