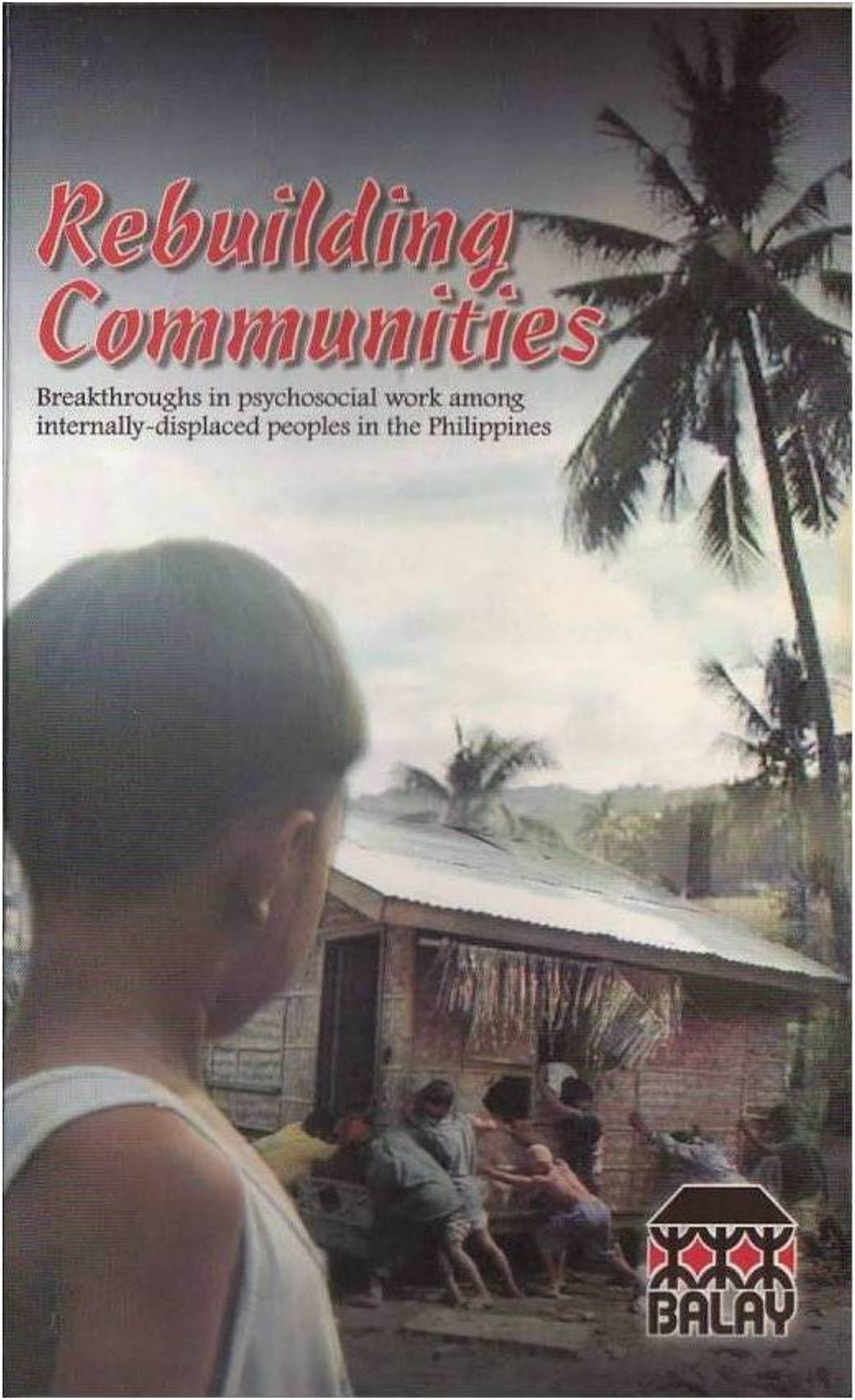
Rebuilding Communities
Breakthroughs in psychosocial work among internally-displaced peoples in the Philippines
BALAY

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Breakthroughs in psychosocial work
among internally-displaced peoples
in the Philippines

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Introduction

This book is a work in progress.

Balay has undertaken this project in an attempt to chronicle its experiences and what it learned along the way in the service of traumatized survivors of organized political violence and forcible displacement.

It is also our way in beginning to understand the phenomenon of social trauma in the context of conflict-impacted communities, particularly in Mindanao, where Balay workers have dedicated their talent, energy, and passionate solidarity for a good number of years.

And in the process of our discernment, we seek to place the significance of psychosocial development response in harnessing personal and community resources for healing and to encourage community stakeholders to transform the conditions that lead to their psychological and social distress.

For almost two decades now, Balay has waded through a stream of development covering various aspects of its work since it was established in 1985. The richness of views and lessons it generated has raised the need to come up with a conceptual understanding of its psychosocial work and the theoretical constructs of its practice.

Balay started on this project in year 2000. Though this idea has been raised time and again in the past, it took the financial support and encouragement from KIOS – the Finnish human rights organization – to make this undertaking a reality.

As a non-government organization (NGO) established at the time of martial law, Balay has some familiarity in responding to cases of trauma arising from torture and political detention. At the time the study was started, it was exploring ways of effectively delivering

psychosocial programs in communities uprooted by forced eviction, large-scale mining operations and other government projects which human rights defenders have come to call as "development aggression."

Balay had to put some of these projects aside when a major war broke in Mindanao between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Balay decided to shift most of its workers to the conflict-affected communities. At first, they provided relief rations, and organized feeding programs. Then they conducted medical missions and debriefing sessions.

In the process they started to establish a "healing alliance" with the affected individuals, families, and communities. Not long after, they accompanied those displaced from their communities in a process of psychosocial recovery, rehabilitation, and development.

Balay's psychosocial development response has been shaped by the context, situations, struggles and aspirations of the people and communities it has worked with. Thus, from the notions of trauma and rehabilitation influenced by clinical psychology and social work that once dominated its experience, the perspectives from community and social psychology, as well as participatory community development and human rights advocacy have widened the scope of Balay's institutional learning, especially on the matter of community-based rehabilitation.

Much of the information cited in this publication are based on Balay's observation and case studies from its partnerships with internally-displaced peoples (IDPs) in the villages in Aflek in T'boli, South Cotabato, Tagabakid in Mati in Davao Oriental, Dalengaoen in Pikit, North Cotabato, Siocon and Sirawai in Zamboanga del Norte from 2000 to 2002.

In Luzon, Balay has also responded to evictions of urban poor families later relocated to Towerville in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan.

The involvement of Balay in community peace-building initiatives, particularly in the Space for Peace project in Pikit which grew from one barangay in 2001 to seven barangays in 2004, was also able to provide a wealth of insights in the role of non-conventional forms of counseling and dialogue in community-based rehabilitation.

As a psychosocial service organization, Balay has come to regard the notion of social trauma as a theoretical background for a conceptual framework about community-based rehabilitation. The idea behind community-based rehabilitation is that psychological problems and psychological processes need to be understood in relation to specific contexts of life, such as the specific circumstances of life experienced by a particular person or group. This means that problems are not understood as something inherent in the person, but rather as something embedded in the person's particular contexts of life, which are driven, influenced and shaped by particular social, political, economical, religious and cultural discourses and practices.

One of the main ideas behind community-based rehabilitation is that since people belonging to a particular community have particular living conditions in common, some of the problems experienced by community members must be interlinked with their living conditions. This idea can be applied to war-torn communities, where a number of people suffer from the same contextual circumstances. Interventions directed towards such communities can go through the traditional support systems;

however, these systems might have been damaged and thus the interventions should be aimed at reintegrating people into the community, identifying and transforming community networks and, building a new normality of a supportive social fabric.

Community-based development projects seek to generate changes, in that local groups become capable of gaining power to control decisions, and organize and control their own lives. The key initiative for community-based rehabilitation and development efforts is to create a set of values and practices conducive to peaceful coexistence through non-violent conflict resolution, capable of reducing the alarming levels of violence emergent in the communities and promotion of human rights. Hence, the approach of community-based rehabilitation has moved the focus from diagnosing mental trauma and individual health issues to 'real life' problems connected to violence and loss.

With its rich psychosocial practice in the context of armed conflict and displacement, Balay takes the view that such a practice offer particular lessons in community-based rehabilitation for communities which have gone through other traumatic displacement events.

Balay is looking forward to other opprtunities to learn and enhance its capabilities to serve other people as it starts to develop a program for traumatized survivors of natural calamities, such as in Infanta in Quezon Province, and those relocated by force in some urban poor areas in Manila.

Developed through a continuing process of action-reflection-analysis-action, this book has taken time to finish. As a practice-based undertaking, old notions of Balay's practice were challenged and improved as new knowledge are gained in the course of providing support and solidarity to its community-partners. Despite the delays and adjustments in making this book, this project nevertheless provided a clearer appreciation of the curative and advocacy continuum where Balay offers a therapeutic relationship with the affected communities. And at the same time, it also serves as a partner in working for social transformation for the promotion of human rights of IDPs. Moreover, the result of the study demonstrated the practicability of doing a research which is embedded in the regular course of intervention, and with community participation.

What Balay learned from its practice may not easily be applied to all other situations. After all, each community has its own particular characteristics and situations in the same manner that no two individuals are exactly alike. However, many things we learned along the way may be useful in drawing context-appropriate principles, guidelines and approaches in community-based psychosocial rehabilitation and development.

Moreover, this book may also contribute to the enrichment of the discourse on psychosocial praxis. It may also invite an interest in studying parallelisms with psychosocial intervention experience of other organizations involved in the healing, empowerment, development, and human rights promotion of vulnerable communities.

Lorena B. dela Cruz
Executive Director

Acknowledgement

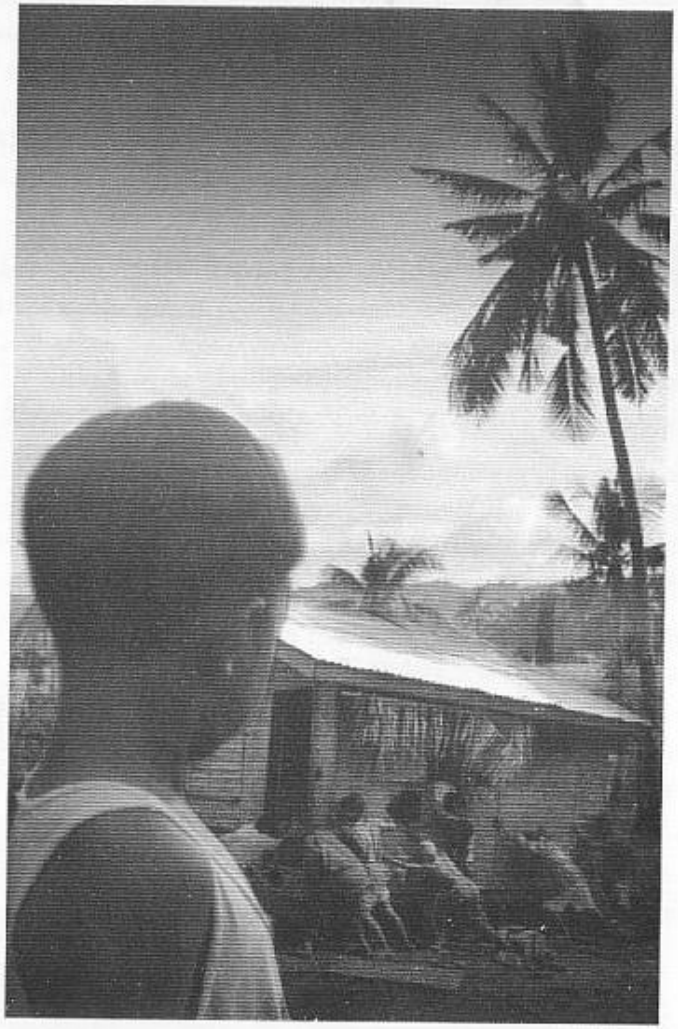
This book owes its completion to all the people in the displaced communities who have allowed Balay to serve them as partners in their journey towards healing, empowerment and development. The trust, confidence and mutually-enriching relationship that they nurtured with our workers was a humbling experience. This space will not be enough to contain all your names but you know that you are in our hearts.

Our gratitude also goes to Fr. Bert Layson, Mary Ann Arnado, Bapa Butch Gilman, Bapa Joe Akmad, Datu Al Saliling, who have showered us with inspiration and guidance as we embarked on the process of enhancing our understanding and approaches in community-based rehabilitation, particularly in Mindanao.

We extend our profound thanks to KIOS-Finland for matching their belief in us with the financial support and the encouragement to accomplish the writing and publication of our experiences and institutional learning.

We also give thanks to Prof. Peter Berliner, Pernille Ianev, Naima Mikkelsen , and Erik Wendt of the Rehabilitation and Research Center for Torture Victims (RCT) in Denmark who helped Balay put together an article on social trauma and action research. Parts of those articles were incorporated in this book.

Other past and present staff of Balay and members of its assembly are likewise deeply appreciated for helping shape the organization into what it is now.



I

Armed Conflict and Internal Displacement

Residents of Manaulanan and Lagunde in the town of Pikit in North Cotabato knew that trouble was coming when soldiers entered their village on March 20, 2002. Sent to hunt down men who had earlier ambushed three paramilitary troopers, the soldiers saw their suspects and fired immediately. When the gunfire subsided, a woman from the village lay dead, and so were a cow and a carabao. The suspects escaped.

When the news spread, people from all over fled and sought temporary shelters in sitios farther away such as Bualan, Tapundok, Pamalian and Idsap. Over 3,000 villagers abandoned their communities after the incident, returning only after the soldiers had left.

But long after life in the affected villages apparently returned to normal, many residents continued to experience bouts of fear and anxiety, waiting for another burst of gunfire to disrupt their lives all over again.

This raid in Pikit is one of countless armed encounters that have occurred in North Cotabato and in other places in Mindanao in the last seven years. Pikit town alone has seen three major battles erupt between government soldiers and fighters of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) from 1997 to 2002.[1]

The MILF is today regarded as the most significant armed opposition in Mindanao, after the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) abandoned armed struggle and entered a peace accord with government in 1996.[2]

In February 2003, an even bigger military operation was launched in North Cotabato, as the military went into an offensive attack against the MILF's so-called Buliok military complex. The military operation turned into a major war. Battles got so vicious and so widespread that over half the population of Pikit's interior villages fled to town centers. Fighting spread to six other provinces, namely Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, Lanao Sur, Lanao Norte, and Zamboanga Del Norte. The war lasted five months. Both parties in conflict declared a truce on July 19, 2003, but skirmishes went on until August of that year.

Leading cause of displacement

Counter-insurgency operations and military actions related to the government's anti-terrorism campaign are today the leading causes of conflict-induced displacement in the Philippines.

The main areas of fighting are to be found in Mindanao, the country's second largest island, where Islamized ethnic groups, recently the MILF, have been struggling for autonomy and independence during the last 30 years.

The Philippine government is also engaged in a long-term military campaign against the communist-led New Peoples' Army. Occasional military operations are also launched against armed bandit groups such as the Abu Sayyaf and the Pentagon gang, both accused of engaging in criminal activities such as kidnapping, and terrorizing of civilians.

Displacement incidents have also been noted in Luzon, such as in Mindoro and Rizal where military operations against suspected NPA rebels have driven indigenous Mangyans and Dumagats to seek safer areas.[3]

Many might view these disorders as a natural occurrence, simply a proof that life in these areas is, indeed, difficult.

