

DIALOGOS

A BALAY Publication
on Psychosocial Praxis, Peace and Human Rights

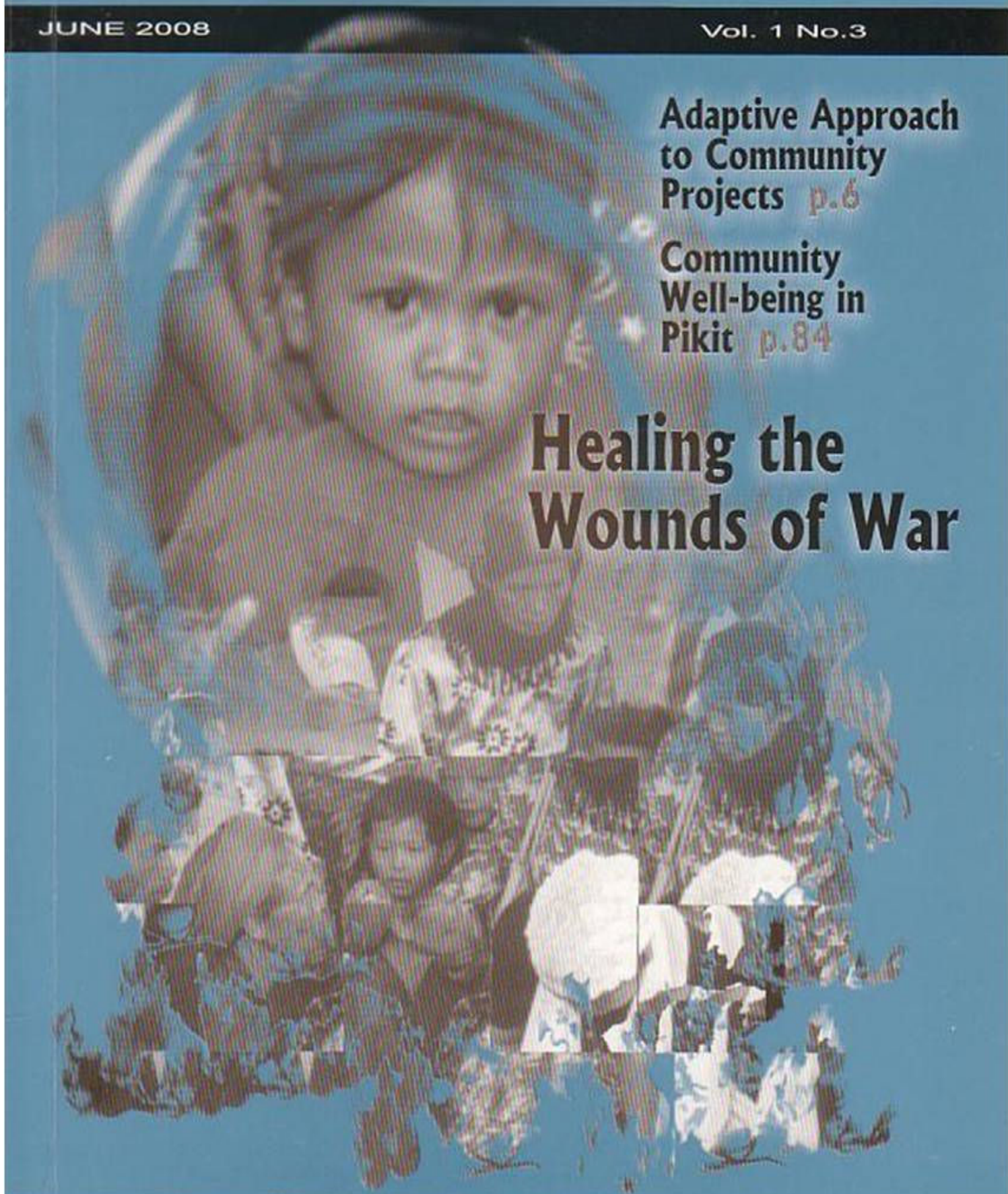
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DIALOGOS

Dialogos is an occasional publication of Balay Rehabilitation Center. It seeks to encourage the generation and dissemination of different perspectives in the field of psychosocial praxis and to contribute to the discourse in human rights and peace-building.

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From the Editors

This issue of **DIALOGOS** publishes selected lectures which were presented in an exclusive forum organized by Balay Rehabilitation Center and the Rehabilitation and Research Center for Torture Victims (RCT-Denmark) in 2005. The said meeting gathered together practitioners in psychosocial intervention work and the related fields in the Philippines and Denmark and had centered on the theme "Towards an understanding of social trauma and community-based psychosocial development response."

We write this brief message in connection mainly with the lectures we have published.

First, we express our apologies, even as we call your attention to the technical and practical constraints especially in generating our transcripts of proceedings. As we know, the use of electronic equipment in the process of documentation is susceptible to risks such as accidental deletion, garbling, audio disturbance and other types of mechanical glitch. We regret that this kind of problems have not spared our work. As a way of resolving, we carried out the proper interventions including the contextual interpretation of the ideas that were blocked out due to the distortions and supplying the gaps with the words and phrases that we deemed were appropriate and safe.

Another issue we had to deal with was in fact not a problem but a case of working and coping with our resource persons who tackled the complex topics given them with a remarkable blend of competent knowledge, simplicity and spontaneity. The lectures they presented which were for the most part uncontrived and also full of seasoned insight, were delivered in the absence

or with minimal use of a prepared abstract or rough copy. The final effect was simple, candid and thus, very down-to-earth formulations of the intended ideas—the way we wanted them told in the actual presentations.

All these intricacies, along with publication standards and design, have prompted us to exercise more aggressively our editorial functions and prerogatives, and thus, make liberal revisions with regard to the style and content of the materials. On the whole, however, we have retained the basic feel and flavor of the original lectures to uphold the primacy of truthfulness and originality.

Notwithstanding the changes we have made, we wish to emphasize that the current articles are the end products of standard editorial procedure and represent mainly this publication's best possible effort in dealing with the difficult aspects of our tasks.

It is our hope as well that the remedies we have resorted to would help foster a full, incisive and beneficial appreciation of the inputs shared in the forum. All the same, we ask the indulgent kindness of our lecture presenters (who are also the respective authors of the current articles) for any possible oversight and other imperfections regarding this final outcome of our editorial work. Similarly, we appeal to our readers for their patience and consideration.

At this point, we rest easy and convinced that the current articles offer a reliable reconstruction of the original materials presented at the Davao forum.

Finally, the materials for this issue were selected based on proximate relevance to Filipino methods and approaches in psychosocial healing practices, as well as on the significant current issues in rehabilitation and peace interventions in the Philippines. Some of the forum inputs were deliberately omitted though without any biased intention or purpose to undermine their significance as further sources of related literature.

Introduction

A researcher who used to live among indigenous peoples in the slopes of Mt. Apo had once used the term "socio-somatic manifestations" to describe what appeared to him as a fearful and evasive response of the tribal peoples whenever they encountered newly arriving lowlanders in their villages.

This researcher spoke of a time when migrants from neighboring colonies first came into their islands and were met by the natives with obliging, yet, hesitant demeanor. Based on the story, the migrants built their own dwelling places on the native lands and were soon living side by side with the indigenous families in the same communities. Not long after, however, the natives began avoiding their new neighbors and had quietly left their homes. They headed toward unoccupied tracts of lands and built their new houses away from the areas where the migrant families were present.

Fearful and evasive behaviors were in fact only two among a number of other negative responses that were observed among the tribal folks with respect to their social relationships with the non-natives. There are indeed other "unfriendly" actions and manners seemingly indicating the tribal folks' general disapproval of, if not aversion, to the lowlanders and their activities and practices.

Seeking to help explain these observations, some social researchers have recently probed deeper for answers through further investigations particularly into the social past of these groups of people and the possible causes of tension among them. The results were eye-opening. Among the findings, it

was clear that the tribal people's behaviors of fear and evasiveness were the manifestations of a conditioned emotional memory through many years of diffident and unstable association with the non-indigenous lowlanders. The former's behaviors had to be explained in terms of the early historical encounters and precedents between the cultural groups.

Within the framework of trauma, it is believed that the crisis experiences were assimilated and firmly deposited in the community's subconscious which in time affected their sense of well-being.

While commonly mistaken by outsiders as an inherent aspect of their cultural attributes as a tribe, the observed initial reaction of the *Lumads* (natives) to the newcomers, is in fact a natural outcome of a complex process—the former's constant exposure to and subconscious collection and storing of negative emotional impressions, characterized by offense, bewilderment, or animosity, in relating with intruders from the far-off islands.

Though at times such reactions are interpreted simply as a function of cultural dynamics between and among peoples, the field of psychology suggests that the mind contains emotional memories and response repertoires that are enacted spontaneously by the individual/s at specific and corresponding situations.

In the same way, the unpleasant experiences of the natives were repeated and internalized over time and have become the basis of their instinctive and spontane-

ous responses toward the non-natives in general. Thus, what had seemed to an uninformed observer as a puzzling behavior on the part of the Lumads toward the lowlanders was reinterpreted in its proper psychosocial as well as historical context. The behaviors have stemmed from a long history of imposed co-existence between the groups that was marked by ambivalent tolerance, and in which the lowlanders had posed a persistent but subtle threat to the homeland and very survival of the Lumads as a people.

Similar dynamics may be observed in the way the well-being and relationships of peoples of different cultural and religious backgrounds in some parts of Mindanao had also gone through episodes that were characteristically tense and conflict-ridden.

In the midst of cyclical social and political conflicts which are often rooted in structural issues such as landlessness, discrimination, poverty and oppression, the material and non-material resources of the community are being destroyed. A sense of mistrust, animosity and prejudice develop giving rise to cracks and eventually causing harm on the social protective factors of the civilian communities. The obtaining social conditions prevent the flourishing of human capacities, sound social ecology, and the meaningful practice of culture and shared values.

The violent events experienced by the poor communities in Mindanao were infused into the psyche of the residents. To some outsiders, the behaviors observed among some of them may be an indication of a form of "social trauma" gripping the individual and the collective way of life of the affected community. Within the framework of trauma, it is believed that the crisis experiences were assimilated and firmly deposited in the community's subconscious which in time affected their sense of well-being and are presently observed in psychological, emotional, physical and attitudinal manifestations.

The professional views and opinions that currently operate with respect to this particular consideration are as many as the environments and contexts that influence them. The psychosocial practitioners, mental health professionals, and service providers also studying the impacts of violence in multi-cultural communities in Mindanao have been using the notion of trauma in explaining the change in attitudes, behavior, feelings, capacities, and relationships of those who were exposed to a life-threatening event such as being caught in armed conflict and other man-made and/or natural disasters.

On the other hand, the experiences of community-based rehabilitation workers in the Philippines have shown that the understanding of the psychosocial effects of armed violence to displaced communities seem to proceed beyond the indicators offered by conventional medical and clinical psychological constructs and tools. Since the scope of suffering in these communities has taken a collective characteristic having transgenerational implications on culture, some contextual perspectives have emerged including a view on life and social relations, an interest on exploring the concept of social trauma from a multi-disciplinary standpoint, and the link between community-based healing, empowerment and development.

These "new" angles were noted on the first psychosocial conference organized by BALAY in Davao City in 2003, which aimed at stimulating further discussion towards a common understanding of psychosocial concepts and practice. The activity gathered participants from 17 NGOs and five government agencies from the Philippines and Denmark who were engaged in the fields of disaster emergency response, post-conflict psychosocial rehabilitation, and development work and peace advocacy in Mindanao. Representatives of the Myanmar refugee population as well as experts who have worked with peoples in the conflict-affected villages in Guatemala and Bangladesh were also present.

At the outset, the participants have agreed that the inputs and outputs of the conference will be treated as basis for the agencies' respective responses to a common understanding of psychosocial trauma. On the other hand, it was also agreed that further forums must be held in order to pursue a continuing discussion and come up with broader views and potential frameworks on the psychological and social implications of violence, especially as it impacts on conflict-affected non-western societies.

With this in mind, BALAY organized another round of dialogues through a psychosocial conference in 2005 which discussed the different views, perspectives, and experiences on the notion of social trauma in the context of armed vio-

lence. The conference centered on the descriptions of social trauma and the identifying characteristics and indicators—the notion of how social trauma is understood in different cultural settings as expressed in language, practices, and social relationships and the comparisons between the notions in different countries; and the identification of frameworks and approaches towards healing, empowerment, and development, in the context of human rights promotion and advocacy for peace and self-determination.

The participants and resource persons were those engaged in but not limited to the fields of psychosocial rehabilitation, community healing and development, anthropology, mental health profession, social work, intercultural dialog, and peace advocacy. Researchers and rehabilitation experts who have worked in other countries in similar contexts have attended as resource persons-participants. A panel of resource persons from various disciplines did their respective presentations and participated in the open discussions that followed.

The major inputs shared in the said conference have been summarized in this document.

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Infusing an Adaptive Approach to BALAY's Community Research Projects

BY GEORGE RADICS

BALAY has been working with displaced and tortured people in the Philippines for at least the past twenty years. In 2001-2003, some of the staff realized that many of the displaced were not experiencing the typically defined signs of trauma.

So the questions that were raised with regard to this issue were the following: 1) are there categories of social well-being more appropriate to this community than the social indicators of well-being that are currently in use?; 2) are the community members experiencing a disruption of their social being?; and 3) are the symptoms/disruptions manifested differently than would have been in other contexts? In other words, we questioned if there are different types of categories of social well-being among the cases on hand and whether there are different responses to the disruption of social well-being, or are there different types of trauma that exist in this particular project.

In order to surface the local understanding of social well-being, BALAY has employed a fusion of research methodology that draws upon sociological epistemology and indigenous methods of inquiry. We used several indigenous research methods, such as through *pagtatanong-tanong*—asking ques-

tions or asking around in an informal, semi-guided fashion; *pakikipagkuwentuhan* or storytelling; *pagdalaw-dalaw*—short informal visits, *napadaan lang po*—stopping by on the way to other people's homes, and lastly but not the least, *pakikipanuhayan*—living in with the household members to observe how life goes with the locals.

These are some of the research schemes that we either consciously or unconsciously used because when we conduct an interview we do not go directly from one place to the next. We also have to stop by and say hello to the people that we talked to the day before whenever their houses are on our way. We had tried to avoid long interviews because this could be very exhausting. We just worked our way through with *pagdalaw-dalaw* and *paglatanong-tanong*.

But a problem with doing research among the people was how to draw out insights in relation to the concepts being studied. If you ask people directly how they understand social trauma or well-being, it is usually very difficult to get answers. So, as a simple way of solving this problem, we decided to do *istorya ng buhay*, or the life history format, to capture the holistic picture of how they conceptualize their world and their place within it. By talking to the people within the community through the *istorya ng buhay*, we learned more essential things such as the significant events in their lives, the choices they made, and the consequences to the community. In the process, we are also able to extract the ideas people have regarding the issues of well-being or social trauma.

To facilitate the process of analysis, we focus on certain aspects of their lives which facilitate our understanding of certain social structures. Thus, although we do historical overview, there is also a bit of logical and sequential structuring, or an "exploration" on the facts. These are the categories that we focus on when we talk to individuals about their lives. We probe deeper into the information given. We also think over our own questions such as: "Why is something—an event or issue, important to them? What were the events, changes, or problems that happened before, during

and after a specific episode in their lives that could have influenced a decision or action? By walking around the answers, we get insights. By this, we could then start understanding why certain things and issues are significant to them.

If you ask people directly how they understand social trauma or well-being, it is usually very difficult to get answers. So, as a simple way of solving this problem, we decided to do *istorya ng buhay*, or the life history format, to capture the holistic picture of how they conceptualize their world and their place within it. By talking to the people within the community through the *istorya ng buhay*, we learned more essential things.

Another important category is the prominence of faith on the supernatural in the lives of the local folks. Religion is a very important aspect in the lives of the victims that we talked to. Every community, Christian, Muslim, or Lumad, has a different interpretation of spirituality and faith. We acknowledged this fact and avoided complicating this aspect by talking only about the things that will facilitate the *kuwentuhan*, like how faith manifests in each one's lives. More precisely, we do not really ask them; we just gather it casually from the stories they tell us.

During the 1960s, a discipline had emerged searching for indigenous terms that were more localized and based on how Filipinos live and prioritize certain life issues. At the center of the Filipino well-being model is *Diyos* (God), and then *sarili*, which is self. *Kapwa* is the relationship with one another, *bayan* is the relationship to your country, and lastly is *mundo* which is one's relationship to the world.

These are just examples of the indigenous terms. At present, the use of contextual and culture-based language continues to be very useful. Once we are able to capture all these rich local notions—the life histories and significant events, the

implications of the tag "insider" or "outsider" as used by the residents, the spirituality and social organization—we begin to help create an understanding of *kapayapaan* or social well-being in the life of the communities.

In order to understand the impacts of war and trauma in the lives of the displaced people, BALAY chose four *barangays* (communities), consisting of multicultural combinations of people to search for local understandings of social well-being or *kapayapaan*.

One of the reasons for choosing these communities had to do with the significance we saw in the ethnic composition they possessed. For instance in the village of Takepan, there were two major ethnic groups present- the Muslim and the Christians. We identified twelve individuals in Takepan and these were the ones with whom we did life histories, or the *istorya ng bubay*. The sessions on life histories were complemented with *dalaw-dalaw, kuwentuhan*. We also visited and talked to other people in the community to try to deepen our understanding of the locals in general.

Our research work as a whole is yet unfolding. Nevertheless, we are discovering important new facts and aspects. We do the most we could given what we have. There are certainly alternative and creative ways to learn well.

Finally, among our many reflections in relation to the research work we do among the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mindanao are the following. A multi-disciplinary approach widens and enriches our outlook. Sociology, for instance, allows us to focus on how external realities affect internal processes. By using an interpretive approach, we can deconstruct essentialist notions in terms, for example, of being able to see not just one but the combination of factors or reasons that cause trauma and the diverse traumatic manifestation to this that inspires our understanding of social well-being as well as social trauma. To end with, we have realized that by moving to localized interpretations, we can become more culturally sensitive to the needs of the communities we serve.

Socio-cultural and Peace-building Approaches to Healing, Empowerment and Development

By FR. ROBERTO C. LAYSON

Cheer despite struggle

When I drive around to visit some of the conflict-affected communities in Pikit, I normally wave my hand in greeting to anyone or any group I meet along the way. And spontaneously, typical of many countryside communities, these simple people would wave their hands back.

The children are even more expressive. They do not only wave back their hands to you. They also put up a big smile as well as an innocent and infectious giggle. If you are a stranger and you do not know the history of the place and the people, you would think they did not undergo the horrifying experience of armed fighting and violence. These people I am talking about are survivors of not one but four major wars in Pikit.

The wounds of war

There are several different elements of human deprivations that evacuees, whether indi-

vidually or collectively, must suffer when they leave their villages to run for safety. The evacuees are involuntarily uprooted from the environment that serves as their home. They are detached from the lands and rivers that provide their daily sustenance. They have to leave behind and lose many priceless possessions. They are separated from families, relatives, friends and neighbors who constitute a familiar system of support. They are deprived of their right to perform their rituals in the mosques or chapels. The children are prevented from going to school.

I harbor in memory many images of the wars and the stories of people who had lived through these wars.

In one evacuation center in the village of Lagunde, I had seen a lady nursing her little baby. When I approached and talked to her, she told me she had hiked for hours with the others who were also fleeing in the midst of gun bursts and mortar shelling. "I do not know where my father went. If you happen to see him please tell him we are here and that we are safe," she said with urgency and concern evident in her eyes.

Anxiety for a loved one who gets separated from or lost in the crowd when evacuees are in flight are sometimes worse than other kinds of fear. Suffering the absence of the person and the uncertainty of that loved one's fate is sometimes more strenuous and unbearable than grieving over someone's death.

At another time, I asked the children-evacuees what they prayed for after they had said their nightly rosary. They quickly answered, "For the war to stop." When I asked them again why they wanted the war to stop, they chorused, "Because we want to go home."

In Parang, during one of our consultations with the locals, we asked the participants to mention a painful experience they have had of the past. A hadji had said, "To me, it

was painful when I was unable to come to the mosque to worship because of the war."

Woes away from home

At the evacuation centers, the evacuees live in congested facilities or makeshift tents for prolonged periods of time. Aside from the deplorable conditions of the environment, they also have to bear with the uncertainty of getting the next meal for the family. They live with other evacuees whom they hardly know. They lose privacy and have to suffer embarrassed feelings doing their most personal activities such as washing themselves in plain sight of everyone in the camp. On top of these, they receive insults from unfeeling civilians in the communities who were not affected by war.

The children are most pitiful. I came across a young boy in an evacuation camp who was crying loudly and sounding like he was so full of heartache while his father was having a meal and seemed unmindful. When I asked what was the matter with the boy, the father said; "He wants some sardines, Father." I looked at the plate of the boy and saw there was only a small lump of rice and a pinch of salt on it.

At another time, I asked a female evacuee in a Buisan warehouse how she and her family coping with the others at the site. She said, "We are having a difficult time, we cannot sleep." When I asked why, she replied, "The place is too crowded and noisy." There were at least eight hundred of them—families packed together in that warehouse in Buisan.

The Pikit municipal plaza was also once designated as an evacuation center and became an instant "tent city." When heavy rains came, the whole plaza was submerged in knee-deep floods. I was there and saw water and dirt rising to-

gether. It was the largest and dirtiest sight of a "swimming pool" that I had ever seen. All kinds of rubbish floated in the midst of the people on the murky water.

Violence on one's doorstep

For the other people in this country, violence and many forms of brutalities are not a part of their reality. But not for those who live in Mindanao's outlying communities. Violence and aggression are always present and as real as the air they breathe. The wars explode right before their eyes. They witness the most violent scenes—mortar fires and artillery shelling, assault choppers and bomber planes dropping explosives, tanks rolling down the streets, huge military trucks with soldiers in full battle gears, and gun bursts all throughout the day and even at night. They lose loved ones amid this chaos; after that, they live in constant fear.

At the Llaguno hospital, we visited two patients, a mother and child. They were survivors from a mortar shelling operation launched by the military. The mother said she heard the sound of '*basukas*' (bombs) exploding at a distance. A mortar shell landed nearby and a shrapnel hit the two of them. Her body trembled as she was narrating the incident. She said she held the child closely to herself to protect her. Deeply moved by the story, we instinctively turned towards the child. It was an attempt to comfort her and show sympathy. But the little girl started to scream wildly. She was still too upset and scared from that last violent experience. She could have perceived us with suspicion and felt unsafe in our presence.

There is another story. A father's eyes moistened with tears of sorrow as he talked about what happened to his son during an attack by an armed group. He said that every time

the mortars fired from the fort in Pikit, his little boy would cry miserably until his lips turned purple. The mother could not pacify the boy and she too would cry in desperation. The crying spell that was afflicting the little boy was clearly caused

by a previous event. Sometime back, the rebels had suddenly rushed into their village, occupied the households and sent the residents away. While they were leaving, the little boy kept looking back towards the village. He saw the rebels firing their guns and was frightened and deeply affected by that violent scene, the father explained.

In times of war, invisible effects divide communities and promote adversarial relationships.

Problems such as interpersonal biases and prejudices, suspicions, mistrust, discriminations, anger and the like further increase the atmosphere of hostility already generated by the armed conflicts. Community polarization is created along religious and cultural lines.

Rift among residents

In times of war, invisible effects divide communities and promote adversarial relationships. Problems such as interpersonal biases and prejudices, suspicions, mistrust, discriminations, anger and the like further increase the atmosphere of hostility already generated by the armed conflicts. Community polarization is created along religious and cultural lines.