But these military campaigns have inevitably placed civilians in harm's way, and often in the direct line of fire where they end up part of a campaign's "collateral damage."

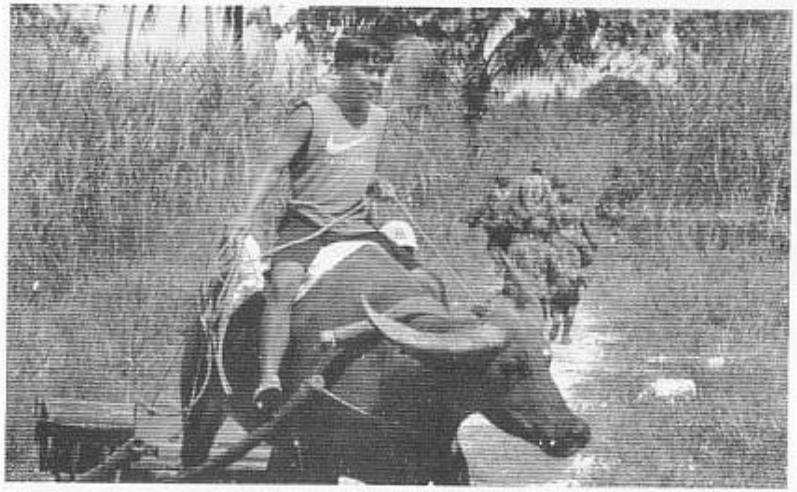
A major disaster issue

In the Philippines, where the familiar disasters are those brought about by typhoons, earthquakes and floods, the phenomenon of internal displacement as a consequence of armed conflict has reached such proportions it has become today a major disaster issue.

Years	Number of IDPs
1997	189,000
1998	122,820
1999	200,000
2000	800,000
2003	400,000

Records show that from 1997 to 2003, a growing number of civilians has been fleeing from their communities due to eruption of armed conflicts in those places.[4]

IDPs affected by conflict in the Philippines in 2001 actually nearly equaled the number of persons hit by disasters due to natural calamities in the same period, as cited in a 2001 report on internal displacement in the Philippines of the Norwegian Refugee Council.[5] This has placed the Philippines in the list of the world's top 40 countries in the same year where internal displacement was considered a great disaster. In Southeast Asia, the Philippines ranked third after Burma and Indonesia as the country with the most number of internally displaced persons.[6]



Evacuees and refugees

Altogether, around 2 million Filipinos have become internally displaced persons, or IDPs, at one time or another since the late 1990s.

The UNITED NATIONS GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT, first published in 1998, defines IDPs as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, and natural or human-made disasters."

Internal displacement may also be caused by coercive economic factors. For example, indigenous peoples or an ethno-linguistic minority, such as the indigenous peoples in Mindanao collectively known as the *Lumads* and the Moro peoples, may become the target of coercive measures when they try to resist the entry into their territory of foreign big business or so-called development projects.

Persons who feel forced to move away in response to systematic violations of their human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, also fit the description of internally displaced persons.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has emphasized that IDPs are those who are forced to flee their homes but "remain within the territory of their own country. They are unable to cross national borders and reach another internationally recognized state or country where they could receive protection and assistance which they desperately need."

IDPs are distinct from *refugees*, which refer to "persons who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of their country of origin or nationality, are compelled to leave their place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside their country of origin or nationality."[7]

IDPs are not conferred the legal status of refugees, as provided for by international refugee laws. But they remain entitled to the same rights enjoyed by all other persons in their country. And they do have special needs by virtue of their displacement, needs that government authorities must attend to. These are spelled out in the UN Guiding Principles and other human rights instruments.[8]

IDPs in the Philippines mostly come from rural areas, usually from communities affected by armed conflict or so-called development projects such as large-scale open-pit mining operations or conversion of ancestral lands into agro-industrial estates.

In population centers, the urban poor are hardest hit by displacement, usually in cases of forced evictions to give way to real-estate construction or road-widening projects.

By far, most IDPs belong to Moro ethno-linguistic groups such as Maguindanaoan, Maranaw, Iranun, Kalagan, and Tausug. Others belong to *Lumad* tribes such as B'laan, T'Boli, Higaonon, Manobo, Matigsalog, Subanen and Teduray. Many Christian settlers in Mindanao have also been forced in evacuation centers.[9]

For livelihood, most rural families survive on subsistence agriculture, planting rice, root crops, corn and vegetables, fishing, as well as raising livestock, either as main or supplemental economic activity.

In urban areas, the vulnerable sectors usually belong to the working classes. Many belong to the so-called informal sector and hardly have any fixed income. They live as informal occupants along waterways (estero), railroad tracks, under bridges and in land claimed by private entities or the government.

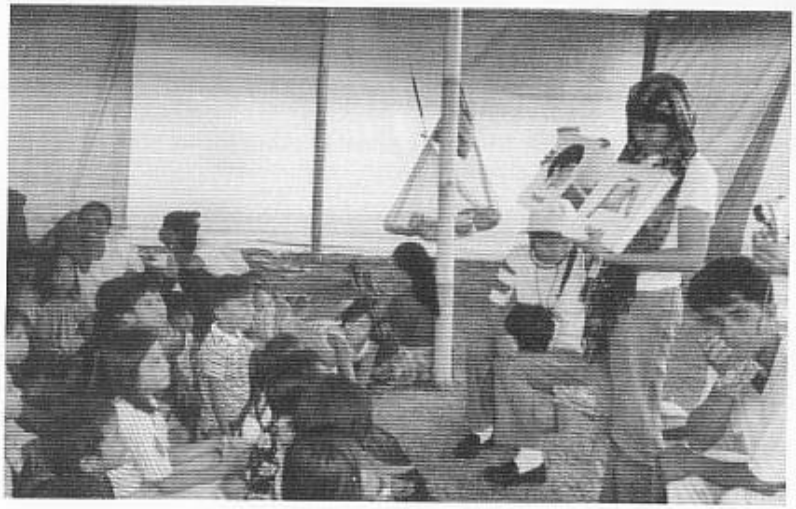
Post-cold war concern

Protecting persons who are compelled to leave their homes and communities due to militarization, gross violations of human rights and other events that upset community life is today one of the most compelling challenges faced by those involved in human rights and development issues in the Philippines as well as in other parts of the world.

According to the United Nations, the post cold-war order is one where internal conflict far exceeds inter-state war, or fighting between countries, as the leading violent cause of human suffering and displacement.

The flow of refugees and IDPs worldwide is unprecedented. Dozens of slumbering internal disputes with far-reaching human rights implications—usually rooted in conflicts over ethnicity, identity, religion, governance, democratization, relative economic deprivation, territorial delineation and exploitation of diminishing resources—are being reawakened. This reality can be observed across the world: in Burma and Aceh in Southeast Asia; in Bosnia and Chechnya in Europe; in Sudan, Rwanda and Sierra Leone in Africa; and in Peru and Colombia in South America, to cite a few.[10]

The United Nations has estimated that globally about 25 million people are refugees or are internally displaced. In addition, millions are affected by natural disasters including earthquakes, floods, typhoons, hurricanes and similar small-scale calamities.[11]



II

Balay Intervention

Balay's decision since year 2000 to focus on psychosocial work mostly in conflict-affected villages in Mindanao was a response to the need of those persons who have been thrown into various states of psychosocial distress due to violence and displacement.

Internal displacement due to war and related forms of violence has unmistakably resulted in trauma, notably among persons who have experienced an event that is outside the range of usual human experiences and that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone.[12]

Examples of such traumatic events are serious threats directed against one's life or physical integrity, or threat or harm against one's children, spouse, or other close relatives and friends. Others are sudden destruction of one's home or community, or seeing

another person killed or being killed or seriously injured as a result of accident or physical violence.[13]

Trauma may also result from coercive eviction as in the case of urban poor dwellers, or those subjected to other forms of organized violence.

In working among forcibly uprooted peoples, Balay caseworkers and counselors identify persons as traumatized caseloads if they persistently manifest, among others, a combination of certain psychological, emotional, behavioral, and physical conditions. Some of the most common manifestations might be recurrent dreams or nightmares about the distressing events. During their waking hours or when they are intoxicated, these persons act or feel as if the traumatic event were recurring, maybe as flashbacks, illusions, or hallucinations.

Another indication of trauma is the manifestation of intense psychological distress when they are exposed to events that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic events, including anniversary of the trauma.

In young children, repetitive play in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expected, such as a penchant for war games, are notable.

Not a few distressed IDPs show markedly diminished interest in their usual activities, which usually affect their relationship with other family members and their social life. Others show feelings of being helpless and alone which they did not feel before.

Some become so depressed they lose the ability to make simple decisions or make future plans. It is not uncommon to hear from traumatized persons complaints of sleeplessness, lack of focus, irritability, and outbursts of anger.

Community Profile

For over a year, Balay provided continuous psychosocial intervention in eight communities of IDPs in Maguindanao, Davao Oriental, Zamboanga del Norte, South Cotabato and North Cotabato, all in Mindanao. It also completed interventions in a resettlement area for uprooted slum dwellers in Bulacan in Luzon.

These experiences helped Balay establish healing partnerships with IDPs, which have in many ways shaped its understanding and practice of community-based rehabilitation.

Following is an overview of the communities that Balay served. The observations, reflections and insights presented in the proceeding pages are based largely on Balay's assessment of its work in these communities.

Making Elementary School, Brgy. Making Parang, Maguindanao

113 displaced families

The evacuees in Making Elementary School, mostly Maguindanaoan Muslims, were among the thousands who had been uprooted in year 2000 from six barangays of Matanog in Maguindanao.

They left their homes and farms after government forces launched an operation involving air strikes and mortal shelling of suspected lairs of the MILF. For two weeks they walked away seeking safer grounds, eventually finding temporary refuge in the school.

Most of the evacuees were rice-and-corn farmers; others were abaca growers. Half were children (49 percent). Among the adults, 42 percent were men, and 58 percent, women.

Inside the school which served as their evacuation center, the IDPs had insufficient clean-water supply and no electricity. As a result of the difficult conditions in the center, at least 14 IDPs died while in the center, of whom 11 were children downed by measles. Three women died from complications due to hypertension, aggravated by the trauma they went through.

While all evacuees showed varying signs of emotional, mental, physical and behavioral distress due to their exposure to violence, Balay caseworkers identified 15 persons as demonstrating signs of trauma based on certain psychological indicators.

All were female, and most were married. Over 70 percent had ages between 17 to 40, with minors accounting for 13 percent. The military strike destroyed their houses completely, while whatever belonging they left behind had been looted by unknown persons.

All had at least one relative killed during the military operations, with at least 13 percent losing a husband, and 6 percent a parent.

Many of the women keep recalling the life-threatening ordeal they went through. Signs of traumatic stress were manifested in sleep disturbances (86.6%) and nightmares (40%). Around 47% showed signs of intense grief. Heightened fear of the military showed among 60 percent of the caseloads, who trembled or went into hiding every time they saw anything they associated with soldiers.

The incidence of psychogenic ailments such as headaches and chest pains were high (40%-60%). Many harbored strong feelings of revenge (60%) because of the tragedy that happened to them.

BRGY. DALENGAOEN
PIKIT, NORTH COTABATO
103 DISPLACED FAMILIES

The residents of Brgy. Dalengaoen consisted of Muslims and Christians who have been neighbors for a long time.

At about 3:00 in the morning of November 11, 2000, the villagers were awakened by the dogs barking. Those who lived in the village's higher parts saw armed men surrounding their houses. Alarmed by the noise, the villagers with houses nearer the highway immediately abandoned their houses, many leaving their belongings behind.

Suddenly the armed men opened fire, sending villagers running for their lives. Stray bullets hit two villagers, including a 12-year-old girl.

Balay counselors who came to the village found 26 persons with signs of traumatic stress, with women accounting for 73 percent and men 27 percent. Most caseloads had ages from 41 to 60 (35%). Youth and children constituted 26.9 percent.

Many were married, but 23 percent were widowed in the aftermath of the tragedy. Of the children caseloads, 46 percent lost a parent. Four percent were actually taken as hostages but later released.

No one among the caseloads reported losing a home during the traumatic incident, but 61 percent reported belongings being looted by the attackers and 11 percent having had their houses fired at.

More than 90 percent of the caseloads exhibited intense grief. More than half reported having felt extreme fear and anxiety at the sight of armed men and soldiers. Many complained having difficulty in sleeping (61.5%). More than 38 percent reported constantly recalling the tragedy (intrusive memory or flashback).

DAWAH EVACUATION CENTER
CROSSING SIMUAY, SULTAN KUDARAT, MAGUINDANAO
178 DISPLACED FAMILIES

The IDPs at the Dawah Evacuation Center came from different barangays in the towns of Barira, Aleosan, Matanog and other nearby barangays who left their homes when the military launched air strikes and mortar shelling of suspected nearby MILF strongholds on April 26, 2000.

Most of the evacuees saw their houses destroyed by bombs or mortar shells. Farmlands, crops and livestock were also damaged. At first, some of the villagers hid in nearby forests, hoping the situation would calm down soon. They moved into the town center only after hunger compelled them to do so. Some found their way to the Dawah center which had been serving as meeting place for government and rebel peace negotiators before the evacuation.

At the Dawah center, Balay found 19 IDPs who showed signs of trauma. At least 70 percent were female. Children with ages ranging between 9-13 years old represented 42 percent of the caseloads. Ten percent were widows. All lost homes due to the military bombing operations. They also complained of looting by armed men. More than 15 percent had relatives killed during the military operations.

The most common complaint of the traumatized survivors was sleep disturbance (52.6%), with 42 percent suffering from recurrent nightmares. More than half (52%) were trying hard to forget the tragedy. Forty two percent were startled easily and slipped easily into anxiety at the sight of armed men. Around half indicated a desire to get back at those responsible for their ordeal.

BRGY. BITUGAN, SIRAWAI, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE
80 DISPLACED FAMILIES

The Bitugan dwellers came from neighboring barangays who fled from the terror of armed guards hired by Dacon, an agribusiness corporation operating in the area. The company hired the guards to scare away upland farmers because it was interested in taking over their lands.

The evacuees, who belonged to the Islamized Kolibugan people, used to live in the villages of Catuyan, Pula Bato, Pisa Itum, and Pisa Puti. Sometime ago, four young persons were killed by the armed guards, and later, 32 houses in the area were burned down.

The residents fled to the seaside village of Bitugan.

Until they left, the upland villagers tended fruit-bearing trees in Sirawai. In their new community, fishing became their main source of subsistence.

The killings and burning of houses by the Dacon guards have understandably traumatized the villagers. Survivors lived in fear. They wanted to reclaim their lands but were afraid of the guards. They stayed close to their new seaside settlement.

Their situation was made more complicated by the presence of members of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) who also actively opposed the Dacon operations.

In September 2001, suspected rebels ambushed a Dacon log-laden truck near Brgy. Bitugan. Not long after, Dacon guards armed with automatic weapons came looking for the assailants. They barged into houses and told the men to line up by the shoreline for questioning. They tied the hands of 16 fishers, hitting them with their rifle butts when the men insisted that they were not members of the MILF.

After this incident, several villagers filed a complaint with Dacon for the atrocities committed by its guards. Dacon dismissed some of the guards, but the villagers' anxiety were not eased because the dismissed guards roamed free.