One day, I visited San Roque, a Christian village in barangay Nalapaan. I invited the civilians to join the Muslim evacuees in the nearby

school. The residents had quickly declined saying they did not want to mix with the Muslims. Feelings of distrust was very strong among the residents.

During the war in 2000 which was one of the biggest in Mindanao, some of the local church leaders disapproved of the help we gave to Muslim evacuees. In the same way, the barangay chairman of Kalakacan had scolded our volunteers for providing relief assistance to the Muslim evacuees. In a previous instance, he had also refused to receive the returning Muslim residents from the evacuation center. Some say that this official's prejudice on the Muslims may have been sparked by an earlier incident wherein a group of Moro rebels harassed the families in their village and took away their farm animals.

Dashed hopes

Not understanding why wars still happen despite the peace talks, not knowing when the fighting would end, not knowing how to start over after the fighting—these are some of the lingering problems faced by the evacuees. All of these create psychological wounds that do not seem to heal. These wounds prolong the agony of civilians long after they have returned to their homes.

"We are like a people sailing on a lost ship. We do not know when the journey will stop and where it will finally dock," expressed one evacuee.

I had talked to a teenager in an evacuation center in Buisan who said, "I had just returned home from the *madarasab*. I was surprised to see our personal belongings already packed in plastic sacks. My mother told us we had to evacuate. I was surprised because I wasn't looking ahead to any evacuation happening. A ceasefire was in effect at that time."

Dignity sheds first blood

Babu Kalima had put it in a very poignant language: "*Para kaming mga manok dito, Father, na naghibintay lang kung kailan pakainin.*" (We are like chickens here waiting to be fed.) Babu Kalima is a 65-year old grandmother. She was speaking about one of the indignities that the evacuees inevitably suffer.

When violence was escalating in Nalapaan and Panicupan, Babu Kalima and her family were forced to evacuate twice in just a week. Her house was completely burned down in the course of the battle between government troops and the MILF.

For Babu Kalima and all other victims of war, the episodes in the evacuation sites were humiliating experiences. The wars stripped them of the core elements of their humanity. When trauma develops, it takes on a collective form after some time. When public structures are destroyed such as school buildings, playgrounds, mosques and chapels, it produces a collective negative reaction from the community. "What does the government really want, kill all of us Muslims?" Babu Kalima had asked.

This is the nature of war—it is inhuman. It does not only take away the dignity of the person but also that of a people or community. In war, therefore, the first casualty is human dignity.

All victims

While we helped evacuate the civilians in barangay Bulol, I had stopped at one military detachment. I had a small conversation with one of the soldiers who said, "Father, last year we were also right here in this village. These are

the same people who evacuated then." He shook his head in regret and disbelief as he said this.

Always remembering that conversation, I have increasingly learned to see the war with fair compassion towards the forces from both sides who are involved. I have realized that when armed conflicts happen, it is not only the civilians who suffer the consequences as victims. In the process, the perceived aggressors turn out to be victims as well. The war traps everyone into its vicious cycle of violence. Hatred and vengeance goes on and on.

Regeneration in the ruins

Witnessing these various layers of victimization that ranged from personal, social, political, economic, cultural and religious, there were instances when I had to re-examine whether my perception of the evacuees as being helpless and powerless was valid at all.

While walking around the evacuation center at the Buisan warehouse, I passed by a family that was having a meal. "*Kain tayo* (Let us eat)," invited the father. He had stopped eating to greet me when he noticed I was peeping into their small makeshift tent. Then he continued, "*Pasensiya ka na, wala kaming ulam* (Sorry, there's only cooked rice and no viand).

On another occasion in 2001, I was about to leave an evacuation camp after a short visit when a young Moro boy engaged me in a conversation. Shortly, other male evacuees had joined in and the conversation lasted till dark.

It was then the eve of Ramadhan and was time for the evacuees to break the fast. They offered me coffee and biscuits at first then asked if I would stay on and eat sardines for meal. It was only afterward that I realized the family of the boy had planned to share with me some of the rice and sar-

dines they had prepared for dinner. So there I was sharing a meal with the evacuees.

During that dinner, I had a terrible feeling of guilt and shame: guilt, because what they gave me could have been another meal for the family on the next day; and shame, because I thought all along the evacuees were in desperate situation and would keep everything for themselves. I was wrong. While I myself only gave out from the abundance that I received from others, the evacuees shared generously from the little of what they had, and probably gave up the last remaining food they had saved.

These stories show that the evacuees are capable of keeping and practicing basic human goodness even when it is usually difficult to do so. They refused to give up decency and goodwill even amid the violence and callousness practiced by others because of the war.

Relations above discord

I have realized too that people refuse to give up long-held relations despite the war.

A group of women came to the convent in 2000 to ask for help. The spokesperson, a Muslim lady, had talked to me saying, "Father, I feel embarrassed to come to you. But I have three Christian evacuees in my house now. There is not enough food to feed all of them. I have run out of supply. That is the reason I came."

There are more accounts of this kind.

Evacuating Muslims in Barangay Balong left behind some of their belongings in the care of their Christian friends in the next barangay of Calawag. When the evacuees returned to their village after several months, they found their belongings safe and intact in the custody of their friends. The gesture of kindness between neighbors and the show of trust during the times of evacuation create opportunities for regaining confidence and repairing damaged relations.

Thus in 2000, the Christian and Muslim evacuees of barangay Panicupan decided to go together to the same evacuation center at the gymnasium in front of the parish church in Pikit. They stayed together in the same rooms. They also decided to return together when the war had subsided.

At another time, I was approached by a young Christian female evacuee. She asked me where the Muslim evacuees in Pagangan had evacuated. I told her that many of them were then staying in the tent city at the plaza. She asked permission to leave the camp, saying she was going to look for her Muslim friend there and give her a visit.

Creating new homes and playgrounds

Our parish grounds had sheltered the evacuees during one of the wars. Our volunteers would conduct play activities to distract the children from the sounds of mortar fires. During nights when the moon is full and the sky is bright, the kids would play by themselves in the open spaces at the parish compound. It felt strange for many kids that different languages were spoken and that communicating with each other was difficult. And yet, by simply learning the basic rules of the game and enjoying once again a normal activity, the difficulty was soon forgotten. They had fun playing with each other while the adults watched in quiet satisfaction.

One day, one of the leaders of the evacuees had approached me. He asked if they could put up a prayer room where the men could perform their ritual prayers. I told them it was okay. So he asked if I could lend out some tarpaulins they could use as partition between the room and the rest of the evacuation area. The prayer closet was built almost im-

mediately and was never empty of evacuees who wanted to pray especially during worship time.

I had also noticed female evacuees cleaning up the surrounding areas every morning. They did this as if these were their own spaces. They held on to order. They wished to return to the normal things that made them feel good even as each day was temporary and unsure. No wonder then, that even when a grenade once exploded at the roof of the gymnasium and had slightly injured some of them, they refused to be intimidated and had decided to stay on. No wonder that when they returned home to their respective barangays after six months, the kids and the adults looked sad. The kids said they would miss playing with the other kids. The adults were full of emotion too when they said goodbye to our volunteers.

Resolve and human rights

It is not easy to stand up and claim one's rights in times of war. Even if one sees and knows plainly that many of his or her rights are being violated, there is an overpowering tendency to keep silent in order to protect one's life. But in the case of the evacuees in Pikit and Pagalungan, keeping silent was not the only option. They chose to speak up.

In 2001 when external assistance for the displaced communities was beginning to run low, the evacuees decided to negotiate with the military through the local government to allow some of them to return to their villages and harvest some of the farm crops. At another time when a torching incident happened and twenty-seven houses were burned down by unidentified people in Makabual, the evacuees immediately reported it to the administrators of the local parish so that the church authorities could help them take the matter up with the security forces and the local government for appropriate response.

Courage and the resolve to defend one's rights was shown at other instances.

On April 2003, a group of evacuees went to Manila to have a dialogue with the President and the military generals. Through the dialogue, they wanted to urge the President and her officials to immediately bring to a halt the violence that was gripping Pikit. The evacuees later returned to Pikit to await government response. But when no action was made, around eight thousand evacuees went to the streets and occupied the portion of the Pikit and Pagalungan Cotabato-Davao national highway in June, 2003. This event became known as the "Bakwit Power." Its objective was to press government to heed calls for a local ceasefire. In the following month of July, the demand was finally granted—a ceasefire was declared.

Evacuees as survivors

My purpose in telling these stories is to show that the perception that evacuees become helpless in the face of violence and human suffering is incorrect. On the contrary, resourcefulness and strength were in fact shown by these people. The common belief that they have very little control of their lives is simply not true. They are not merely victims; they are survivors, too. They are not just objects of attention; they are subjects amply in touch with their lives. They are wounded and dehumanized, but they are able to preserve their humanity. They act

The perception that evacuees become helpless in the face of violence and human suffering is incorrect. On the contrary, resourcefulness and strength were in fact shown by these people. The common belief that they have very little control of their lives is simply not true. They are not merely victims; they are survivors, too.

humanely and better than some of us who are not directly and as much affected by the armed conflicts.

Where did the evacuees get this power? Where did they get their strength and resiliency? Some coping behaviors of the evacuees who went through the horrors of war are even more intriguing. How come they look normal now as if nothing bad had happened to them? Have they totally forgotten their traumatic experiences? How did they cope with the painful past?

Faith rather than control

When the person is not in full control of his or her life, he or she is not himself anymore. Something is wrong with that person. The best way therefore to become oneself again is to recover one's control over one's life. But to achieve this, to regain control, one has to reach a certain degree of understanding of what is going on with his life. Only then, can he or she be free. But when control is no longer possible, only faith in something greater than human reason - in something that is strangely able to take charge of things totally and unfailingly, carries us through.

When I visited Babu Kalima at the evacuation center in Batulawan, I told her that she needed to go home to Nalapaan where we planned to start a rehabilitation project for the returning residents. "Many are getting sick and I am afraid some will just die here," I told Babu. She looked at me with a smile on her face and replied, "Father, we will not die here. Allah will not allow us to die here."

The Muslim evacuees who had improvised a prayer room, along with the Christian evacuees who prayed the rosary every night—they may have undergone terrible suffering. But

they were to a certain extent in control of their lives. It was not necessarily because they fully understood what was happening around them. It was because they have submitted their fate to God/Allah. Wrongly or correctly, that was the choice they have made, and it gave them a sense of freedom. No wonder, even in the evacuation centers, you could still hear the jokes and see the smiling faces of the evacuees. They chose to prevail over their plight.

Comfort in family and social relations

The presence of familiar and reliable relations is also a source of strength. During one of the wars, some of the evacuees did not stay in the evacuation centers. They stayed in the homes of relatives and friends even if this meant they would not be prioritized in the distribution of rations. The host homes provided emotional and psychological well-being more than economic security to the evacuees.

In the 2000 war, at least seven Muslim families were accommodated by the barangay secretary of Panicupan, a Christian, in his house. Some of the families stayed inside the house while some put up makeshift tents in the backyard.

On the next year in 2003, the Lumads, Muslims and Christians in Baruyan, Nalapaan, did not leave their village when war broke out again. Those residing in the boundary and the remote areas simply congregated in one part of the village where they put up temporary shelters. It was there where they found comfort and security; they were surrounded by the presence of one another.

During the war in 2003, the whole community of Panicupan refused to abandon their village. They firmly stood by an earlier declaration they had made proclaiming their

community as a Space for Peace. Some Christian residents, however, would then still spend the night at the nearby elementary school. Some of the Muslim residents volunteered to accompany them as they moved into the school for the night. "We wanted to give them company, Father, so that they would somehow feel secure," said the barangay Captain who was a Muslim.

The stories of these evacuees are about the cultural and human values of hospitality, solidarity, and most of all, faith in the Almighty. These have become their sources of strength during the difficult times.

Visible and invisible effects

The framework of the Space for Peace is simple. The war has created visible and invisible effects in the lives of people regardless of whether they are combatants and non-combatants. We must address both effects on all the affected. The Space for Peace communities which started in Nalapaan in 2000 (and extended to Panicupan and then expanded to five more barangays in Ginatilan, Lagunde, Dalengaoen, Takepan and Kalakacan), were a product of this rehabilitation and development framework.

The war caused socio-economic problems on the community. The effect it had on the relationships of people was even more damaging. What we tried to do was address the visible effects by implementing socio-economic projects. This was the easiest part of rehabilitation. The most difficult part was to heal the invisible effects underlying the surface - these were feelings of hatred and anger, traumas caused by dehumanization, increased prejudice, lack of self-confidence, polarization, and worst, the breakdown of people's faith in the peace process and the possibility of peace in general.

Reconciliation—sharing a common space for healing

We started by negotiating with the key actors, the military and the MILF. We succeeded in convincing them to make commitments regarding the peace declaration. In negotiating for the Space for Peace, we did not insist on the withdrawal of combatants. We only appealed to their human goodness by asking them to spare our barangays from the hostilities and to leave it out as military battleground. The seven barangay chairpersons sat face to face with the MILF Central Committee and the brigade commander of the Philippine Army, in negotiating for the agenda of peace for their respective villages.

When it was time to launch the Space for Peace, we made it a point to invite representatives from both sides of the armed conflict. Their mere presence in the gathering restored the confidence of the people in the peace process. It gave the community a sense of security. The event was not just about installing a peace zone. In a deeper sense, it was the start of a process of reconciling the perpetrators with the victims. It was a healing process not only for the civilians but also for the combatants who were also somehow victims of the war.

Alone no longer

As we worked to address both the visible and invisible effects, many NGOs eagerly supported us. Their presence was seen as encouraging by the community not only in relation to the financial assistance they extended but also in terms of the gesture of solidarity they demon-

strate in our journey towards community rebuilding.

For the duration of the project partnerships, some staff-members of the NGOs would even stay in the community and dwelled for brief periods in the homes of the residents. Friends working for local and international organizations visited the homes of people in the communities and provided emotional and psychological support. The residents regarded their visits as an expression of confidence in the Space for Peace and as an acceptance of the community into a wider society.

Redressing the offense

Countless acts of injustice were done to the civilians on account of the wars. The damaged properties, destroyed farms, work animals lost or killed, not to mention the lives and opportunities missed, were only some of the results of the unjust actions.

Our NGO partners helped us respond and recover from these damages and losses by implementing the appropriate socio-economic projects such as core shelters, day-care centers, seeds supply among the farmers, livestock dispersal, agricultural equipment, post-harvest facilities, water facilities and latrines, health education, and scholarship programs for the direct victims of violence. These interventions did not only have economic value. They also served as a form of reparation for the damages and therefore an act of rectifying the injustice committed against the people. There is no real reconciliation without first dispensing justice.

Reclaiming collective dignity

A most remarkable part of the people's effort in reclaiming their collective dignity was the resolve to assert it. Having realized this, we asked our partners not to put up promotional billboards of their organization in the vicinity of the communities as these would in a way only advertise the people's dependency on them. We believed that having the ads around would only continue the process of humiliation suffered by the evacuees. If billboards were to be installed at all, this should instead be to acknowledge the community residents themselves and their collective efforts toward recovery. This way, it is the people who will own the success.

Despite our reservations regarding the billboards, we recognized the NGOs for the good things they have shared as facilitators in the process. There is now a sense of pride among the inhabitants of GINAPALAD TA KA Space for Peace. Many poor families have accommodated fellow Filipino and foreign visitors into their homes. During these visits, the host community would always offer simple and sincere hospitality which visitors accepted with pleasure and thankfulness.

Rebuilding the sacred places

The destruction of the sacred structures during the armed hostilities not only violated God's abode but also damaged the soul of the community.

The first thing the people of Nalapaan did when they returned to their community was to rebuild the mosque, chapel and 'bentana'—a place of worship for the Manobo. To them,

the sacred places of worship are not just mere symbols; they serve as gravitational centers where the vital life of the com-

The destruction of the sacred structures during the armed hostilities not only violated God's abode but also damaged the soul of the community... For them, the sacred places of worship are not just mere symbols; they serve as gravitational centers where the vital life of the community revolves. The act of rebuilding these structures is actually an act of re-establishing the center of power and of restoring the cultural and religious identity of the community as a people.

munity revolves. The act of rebuilding these structures is actually an act of re-establishing the center of power and of restoring the cultural and religious identity of the community as a people. Hence, we also included this aspect in our rehabilitation program.

Restoring social cohesion

To strengthen social cohesion and restore community spirit, we did not create new structures but rather acknowledged and entered into the already existing Barangay Development Council. By doing so, we have placed the primary responsibility of leading and rebuilding in the hands of the local leaders.

We popularized the tri-people arrangements and returned to the traditional practice of '*bayanihan*'. In sitio Baruyan, Nalapaan, a solar dryer was completed with the help of Muslim, Christian and Lumad men who worked together within the *bayanihan* tradition. In the

same spirit, the women cooked for their meals in the same spirit. The solar dryer now also serves various other func-

tions, for example, as a basketball court for the community's youth and a playground for the children. Sometimes it is used as a space for benefit dances.

The goat dispersal project managed by the local women was designed to facilitate sharing among the goat raisers themselves and among the other potential raisers in the community. The sharing mechanism is easy to employ. The Muslim raisers in sitio Maguid have given out some of the young of the parent goats to the Christian residents in sitio San Roque so they too could breed and raise their own animals. Once the goats gave birth to new ones, these were given away to others. The cycle is repeated over and over again until as many as possible have benefited from the project.

In the summer of the previous year, a month-long basketball tournament was organized by the barangay chiefs of the communities. The games were scheduled and played in every barangay. For many of the young players, it was their first opportunity to go and visit some of the other barangays in the GINANAPALAD TA KA. It was also their first time to play with the other young boys especially those of different religious upbringing.

Truth telling towards healing

The Culture of Peace Seminar (COP) is more than just a class session for lecture and discussion. An important element of the module it uses is analyzing inter-relational conflicts by means of revisiting the past. By reviewing Mindanao's history, the participants of the seminar including the Christians, Muslims and the lumads, are made aware of the historical events that produced unjust consequences among the inhabitants of this large region. The COP is thus a form of unveiling and promoting the truth.

Another important part of the seminar is the victim-offender encounter. In this activity, the participants sit on a circular formation and listen to the person recounting a personal story that has caused or continue to cause pain and grief. The exercise would usually end up with powerful realizations. One of such realizations is that cultural and religious differences have caused hurts between and among them directly or indirectly, and that often, they were not aware this had happened. Ultimately, the participants would also realize that all of them were only victims of past and present circumstances. A participant who has had a conflict or issue with another would then try to reconcile with that person. The act of reconciliation would be dramatized either by embracing or shaking each other's hands. They conclude the session by performing a "cleansing and releasing" ritual through an interfaith prayer.

Children as special zones of peace

Children constitute the most vulnerable group that is affected by the armed conflicts. In view of this, organizations like BALAY and Balik Kalipay have introduced the play and art therapy for the children who were traumatized by the wars. Aside from this kind of therapy, they have also put up additional day care centers and provided educational materials for the local students. Peace camps were organized in which young participants were actively involved. Last year, the children were at the center of the celebration for the launching of GINAPALAD TA KA. At the same time, they were declared as Zones of Peace.

Children are a blessing—they are the center of affection and a joy to the family. Giving them special place and atten-

tion in rehabilitation projects is a way of bringing back their special place in the community. The joy of the children is also the joy of the parents. The healing of the children is also the healing of the community.

Religious values and community celebrations

For many people, religion plays a very important role in their lives. It is the source of their strength. It guides them in their day to day interaction with the other members of the community. However, religion could also be manipulated and used by some to sow conflict.

In the Space for Peace, religion is used as a source of peace. Hence, we promote joint religious festivities such as the '*Duyog Ramadhan*' of the Muslims, the '*Duyog Pasko*' of the Christians and '*Duyog Samayaan*' of the Manobos. We have also conducted inter-religious activities to promote understanding, respect and acceptance of other religious beliefs. We formed different inter-religious councils in the seven barangays of GINAPALAD TA KA Space for Peace in recognition of the important role of religious leaders in promoting peace and dialogue in the community.

Laughing about uncertainty— courage amidst chaos

In the summer of 2004, I had the chance to visit the locality of Paidu Pulangi in Pikit. This barangay was struck by two calamities in 2003. One was man-made, an armed conflict. The other was a natural disaster, a big flood, which submerged the whole barangay in massive waters for days. While driving towards the barangay, I saw

kids putting up small houses in the middle of the field. I presumed that the kids were playing '*bahay-bahayan*,' until I noticed that they were actually re-enacting a real evacuation scene. The small houses were imitations of the '*bakwit*' tents they had seen in real life. The only difference was that, this time the children were no longer crying because of fear or pain. They were laughing and obviously having fun playing out a true-to-life scene—a reality which may not end soon but one that they are learning to overcome.

Healing the Wounds of War

BY PROF. ANGELINA P. HERRERA

My study of the healing stories of ten Filipino war survivors from Pikit North Cotabato aims to explore healing and reconciliation as a phenomenon from the real experiences of these ten people in different circumstances of trauma from war. It is my hope that the findings from this study will affirm your experiences and theories of healing and provide you with new insights and fresh inspiration for your work.

The phenomenological approach was the research method used to unveil the "life world" of the respondents. The phenomenological interview, together with the narrative story telling approach, was the main technique for data gathering. The interview used open-ended questions to elicit narratives - to draw out the respondents' personal experiences, along with the reflections and meanings they attach to their experiences. As the researcher, I tried to be an effective instrument in the research by immersing myself in the whole process and by practicing focused listening not only to the co-researchers' stories, but also to my own inner thoughts and processes. I conducted field research and spent several days in Pikit, visiting the respondents in their homes and accompanying them as they went back through their healing stories. Each interview turned out to be a sacred meeting of hearts and minds.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and then written as ten case studies which describe the participants' experiences of war trauma, their process of healing from trauma

and the role of the family. The case studies used texts directly taken from the transcriptions. All efforts were done to preserve the authenticity and real texture of each testimony. These case studies were reviewed, edited and approved by the participants.

The methods of analysis used were: immersion in the data, bracketing or suspension of biases and suppositions, critical reflection, surfacing of themes, clustering into core themes, and intuitive synthesis. I repeatedly immersed myself in the stories, reading them again and again but stepped back at various points to gather my thoughts and to let the themes, patterns and meanings emerge. All except one respondent chose to use their real names.

The ten respondents are grouped into four clusters:

1. **The Dalingaoen Women**, who include four women, all Christians, from the Barangay of Dalingaoen, a village that is in the 'path of war' because the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) and the military frequently cross paths in this community. Dalingaoen was the site of a hostage taking incident by the MILF in November of 2001, which left several people dead and many houses burned. Lee, 47 years old, Merlie, 48 and Lumen, 45 are mothers from poor families with eight, two and six children, respectively. They lost loved ones, their homes and livelihood because of the war. Adel, 55 years old, the fourth Dalingaoen respondent is a professional and a member of the Pikit Parish Team. Her family is middle class but was nevertheless not spared from the ravages of war.
2. **The Andik Family**. Two members of this Muslim family, Bapa Kadtong Andik, 45 years old, and his daughter Taya, 23, are participants in the study. Bapa Andik is a prominent Kagawad of Barangay Nalapaan and an active leader in the peace programs of the Pikit parish. He has seen many wars since his childhood. His family has lost several members and has experienced repeated displacements and extreme poverty due to war. Taya is an active woman leader in their village and a staff of BALAY. A young mother

with two children, Taya talks of the effects of war on her family and the families she serves. Barangay Nalapaan was the pilot barangay for the Parish's Culture of Peace Seminars and Space for Peace Programs. It has served as a model, which has been copied by six other Barangays in Pikit and is inspiring many communities and groups all over the Philippines.