Meanwhile, local authorities put up a military detachment inside the barangay, which served to heighten the villagers' worries that the detachment could act as magnet to MILF attacks. They always stayed alert in case fighting erupted again.

Balay identified 26 caseloads in Brgy. Bitugan.

SITIO CANATUAN, BRGY. TABAYO
SIOCON, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE

Balay found at least 20 persons in Sitio Canatuan who were suffering from various forms of maltreatment and physical assault from private guards of a mining company arising from anti-mining protest actions in 1999.

The residents' movements are restricted by a paramilitary group called the Special CAFGU Active Auxiliary (SCAA), reportedly under the payroll of the mining company, the Canadian-owned TVI Mining Corporation.

The SCAA intruded into the ancestral domain of the Subanen indigenous people in Siocon under the Mining Act which allowed foreign mining companies access to lands occupied by native inhabitants. The company is extracting gold, denying the small community-based miners their source of livelihood. The Subanens have an ongoing claim for an ancestral domain certificate. The community members earned a living as small miners. They were organized in a cooperative and used simple technology in extracting gold nuggets and dust.

Armed men constantly watched the residents' movements. Visitors had to sign in a logbook and were closely questioned before they could enter the community.

The presence of the armed men and the constant threat of assault were creating anxiety among residents, while economic dislocation of the small miners due to the company's operations also posed a problem.

BRGY. AFLEK
T'BOLI, SOUTH COTABATO
248 DISPLACED FAMILIES

Before their displacement, the B'laans lived in the hinterland sitios of Atbilang, Gindang, Atbonabol, Malalem, and Lambato. These were upland communities belonging to Brgy. Aflek, whose population was composed mostly of lowland residents.

On June 20, 2000, army soldiers found a camp of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) near the indigenous peoples' dwellings. The soldiers fired mortars and automatic weapons at the rebel positions.

Shaken by the explosions, the villagers hastily left the mountainsides and went down to the barangay proper where they sought refuge in the school grounds. Others moved in with relatives. Some (58 families) built shanties by the roadside.

All eventually decided to resettle permanently in Aflek proper because they felt that it was no longer safe to return to their former villages upland.

But the B'laans' lives were disrupted. They were separated from their land which provided them their sustenance. Although the tillers returned to their farm to gather whatever crops they could,

they could not stay out too long for fear of the armed men. Children were gripped with fear and uncertainty and their schooling was aborted. With little food to eat, their nutrition and health were threatened. Balay provided psychological support to 20 B'laans as caseloads.

BRGY. TAGABAKID
MATI, DAVAO ORIENTAL
151 DISPLACED FAMILIES

Gunfire startled the residents of three sitios inside Brgy. Tagabakid on June 14, 2000. These were the three upland sitios of Sandig, Bugacan, and Culisisi. Later the villagers learned that a municipal court prosecutor had been attacked and was wounded by unidentified armed men.

Two more ambushes took place in the next two days. The fatalities were two lieutenants of the Philippine army.

The military quickly blamed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) for the killings. They swooped down on the Muslim-dominated villages of Brgy. Tagabakid in search of the attackers.

On June 20, almost a week after the first ambush, two Kalagan farmers from sitio Culisisi were abducted by unidentified men. Aidal Dapitanon, 25, and Vivencio Paseo, 50, were walking down the road to fetch water when stopped by armed men and shoved into a waiting van. Some villagers suspect that the abductors were military agents who thought the two were MILF sympathizers.

Aidal's parents were deeply distressed when they heard what happened to their son. The mother cried a lot and refused to eat unless forced by relatives.

One month later, 26 male villagers were rounded up and brought to the Mati provincial jail, accused of being rebel sympathizers. Some said they were tortured.

Fear spread among the residents. Many decided to leave their upland communities and seek refuge with relatives in the barangay proper. Meanwhile soldiers erected barracks in the hinterlands, further discouraging the villagers from returning to their houses and farms.

Balay identified 27 caseloads in Brgy. Tagabakid, including the mother of the two abducted men.

TOWERVILLE, SAN JOSE
DEL MONTE, BULACAN
1,000 DISPLACED FAMILIES

Towerville is a community of IDPs who came from various places in Metro Manila, mostly victims of demolition drives since 1999 in the government's pursuit of a development plan for the National Capital Region (NCR). The displaced families came from slum areas in Pasay, Paco, Malabon, Navotas, Manila, Quiapo, and Binondo.

The Towerville occupants were old-time occupants in their original communities when forcibly evicted (contrary to the provisions of the Urban Development Housing Act or UDHA. They were never properly consulted about the displacement. They suffered from physical assault and mental anguish, were separated from their sources of subsistence and livelihood, which further aggravated their impoverishment. The children had to stop going to school. With their community gone, they were left by the government to fend for themselves somewhere outside Metro Manila.

Though the urban poor are noted for their resilience, many of those who go through violent demolitions clearly remember the experience. Balay forged a partnership with a community organization in Towerville where 17 of its members complained of recurrent distress and received counseling assistance.

III

Community Suffering and Response

Terrified children, young boys carrying small children on their backs, women clutching their babies, teenage boys on top of carabaos that pulled sledges which carried [the elderly], chickens, and belongings in plastic sacks all together. It was like [seeing] the Ten Commandments except that [the people] were not going to the Promised Land to live in abundance "with milk and honey," but to evacuation centers where they suffered in deprivation and misery.

These were the dismal images from the 2002 evacuation in Pikit that were remembered by Fr. Roberto C. Layson, parish priest of the Immaculate Conception Church of that town, and head of its Disaster Response Team.[14]

Fr. Layson, who tirelessly looked after the evacuees during their evacuation, also told the story of one young Moro couple who left

their two children with relatives so they could return to their village to harvest some of their food crops to augment their small rations at the evacuation center.

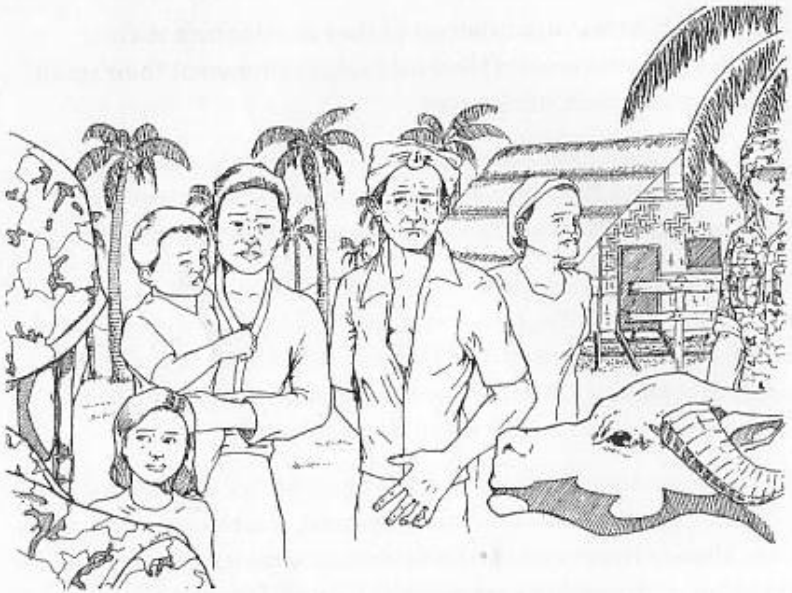
...They never returned... Three days later, their bloated bodies were found ... The father bore a gunshot wound in the head and the mother in the belly. The mother was seven months pregnant.[15]

Internal displacement devastates individuals, families and societies. They are dispossessed of land and livelihood, deprived of shelter and security, and denied of the right to live in peace and enjoy development. And the worst hit are usually the children, women, and society's other disadvantaged sectors.

Their overall well-being—physical, psychological, emotional, behavioral and social—is severely stressed, most especially because they already live in impoverished communities whose capacities for handling such problems are severely limited. Dispossession, deprivation, and violation of their human rights often cause psychosocial trauma which, if untreated, result in even more distressful conditions.

In places where a particular ethnic group or people is subjected to recurrent violence, repeated displacement perpetuates hostility because people feel that they are being denied justice and respect for human dignity.

In one instance, a seven-year old boy who actually saw his father gunned down, gathered together the bullet shells scattered around his father's body and kept them for a long time despite his mother's admonitions to throw them away. When she asked the boy what he wanted to do with the shells, he readily replied: "I will make them into amulets. I want to be a soldier when I grow up so I can kill my father's killers *(Gawin ko itong anting-anting kay paglaki ko magsundalo ako para patayin yong nagpatay kay Papang)*."[16]



Fr. Layson added:

I have seen young Moro boys stomp the ground and heard them throw vindictives every time they heard 105-millimeter mortars fired toward MILF positions. I wonder if the government realizes that as early as now it must prepare itself for yet another war against those young boys whose father or elder brother they may have lost in the war.[17]

A traumatic displacement episode in a community obviously consists of more than just individual ordeals.

For instance, destruction of mosques and deliberate military attacks on Muslim civilian villages in the guise of containing criminal elements or rebels might be perceived by the survivors of these attacks as a direct affront on their social and cultural life. They might believe they are being collectively targeted for oppression and thus harbor feelings of rancor.

What might seem like prolonged mourning or abnormal bereavement may actually be profound feelings of anger shared by an entire clan or community. For instance, when a Moro villager is abducted during a military raid and is presumed killed, his body is never found so that his widow and his family are unable to bury him under traditional Muslim rites.

Similarly, a community of non-Muslims who have survived attacks from Muslim armed groups may nurture vengeful thoughts, waiting only for a chance to put them into action.

For communities of indigenous peoples, air attacks or even mining operations which destroy parts of their ancestral domain (land, rivers or forests where they believe their ancestors' spirits dwell) may be regarded as an assault on their dignity as a group of people with a distinct system of beliefs and practices.

Memories of harrowing experiences may be passed on from one generation to the next, and immortalized in songs, poems, and tales told and retold, and with each opportunity, the hurt feelings are stoked and are never healed. This appalling cycle of violence will live in the collective consciousness of peoples living constantly in the shadow of war and displacement, unless healing and justice is achieved.

As Fr. Layson observed, the war succeeded in producing new generations of children who saw all the war's ugly images and were exposed to violence of great magnitudes and who now believe that violence is the best and only way to resolve conflicts.

Harnessing common resources

Sometimes, however, violent events may also draw people together, driving them to harness their common resources so they could surmount the difficulties they all mutually face.

This shows that it is not only the events themselves but the way the community experiences them and responds to them that are the true indicators of the sociocultural impact of a traumatic situation.

Fr. Layson (who received the Pax Christi International Peace Award in December 2002 for his work in Pikit), described the larger effects of violence and displacement on peoples and communities in Pikit after the Estrada administration's "all-out" military campaign against the MILF:

> *At least a thousand people died in the war last year. About 500 barangays were affected [and] 6,000 homes [destroyed]. Thousands of hectares of farmlands were abandoned ... [It] brought the beast and the worst in people because that is the nature of war. It diminishes certain aspects of humanity. In war, human beings become less human because they tend to be cruel against each other. Ironically, though, the war last year [also] brought out the good and the best in the people of Pikit.*

At the same time, Layson identified the community's very positive responses to the displacement incident. His parish put up a disaster response team composed of young Muslim and Christian volunteers who, under scorching sun and pouring rain, and amidst bullet fire, crossed religious and cultural boundaries to bring food to thousands of starving evacuees in evacuation centers. Their initiative demolished the myth that the war in Mindanao was religious in nature.

> *(T)he volunteers [discovered] their interconnectedness and interdependence, strangely in times of war, and [learned] the real essence of human community. [Many] have not even heard of the word inter-religious dialogue. But this small group of people has shown to the people of Pikit that, indeed, dialogue between Muslims and Christians is possible even in times of war. How much more in times of peace?*

IV

Response Patterns to Internal Displacement

According to figures from the World Health Organization, one out of five refugees or displaced persons is either chronically ill or suffering from psychosocial dysfunctions due to exposure to war and other life-threatening events.[18]

While the intensity, severity and meaning of complaints in the aftermath of a forcible displacement may vary, the nature and types of the so-called symptoms seem quite consistent across cultures and places.[19]

Studies made on the emotional and psychological responses to war by Sudanese refugees, for instance, show similarities to those demonstrated by IDPs in Mindanao. They include feelings of fear and anxiety, physical pain, shortness of breath and tightness in the

chest, loss of energy and motivation, change in temperament, estrangement from friends and family, disturbed sleep and nightmares, inability to make decisions, to concentrate or to remember, inability to work, a loss of interest in the care of family and self, and a change in interest in food and pleasure.[20]

State authorities, government social workers and private service providers seldom realize that more than the physical effects of disasters, it is the psychological trauma that creates longer-lasting suffering and disability which impairs the normal and meaningful functioning of individuals, families and communities.

A testimony from Parang in Maguindanao province describes a common experience of most evacuees who have survived Mindanao's armed conflict:[21]

The military attacked at nighttime. My family was roused from sleep by the sound of planes and gunfire. Without warning, the bombs started falling. Mortar shells rained near our house. We heard shouting everywhere. People were running, wailing. Children were crying. My heart pounded hard. My mouth was dry. I was stunned, I could barely speak. Terror gripped me. I could hardly move. I could not understand what was going on. All I know was that our lives [were] in danger.

My parents told me to grab some clothes and to carry my younger sister. We had to get as far away from the fighting as possible. We walked and ran under the cover of darkness. I thought of our house being hit by bombs. After two days, we arrived in the town center and camped in the school house where we saw many other evacuees who had sought refuge there. We were tired and had not eaten, but I was too shocked and scared to feel hungry. I resented the military for what it did to us.

Grieving, guilty thoughts

Long after the fighting is over, shock, fear and a sense of unreality dominate the survivors' thoughts. At the evacuation centers, they keep recalling the sight, sounds, smell, and feelings they experienced during the tragic event, leaving indelible images of horror in their hearts and minds. They grieve for loved ones who were killed and wonder how they themselves survived. Not a few entertain guilt about having been unable to save their parents, siblings or kin. Others feel devastated by the loss of their homes, treasured personal belongings such as school uniforms, family pictures, and documents, and pets, friends and the familiar neighborhood.

Dr. John H. Ehrenreich (2001), in his book Coping With Disasters, said the prevalence of strong physiological, cognitive, and emotional responses to forcible displacement indicates that these are normal reactions to certain extreme situations. The trauma symptoms that IDPs show are not signs of mental illness or moral weakness. They do not signify that traumatized people are losing their minds.[22]

However, unless the psychosocial disturbance is resolved as soon as possible, such distress might eventually interfere with these persons' ability to reconstruct their lives, and threaten family and community relations. It might lead to dysfunctions and debilitating emotional and behavioral conditions that would have devastating effects on individuals, their family, and their community.[23]

Family dynamics altered

Having to stay for long periods in evacuation centers creates additional problems for displaced persons.

In addition to mental and emotional distress, they have to bear with the loss of privacy due to overcrowded temporary shelters,

poor sanitation, inadequate protection from weather, contaminated water and so on. These may result in outbreak of diseases, leading to deaths.

Having to rely on government agencies or private service providers for their daily needs also results in the evacuees' feeling of lost independence. Most would have been economically productive prior to their displacement, so the new situation damages their self-esteem.