3. **The Peace Team.** This refers to the members of the Pikit Parish Inter-religious Rehabilitation team which I call 'the Peace Team'. Bapa Butch Gilman, 52, and Bapa Mike Alon, 44, are Muslim leaders with seven and eight children respectively. Bapa Butch is a former MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) commander turned peacemaker. He is in charge of advocacy in the Peace Team and is a council leader of the Mindanao People's Caucus, a coalition of peace NGOs and peace movements in Mindanao. He is also a founder of the Mahid Multi-Purpose Cooperative. Bapa Mike is a farmer who lost his mother in war. His family suffered heavy economic losses due to war. These two Muslim fathers speak of their families' war trauma and the plight of the Muslim people especially Muslim children victims of war. Alfredo ('Bibot') Recana, 45 years old, is a Christian farmer-leader and church worker. He has four children. When he was a child, he suffered irreversible losses when war uprooted his family from his home and disrupted his schooling. He joined the NPA and the Alsa Masa movement in his search for solutions. His search for peace led him to join the Peace team. Adel Nayal, earlier mentioned in the Dalingaoen series, joins the Peace Team as the fourth member.
4. **Father Robert Layson**, 45 years old, is a cluster by himself because of his unique role in the healing of the others and his experiences that cross both the Muslim and Christian side of war trauma. Mentioned by all the respondents as a key supporting factor in their healing, Father Bert is the Catholic Parish Priest of Pikit and the Coordinator for the Inter-Religious Dialogue of his congregation, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI). He is the prime

mover of the rehabilitation programs for the war-torn communities of Pikit. He formed inter-religious communities of volunteers and an inter-religious parish team to spear-

head the peace programs in Pikit. He is a co-chairman of the Mindanao People's Caucus. Father Bert has suffered the loss of loved ones, (members of his 'family' structure) and severe war trauma as a child and as a young priest. He has transformed his trauma into a seedbed for peace.

War is the 'great traumatizer'. The trauma and its effects are massive. War damages family unity and destroys bonds of friendships. War erodes people's sense of power and control. War destroys rational thinking. War undermines people's sense of dignity.

Summary of findings, themes and meanings

The analyses of the narrative accounts revealed the essence of healing as a multi-leveled, multi-dimensional and immensely profound phenomenon. The findings from this study may be grouped into six themes: (1) Healing is a process of repairing and making whole again; (2) Healing is a process of 'coming home'; (3) Healing is a spiral process; (4) Healing is a complementary and cyclical process; (5) Healing has a spiritual and divine dimension; and (6) Healing is peace come to life.

These themes are interconnected.

1. Healing is a process of repairing and making whole again

War is the 'great traumatizer'. The trauma and its effects are massive. The narratives bring out four major areas of war's destructive impacts. War damages family unity and de-

stroys bonds of friendships. War erodes people's sense of power and control. War destroys rational thinking. War undermines people's sense of dignity.

Corollary to these four areas of destruction, four sub-themes of healing emerge under the first major theme. These sub-themes are: (a) Healing is a process of connecting and bringing together; (b) Healing is a process of empowerment, of regaining power lost; (c) Healing is a process of restoring rational understanding; and (d) Healing is a process of redeeming dignity and self-esteem. These sub-themes intertwine with each other like threads in a tapestry. For better appreciation of the dynamics of the healing process, the dimensions of war trauma are also analyzed and described in the study.

Merriam Webster (1948) defines healing as the process of "curing or repairing a derangement or injury; restoring to a sound or healthy state, to its original purity or integrity." The English word 'healing' comes from the words, 'helen', 'heelen', and 'heilen', which mean 'whole'. Healing, then, is the process of making whole again by repairing the damages of war on the physical and emotional levels. Mike affirms this repeatedly when he talks of the importance and interconnection between the two aspects of healing, the material and the psychological.

a. Healing is a process of connecting and bringing together

War destroys relationships between people. War separates persons and families and divides peoples and communities. War damages or disrupts precious bonds of friendships. Poignant examples are the broken friendships of Fr. Bert & Quezon, Mike and his Christian friends.

This separation is first of all experienced by families. This separation magnifies the torture from war that was experienced by the Pikit respondents. They experience this separation during the initial chaos of war. For some, the separation lasts for some time and causes extreme stress and pres-

sure on the family. Mike describes this pain. "*Yun pamilya kung nabiwalay yung mga anak, naguguluban*" (The family experiences turmoil when the children are taken apart from them).

This violent separation is not only experienced by families, but also occurs on the community level. At the outbreak of war, neighbors who normally live side by side in harmony and peace, suddenly become afraid and suspicious of each other. Andik laments the change in his community, the loss of friendship between Muslims and Christians, which used to be very strong in his father's generation. "*Yung mga matanda noon, naging magkaibigan*" (The elder ones then became good friends). Mike, Butch and Adel, echo this regret over the loss of this peaceful paradise which prevailed over Mindanao, before the great intruder, 'war', came into their community.

Thus, one important dimension of healing is the repair of broken relationships. Even if the relationship with the presumed 'perpetrators' is difficult to repair immediately; an important step in healing is connecting with people. The respondents experienced this in the different healing steps they undertook. Reuniting the family is always an urgent step. Lumen highlights this value of family cohesion and unity. "*Dapat magkaisa ang pamilya. Hindi dapat magkabiwalay*" (The family should stay together. They must not separate). The Dalingaoen women and Taya also found it important to talk with friends and to connect with other survivors through seminars. Lumen, Merlie and Lee recall the healing space they found in that seminar in Midsayap where they linked arms with other women war survivors. These mothers also observe the healing effect of the children's camp where their children had the chance to connect and find comfort in the company of other young victims of war. For both adults and children, it was such a healing experience to discover that "they were not alone" in the pain.

It is not enough to connect with friends. It is also important to connect with the 'other side'. Merlie highlights this when she gives special significance to the fact that Muslim

and Christian women found a 'meeting point' in that Midsayap seminar. All respondents took the difficult but crucial step of 'crossing the borders'. The Dalingaoen women live side by side with Muslim neighbors. Although divided during actual war, they and their neighbors would slowly come back to their multicultural community once the fighting subsides. The sight of the suffering of their Muslim neighbors healed their anger and mistrust and facilitated the blooming of compassion in their hearts. The same thing happened to the members of the Peace Team. Butch and Mike, who are devout Muslims, like Bibot and Adel, who are Christians, experienced this 'shared pain' and formed a common realization of the once considered 'enemy'. "*Biktima din pala sila!*" (They were victims, too). They came together to form an inter-religious team for the rehabilitation of the war torn communities and families of their town.

Since war widens the gap between groups of people and breeds blanket hatred and judgments, it is important for war survivors to once again encounter people from the 'other side' as persons. For healing to occur, it is vital that people could transcend their divisive 'labels' by coming together and experiencing again their common humanity. Thus, the inter-religious color is seen in all the efforts of Fr. Bert and the Peace Team— inter-religious dialogues, inter-religious Culture of Peace seminars, and inter-religious economic projects. The interfaith celebrations are central to their programs. If we look at the importance of faith in the lives of these people, the bridging of religions takes a special role. And for this task, the value of respect is paramount. Fr. Bert declares it as a guiding principle. "*Kabit anong relihiyon, tama ka rin*" (There is some truth in each and every religion). He models it with his life. Bibot echoes this when he says, "*Ang mahalaga ay paggalang*" (Respect for one another is most important).

Fr. Bert, as an Ilonggo, serves a special role in the healing process of Butch, Mike and Andik. Fr. Bert's sincerity and genuineness affects them and allows them to slowly heal their trauma from cruel acts done to them by Ilonggo war perpetrators. Thus, even if Mike admits difficulty in forgiving

the Christians who stole their land, he speaks with joy and pride of his friendship with Fr. Bert, who visits him at his home. The healing is mutual. His friendship and brotherhood with Butch and Mike likewise heals Fr. Bert from his anger towards Muslims whom he used to call, "the killers of Bishop Ben."

**b. Healing is a process of empowerment;
of regaining power lost**

War destroys and corrupts people's sense of power. For the victims, the experience of overwhelming fear, anxiety and terror produces a profound sense of powerlessness that causes paralysis in many forms. Some of the respondents experienced physical paralysis from the initial shock of war. Merlie collapsed and lost her consciousness. Taya's mother was unable to walk. Lee developed hypertension and other ailments. Bodily functions were disrupted. Many respondents talked about their sleepless nights and loss of appetite.

There is also emotional paralysis. The first sounds of gunfire sent everyone in a state of panic. Even after arriving in a temporary shelter, Lumen was in a state of shock for a while. Adel and Lee went through depression. The four women admit being unable to do normal household chores for a while. Andik continues working for the community but starts to develop physical and emotional symptoms of 'war fatigue'. From his own account, he is aging fast because of his trauma. He attributes this to his persistent worries about the future of his family and his people. Taya, as the eldest sibling, absorbs the worries and is also aging fast. The 'tyrannical memories' described by Fr. Bert also caused paralysis, trapping war victims into a state of immobility and helplessness.

Even families experienced some kind of paralysis. Taya remembers war disrupting their normal family routine. "*Gabi gabi, takot na takot kami. Hindi kami nag-iingay. Maaga kami kumain*" (We were fearful at nighttime. We did not make any noise. We ate dinner very early). Bibot missed a normal family life for several years as his family lived in two separate homes—his mother and siblings, including himself living in

Surigao and his father and the other siblings in far away Agusan. Indeed war freezes life for families, while robbing them of a normal future for the children. Taya reveals this painful truth, "*Kung bindi siguro nag-evacuate may napundar na kami...sana para sa pag-aaral ng mga kapatid ko*" (If only we did not have to evacuate, we could have already saved up and owned things we needed; my siblings could have attended school). All the parents in the study- mothers and fathers alike, lament the disruption of their children's studies. Education is a prime source of power, security and stability that they long to grant to their children. Butch worries that without a sound education, the Muslim children are "becoming like robots."

Perhaps, the loss of power is most strongly felt by the families in the economic domain. The repeated wars and displacements have destroyed their livelihood, plunged them into poverty and robbed them of stability. Taya says, "*Talagang naghirap kami. Kabit bata pang saging kinakain*" (We became very poor. Even very small children had to eat only bananas in order to survive). Andik adds, "*Walang stable. Hindi kami makagawa ng pangmatagalang plano*" (There was nothing stable. We could not make long-term plans – Andik). This overwhelms Andik and makes him cry in desperation, "*Meron pa bang katapusan?!*" (Will there be an end to all this?).

The loss of power is drawn from the respondents' experience of danger at close range, visceral experiences of war that torture the senses—the sound of gunfire, sirens and tanks, the sight of soldiers and heavy artillery, the smell of smoke from burning houses. Fear and hunger combined produce physical torture. "*Nagahutang ako sa hangin. Sobrang nerhyos. Walang kain umaga tanghali*" (It was like I was floating in the air. I was very nervous. We went on empty stomachs from morning until noon – Lumen) "*Hindi kami nakakain, mula umaga...isang araw pa...isang gabi pa*" (We were not able to eat since that morning. Another day, another night had passed us by – Andik). Danger is also felt from the experience of death—from seeing dead bodies in the streets

to experiencing loved ones violently snatched away by war. Some even had to endure the gruesome experience of witnessing the killing of their loved ones. The feeling of danger becomes so near that death seemed inevitable. Andik cries, "*Parang kamatayan na namin yun*" (It was like it was our time to die). Even the seemingly invincible Adel also feared for her life. "*Sabi ko, siguro buli na ito*" (I said to myself, "Maybe this is the last"). People and families are left helpless in the face of this imminent threat to their lives. The torture is magnified as one lies in the underground foxhole, with the chaos of war exploding all around. With no escape possible, the haunting images of danger become blown up in one's mind so that one feels the imaginary but also real possibility of being the next victim. Andik reveals, "*Natakot kami baka madamay, baka tayo naman o anak natin*" (We feared getting drawn into the fighting. We could be the next victims, if not our own children). Some of them became direct victims of violence. Lee and family were taken hostage and were made to witness the brutal murder of their father and relatives. Adel and her father were trapped in their home for hours.

The terror is recurring, happening not only once but again and again. These fearful memories are stored in the deep recesses of the mind and take the magnitude of a monster that rises from the person's consciousness and causes recurring trauma at the slightest provocation. Merlie narrates, "*Basta maggabi na, pag magtabol yung aso...iniisip ko kung saan ako lulusot*" (When night falls and when the dog barks, I would instinctively think of a place to hide). This brings to mind the special vulnerability of children. The fear is already overwhelming for the adults. One can then imagine the intensity of torture on the mind of a child that is still fragile and unable to process.

All of these, the visceral experience of real danger and threat to their lives and the recurrence of terror and trauma, impress on people's minds the magnitude of war. The result is a feeling of powerlessness against this monstrous plague called 'war'. A hallmark characteristic of trauma, for both

child and adult victims, is the extreme feeling of helplessness aroused (Monahon, 1993). The suddenness, unpredictability, and overwhelming nature of the experience combine to create terror.

The feeling of powerlessness also comes from knowing that "war has its own rules." War spares no one. It kills even those who are already in positions of authority, like Andik's uncle and Bishop Ben. Thus, when Andik found himself and his family under suspicion of being rebels, he experienced real panic, "*Natakot talaga ako! Baka magkagyer, sabihin nila barilin na lang natin ito dahil panabon ng gyera naman ngayon*" (I was terrified at the possibility of war. I feared that I will be killed just like that because it was a time of war anyway).

Monahon (1993) states that the victims of trauma need a safe release of feelings, recovery of a sense of mastery and control in life, and restoration of a sense of trust in themselves and the future. The Pikit respondents described many ways by which their healing process helped them to reclaim their power. First, there was a need to 'normalize' in order to free oneself from the paralyzing effects of war. All respondents saw the need for some diversion, to 'keep busy.' The men took to work in the farm and attempted to find a livelihood. The women immediately turned to their gardens for the soothing effect of their flowers. Then, there was a need to 'release' overpowering fear, anxiety and pain from the trauma. This they did by talking to friends, disclosing and telling their stories. Merlie found it helpful to make a drawing of her experiences and feelings during the seminar given by BALAY. Fr. Bert releases his own tensions of the war by writing stories and articles which he compiled in a book. "*Na-unload ko masamang karanasan ko*" (I wrote...to unload the terrible memories). The women all give credit to the debriefing sessions and counseling they received from the BALAY staff, which helped them to bring out their heavy feelings and to 'breathe'. Lumen shares, "*Gumaan ang loob ko*" (I felt more lighthearted after the processing).

Another way of regaining power was learning to 'handle' or 'manage' the conditions brought about by war. They could not stop the war from repeating but they could at least develop some degree of 'preparedness' for the next war. Merlie's sons advised her to be alert. Healing also comes in the form of handling the effects of trauma—especially anger and fear. The women resorted to self-care and self-talk. McCarthy (1998) calls this 'auto-suggestion', which is the practice of changing one's behavior through giving directions to one's mind in the form of silently verbalized orders. It is a way to learn to consciously program your subconscious mind by telling it how to react. Merlie is an example. "*Ngayon, kinakalma ko ang sarili ko. Sabi ko ganun, tingnan ko muna iyong mga kapitbahay ko; kung magtakbo sila, takbo rin ako*" (I tried to calm myself down. I looked out to see what my neighbors were doing. If I saw them fleeing, I would also flee). Reidhart (cited in McCarthy, 1998) mentions the method of thought stopping, which is a way of stopping the internal voices that keep us anxious. Lee demonstrates this. "*Tapos pinipilit kong buwag masyado isipin. Sabi ko, kung magpatalo ako sa emosyon baka kung mapaano pa ako. Kawawa yung mga anak ko*" (I struggled not to think too much about the cause of my feelings. I thought that if I let my emotions get the better of me, I could bring harm to myself. I felt sorry for my children). Through these methods, the women experienced healing in the form of increasing capacity to handle their fear. "*Menos-menos na ang nerbyos*" (My nervous feelings were lessened – Merlie) "*Nakokontrol ko na*" (I have gained some level of control- Lumen) Meanwhile, the men found ways to take hold of their anger. Bapa Butch calls this 'self-control'. He and the other men acknowledged an increasing ability to handle their reactions towards war trauma. "*Hindi na ako na traumatize kasi marunong na ako kung paano*" (I have learned to face my trauma because I already know how it is to be traumatized; it is not a strange thing anymore). Fr. Bert experienced liberation and transcended his fear of death. "*Hindi na ako natakot mamatay*" (I don't fear death anymore). In this way, healing means regaining control over their bodies and their feelings. Dialogues with the 'other side' are also

very helpful in working out issues and conflicts and dealing with their anger in a constructive way.

Here we witness the natural coping ability of humans to deal with crisis. The texts are replete with examples of the inner resources of the respondents that they used to recover and heal from the trauma of war. Some of the inner resources they displayed were courage, determination, resourcefulness, assertiveness, and acceptance. The natural will to survive pushes them to stand up and reclaim the power over their lives. Even Lee who is left with a heavy burden after the war takes hold of her new situation. She is learning how to manage their livelihood. This is consonant with McCarthy's (1998) premise: "Death places each of us in a situation where we are forced to leap or be pushed head-on into the unknown." The death of one's spouse brings up issues of self-definition and prompts the need for developing a new identity (Murray, cited in McKenry, 1994).

The Pikit narratives are examples of how the members of a family rally and gather their inner resources in order to rise from the crisis caused by war. Burr (1973, cited in McKenry, 1994) described this process in terms of a family's 'regenerative power,' denoting a family's ability to recover from stress or crisis.

There are other forms of 'standing up to war'. One way is to 'question.' Adel and Fr. Bert vented out their recurring questions about war. "*Bakit may gyera, Bakit ganito nag-aaway ang mga tao?*" (Why does war happen? Why do people have to fight each other?). The members of the Peace Team and Fr. Bert resorted to undertaking study and research to find answers to these questions. Adel and Andik fought back by standing up to the military. Lee and Fr. Bert resorted to questioning and 'fighting' God. Lee cries out, "*Sabi ko, Lord, bakit mo ako ginaganito? Andyan ang masasamang tao, bakit hindi yun ang kinuba mo?*" (I said, "Lord, why do you allow these things to happen to us? Why did you not just take away the bad people instead of the good ones?").

The Pikit respondents also confronted war to reclaim their power over their 'space'. The women helped their men

work on their farms and also continuously planted flowers in their gardens as an act of holding on to life. Although they initially saw it as a diversion to keep their minds busy, the act of planting can be seen as a silent protest over the destruction and death that war brings.

They work on their farms and plant flowers in their gardens as an act of holding on to life. Although they initially saw it as a diversion to keep their minds busy, the act of planting can be seen as a silent protest over the destruction and death that war brings. It is a declaration of the power of life over death. It is also an act of 'owning their home space.' It is as if they were saying, "This is still my home." If they could not stop war, at least they could declare ownership over their farm.

It is a declaration of the power of life over death. It is also an act of 'owning their home space.' It is as if they were saying, "This is still my home." If they could not stop war, at least they could declare ownership over their farm. The men took to armed struggle or community work. It was their way of reclaiming power over their lives, the power to protect themselves, their families and communities, the power to right the wrong being done to their people. Getting involved with peace work and community development work allowed them to respond and find solutions to the problems caused by war. This action and movement freed them from the grip of helplessness and powerlessness.

These little acts of regaining power were gathered and became crystallized in the program called 'Space for Peace'. Here the people of Pikit, under the leadership of Fr. Bert and the Peace Team found a creative way to restore peace in

their communities. They call the program a 'people's declaration.' The community leaders demanded that the combatants respect their living space. They asked both the MILF and the

military to stop using it as their war zone. The experience of Nalapaan has proven effective and the program has grown and now includes seven 'Spaces for Peace'. It is a single, powerful declaration of the people—'owning' back their community and reclaiming power to run their communities.

The loss of power also has social and structural roots. Andik believes that as long as there are guns in society, there would always be war. "*Habang may baril...may gulo...*" (So long as guns are around, there will always be trouble). This is because of the feeling of unlimited power that gun-holders acquire. "*Akala nang may hawak ng baril, siya na ang Panginoon*" (Those who hold guns think they are God). From the perspective of the respondents, one root of war is the imbalance of power or the abuse of power by some, which leads to the disempowerment of masses of civilians. We see this in many forms—the soldiers controlling the ratio of rice for Muslim families; priests using their influence to convert Muslims. Andik takes special issue about the unjust discrimination against Muslims. "*Dina-down yung Moro community. Habang ganyan, hindi matatapos ang labanan*" (The Moro community is always being undermined. The fighting will not stop for as long as this problem continues). Both Muslims and Christians cry out against the unfairness and injustice of the war and what it does that harms and kills innocent civilians.

Thus, healing also includes the restoration of the balance of power and a sense of fairness by upholding the value of equality and egalitarian sharing. We hear from the narratives several ways by which this balance is effected which is through the formation of cooperatives and Fr. Bert's inter-religious committee of volunteers. Dialogues and sharing groups give 'equal space' to different sides and allow perceived 'protagonists' to meet and share a 'common space'.

c. Healing is a process of restoring rational understanding

War destroys rational systems of thinking and forms its own rules—'an eye for an eye'. It creates a cycle of irrational

actions, counter actions and counter reactions. The recurrence of war comes from ignorance, from wrong perceptions, judgments and biases. People are grouped into oppressive 'labels', causing blanket hatred, hostility and discrimination of the perceived 'enemy' or 'weaker' groups.

War also throws victims into chaos and confusion, turning their sense of reason and order upside down. The loss of rational understanding is related to the loss of power. As children, Fr. Bert, Bibot and Andik were powerless amidst their endless questions about war that nobody could answer.

Healing, then, means the restoration of rational understanding. Rev. Thich Nhat Hanh (1992), a noted Buddhist monk and peacemaker teaches that violence and conflict come from wrong perceptions. Understanding comes from right perceptions, from a sense of knowing and seeing the bigger, broader picture. Love and peace are borne of understanding. To reach this level of understanding, Thich Nhat Hanh encourages the practice of looking deeply and mindful listening. The narratives show that understanding aids the survivors' healing process. Bibot reveals, "*Kasi naunawaan ko na sila rin ay biktima tulad ko*" (I have understood that they, too, were victims). We recall Fr. Bert's zealous study to acquire understanding of the real dynamics and causes of war. This base of understanding healed the confusion and turbulence in his mind that war has created during his childhood. This zest for answers ran a parallel course in the healing process of Butch, Mike, Adel and Bibot. Understanding leads to action. Their parallel search brought them together to form a common analysis and common approach to build peace. We see then that rational understanding leads to rational steps. Their rational approaches to peace and healing defeat war's irrational violence and divisiveness. As an example, Butch describes his realization, "*Nagbabago ang sarili ko. Meron palang pamamaraan na mailabas mo din yung katotohanan, yung gusto mo sa hindi marahas na paraan*" (I see positive changes in myself. I realized that there are peaceful ways by which I can bring forth the truth).

**d. Healing is a process of redeeming
dignity and self-esteem**

War dehumanizes and undermines people's sense of dignity. The discrimination produced by war desecrates the humanness of people. The grouping of people into blanket labels because of suspicion and hatred robs them of their personhood. This is dramatically manifested in the oppressive rice rationing and other forms of cruelty directed against the Muslims. Andik cries out, "*Parang bindi kami tao*" (It was as though we were not human beings). The soldiers' suspicion and anger towards the MILF rebels pushes them to a blanket denial of the Muslim people's right to food. Their language of hate reduces people to sub-humans. "*Kabit langaw bindi namin papapasukin*" (We will not let even the flies to get in).

People also experience indignities while living in evacuation centers - sleeping on cold soil, falling in line to beg for food, enduring the overcrowded quarters with hardly any space to move or to breathe. Taya speaks for every evacuee, "*Napakabirap sa evacuation. Nagsisiksikan, walang katapusang pila*" (Evacuation camps mean a tough a life for the evacuees. It was always overcrowded. There were endless queues for food and for all other rations). Lumen describes this as an experience of being thrown to the pits. "*Morag gitapon*" ("*Parang tinapon*"). War also disrupts the schooling of children. Since education is very important in our society, their disrupted studies also meant a loss of status for Bibot and Andik and affected their sense of self-esteem.