When the usual family activities and economic preoccupation are disrupted, the authority of traditional breadwinners is also undercut, altering the family dynamics. Women who lose their husbands have to take on the roles culturally assigned to menfolk, such as providing for the family's daily needs. Older children may also assume family roles inappropriate for their age, such as, in the case of young boys, providing for the family's security or engaging in child labor to augment family income. Sometimes the changes in the traditional dynamics may develop into parent-child conflict.

An Iranun mother in Parang, Maguindanao, complained that her 12-year-old son started misbehaving since the family returned from evacuation. Her son, she said, would shout at her. It had become difficult to tell him to perform his usual household chores. The woman's husband died during a fighting that erupted in their village, and life had become doubly stressful for her since. Now she had to earn a livelihood as well as raise her children by herself. She felt tired most of the time and uncertain over the future. She was also impatient and irritable, and her children felt her despair.

During a parent-child encounter facilitated by Balay caseworkers, the woman realized that her own stress was affecting her son, driving him to shout back at her. She also learned that her son felt irritated by her orders because he was trying to catch up with the lessons he missed when the family had evacuation. He

felt that his peers had moved far ahead of him, and he felt self-pity and shame.

When offered educational assistance, the boy readily accepted, seeing it as a chance to erase the "stigma."

The boy's eagerness for his lessons and his overburdened mother's need for somebody to lighten up the family load led to family stress which was resolved through family dialogue, counseling, self-awareness activities, scheduling of chores and household responsibilities, and livelihood assistance from their partner-NGO.

Mistrust of self and others

The disbandment of their communities and the destruction of the socio-cultural fabric of their lives cut deeply into the IDPs' hearts and minds. They reel from the loss tied to their cultural activities and social identities. Evacuation separated them from their familiar world and from a homeland where they drew their sense of safety and traditional subsistence, where they found meaning in their lives as individuals and as a people.

These feelings of loss and grief drive many to doubt themselves and their capability to go on with their lives. They also develop or heighten feelings of mistrust toward others, especially to authorities and people they view as responsible for their misery.

In Dalengaoen, North Cotabato, a once-harmonious cohabitation of Moro and non-Moro villagers was disrupted after a violent incident in 2001.

The Moros (who are of Muslim faith) and settlers who came from other parts of the country (who are Christian) had been living near each other for decades. They shared food, helped tend each other's farms, respected each other's rituals, and allowed their respective

children to play together. They were good neighbors and they resolved their misunderstandings through non-antagonistic methods. Their community bond grew stronger over the years and intermarriage between the two groups became possible and acceptable.

When armed hostilities between the government and Moro rebels spilled over to their village, the Moros and the Christian settlers both evacuated—but to separate evacuation sites.

Animosity suddenly emerged, as each group blamed the other for the tragedy when they tried to interpret what happened to their community.

Traditional divisions along ethnic and religious lines were revived. Memories of social oppression and feelings of marginalization were exacerbated.[24] Old neighbors refused to see each other in the eye. Muslim and Christian children stopped being friends.

Counselors helped restore respect and trust through several means.

A peace camp was organized where Moro and Christian children were given the chance to play with each other again. Those who showed signs of deep-seated anger and hostility and who might need sustained psychosocial intervention were given special attention, together with their families. Structured learning exercises and games were organized, where the children were invited to recall good memories about their community prior their displacement. Sharing of stories enabled the children to make some sense of the tragic event that damaged their village, and helped them reestablish the ties that bonded them together as stakeholders longing for peace.

For the children's parents, the peace camp also proved therapeutic. They were urged to help in the preparations and guided toward bridging their reservations against their neighbors. Muslim and Christian parents offered to cook food for all the children. Others built the sheds where the games and other activities were to be held. As their elders rekindled ties, the children were also encouraged to restore relations with each other.

Psychosocial care was provided to those families and individuals who showed prolonged bereavement and behavioral disorders. Family and group therapies were introduced, and the effects of the traumatic incident was patiently explained.

Some community members were also oriented in psychosocial intervention, and volunteers were given para-counselor's training. Adults and youth members of the community were also offered human rights education and peer-counselors' training.

One year after psychosocial work was started in the community, Muslim and Christian neighbors were visiting each other again, and asking each other to join in the observance of each other's

rituals. The youths formed a Christian-Muslim youth organization, while the adults organized a cooperative with Moro and non-Moro members.

Though the villagers still showed anxiety about the possibility of armed conflict recurring in their village, they have somehow managed to take life one day at a time, and resume the flow of their life and co-existence.

Response patterns

The consequences of armed conflict and internal displacement on individuals, families and communities are interrelated and inseparable. An individual's emotional and behavioral response would, in one way or another, affect the relationship between or among parents and siblings. Social disruption reduces as well as blocks the healing effects of the family and the community and itself becomes an enormous source of stress on the individuals who make up the family and the community.

With many survivors, these symptoms fade with time. But for others, emotional effects, whether obvious or subtle, may remain, especially without psychological intervention.

After days or weeks in an evacuation center, a person might begin to experience a variety of emotional disturbances such as chronic grief, depression, anxiety and guilt. Some may become irritable or hostile. Others may show inability to control anger and suspiciousness. It is also not uncommon for traumatized evacuees to shun other people's company, keeping only to themselves. Nightmares and flashing images of the tragedy may haunt many, while during their waking hours, they may frequently recall the sights and sounds of their ordeal, feeling as if it were happening all over again, reinforcing their sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

People's emotional responses to violent displacements are generally similar. But the degree of adverse mental and emotional consequences tend to be influenced by a number of factors, as Balay has established in its work with seven affected communities in Mindanao since 2001.[25]

For example, the more severe the disaster and the more terrifying the experiences of an individual, family or community, the greater is the likelihood of intense and lasting psychological effects.

Those who lose a family member or who come close to death themselves seem to suffer from intense grief and abnormal bereavement much more than those who manage to escape from harm.

Some children who barely survived the violent conflicts and those who lost treasured personal belongings such as books, pets and school uniforms exhibited aggression and hostility. They also took longer to make new friends.

Many displaced persons who came from villages that were destroyed by military operations often blame soldiers and national government leaders for their misery. Those who return to their communities and find their homes ransacked, or their place of worship vandalized or desecrated harbor feelings of hatred, even vengeance.

Adverse emotional and behavioral effects and psychological difficulties are further developed by negative experiences in temporary shelters, "tent cities," or other evacuation centers. Severely inadequate food rations lead to constant hunger and eventually malnutrition, disease or death. The lack of sanitation facilities are also a constant aggravation, often causing sicknesses that reach epidemic proportions. Other negative experiences might

take the form of harassment and other violations of the evacuees' rights.

An old Kalagan woman went into shock after her two sons were abducted by suspected military forces in Mati, Davao Oriental, midway during evacuation. For months, she would not speak. She spent hours staring blankly, with tears welling from her eyes. Her eldest daughter had to feed her. With the help of her family and counselors, the old woman was later able to get past her shock, although she never saw her sons again.

For many displaced persons, the disaster does not end when they have returned to their places of origin. Especially if armed men whom they consider as their stressors still occupy their villages, they remain in highly stressful, even repeatedly traumatic situations. The lack of rehabilitation assistance for rebuilding their lives and mending their mental anguish reinforces these negative feelings.

But if a social support network exists, such as sympathetic clan members or relatives, friends, community, religious leaders and institutions, or partner service providers, individuals are less likely to suffer from lasting emotional and mental distress.

Evacuees who are camped with relatives in tent cities often share meager rations with each other. Others move in with relatives and friends in town centers relatively far from the sites of battle. In Aflek (T'boli, South Cotabato) and Simuay (Sultan Kudarat in Maguindanao), temporary settlement sites for evacuees were offered by political and religious leaders such as *ustadzes, imams* and *datus*, thereby helping to strengthen the moral and spiritual resilience of their displaced constituencies.

Wherever accessible, the operation of *madaris* or Arabic schools help provide continuity to the intellectual, religious and social education of Muslim children and youth.

In Sirawai, Zamboanga del Norte, Balay initiated a literacy and numeracy program to enhance the coping resources of the displaced Kolibugans, and contribute to the rebuilding family and community solidarity. Some community leaders who learned to read even simple words gained greater courage in talking to government officials to ask for support.

Moreover, those who have survived and coped with similar disasters in the past, such as those who have been repeatedly exposed to armed conflict and internal displacement, may show more resilience in handling their ordeal.

A number of Moro evacuees in an evacuation center in Maguindanao claim to have become "immune" to the tragedies, suggesting an acceptance of the military reaction as a consequence of the Moro aspiration for an independent homeland.

V

Balay's Evolving Psychosocial Concept and Practice

When Balay was established in 1985 in response to the widespread practice of political detention and torture during martial law, its curative response was highly inspired by social work and psychological practices.

But because the suffering of torture survivors and political prisoners was used by state authorities to strike fear in individuals and communities, it was clear even then that the psychological impact of torture had social and political dimensions that had to be addressed as well.

Nevertheless, Balay's attention during those earlier years was mainly in addressing the survivors' mental health and social needs through the psychological processing of individuals, and later on, of families too.

Psychosocial intervention enabled torture survivors to manage their prison ordeal and build up their coping resources toward being able to reintegrate themselves into their families and the society.

The downfall of the Marcos regime in 1986 marked the end of military rule and was followed by the rise of civilian leaderships, from President Corazon Aquino to President Gloria Arroyo. However, the change in government has not brought about a respite in armed conflict and state-perpetrated organized violence.

Balay subsequently expanded its work to also include intervention with survivors of massacres and families of forced disappearances. From 1986 to 1996, most of Balay's psychosocial rehabilitation work took place in prisons for tortured inmates and in the houses of former detainees and other survivors of human rights violations.

Similarly, interventions were also conducted around the office of Balay. Psychosocial help mainly consisted of counselling and debriefing and some welfare assistance and economic support.

In the 1990s, the guiding rehabilitation framework of Balay was markedly curative, stated thus:

> *[C]omprehensively address the physical incapacitation, social and economic dislocation and the psychological dysfunction of individuals as a result of HRV (human rights violations).26*

Balay started to undertake rehabilitation responses by adopting the casework method. Intervention was focused on counseling and therapy and incorporated elements of the Family Systems Approach (FSA) in its work.

Among other things, this included holding family therapy workshops, employing life-line methods and so-called human

development activities. Psychosocial activities for children included parent-child encounters and summer camps.

Balay also offered medical support as well as relief and welfare provision such as food aid, temporary shelter and transportation, and credit for livelihood activities, particularly for newly-released political prisoners.

In 1996, it started to explore community-based interventions in places where civilians were being displaced by the government's "total war" counter-insurgency policy against the communist New Peoples' Army.

Among Balay's early areas where it focused its work from 1997 until 2000 were communities found in Marag Valley (Apayao), in Sumisip (Basilan), in Polomolok (South Cotabato), in Baviera (Negros Occidental), and in MacArthur and Palale (Leyte), among others.

Balay's psychosocial rehabilitation practice then was very much influenced by its background in addressing the needs of former political prisoners and other individual survivors of torture and organized violence.

In collaboration with other NGOs, Balay became involved in relief rehabilitation missions at evacuation centers at the same continuing psychosocial rehabilitation work among torture survivors and released political prisoners.

However, the premium Balay gave to clinical and psychological responses by affected individuals, while helpful with individual survivors, seemed to be inadequate when applied in a community setting.

This became notable in the context of armed conflict, state oppression and forcible displacement, where the resulting traumatic stress went beyond individual mental health.

The use of the term *clients* and *beneficiaries* to refer to survivors of human rights violations being served by Balay strengthened the curative perspective among Balay's counselors and caseworkers.

During a review of its community-based rehabilitation attempts in 1999, Balay affirmed the view that psychosocial intervention, in the context of areas where it operates, should incorporate political, cultural and social realities as essential components of its perspective as well as its priorities.[27]

Departing from its erstwhile curative viewpoint and practice, it considered psychological processes in a context of the actual social and political circumstances and factors, thereby making inequalities and oppressions visible.[28]

As a result of a workshop-conference series, Balay came up with a consensus on the three integrated components of its psychosocial work, namely, the curative, the preventive, and the proactive forms of interventions.[29]

The proactive and preventive components are demonstrated in advocacy actions that aim to raise the human rights awareness of community members and influence policy makers and stakeholders in the conflict to work toward a favorable climate conducive to peace-building, rehabilitation and development.

The curative component refers to the direct service interventions at individual, family and community levels which aim to increase the coping resources of the affected population, to develop their capacities and to reduce their vulnerabilities.

Balay's community-based approach today is anchored on the principle of "starting from where the people are and building on what they have."[30]

Balay's direct psychosocial practice among civilian communities displaced by fighting in Mindanao has evolved into the

repositioning of *beneficiaries* into *partners*, who Balay believed, were the agents of their own change, not the objects of that change. The consideration that a program had "clients" or "beneficiaries" emphasized the outside "expert" who supposedly knew what would work best.

Balay maintains that community stakeholders are *partners* who are rational and capable beings and who can, with the right tools, identify their own problems, find solutions, and mobilize needed resources. Rather than trying to persuade partners to do something, Balay aims to promote critical thinking and harness community solidarity and negotiate the best way forward in a partnership process.

Community Strategies

Balay's community intervention strategies in Mindanao consist of various activities in conflict areas and involve as active participants the multi-ethnic members of the local community. The approach is multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary, thus providing a wide range of approaches other than psychological.

During the first phases, interventions take place in the local community, but later phases of intervention focus on the participation of local community members in a broader national or regional dialogue.

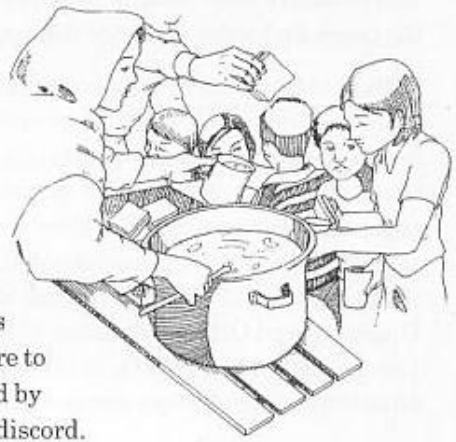
Interventions are either horizontal (focusing on addressing current issues) or vertical (focusing on addressing issues of prevention and the continued participation in the process of peace).

The interventions respond to the *visible* impact that violence and displacement make on infrastructure, production, and social network. At the same time, they address the *invisible* impacts of armed conflicts, manifested in social discord, heightened biases and

misunderstanding, disempowerment and lowered sense of personal and collective dignity, and psychological and emotional stress.[31]

The following is an illustration of the phases that a community intervention goes through in a post-conflict scenario:

Balay members travel to the local area of conflict or are invited by local community leaders, government authorities, and civil society organizations. Contact is established with persons in authority such as Christian priests, Moslem *imams*, indigenous clan leaders, local government officials and traditional village leaders.



This phase identifies communities based on a set of criteria which include status as displaced communities, exposure to traumatic events, characterized by community distress and social discord.

In other instances, Balay first gets in touch with a community at the height of an evacuation or during an emergency period of a disaster. In partnership with other NGOs or government social welfare officers, Balay encourages evacuees to organize themselves to facilitate relief and medical assistance. Evacuation center management is reinforced by inviting IDPs to form various committees, such as cooking and feeding groups in charge of preparing supplemental meals, particularly for children.

When conditions permit, psychosocial workers conduct therapeutic play activities and art sessions for children so they can process their fears, grief or anxiety. Alternative education is also

encouraged by setting up makeshift class rooms for children and supporting temporary teachers for basic literacy classes.