Some respondents described their experience of being treated like animals. Andik and his people had to flee like hunted animals that dreadful day in 2000. Lee and her children were taken hostage and dragged like animals. They were made to crawl among ants. Even the dead are robbed of their dignity. Adel, Lumen and Andik talk of seeing the blood-drenched bodies of their relatives and neighbors scattered in the streets like animal carcasses. Fr. Bert laments the desecration of Bishop Ben's 'holy' body.

Thus, an important element of healing is the redeeming of people's dignity. As mentioned, the Culture of Peace seminars and inter-religious dialogues allow war survivors the chance to see the personhood of the 'other side.' Fr. Bert's mother is his model of unconditional love that excludes no one and respects everyone. The years of discrimination and disrespect produced layers of resentment and hatred that form the ground for the continuing wars in Pikit. Aware of how this makes the healing process very sensitive and fragile, Fr. Bert and his colleagues underline the importance of giving equal value to the different tribes and religions. Thus, all projects are inter-religious and include the 'tri-people', Muslims, Christians and Lumads.

In the process of regaining respect for the dignity of the other groups, one experiences redeeming of his/her own personhood. Mike uses the metaphor of 'mirror' in this dual process of redeeming. Fr. Bert also describes his healing process as a process of self-redemption. *"Na-redeem ang sarili ko. Yung mga dati kong perception, biases sa Muslim, mga judgement, nawala"* (My person has been redeemed. My previous perceptions, biases and judgment against the Muslims had ceased). It is important for some respondents to rebuild their broken self-esteem. Bibot finds affirmation in the acceptance given by his church circle who welcomed him as a *"kaabag"* (lay workers) despite his lack of education. Mike claims that one fruit of his healing process is his bigger value for himself. *"Noon, sa tingin ko maliit masyado ako. Pero sa ngayon, palagay ko sa isang centavo, ngayon nagiging dalawang centavo na ako ngayon"* (I saw myself as someone having little importance before. But now, I think I have increased in value as a person). Taya is determined to complete her studies to be a licensed social worker and admits this will give her pride in herself. *"Maging proud ako"* (I will take pride in my achievement). The Muslim respondents, Andik, Butch and Mike need a collective self-redemption. They cry out for the healing of the image of the Muslims. They participated in the interview to redeem the image of the Moro people. *"Para malaman ng labat na bindi kami*

masamang tao" (We want everyone to realize that we are not bad people).

The interview turns out to be an important aid for this aspect of the healing process. It has an equalizing effect since the respondents were chosen from different economic classes, different religions. The chance to be interviewed and to tell their story gives the respondents a boost in their self-image. Andik voices this out. "*Kabit pobre, may halaga ako*" (Even the poor ones have their own worth).

2. Healing is a process of 'coming home'

The 'home' is a central element in the Filipino family and in all families, no matter what creed or color. The narratives from Pikit shed light to the different dimensions of the meaning of 'home'. The 'home' first of all refers to the physical space shared with one's family, which provides shelter and protection from the natural and man-made elements. It is the source of the sense of safety for the individual members. The 'home' is not just the building, which houses the family but includes the land, the farm and the animals. It is the source of their life, the symbol of survival, family security and stability. 'Home' then is as precious as life. Andik was willing to give up his life for their home. His Ilocano neighbor refused to leave their home and held on to their livestock and poultry. "*Mamamatay din kami, kung di kami kakain*" (We shall die nevertheless if there is nothing to eat). This holding on did result in the death of Lumen's relatives.

There is also the emotional home, where one gets nourishment, affection, belonging, affirmation and a deep sense that "everything is alright in the world." 'Home' means family togetherness and joy. It is the sanctuary of their shared memories and dreams. There is strong interconnection between the physical and emotional home. The physical home is a symbol of the parents' care for the family and an expression of the family's dignity and beauty. This is why Taya is angered by the loss of their precious orchids and by the damage to their home, which was her father's 'labor of love'.

We discovered that for many of the respondents, 'home' was bigger than the immediate family. For Fr Bert, the 'family structure' widened to include other significant people in his 'home'—his best friend and 'big brother', Quezon, and his spiritual father, Bishop Ben. 'Home' was also his nourishing community of friends, classmates, elders that were mostly Muslims. Adel, Butch, Mike and Andik echo this sense of a 'bigger home'. 'Home' was also the paradise that they remember from childhood—the virgin beauty of their place and the joyful and peaceful co-existence between neighbors from different tribes and religions.

The study affirms earlier studies that in war, one of the strongest hit is the family and the 'home.' War causes "family stress", which Boss (1988, cited in McKenry, 1994) defines as "pressure or tension in the family system, a disturbance of the family's steady state." War destroys the 'home' in many ways. It first of all destroys the physical home. The homes of Lumen and Butch were burned down. Adel's home became unlivable because of war's damages. Andik's family home was also severely damaged. The homestead and farm of Mike's family were forcibly taken from them. The loss of the physical home may also be experienced through forcible displacement and evacuation, which uproots families and turns them into wandering refugees. The evacuation center may indeed be a temporary shelter but the conditions are not fitting of a human 'home.' The loss of the physical home is already a trauma in itself. It produces strong fear, a grave feeling of loss of safety and of being uprooted from one's space. It shakes up a family so severely because it means the loss of space and ground from which to move on and reach its desired future. It means also the loss of security and stability for a family. It undermines the sense of dignity and respect of a family. Bright (1996) claims that, "material objects are endowed with meaning far beyond their structure and color. We associate things with people, with events, with beliefs, hopes, fears, and so on. Thus, in mourning material objects, such as family possessions and homes, we are mourning deeper losses." The loss of the family home creates a deep impact especially on children. Bassuk's (1990, cited in McKenry,

1994) study of homeless children reports high levels of anxiety and depression with 50% of the samples in need of psychiatric evaluation and treatment.

War also destroys the emotional home. It destroys family unity and togetherness through the death of loved ones or the separation of families. Lumen, Butch, Mike, Fr. Bert and Andik lost precious family members. This loss left a deep pain because like a broken body, precious members were now missing from the family wholeness. The loss must have been most severe for Lee who lost two husbands from war and for her children who lost a loving father. Holmes (cited in McKenry, 1994) devised a Life Events Scale to measure the degree of stress caused by different stressors. The scale lists the loss of a spouse as the highest in the stress scale and the loss of loved ones as the fifth highest. For Lee, the combined loss was intolerable.

Butch discovers an even bigger destruction. War destroys creation, which God has given as a home for the whole of humanity. The hatred and greed for power that comes with war, destroys people's connectedness with the earth that has given them life. *"Pati yung walang kaalam-alam, yung wild life, nasisira. Unti-unti kong na-realize na malaking destruction sa mundo yung mga karabasan"* (Even the most innocent, like the wild life, are destroyed. I have gradually realized that violence triggers enormous destruction in the world).

Thus, an important dimension of healing war trauma is the process of rebuilding the 'home' or simply 'going home.' During the initial shock of war, safety and shelter is of paramount concern. Fr. Bert and his staff reveal that the villagers of Pikit have their own natural evacuation areas, which are usually wide areas or buildings like the school, the church gym, or an open space where they get temporary protection in the company of their families, relatives and friends. At the first sign of war, they run to these evacuation centers. After several repeated wars, the community leaders with the help of the Parish Inter-religious Rehabilitation Team have devised procedures to organize the evacuees and provide effective shelter and assistance to families during the initial crisis hours.

With the help of the NGO's and local governments, the evacuees are given food, medicines and other needs to make their life as bearable as possible for the duration of their displacement.

Healing is possible because despite the destruction and damage to the physical home, the emotional home remains intact. For this, the role of the family is paramount. The family is so important that all efforts are done to keep the family together.

When the fighting subsides, the people start to go home to rebuild what is left of their homes. But many families find their homes different from how they left them. Either the structure is damaged or some contents are missing. How then can they 'go home?' One of the first steps done by the respondents during and after each war was to rebuild their physical home. Those whose homes were burned or were still unsafe for living were given assistance to build simple shelters. Examples are the Dalingaoen huts along the Highway, where I visited and interviewed the women respondents. Another important step was rebuilding their livelihood, a task that the whole family takes on. Somehow with all these steps, the families once more find a 'home.' Merlie shows off her garden and is proud of her efforts to turn her home into a beautiful place. "*Ngayon, ang ganda na ng bakuran namin!*" (Now we have built a lovely yard).

The respondents also made efforts to rebuild their connection with the earth, their 'mother home', the land they have tilled and cared for and which has nurtured them

back. The men immediately returned to work on their farm. The women who know about giving birth and giving life, tended to their flowers, as if in an act of reparation and homage to the earth, their 'great mother', who has cradled and given a home to their families for generations. Aware of the terrible destruction created by war, they continue to work on their gardens and farms as if in prayer.

The 'home', then, becomes the focus of healing for the respondents. Healing is possible because despite the destruction and damage to the physical home, the emotional home remains intact. For this, the role of the family is paramount. The family is so important that all efforts are done to keep the family together. At the onset of war, the first instinct is to run away. However, the primary concern is not only one's personal safety but also the safety of the family. People scramble to safety but also frantically look for their family members. For the families who are indeed separated, maximum efforts are exerted to reunite them, even while the physical home is not yet completely rebuilt. Those who lost loved ones know that this loss is irreversible. They cannot bring back their dead but the grieving process they go through somehow honors the dead members' place in the family. Their tears and memories keep the family intact in their hearts and minds.

The family plays many roles in the whole process of healing. The family serves as the roots and wings of the person undergoing healing. It serves as a refuge and a cradle that cushions the pain, provides solace and consolation and nourishes while the person heals and slowly comes back to life. The family provides protection. Merlie's sons give her advice to help her deal with her panic. Cheryl embraced her father and tried to save him from death. Andik stayed behind to look after his wife who could not walk due to shock. The family also provides the nourishment and moral support essential for healing. Fr. Bert pays tribute to the unwavering support he gets from his mother. Adel is grateful for her brother's understanding. There are many accounts of families resorting to a new reconfiguration of roles in order to support each other. The men respondents—Butch, Andik, Bibot and Mike, are immensely grateful for their wives and children who take over the task of managing their livelihood so that they can continue with their peace work. It is important to underline the role of women in this theme of healing. Managing the family livelihood is no simple task considering the meager resources left in the family because of the continuous threat of war. The women's role is multiple because they also act as teacher, supporter and counselor for the emotional

healing the children go through. To think that they are victims themselves who bear many wounds from war! Furthermore, Andiks' wife provides the balance in the family, providing objectivity and cautioning against blanket judgments.

We can thus see that the family acts as the seedbed for all aspects of healing, enabling the person to find the strength to go through all the aspects of healing described above. We discover however, that the family that nourishes the healing process is not confined to the immediate family. Through the narratives, we discover that the miracle of healing is made possible by the presence of a widening circle of healing and protective love which makes up the person's healing space which he knows as 'home'.

Healing support comes from the extended family. Several examples are given - Lumen's Muslim niece who says a white lie to save them, Lee's aunt, Mike's uncle & grand-uncle. Still bigger than this is the expanded family. Monahan (1993) calls this the family's 'support network'. Families that can readily find support from the extended family, their church, or their community are more likely to have resilient children.