Stress-reduction exercises and talk-therapy activities are also organized for traumatized adults, whenever possible. If opportunity allows, IDP leaders are accompanied in negotiating food ration or water and sanitation facilities with government agencies or other NGOs. Balay also supports efforts of evacuees to negotiate for their safe return to their place of origin as soon as fighting subsides and the peace and order situation has improved.

Balay talks with as many community members as possible in order to assess a community's current needs. This step shows the best practices and strong points of a partner community, which community members can use in mobilizing themselves for regaining psycho-social and socio-economic stability. This is sometimes referred to as situational analysis. Balay uses portions of the Rapid Assessment of Mental Health Needs of Refugees, Displaced and Other Populations Affected by Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations (WHO, 2001) in assessing displacement-related situations of the partner communities.

Caseloads or IDPs who might need closer psychological and emotional support and processing are also identified in the process.

The concept of *community diagnosis* departs from the psychological checklist used by Balay earlier. The former covers a wide range of reality in a community, covering the domains of social ecology, human capacity, and culture and values.[32]

In obtaining insights about what the community perceives as major concerns, especially those related to their displacement, this type of assessment looks into lifestyles and behaviors that aggravate the community members' already dire situation. The assessment also accounts for positive behaviors that could lead toward the prevention of these problems.

Community members are invited to participate in the process of planning the community's healing in the aftermath of a conflict. This process is brought about by gathering information about the conflict (conflict and resource map) in an attempt to discern what has happened. Community members join in a healing alliance where they actively plan the necessary interventions at a community level.

Community members are encouraged to share their feelings and thoughts about what happened during the period of violence with the other members.

The next phase is the actual implementation of the process or reparation, where the community works together in implementing the specific plans of action decided earlier. Community partners will design the structures best suited to pursue their dreams and visions. This step includes their plans about their organizations and identifies the key stakeholders who would be involved. This would entail the voluntary mobilization of community partners to negotiate with government authorities (or other parties in conflict) to attend to their rehabilitation efforts and peace building.

Balay facilitates the drafting of goals and objectives that would bring the community partners towards their attainment of their plans. The community partners define their monitoring and evaluation systems during this stage, including a number of simple indicators they could use to track their progress.

Among the intervention activities which Balay and its community partners agree on are: creating peace camps, arranging economic support and educational assistance for youth and children, restoring farming activities, human rights seminars, and making psychological processing available for those members who are severely traumatized and in need of individual attention.

Considering its limited resources, capacities and mandate, Balay practices a multi-stakeholders' approach which entails cooperating with other NGO service providers, community organizations and volunteers, and government authorities whenever necessary.

PEACE CAMPS

Peace camps, which usually last three days, are offered to young people from conflicting groups who are urged to discover each other's backgrounds through cultural presentations by resource persons representing the Moro, the *Lumads*, and the settlers.

The young people are encouraged to talk with each other about their feelings, thoughts and aspirations and to learn about the historical diversity and convergence of the multi-ethnic population in their communities where they used to live together peacefully.

The aim of a peace camp is to sort out issues among the participants and reduce cultural biases amongst them.

At the end of a peace camp, participants make plans to create organizations of mixed cultural groups when they return home. Some participants become peace advocate leaders, trainers, or peer counselors.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Representatives of various community groups of women, youth or leaders work together to plan tools, talk about their aspirations, create resource maps of the community and rebuild areas that have been destroyed during conflict.

EDUCATION

Education includes training community members in documenting events in the conflicts and human rights violations. It may also involve teaching cooperative management or organic

farming to community members. Training generally aims to create a network of self-help groups in the community.

ECONOMIC SUPPORT

Community members are encouraged to form productive cooperatives or community livelihood associations by people of different ethnic or religious backgrounds, to decrease the community's reliance on external aid, increase its productive resources, and strengthen pluralist cooperation among the peoples.

POLICY SUPPORT

Community leaders and other grassroots advocates are encouraged and supported to speak out and take action to raise the concerns of the displaced community at the regional or national level.

Community partners are empowered to be able to represent their people's concerns and demands in the formal peace process between the parties in the conflict, and at the same time to conduct dialogues with government authorities in order to create social conditions for rehabilitation, human rights protection and development.

SPACE FOR PEACE

Balay supports and is an active participant of the community-based Space for Peace project, particularly in Pikit, North Cotabato. This undertaking takes place when community members in a particular area decide not to accept fighting and military operations in their area.

This means that if Moslem rebels or the Christian military arrive in an area previously declared as space for peace, the elders of the religious group residing there negotiates with these armed

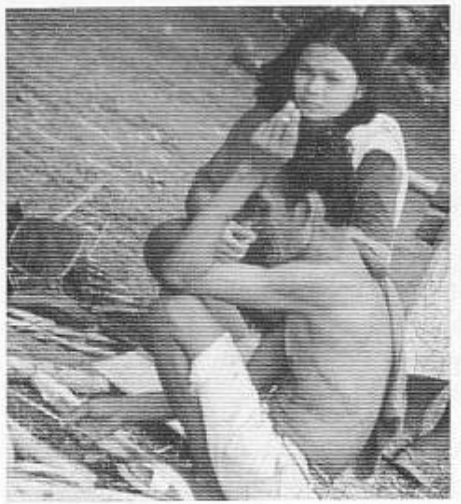
groups to ask them to refrain from using force while in the area. Aside from being geographical areas, these are also an "emotional space" where mixed community members can participate in a dialogue with each other and thereby bridge many misunderstandings and resolve their differences in a constructive and culturally-appropriate way.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES

Individuals and families showing signs of traumatic stress are invited to participate in stress management workshops, trauma counseling sessions, debriefing, and value clarification activities.

At the community level, villagers are enjoined to take part in group dialogue and workshops about developing a *culture of peace* or COP. The building of relationships and social healing are encouraged through the practice of traditional peace rituals of the tri-peoples, the Moros, the *Lumads*, and the settlers.

A year after the first interventions are initiated, the rehabilitation plan and the peace plan are re-assessed in order to establish whether the intervention strategies were successful or not. Adjustments are then made and a new round of intervention plans would be drawn up with the community members and other stakeholders.



VI

Developing Concepts in Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Social Trauma

The concept and practice of psychosocial intervention have lately gained greater attention among relief agencies, humanitarian organizations and development-oriented service providers in Mindanao.

Trauma, debriefing, defusing, counseling, play therapy and other terms and approaches usually employed by mental health professionals, social workers and community counselors have became the new buzzwords among them. Some have even found their way into the lingo of civilian survivors who overcame their distressful experience with the help of social workers or counselors.

However, much remains to be done to fully clarify what psychosocial rehabilitation is, and to bring it to the mainstream of

response to internal displacement. This was affirmed by participants from 17 NGOs and 5 government agencies who attended the first psychosocial conference organized by Balay in Mindanao in November 2003.[33]

Three views

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines *psychosocial rehabilitation* as a process that offers individuals who are impaired, disabled, or handicapped by a mental disorder, the opportunity to reach their optimal level of independent functioning in the community.[34]

From the WHO perspective, psychosocial intervention is part of the curative regimen for addressing a mental illness or a disorder away from asylums and other mental institutions. It includes assistance in developing the social skills, interest and leisure activities that provide a sense of participation and self-worth.

Another view is offered by Lourdes Ladrido-Ignacio and Antonio Perlas based on their work with victims of the Mt. Pinatubo eruption in Central Luzon in 1991.

Writing for the International Journal for Mental Health in 1995, they said:

> *The most basic issue in psychosocial intervention following a disaster is to transform those affected from being victims to survivors. What differentiates a victim from a survivor is that the former feels himself subject to a situation over which he has no control over his environment or himself, whereas a survivor has regained a sense of control and is able to meet the demands of whatever difficulty confronts him. A victim is passive and dependent upon others; a survivor is not—he is able to take an active role in efforts to help his community and himself recover from the disaster.*

A social psychologist, Fr. Ignacio Martin-Baró, expounding on his research in the context of organized violence and displacement in El Salvador, had said that war-related traumatic reactions cannot be understood solely at the individual or psychological level because they are embedded in a historical social context.

According to him, psychosocial trauma has three essential aspects.

One, it has a dialectical character, which means that it is produced in actual social relationships of which the individual is just one part.

Second, psychosocial trauma is socially produced, and thus, intervention aimed at alleviating it should address the social fabric of the community.

And third, social relationships may multiply and sustain traumatic stress at the community level, leading to individual experience of suffering for traumatic stress. Thus, as a socially embedded phenomenon, the reconstruction of the social tissue implies healing, empowerment and community development.[35]

Beyond just mental health

Seen from these perspectives, understanding the *psychosocial* concept in relation to peoples exposed to armed violence and disasters does not only require a grasp of those individuals' mental health dimension.

More broadly, the psychosocial dimension explores the close relationship between the psychological and social effects of armed conflict and violent displacements, hence, going beyond the *psychologization* of the understanding of the impact of violent displacement.

Psychological effects mean those experiences that affect the emotions, behaviors, thoughts, memory and learning ability, and how a situation may be perceived and understood.

Social effects mean how the diverse experiences of war alter people's relationships to each other. Such experiences change people, but they can also be affected and changed by death, separation, estrangement, and other losses.

Social effects can be extended to include an *economic dimension.* Many individuals and families become destitute through the material and economic devastation of war, thus losing their social status and place in their familiar social network.

From a psychological viewpoint, economic considerations may seem a secondary factor in evaluating the psychosocial effects of war and displacement. But most IDPs will point to the establishment of a secure economic base as the starting point for addressing their situation following a displacement. Failure to meet this fundamental requirement for existence might compound the refugees' already stressful situation.

Community in distress

Experience in armed conflict and displacement brings about collective suffering. It affects not only individuals and families, but entire peoples and communities as well. When a traumatic event happens, it does not only bring fear and anxiety to survivors; it also damages their livelihood and environment.

Moreover, it tears away at socio-cultural institutions and threatens the community's social protective factor, which is anchored on group solidarity and collective security. This crack in the protective factor may trigger mistrust, social tension and discord, and if left unchecked, may ultimately lead to community distress.

Limits of psychological tools

In this context, the psychosocial impact of armed conflict and displacement should be considered beyond the issue of individual mental health. Because a traumatic event weighs down on the psychosocial well-being of groups, peoples and communities, its impact should be also understood in the context of its social, political, economic and cultural dimensions.

In many instances, the use of psychological tools in evaluating a certain disaster's impact on a community has led to clinical interpretations of the survivors' responses. But reliance on such psychiatric diagnostic checklists has tended to promote the *psychologization* of a community in distress while de-emphasizing the material and social factors that contribute to the community's suffering.

Subsequently, this has encouraged the emphasis on the curative intervention for individuals and families, rather than an integrated psychosocial response among groups and communities.

Balay's years of work with displaced communities has shown that affected populations may demonstrate adjustment difficulties at the time of their forced exodus that do not necessarily indicate clinical trauma or mental illness.

This does not ignore the fact that some individuals, as a result of their exposure to a traumatic incident, may be afflicted with post-

traumatic stress or other related psychological or behavioral conditions. In such cases, psychological processing intervention and other therapeutic activities using the Family Systems Approach (FSA) may be applied to the affected individuals or groups.

Community intervention

In trying to provide a model for community-level post-conflict interventions, Ager and Strang (2001) suggested that the intensity of a traumatic event depends on the degree of damage done on the community resources, which are categorized into three components.[36]

Human capacity– Events can lead to a loss of human capacity within the community. This domain is taken to constitute such resources such as the health and well-being (mental, emotional, physical) of community members; the skills and knowledge of people, their household; livelihoods, etc.

Social ecology– Events also frequently lead to a disruption of the social ecology of a community, involving social relations within families, peer groups, religious and cultural institutions, links with civic and political authorities, and so on.

Culture and values– Events may also disrupt the culture and values of a community, leading to a sense of violation of, or challenging human rights, and undermining cultural values, belief, practices and self-determination.

The domains of community resources are interrelated and interconnected. Hence, any impact on the economic and social resources, for instance, would subsequently affect relationships and the well-being of community members, and vise versa.

For instance, the burning of crops and destruction of farms due to air strikes may be seen not only as an attack on physical resources but on the symbol and way of life that gives meaning to the lives of the affected populations.

For indigenous peoples, the destruction of land, plants and animals is a desecration of the spiritual domain that is connected to their humanity. The destruction of lands and religious shrines and places of worships may leave a gaping wound in the collective consciousness of an affected community. The inability of civilians to go on with their productive existence and to practice their rituals and customs due to military offensives may also bring about resentment and rancor. This may be aggravated if the fighting and displacement caused deaths or separation among families and groups.

Repeated occurrence of the traumatic events are often cited to underscore the severity of a crisis. Yet, communities may respond differently to apparently similar events.

A life-threatening event such as an armed encounter may stretch the limits of one community's resiliency and coping capabilities, while a similar event may strengthen the resolve of another community to jointly surmount the crisis.

Some mental health practitioners have noted that it is not the intensity of an event per se that determines its psychosocial impact on a community. How the affected population faces up to the ordeal, based on the level of its coping resources, spells the degree of its distress. Hence, communities which have learned to manage disasters and those which have a wide support network may stand a better chance of hurdling their difficulties, compared to those who are ill-prepared and more vulnerable.

Psychosocial goals

Certainly, there are various ways of defining psychosocial intervention and rehabilitation, depending on which discipline or perspective one explains or practices it. But based on numerous literature as well as direct experiences and observations made by Balay workers working among internally displaced persons, a number of elements shape psychosocial rehabilitation work.

Psychosocial rehabilitation is a comprehensive process. It is not just a technique. It involves resolving the emotional, mental and behavioral effects of a traumatic event by helping those affected to harness their internal and external coping resources. It also involves improving individual competencies as well as introducing environmental changes. The main objectives of psychosocial rehabilitation is the empowerment of an individual, family or community; the reduction of discrimination and stigma; the improvement of individual social competence; and the creation of long-term systems of social support and improvement of external conditions to reduce or prevent organized violence which lead to trauma and distress.

This would entail, among others, the clear identification of survival, recovery, rehabilitative and developmental goals for each phase or aspect of psychosocial responses.

At the community level, psychosocial responses may include projects and activities that tend to address the issues of social discord, mistrust and divisiveness among stakeholders.

Among the goals of psychosocial rehabilitation is to accompany the affected population in their process of catharsis and collective discernment of their common distressing experience. The role of psychosocial workers is to facilitate their rediscovery of their inherent capacities towards harnessing community solidarity in rising above their difficult situation.

The strategies of psychosocial rehabilitation vary according to a person's needs, the particularities of a community, the setting where the rehabilitation is to be provided, and the cultural and socioeconomic conditions in which it is to be undertaken. Housing, education, skills development, employment, livelihood and social support networks are all aspects of psychosocial rehabilitation. Hence, the scope of psychosocial responses would naturally require an integrative, interdisciplinary and multidimensional approaches and methods.

Psychosocial intervention is one of the components of comprehensive community-based rehabilitation. It enables many individuals to regain practical skills that are needed to live and socialize in the community, and teaches them how to cope with the disaster that have caused their trauma.

The primary goal of the psychosocial-oriented worker is change—change which may take place in persons, groups, families or situations.

The nature of the change sought is related to the potential of the individual or community partner in psychosocial rehabilitation, the goals and attitudes for which a person, family or community is striving, their values and aspirations, and the resources available to the individual or group.

Psychosocial advocacy

Appreciating the concept of psychosocial rehabilitation starts from the understanding of the human person as having mental and physical endowments, as wells as emotional and spiritual entitlements.

But—to adapt the popular phrase—no one is an island.

As social beings, people naturally find meaning and fulfillment in their existence by associating with others—their family, relatives, friends, and community. Thus people are to be understood as products of the interaction among their biogenetic nature, the effects of significant relationships, the impact of life experiences, and their participation in societal, cultural, and current events.

Whatever a person does creates a ripple of effects to himself or herself and to the social and natural environment. In the same manner, changes in the family, community or society create an impact on the individual. This web of psychosocial continuum could either contribute to the well-being and development of a person or community or, if left shattered, could also lead to discord, stress and trauma.

Balay considers the individuals, families and communities that it served within an optimistic framework. Those traumatized by the crossfire and who were forced into exodus are essentially good people caught in the midst of impoverishment, discrimination, oppression and violence. They are endowed with the gift of life and dignity that must be protected and nurtured, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, gender, age, creed, economic status or political beliefs.

Balay believes that these people, whatever their situations in life, are entitled to development in a manner and direction that they commit for themselves as individuals and as a people. They have the right, as much as anyone else, to determine the satisfaction of their goals and objectives within a social, economic, cultural and political context in which the interests, goals, and aspirations of others are acknowledged and accommodated.

Toward this, conditions must exist so that they may be free to influence their developmental course and choose their alternatives.

For Balay, psychosocial work would necessarily require advocacy for social justice and the protection and respect of human rights toward the development of a culture of peace. In addition to mitigating distress and rehabilitating traumatized victims of internal displacement, psychosocial work should also contribute to the prevention of traumatic events such as internal displacement from happening in the first place.

VII

Emergency Psychosocial Response

When is the best time to conduct psychosocial intervention in response to a catastrophic event?

After an armed-conflict incident which is then followed by internal displacement, it is seldom to find survivors in a calm mental state. But what matters to most evacuees immediately after they had to abandon their homes and managed to escape from almost certain death is direct concrete relief.

Psychosocial intervention during this period should be directed toward their urgent need for food, water, clothing and shelter. Many might need immediate medical attention, physical safety and security. Separated families should be reunited as soon as possible. Family members or relatives who died must also be located, recovered as early as possible and given proper burial rites.

Providing these immediate support services contributes to the stabilization of the survivors' physical conditions and mitigates their mental and emotional anguish. On the other hand, failure to do so may reinforce the survivors' distress to such an extent that is way beyond that which may have been directly caused by their trauma from forcible displacement.

Disaster-management experts call this phase the *emergency* period.

At this point, the conduct of relief, medical and psychosocial missions is most desirable and timely, but not necessarily easy.

School houses, government buildings, places of worship, or public parks serving as evacuation centers or tent cities teem with all kinds of people. Many might be in dire need of help, sometimes clawing at each other to get their share of the relief rations being distributed.

But some people may not be actual victims, loitering around evacuation centers to try to use the situation to their advantage. Others may be in the vicinity only for curiosity.

Service providers might have to instill some order first, to prevent the occurrence of untoward incidents. This is part of providing safety to the victims. To overlook it invites chaos in the evacuation camps, reinforcing the trauma of the displaced persons.

Psychological first aid

Days immediately after a displacement, some victims may start showing severe distress, with such symptoms as intense anxiety or panic, uncontrollable crying, disorientation, or incoherence, which tends to further disrupt an already distressed family or community.

At this point, psychosocial workers may provide *psychological first aid* to comfort such persons and reduce their stress. Letting the victims express their feelings and regain a sense of control may help, as would facilitating stress reduction exercises.

Victims should be assisted in getting in touch with family members, neighbors, and friends so they can rebuild their comfort zones and restore some level of social or emotional support system. This could shore up their coping resources and prevent further emotional and mental anguish.

Many evacuees might not be immediately receptive to psychosocial intervention, days or even weeks after their displacement. Some might be too dazed to respond to debriefing, and might prefer to develop their own thoughts about the disaster by themselves. Some would be in denial and assert that they don't need any psychosocial help. Others might be simply unaware that what they are going through emotionally, mentally and behaviorally are indicative of trauma which ought to go through a healing process. But many might mistrust the psychosocial workers or community counselors, particularly if the former are "outsiders" who don't speak their language or practice their religion.

Several psychosocial interventions are appropriate for this stage. The principle that service providers should observe is that their responses should match the emotional and relief requirements of displaced persons at a particular stage of disaster.

At this point, it is essential to focus on identifying those who need therapeutic partnership and sustained intervention toward reducing their emotional, psychological or behavioral dysfunctions.

Some of the measures undertaken by Balay at this phase are:

- Identifying those who show signs of intense distress and who seem in need of prolonged services. The priority are those who lost a loved one or a treasured possession, or are suffering from grief, trauma, and intense anxiety, or are showing maladaptive behavior. Others are those who had a near brush with death or who saw someone close to them die.

- Identifying and diagnosing traumatized evacuees through area scanning, profiling of communities and direct victims, and trauma diagnosis using appropriate documentation tools. The means for doing these include individual and family interviews, home visits, community assemblies, dialogue with the council of elders and religious or political leaders, meeting with village officials, and youth camps, among others.

- Establishing a healing alliance with individuals, families, communities for focused psychosocial intervention. Once partnership is ensured, concrete support that matches the needs and intervention goals of the caseload is provided. This includes debriefing, defusing and other crisis intervention approaches, trauma awareness education, educational assistance, livelihood support, and medical and health assistance.

Later on, the following interventions may also be introduced: conflict mediation, peace camps, community education, disaster management training, human rights awareness programs, training of community-based counselors, assistance for community organizing and advocacy.

Dealing with long-term displacement

Many internally displaced persons in Mindanao stay in evacuation centers for months or even years. While government authorities usually regard such persons as having been resettled—because they refuse to consider returning to their place of origin—the environment in which they now live could hardly be considered permanent. They live in situations far from ideal for complete healing. Nevertheless, such individuals and families might still be encouraged to create a semblance of a normal life through several ways.

Even within an evacuation center, individuals can work at keeping family ties intact and adapted to the new family dynamics. Though individuals might come from different villages, they could be assisted in building new structures for this new community of displaced persons. They could be urged to worship together or otherwise engage in other meaningful social interactions. Together they could engage in collective farming, in providing camp security, in holding rituals, or in recreational or cultural activities.

They could be provided with opportunities to learn new skills for alternative sources of subsistence. Their children could be assisted in resuming schooling. Arabic schools or *madaris* can also be built inside the evacuation centers for those who want to pursue religious, cultural and educational enrichment there.

Psychosocial work at this phase is toward the reconstruction and rehabilitation of displaced persons to help them take hold of their lives even while they continue to live in evacuation centers.

With such help, displaced persons would hopefully and with dignity later be able to move to a peaceful community of their choice, where they can truly rebuild their lives according to their cultural and political preferences, and carve their own development where they can find meaning in their lives as individuals and as a people.

VIII

Socio-economic Dimensions of a Psychosocial Response

For Balay, providing economic responses such as helping put up cooperatives is not simply a means to provide livelihood to community members. It is also meant as a therapeutic component of Balay's psychosocial rehabilitation for displaced people traumatized by violence and internal displacement.

Restoring livelihood systems as a way of encouraging distressed stakeholders to regain control of their lives following a violent event comprises a complex and diverse set of economic, social and physical strategies. These strategies are realized through the activities, assets and entitlements by which individuals make a living. Sustainable livelihoods are derived from people's capacities to exercise choice, and to access opportunities and resources, and use them for their livelihoods in ways that do not foreclose options for others to make their living, either now, or in the future.

But sustainable livelihoods are not just about what happens in a given locality. It begins with how people living in poverty perceive their own reality, and extends to understanding how this reality is related to what happens with the rest of society, to forming new relationships within and outside the locality, and imagining alternative paths in social transformation. It stresses the need to support and protect people's capacity to act and produce.

Balay also puts premium on the introduction of livelihood undertakings both as a means and a process for the stakeholders to discern and regain their coping and adaptive capabilities which had been temporarily weakened by their exposure to a traumatic event.

Hence, the psychosocial objective of this intervention is to assist the partners in the process of becoming self-reliant, encouraging cooperation and mutual help, and reduce dependency on service providers and government dole outs. The economic undertaking then becomes one of the avenues for resuming their lives and rekindling positive social relationships that had been disrupted when violence uprooted them.

The economic projects also provide immediate alternative livelihood activities for the stakeholders which prepare them for more regular and long-term economic work. The livelihood activities help restore self-confidence and normalize social relations with relatives and peers. The story below is a case in point.

Repairing social relationships: 2 cases

Villagers of Dalengaoen in Pikit, North Cotabato, experienced an armed assault on their community in November 2000. Many sought temporary shelters in farmlands along the highway.

The incident shattered the hitherto peaceful co-existence between the Muslim and Christian villagers. Mistrust and animosity grew among them.

Balay organized a series of community-based psychosocial processing of traumatized adults and children. Eventually the Muslim and Christian sub-groups were later able to hurdle their pains and losses, and began to visit and talk to one another as before.

A cooperative was one way where they could once more demonstrate their solidarity and respect for one another.

Thirty nine families, all of them survivors of various armed attacks in Central Mindanao, served as founding members of the Muslim-Christian Multipurpose Cooperative (MCMPC). It was formally established on December 3, 2002, after the members completed a pre-membership seminar (PMES). It was facilitated by Balay's savings generation program (SGP).

The seminar taught coop members the cooperative principles, the rights and duties of cooperative members and the steps to take in setting up and managing the cooperative. Seminar participants, many of whom have had past experiences in failed cooperative undertakings in their villages, said the seminar taught them for the first time about the obligations and accountabilities of cooperative members.

Balay also facilitated the election of the cooperative's board of directors through a process of free nomination and secret balloting. Seven persons were voted to manage the affairs of the cooperative, including the running of its committees. The board had four Muslims and three Christians as members.

The fledgling cooperative is engaged in providing credit to its members, who in turn use the money they borrowed to start backyard business projects such as cutflower growing, livestock raising, or farming.

Members are expected to repay the amount they borrowed. But Balay also puts a value in ensuring that the members learn to manage their own organization, discern their situation and problems together, and encourage each other's success in their respective undertakings.

A challenge posed before each member at the start of each project is that the money from their payments would be shared with other communities facing conditions similar to theirs. Made aware of this responsibility towards their neighbors, borrowers are encouraged to demonstrate "ownership" of their projects with the conviction that they are also helping make a difference to the lives of other communities.

Balay also facilitated at the Dawah Evacuation Center (Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao) the formation of a communal farming arrangement. The project involved Muslim land tillers who had been displaced by military operations in Matanog, Parang, Barira and other places.

Twenty-eight farmer-families initially offered to join. The project's coordinator is the head of the association of displaced families who sought refuge in Dawah Center.

The members of the farming collective jointly tend a five-hectare land provided free of charge by a sympathetic Muslim landowner. All of the collective's members are expected to contribute in the land preparation and the planting of corn. Each member would eventually get a share in the harvest or income from the project.

Balay facilitated a planning session of the stakeholders where the mechanics of the communal farming were drawn up and the project's economic viability and sustainability discussed.

Through the communal farming project, the IDPs not only got a chance to engage in meaningful livelihood activities, but they were

allowed to act to shore up their dignity, empower themselves, and prevent them from losing hope to sustain them until they are finally able to return to their places of origin.

Fr. Bert Layson, head of the Disaster Response Team and advocate of community-based peace zones in Pikit, has endorsed the Dalengaoen cooperative project. He said it could serve as a pilot project for the role of cooperatives in building a *culture of peace*, a project that could then be replicated in other barangays.

The livelihood projects in North Cotabato and Maguindanao are two of the six cooperatives facilitated by Balay through its savings generation program for partner-beneficiaries in 2001.

Empowering Women: Towerville Experience

Towerville in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan, is a relocation site for at least 1,000 families displaced during a series of forced evictions of urban poor dwellers in Metro Manila, mostly as a result of clean-up operations prior to the holding of the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) in the Philippines in 1998.

Considered as eyesores by government, many urban poor communities were razed down and the occupants transferred to Towerville, which the authorities then lauded as a showcase of the state's concern for the poor.

Most Towerville residents were survivors of usually violent demolition campaigns. While many have shown a resilience in

coping with their ordeal, others have been unable to truly recover, showing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders, or PTSD.

Their conditions are not helped by the deplorable living conditions in Towerville. The construction of schools, health centers and other basic facilities are long-delayed. Residents have to buy potable water in pails or drums. The lack of job opportunities in the area aggravates the victims' troubles.

Caseworkers from Balay NCR/Luzon started their psychosocial work in Towerville in February 2001.

The caseloads underwent counseling sessions, family therapies, self-awareness seminars and, for the children, youth camps. The therapeutic partnership of the institution and the partner-beneficiaries resulted in improvements in the emotional and behavioral conditions of a number of residents.

However, impoverishment remained a source of constant torment. Towerville residents kept worrying about where to get the next meal, where to run to if anyone in the family fell sick, how to put the children back to school.

The women bear most of these worries because it is they who are usually left in the community while their husbands leave to try to eke out a living as drivers, carpenters or fish port workers in far-away places.

This prompted the Balay-NCR/Luzon office to encourage the caseloads to harness their collective strength and organize a livelihood project. The idea struck a responsive chord among the women, who promptly started thinking of forming a cooperative. After all, some were members of cooperatives in the past.

They became partner-beneficiaries of Balay under its savings generation program (SGP), and with Balay assistance, the women soon put their project in motion.

The Balay regional office organized workshops and orientation sessions to discuss the cooperative principles, and the requirements for setting up a cooperative and managing it.

In the process, the women also decided to start producing dresses, uniforms and other garments and related products.

They divided the work. Those who knew how to use the sewing machine were assigned to production. Other coop members were tasked to do the purchasing of materials, while others were tasked to promote and market the products. Several meetings were held to discuss project feasibility, while a team reviewed the cooperative's by-laws and other documents.

Psychosocial rewards

Balay partners all agreed that they had to learn from their past experiences with failed cooperative projects.

At the same time, they came to appreciate a cooperative as not being a mere economic undertaking, but one that was a labor of love of community members who nurture and lean on each other for mutual strength. They learned to be more patient and diligent in attending meetings and sharing ideas.

Realizing that their project's success depended on themselves, the women learned to express their thoughts on and doubts about various aspects of the project, offering solutions to the problems they saw.

As project stakeholders they learned to defend the cooperative from others who tried to discourage them. This strengthened the cooperative members' solidarity and deepened their trust and cooperation with each other.

The women named their project the Kapatiran para sa Kalayaan at Kaunlaran Multi-Purpose Cooperative (KKMPC). They elected a set of officers and have started production. They have much to do to make their initiative an economic success. But already the members are proud to have been able to reap the psychosocial rewards of their efforts. That was something that no money could buy.

IX

Community Partnerships

A sociological definition of a *community* is that of a population aggregate inhabiting a contiguous territory, integrated through common experiences, possessing a number of common institutions, conscious of its unity, and able to act effectively in a crisis.[37]

In this sense, a community may be bound by a complex of activities, which tie the inhabitants of an area into an interacting social group that, in association, works out its common life tasks.

Most often, a community is related to other places by physical and social ties as well as by cultural, political and economic relationships that are organized in an orderly manner.

The people living as stakeholders feel they belong there: it is their home. A community is thus integrated psychologically and socially through the common experiences of its inhabitants. It develops a history, and a body of shared experiences that are expressed in myth, legend, traditions and folktales.

A community also consists of a number of people who have something in common with one another which connects them in some way and distinguishes them from others. This common connection could be the place where the members live, an ethnic identification, a unique history or a collective aspiration as a people.

Communities bound by a shared area or territory may be referred to as *geographic communities.*

Meanwhile, a *functional community* may be defined as a group of people who share certain common experiences, characteristics, or sense of purpose even if they come from various places or have diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. This may include communities of internally displaced persons who come from different places but are for the moment sharing an evacuation center. Traumatized survivors of violence who are undergoing a therapeutic relationship as a group may also be included in this category of a community.

Whatever the category is, a community is a social entity with some degree of cohesion consisting of different interest groups that are motivated by economic, political and religious motives and by specific values and cultural perspectives. The community includes people who participate in the struggle to protect the interests of the community. The interests of the community participants are to be found within the continuum from exploitation to solidarity.[38]

Balay partner communities

For the purpose of its intervention, Balay distinguishes the communities it serves into different categories.

The *focus community* is where Balay works with the people in delivering a whole range of programs and services in a sustained manner towards a comprehensive psychosocial goal. The community may take the form of a group of evacuees in a

temporary settlement area, an entire village or a cluster of population or specific sector, like the youth and women, within a village.

The other Balay category is the *service community* where Balay establishes a certain level of partnership with stakeholders in responding to specific needs or requests with the potential of pursuing a more strategic relationship in the future, in case Balay selects the community as an expansion area.

Balay's involvement in such communities are mostly in capability-building, support to advocacy facilitation and awareness raising , etc. (e.g. disaster management training, documentation training, psychological processing etc.).

The last type of community that Balay covers are *outreach communities*, former focus communities which have attained a certain level of psychological development, and where Balay nurtures a partnership for monitoring and assisting in the sustainability or enrichment of their psychosocial development objectives.

Organizing strategies

In establishing these therapeutic partnerships, Balay engages in some amount of organizing for psychosocial development.

This involves an integrative participatory process, programs and approaches intended to encourage community members to come together to identify their issues and capacities, determine their goals and be able to act collectively to attain such psychosocial development objectives.

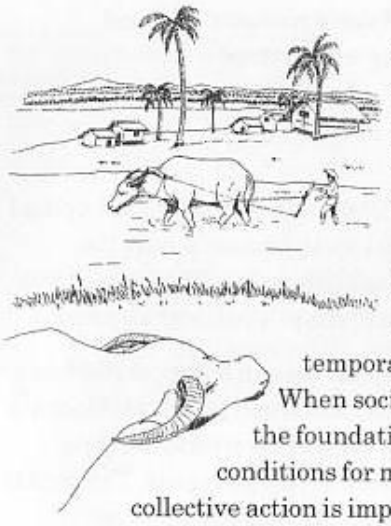
In dealing with psychosocial trauma at the population level, Balay facilitates mass intervention activities or MIA.

The targets of mass intervention are stakeholders' groups, core partners, even the entire community itself. Mass intervention provides situations for individual and group psychological healing, or occasions to evaluate individual and collective traumatization, as group solidarity is harnessed toward attaining a community protective factor, mass catharsis and collective problem-solving, and capability-building.

Mass intervention may be implemented through programs for community participation (PCP), which in Balay experience, are activities that aim to provide opportunities and encouragement to affected communities to work at analyzing their situation, identifying their problems and resources, planning, taking collective action, and mobilization based on objectives and goals they themselves have set.

Programs for community participation help mobilize IDPs to work for their own welfare and interest. Such programs may take the form of evacuation center management, trainors' training, organizing and action planning for IDP communities, and projects for youth evacuees, cooperatives, displaced women, and so on.

In the context of addressing community psychosocial trauma, projects for community participation can be used as a strategy and as a means to encourage stakeholders to pick up their lives and move on after a disaster. It is based on the principle that victims of organized violence and internal displacement are not helpless or passive recipients of support, but are capable human beings with dignity and resilient abilities that, with some help, enable them to rise from their ordeal. As a rehabilitative and developmental strategy, programs for community participation are aimed at recovering the capabilities of stakeholders and encouraging them to harness all their remaining resources and to rebuild from there.



The PCP and MIA are part of the curative-social mobilization continuum process of mending broken social relationships, healing, empowerment, and development.

When internal displacement takes place, members of a community in distress temporarily lose control of their lives. When social structures are broken or lost, the foundation that creates the necessary conditions for motivation, stimulation and collective action is impaired. Community discord results in a collective suffering that inevitably impacts on the psychosocial well-being of individuals, families, and groups.

At this point, intervention is needed to help IDPs regain psychosocial well-being linked to the upliftment of their dignity, values and rights.

PCPs enable affected communities to create, develop, and apply social structures for identifying and responding to these needs. The restoration of social structures or a sense of community organization creates a protective factor that projects control and resilience, hastening the recovery of psychosocial well-being. PCPs encourage ownership of stakeholders and tends to discourage dependency or learned helplessness.

At the height of an evacuation, PCPs minimize the negative effects of a distressful life in evacuation centers. It fulfills the evacuees' right to self-determination by allowing them to work for their own welfare and interests.

The following is an overview of Balay's community-based psychosocial response in some areas it has served:

Sitio Bianan, Basag T'boli, South Cotabato

Barangay Basag has two sitios. Upper Bianan is situated upland and is predominantly B'laan, while Lower Bianan is near the riverbank and is predominantly Maguindanaoan. The river serves as a natural boundary between the towns of T'boli and Polomolok.

Several faiths are practiced in Upper Bianan but most residents have kept their indigenous religious rituals and practices. Most are farmers and harvesters, with some keeping livestock and farm animals as means of support between cropping seasons. The land is generally fertile and the weather good, which helps produce constant good harvest.

The barangay is located in mountainous areas considered by the military as rebel territory where the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) operates. It is believed to be an entry-exit point of rebels coming from or going to the adjacent provinces of Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani.

When the government launched an intense military campaign ("total war") against the MILF in 2001, the Philippine Army's 601st IB dropped bombs and fired 105-mm howitzer cannons on positions it believed were occupied by some 200 rebels. The upland villages in the towns of T'boli, Tupi and Surralah in South Cotabato were among those hit by heavy artillery.

In Barangay Basag, gunfire and the sound of exploding bombs rudely awakened the residents very early in the morning of August 14, 2001. The *sitio* leader immediately advised the residents to pack up and evacuate to Polomolok town.

A total of 248 families of indigenous B'laan abandoned Upper Bianan and Lower Bianan.

In Polomolok town, they sought refuge at the gymnasium, where many more evacuees were soon gathered in various states of bewilderment, shock and fear.

This was the third displacement incident in twelve months for the residents of Upper Bianan and Lower Bianan.

They stayed a whole month in the evacuation center. While in the evacuation, they faced hardships and problems they never faced before. Their crops were destroyed due to military operations. They had to sell livestock to support their daily needs in the evacuation center. The belongings and properties they left behind were looted in their absence. The children had stopped schooling.

Balay sought out the barangay residents still camped in schools and in the gymnasium. Then it went to see the local officers of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in order to gather data and assess the extent of services already provided the evacuees. Balay staff also talked with community leaders and several individuals who showed observable manifestations of trauma.

After consultation and meetings with the affected community, partner NGOs and the local DSWD, the team sent a joint medical, relief and psychosocial mission, aimed to offer help and assess the community's needs more thoroughly.

Balay staff noted manifestations of trauma among the residents. Some of the psychosocial effects were psychosomatic pains, difficulty in sleeping, nervousness, fear of armed men, suspiciousness and uncertainty.

Balay took charge of the mission's psychosocial component, where activities were organized for both children and adults. Children were urged to make drawings and play therapeutic games to draw out and process their thoughts and feelings affected by their life-threatening experiences. On the other hand, adults initially assessed as suffering from trauma were invited to debriefing sessions.

Based on its assessments and those of the evacuees, Balay came up with an intervention plan for the community, and for identified caseloads. The psychosocial responses include psychological processing, livelihood support, educational assistance, skills enhancement trainings, campaign for peace (Peace Dialogue and Peace Zone-Building), and human rights advocacy.

With the clear guidelines and orientation, Balay was able to manage its psychosocial rehabilitation work in Lower and Upper Bianan quite smoothly.

Community visits, psychological and emotional processing, family dialogues, and education contributed to the over-all rehabilitation of the caseload and the community as whole.

In May 2002, the Balay regional office conducted its summer camp in Glan, Sarangani. Its purpose was to identify and process possible grantees of its educational support, and serve as venue to rekindle the once-harmonious relationship between B'laans and Maguindanaons.

During the summer camp, participants were given inputs on the Rights of the Child for them to better understand and appreciate their rights as embodied in the Philippine Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Participants were urged to do role-plays, where they shared their experiences through drama, games and exercises. Such role-

playing helped them recall their life before their displacement and encourage them to build on their remaining resources and move on.

The summer camp brought the victims together so they could work to achieve lasting peace and harmony in their community.

Moreover, Balay facilitated family dialogues for its caseloads. Pressures and stresses brought about by displacement caused tensions among family members. Parents would scold their children for no reason at all, which in turn drove children to stay with their peers rather than at home. The scarcity of money for daily needs are a burden on parents who worry about keeping their children in school. If these worries are not verbalized and clearly explained to children, they are likely to cause future problems.

How a family supports each other has a great impact on the caseload's total rehabilitation. They play an important role in the quick and objective assessment of the caseloads' problems. If family members have a close relationship, chances are that the identification and resolution of their problems can be worked out in due time.

One of the most helpful components in the rehabilitation of caseloads in Upper and Lower Bianan is the savings generation program (SGP).

This is not a surprise given that the residents were already on their third displacement in year, and they were having a hard time getting back on track economically. They had to neglect their farm when they were away. They even had to sell livestock to help sustain themselves during the period of evacuation.

Balay granted a seed fund to enable the community to start a cooperative, first providing training and orientation to participating residents in order to ensure the project's success. Responsibilities of members and officers were clarified.

When everything was at last ready, the residents established the Upper Bianan Farmer-Evacuees Multi-Purpose Cooperative.

The act of putting up the cooperative helped revive former relationships in the community, hasten the settling of personal differences, and most importantly, pave the way for a faster psychosocial rehabilitation among the residents of Barangay Bianan.

Through the initiative of the Mindanao Tri-People Caucus (Balay as one of the founding members), a consultation was called on the GRP-MILF Peace Talks sponsored by the government panel for the peace talks, headed by Presidential Assistant Jesus Dureza.

During this consultation, Bianan community leader Alfonso Pangulo was called on to air his sentiments on the plight of the B'laans who were caught in the crossfire between the MILF and government forces. He called on the parties in conflict to spare the civilian communities in their fighting.

Participants in the consultation included Lumad leaders from different parts of Mindanao, LGUs, MILF representatives, peace advocates and consultants, among others. Local and international media covered the event. The issue of ancestral domain and community-based peace initiatives are now among the central themes in the ongoing peace process in Mindanao.

X

Community Mobilization for Psychosocial Development

Reflecting on its rehabilitation practice in conflict-affected places in Mindanao, Balay has noted that the individual-focused linear models mainly derived from clinical psychology that it initially referred to have limited use in community-based intervention.

These models rarely take into account the cultural and social contexts in which individuals make decisions or take action. While individual change is important, an individual's behavior is affected and prompted by group or other social influences. Balay recognizes these important influences and thus focuses on theories and programs concerned with group and social change.

Because Balay focuses on psychosocial development in the context of community empowerment and long-term social change, it prefers to use approaches that lead to social mobilization.

Social mobilization is defined in the context of the Balay IDP project as a series of planned or spontaneous actions and processes that reach, involve, and influence all relevant segments and sectors of society, intended to create an enabling environment that effects and supports positive behavior and social change among IDPs.

At the heart of Balay's social mobilization program / project for IDPs is communication in the form of a dialogical relationship and response. This may be demonstrated through interpersonal communication, facilitating community dialog, person-to-person counseling, negotiating rehabilitation and development plans and actions, information and education and advocacy work.

Balay's approach to psychosocial development is community-centered with a focus on empowerment, and an ultimate aim of promoting social change among IDPs. Balay therefore embraces the concepts of partnership, participation, empowerment, human rights, and the promotion of the community's assets.

In this regard, the psychosocial development practice of Balay in the conflict-affected communities that it serve is inspired by the principles and methods of *Appreciative Inquiry*, or AI.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a way of thinking, seeing and acting for powerful, purposeful changes in organizations. The concept works on the assumption that whatever you want more of already exists in all organizations. While traditional problem-solving processes separate and dissect pieces of a system, AI generates images that affirm the forces that give life and energy to a system (Cooperrider and Srivastva:1990). It uses a positive approach rather than the more usual problem approach in program implementation.

Differences Between Traditional Diagnostic Model Used in Organizational Development and the Appreciative Inquiry Model

TRADITIONAL PROCESS	APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY
Define the problem	Search for solutions that already exist
Fix what's broken	Amplify what's working
Focus on decay	Focus on life-giving forces

AI is a complex philosophy that engages an entire system in an inquiry about what works. The inquiry discovers data that is then analyzed for common themes. The community (or group) articulates the themes and dreams of what *could* be and what *will* be.

The entire system maintains the best of the past by discovering what it is and stretching it into future possibilities.

The process involves the following steps in a cycle:

Discovery – WHAT IS NOW. This step shows the partner community's best practices and strong points which they can use in mobilizing themselves for regaining psychosocial and socioeconomic stability. This is equivalent to situational analysis, in the language of community development.

Dream – WHAT MIGHT BE. In this step, community partners define their visions between the present and a future time in relation to the positive changes they want to see and experience in both their family and community life as a result of the interventions they want to adopt to improve their situation.

Design – WHAT SHOULD BE. Community partners design structures best suited for themselves in their pursuit of their dreams and visions. This step includes their plans about their organizations and the key stakeholders who will be involved.

(In implementing this approach with its partner communities, Balay facilitates the drafting of goals and objectives that will bring the community closer to their dreams, while the community partner defines its monitoring and evaluation systems, including simple indicators for tracking progress.)

Deliver – WHAT WILL BE. Partner communities draft a two-year implementation plan which best describes the integrated forms of interventions they plan to pursue to address their needs.

AI works best if principles are translated into assumptions. Assumptions are the rules that a group follows to make decisions about their behavior or performance. Many times, assumptions are unspoken or are operating at the unconscious level. For this program, the key to all change efforts is the surfacing and examination of all working assumptions.

The assumptions in Appreciative Inquiry are:

1. In every group, something works.
2. What a group focuses on becomes reality.
3. Reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities.
4. The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.
5. People are more confident and comfortable about journeying toward the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).

6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
7. Differences are of great value.
8. The language we use creates our realities.

This set of assumptions may look reasonable for Balay program implementers. But their application is actually quite challenging.

For example, assumption #4 counters the traditional social research model that a researcher should remain a neutral observer or interviewer. Their very presence in a group changes the group dynamics in some manner. The way questions are worded also influences a group in some manner.

Balay's task is to help its partner communities find where they are very good at and help them take action to do more of what they do well. It aims its rebuilding efforts based on what a community does well, instead of trying to impose change on the community itself. Psychosocial workers work on individuals, families or communities, using a target number of sessions to make significant progress in their battle over traumatization.

As shown by its practice, Balay's psychosocial program direction in conflict-impacted communites has been guided by the following principles:

A. Behavior change programs should reposition "target beneficiaries" and "beneficiaries" as partners who are the agents of their own change, not objects of change.

Behavior change is an individual and a group process and is part of the larger process of social change. Programs that consider "target beneficiaries" or "beneficiaries" usually

emphasize the role of the outside expert who is supposed to know what works best. Balay positions "beneficiaries" as *partners* who are rational and capable beings who can, with the right tools, identify their own problems, find solutions, and mobilize needed resources.

Rather than trying to persuade partners to act, Balay aims to promote their critical thinking and negotiate the best way forward in a partnership process.

B. Sound knowledge alone is not sufficient to bring about behavior change; social, economic and political factors are also important.

A gap often exists between information and practice, which indicates that while knowledge plays an important role in behavior change, it does not necessarily predict behavior. Other social, economic and political factors that affect their present situation greatly influence people's behaviors.

Balay adopts a two-pronged approach: providing appropriate information, and creating an enabling environment that promotes the adoption and maintenance of behaviors that enhance the status of internally-displaced persons.

C. Behavior change is more likely to be sustained if the community's own resources, knowledge and assets are mobilized.

Bringing resources in from the outside to address a community's needs might not be sustained in the long run because of program limitations (e.g. funds). Balay looks for answers from its own partner communities, recognizing that the community's knowledge, strengths and assets could be used as solutions in improving their current situation.

D. Behavior change programs should respond to both explicit and latent demands which already exist in the community.

Linking behavior change programs to existing needs in the community, whether recognized or unrecognized, is another Balay strategy. If the community has not recognized these needs, Balay focuses its efforts in enabling people to articulate their needs and identifying solutions.

E. Balay and community staff must be empowered if they are to adequately address the needs of the partner communities and offer quality program services.

Balay aims to empower its staff so that they can effect changes within their system and be able to address the needs of program partners.

F. To ensure quality and adequate provision of program services, Balay dialogues with partner communities and defines together with them what quality means.

Balay framework

Balay's psychosocial rehabilitation work (PRW) among internally displaced persons (IDPs) is a broadened mandate of its former thrust of providing human rights victims (HRVs) with curative services including facilitation of psychosocial rehabilitation.

Balay's psychosocial rehabilitation work has three main components: curative, preventive and proactive forms of interventions.

Balay implements the proactive and preventive components with its advocacy work, hand in hand with facilitating the victims' psychosocial rehabilitation, which is the curative component of its services.

In all phases of psychosocial rehabilitation, Balay tries to achieve integrated rehabilitation according to what the concerned community needs.

With its growing experience in psychosocial rehabilitation of IDPs, Balay has formulated its own Community-Based Integrative and Multi-disciplinary Psychosocial Response Process.

Balay's partner communities are identified based on a set of criteria, which includes status as displaced communities, and community distress and social discord as a result of the community's exposure to the traumatic event.

Balay staff use appropriate community diagnosis tools to gather data from among the partner communities. Caseloads for psychosocial rehabilitation are also identified during this phase.

Balay observes participatory processes in all the phases of its intervention programs / projects for IDPs. Although Balay is relatively new in its endeavors to deliver IDP-focused forms of assistance using the psychosocial rehabilitation framework, this strategy enables Balay staff to fully realize its goals and objectives of providing assistance to its partner communities.

Operational assumptions

In implementing the program/project, the staff of Balay and its partner communities carefully consider the following:

DISCOVERY PHASE

* What is the level of the public's awareness about the causes and effects of displacement, accuracy of this knowledge, and the relation of such knowledge to local practices.

* What are the current practices that directly affect their situation?
* Why do they act as they do? Why don't they do what is needed to improve their situation?
* What are the community assets, resources, and strengths that can help them overcome their situation?
* Are there other displaced groups with similar socio-demographic profiles but who seem to be in better situations? If so, what are they doing differently?
* What are the skills that community members need to develop so they can identify problems, find solutions and mobilize necessary resources?
* What are the tools they can use?
* Why do certain community members avail of Balay services more readily than others? Why don't others do? Is it lack of access to Balay services? If so, how can the services be made more accessible?

DREAM PHASE

* How can people be made to realize that change is needed?
* How can a vision of what is possible be created?
* What are some of the obstacles to the vision? How can these be removed?

DESIGN PHASE

* What are the strategies that can be used to develop the community's capacity to address its own needs?

* What interventions are necessary so that the community members can learn from the positive "deviants" and adopt their constructive behaviors?
* With respect to harmful practices, why are these practices considered harmful?
* How can the positive aspects of cultural practices be delineated from the harmful aspects? Are there alternatives to harmful aspects? If so, what are they?

DELIVER PHASE

* What is the best way to engage the community in dialogue to identify alternative practices?
* Is there a latent need to change a particular behavior? How can this latent need be mobilized to effect positive changes?
* How can those involved in the change be encouraged and kept energized?
* How can leadership be developed and supported?
* What mechanism(s) can be used to bring the community and Balay staff together to discuss and address pressing issues related to displacement?

Putting into practice

Balay and its staff are first oriented on Appreciative Inquiry and Social Mobilization as applied to the PRW Framework.

Using the concept and the PRW framework, Balay and its staff consider the community and institutional goals and objectives ("big chunks") for the program/project to be implemented in its target areas.

For leveling off, Balay staff introduce the initial program/project concept and activities to partner communities in a consultation or dialogue.

Planning for diagnostic activities are conducted (development and finalization of questionnaires, pre-testing, etc.).

Balay starts the AI process with discovery activities (community diagnosis).

Initial results of the diagnosis should identify priority concerns, which could be given immediate attention, while other diagnostic activities continue.

After diagnosis is completed, Balay and its partner community discuss the results and define their visions (Dreams) in relation to positive changes they want to see in their families and within the community.

The Design phase follows, where Balay and its partner communities plan for interventions the community people wish to apply to themselves. Balay facilitates in drafting objectives ("smaller bites" of the project/program, according to the community's capacity). This phase includes identification of simple indicators and a monitoring and evaluation system. A reporting system will be installed for better monitoring and evaluation.

The plan is implemented (Deliver) by Balay staff and its partner communities.

Balay staff and its partner communities conduct regular monitoring and evaluation, and mid-term and end-of-project assessments. To assess project impact, an endline community diagnosis is conducted.

Rapid assessment

The technical approach used in this program/project uses two types of assessments to generate recommended psychosocial change interventions which will be designed and implemented in partnership with communities of IDPs.

In assessing displacement-related situations of its partner communities, Balay uses portions of the Rapid Assessment of Mental Health Needs of Refugees, Displaced and Other Populations Affected by Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations. Developed by the World Health Organization in 2001, Balay used this to prepare the set of data gathering tools based on the particularities of the communities that it serves.

Balay staff also review relevant documents to establish basic information. The review covers documents about demography, basic social services and survival situation and needs (morbidity, death rates, and causes), food supply, food distribution schemes, future food needs, supply and quality of water supply, adequacy/inadequacy of sanitation facilities, situation of shelter and clothing, and other basic survival needs of the affected population.

Balay assesses the community's current quality of life. This portion of the community diagnosis largely gets community members to become involved in discovering insights about what the community sees as major concerns, especially those related to displacement.

Differences may be revealed between data from documents and those obtained from analyzing the quality of life of internally displaced persons.

The assessment of quality of life may highlight other social issues not revealed in the analysis of documents. It is thus imperative to work closely with community members in

establishing facts, discovering reasons for the possible discrepancies, and outlining workable strategies to address actual needs.

The second type of assessment done with community members and other stakeholders look into lifestyles and behaviors that aggravate the already distressing situation. The assessment also seeks to identify positive behaviors that could help prevent such problems.

Results of these assessments are analyzed to show the barriers to the attainment of what the community envisions (Dreams) and the appropriate behavior-change program(s) that addresses the community's needs.

Activities likely to be included in this type of assessment are: review of data from government agencies, NGOs and other institutions, focus group discussions or in-depth interviews with community members, observation of behaviors likely to affect the community situation and transect walks, wealth and well-being, ranking and scoring, trend analysis, picture stories/cartooning, semi-structured interviews, case studies, stories and portraits, role plays and community mapping.

Flexibility should be used in selecting the tool to use, depending on the questions that have to be answered and the given setting.

Assessment results are disseminated to partner communities so that agreements on priorities can be made. These results become the basis for developing an action plan, also to be completed with community members participating. Balay uses for this the problem-ranking matrix, the intervention-ranking matrix (for a problem), and the community action plan.

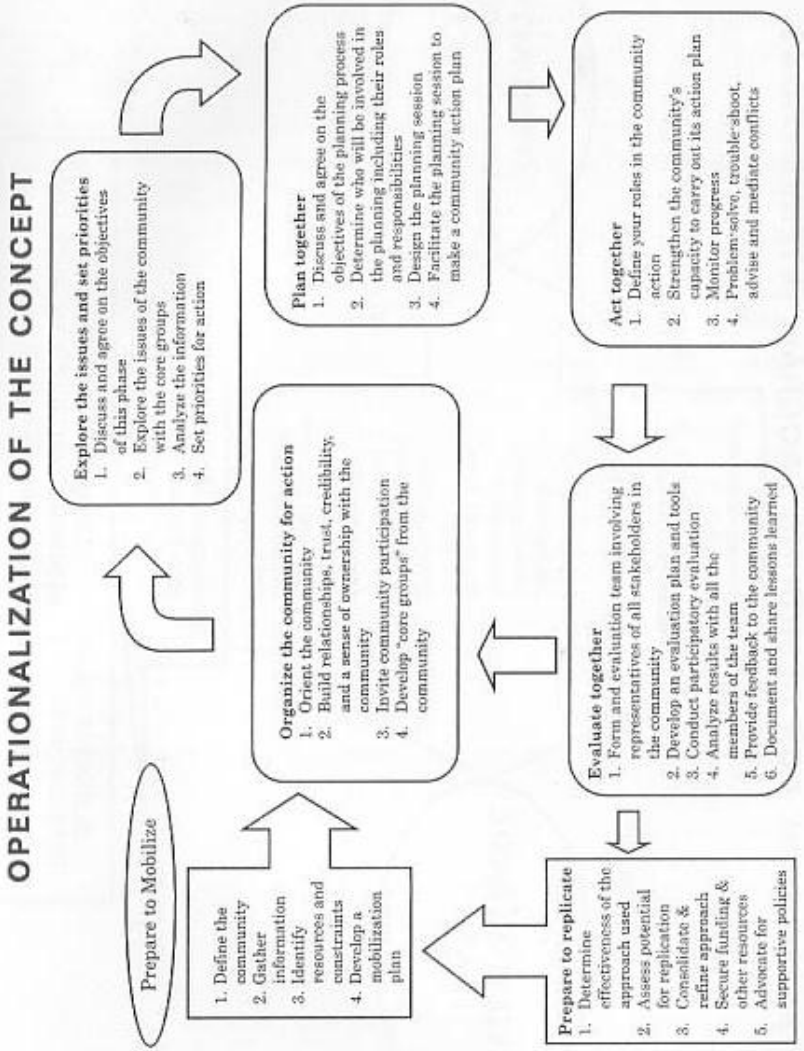
Tracking Changes

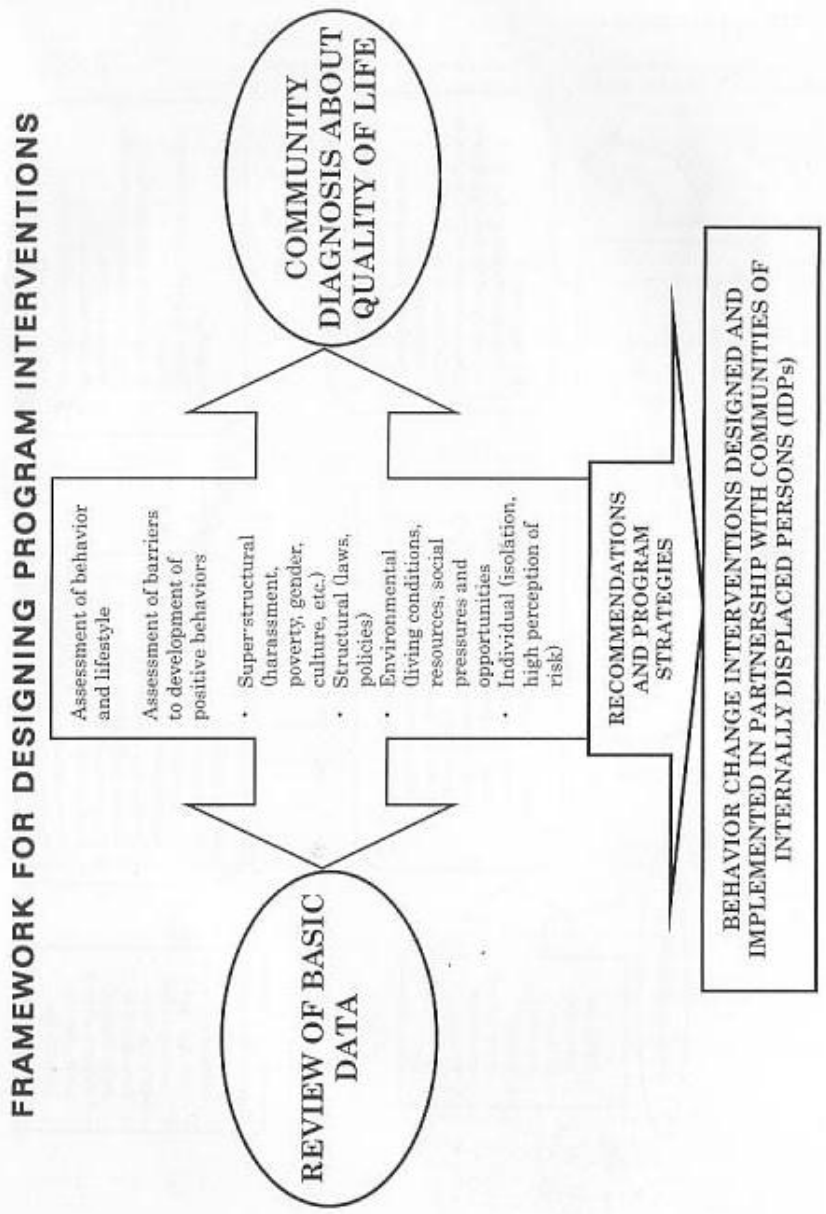
In addition to the baseline data which was gathered in the initial assessment of a community, the program/project conducts endline assessment to establish what was and was not attained, and the helpful and unhelpful factors that affected the program/project. This monitoring and evaluation phase requires the installation of reporting system and data gathering forms to collect information whether Balay's intervention has made any significant impact or not.

Balay's psychosocial workers, who also practically serves as community-based researchers, hold household, individual, or community surveys or interviews to gather feedback on any meaningful changes that have happened on the stakeholders' practices, knowledge, skills, relationships, priorities, needs and beliefs.

They also gather information to know what types of actual assistance being provided to the partner communities by government and private groups have actually contributed to community rehabilitation and development.

In all these undertaking, Balay and its partner communities perform evaluation activities together. Whatever results that are gathered and analyzed are made known to community partners for them to validate, own and use as guideposts to take their community action for change and development to the next level.





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