The Dalingaoen women are grateful to the BALAY counselors who provide guidance and supervision (*"pagsusubaybay"*). Their healing presence gives the women a feeling of safety and relief from their trauma. Taya uses the language of family in referring to Ate Lina, her counselor. "Parang nanay ko siya" (She is like a mother to me). Her officemates also provide support like a real 'family'. "*Talagang parang kapamilya ko sila*" (They are like a real family to me). To this expanded family also belong the many NGO's, LGU's (Local Government Units), and volunteers whom Andik calls 'sympathizers.' His list is long—Oxfam, Tabang Mindanaw, CRS, PBSP, PDAP, CIDA, UNDP and CORUM, Balik Kalipay, BALAY. These groups give much needed help in the form of construction and repair of roads, houses, mosques, water pumps and latrines, livelihood assistance, feeding program, psychosocial intervention, educational support. Their kindness and compassion lift up the broken spirit of the Pikit people and give them hope. "*Maraming NGO na nagpunta*

dito, parang may gana na kami. Naalis ng kaunti yung kawalan ng pag-asa" (There are many NGOs which come to us. With their help, we have regained enthusiasm for life again. We have somehow overcome our hopelessness). Connection with others is clearly a universal source of help and hope (Monahan, 1993).

The circle of love grows to include also the whole community. Somehow, there is always someone who provides support at the right time at the right place. The texts give examples of this circle of protection that surrounds the respondents—the neighbors giving warning, "*Takbo na Kayo!*" (Here they come; run for your lives!), the government vehicle that fetched the people, "*Gising na Kayo! Lilipat tayo sa Poblacion!*" (Get up everyone, we are moving to the poblacion), and the Mayor who negotiated for the lives of the villagers of Nalapaan and gave Andik a white flag to keep them safe. This circle of healing and protection shields Andik and gives him a feeling of safety.

The importance of building a 'safe place', a healing space is repeated in the texts. Adel finds in the parish team a healing space where she works out her mistrust and anger towards Muslims. The Midsayap seminar served as the healing space for the Dalingaoen women as did the children's camp for their children. The 'Space for Peace' program gives Mike and the people of Pikit a "safe haven in our backyard." The healing space serves as their 'home' in the midst of war's chaos, a sanctuary and refuge where they can breathe and slowly recover their wholeness.

The circle grows even wider to include the whole society. Fr. Bert and his community of peace advocates meet other groups and they form the Mindanao People's Caucus, which attempts to bring peace and healing to the whole of Mindanao and the whole country. Thus, the peoples of Mindanao find a common 'home' from where they can walk together with their common longing for peace.

Indeed, in the midst of war, healing becomes possible because of this amazing 'healing space', this great reservoir

of love. This loving support is experienced in the form of healing gestures and healing words that come unannounced from different sources- Taya's neighbor ("Huwag kang mahiya, kunin mo ito/Do not feel embarrassed, take this."), Taya's parents, ("Huwag kang mag-alala sa mga bata. Kami na ang bahala/Do not worry about the children; we will take care of them."), Merlie's sons ("Nandito lang kami"/We are here for you), and Merlie's neighbors who came back and gave them support. The respondents become part of a chain of kindness where they give and receive support unceasingly. Andik gives unconditionally to his people. His family gets back this kindness when a neighbor helps Taya. Mike uses the metaphor, 'harvest of gifts' to describe this chain of love.

It is important to note that the respondents who are actively involved in peace work describe their significant memories of a time of peace in their communities and in the whole of Mindanao. Thus, the circle of healing and protection also includes their fore parents and elders who built their communities on a solid foundation of peace. While it is the 'tyrannical memories' that make the trauma recur in their minds, it is also memories, healing memories, that neutralize these negative memories and give the respondents a space to breathe and hope.

3. Healing is a spiral process

In one sense, healing is a chronological process that follows certain stages. McNabb (1993) describes the stages that are common to the healing process of all survivors of trauma (initial impact, recoil, reorganization.)

On the other hand, healing is also a spiral process, because of the recurring nature of trauma, which subjects people to a series of repeated ups and downs. The progression of phases in the recovery from trauma does not always follow a straight line. There is a unique ebb and flow to the process of recovery for each child or adult. Progress can be uneven, occurring in fits and starts. Ups and downs are predictable in the healing process (Monahan, 1993). It is important to note that the victim rarely passes through such clearly defined

phases. McKenry (1994) reveals that more recently, family stress research has moved beyond the linear relationship of stressor, mediator, and response to look at the process of coping and adaptation over time.

The stories of Lee, Merlie and Lumen demonstrate that healing is not observed as a fixed state of perfect wholeness. They admit that they still carry some of the pain but reveal a marked improvement in the way they handle their trauma. Butch who marks a change in his reaction to succeeding wars demonstrates this spiral process. Fr. Bert believes that trauma cannot be 'cured' but can definitely be 'healed'. A total cure is not possible because tyrannical memories remain. "Hanggang ngayon, medyo dala-dala ko pa iyon" (Up till now, I continue to harbor the memories). However, he is convinced that healing is possible. He calls this healing as a process of cleansing and transformation. He gives as an example which is the transformation of his hatred towards Muslims into pure, unbounded compassion. He uses the metaphors 'beast and best' to describe the positive and negative effects of war. These two symbols also allude to the ongoing spiral process of healing where pain and healing, anger and compassion can exist side by side.

The tale of the Andik family dramatically demonstrates this. Andik in his younger days experienced the trauma of successive displacements from 1970 to 1977. This history was repeated in his adult life when his family and whole village once more experienced four evacuations in 5 years (1997 to 2003). The feeling of desperation and tiredness from war are evident in both Andik and his daughter, Taya as they experience layers and layers of war trauma. Nevertheless, at each crisis, they rise up and rebuild and even go further to become instruments of healing for their people.

In this spiral healing process, the element of time is very important. Lumen affirms time as a great healer. Time is a friend to families healing from trauma. When the anchors of home and routine daily life have been destroyed by severe trauma, the process of recovery for all family members is slow and gradual, occurring more often over years than

months. Fr. Bert admits that "It took me time to accept the job of Coordinator." Related to this, are the virtues of patience and faith. Because healing takes time, one should let nature and God work. Fr. Bert describes his enlightenment as a step by step process. "*Sa umpisa, letra-letra, unti-unti nagiging word*" (At the start, we achieve [healing] one letter at a time. This progresses and becomes one word at a time). He is proud of the slow but definite success they are reaping in their peace work in Pikit. "*Pakonti-konti*" (Bit by bit), Andik agrees. "*Daban-dabang nagagamot*" (We are slowly healing). Butch describes healing as a 'leisurely' process. It is like a 'certified seed' of peace and goodness that grows in a leisurely way.

4. Healing is a complementary and cyclical process

Based on the family systems theory, the effect of trauma on one member affects the other members and the whole family system. Such a reverberating effect in turn impacts the first person, and so forth, in a continuous series of circular loops or recurring chains of influence. Goldenberg (1991) calls this 'circular causality'. We see this cyclical trauma in many forms. Men are the usual targets during combat because of their capacity to join the armed group of the 'enemy.' Andik's four uncles who were killed were heads of families. Their death plunged their whole families into suffering. The violence generated by war seeps into the family domicile. Taya admits her tendency to transfer her anger on her husband. Lumen's gentle husband started to talk to their children with harshness. The mothers and fathers agonize and worry for their children's future. The daughters, Taya and Adel, on the other hand worry about their parents.

While the trauma of war affects the individual and family in a complementary pattern, the healing process also connects the family and individual in a complementary, cyclical fashion. As mentioned above, the family serves as the cradle and seedbed for the individual's healing process. The children, especially, are dependent on this complementary nature of healing. The active participation and cooperation of

the family is essential in the recovery of the child. The family also serves as the roots for healing, the guiding star providing inspiration and guidance. Several of the respondents talked about early seeds of healing. Fr. Bert has his mother; Adel, her grandmother and Mike his uncle and granduncle. The family then serves as the source of models and mentors of compassion and peace.

The reverse is also true. The individual's healing benefits the whole family. Lumen's healing brings back peace and security to her family. Mike, Butch and Andik influence their families through their healing steps. This results in their families joining them in their common cause as advocates for peace. In cognizance of this complementary nature of healing, BALAY uses the family systems approach in their counseling and psychosocial intervention.

The cyclical nature of healing includes not only the family but also the community at large. Brofenbrenner's ecological theory of the family discusses the interplay between the micro, meso and macro systems. The family's ecosystem consists of historical, cultural, and economic influences (Boss, 1988, cited in McKenry, 1994). Thus the family's response to a stressor event is influenced by living in a particular historical period, its cultural identification, and the economic conditions of society.

The texts are replete with examples of personal healing intertwined with collective healing. The ripple effect also means a series of widening circles starting from the person as the seed. A person starts as a victim of war and goes through a healing process that empowers and transforms one into a healer and model. The person becomes a symbol of healing, who sends healing waves to the family, the immediate group and the community as a whole. Fr. Bert and his Peace Team are such symbols.

The cycle of healing is also intergenerational. Goldenberg (1991) continues, "A family is a natural social system extending over at least three generations. Families display a recurring pattern of interactional sequences in which all members participate." The narratives show war trauma as a cycle that

is transferred from generation to generation. The Andik family is a classic example. Andik inherits the trauma from his father who worried about his sons' safety because of the blanket suspicion of the military against Muslim men. Taya inherits Andik's trauma of aborted schooling. Taya's child cries, signaling another layer of war wounds in the youngest generation. But the cycle does not stop there. While the cycle of war continues, the cycle of healing starts. The cyclical nature of healing is again vividly demonstrated by the example of the Andik family. Andik rises above his personal trauma and becomes the shepherd and 'Moses' of Nalapaan. His shining example touches Taya who becomes a healer herself through her work in BALAY. Together, Andik and Taya are leading their people to the path of safety, recovery and healing. Andik influences also his wife who teaches his whole family to become a family for peace. They give active support and participation to the Culture of Peace seminars and the Space for Peace program. Their village, Nalapaan becomes a model Space for Peace, which influences other barangays of Pikit to follow suit. The circle is growing and growing as groups of people trek to Pikit to learn and duplicate their remarkable peace program.

The Pikit stories amaze us with the colorful description of the vastness of healing. The importance of children and youth is underlined. The children are the most vulnerable victims of war. On the other hand they are also the foundation of healing for the family and the community. With their sense of agency, they are the source of hope that sustains their families and communities in the long, arduous process of healing. Just a little dance step from her youngest child sends healing sparks inside Taya. Lumen, Merlie and Lee likewise regard their children as their stars of inspiration. Adel dedicates all her efforts to the next generation. Fr. Bert draws inspiration from Normina and his committee of youth.

5. Healing has a spiritual and divine dimension

The Pikit narratives show us the magnitude of war trauma. We see layer upon layer of war wounds in different dimen-

sions, recurring again and again and transferred from generation to generation. The trauma experienced by the respondents exceeded human limits. The impact of the trauma is so great that they are left with only one word or one-phrase descriptions for their experience. "*Mabirap!*" (Tough- Merlie), "*Grabe!*" (Harsh- Lumen), and "*Masakit talaga!*" (Really painful- Andik). Their survival and healing can challenge established theories of stress management and recovery. Indeed, the respondents affirm the definite effect that human intervention (psychosocial counseling, moral support, material assistance) has on their healing. However, there is a certain point where it was more logical that the persons give up and break down or lose their mental and emotional faculties. It was more logical for them to retaliate and to become walking bombs of hatred that can continue the cycle of war. How does one explain their capacity to rise again and again and even go beyond recovery to become instruments of compassion and healing? How does one explain for example the resiliency of Lee who has experienced the killing of two husbands, the last one right in front of her eyes? Or Andik and his family's steadfastness amidst their string of recurring trauma in different forms – killing of relatives, threat to their lives, destruction of their home and repeated displacement that destroys their life again and again? Throughout his whole life, Andik only knew terror, pain, poverty and oppression brought by war. Where does he get the power to survive and the deep compassion that makes him a strong leader of peace in his community?

One insight can be drawn from the discussion above about the importance of the 'home' in the healing process. Even when the physical home is damaged or destroyed, the survivors could heal because of the nurturing emotional home. And when even this emotional home is threatened, there is still another reservoir where the survivors could find refuge and strength for healing. This is the spiritual home. The respondents' unwavering faith in a force bigger than themselves acts as an invisible shield and ground that sustains them when everything else fails.

This spiritual healing grace is first of all drawn from religion, from the traditions and precepts of their creed. Most of the respondents talk of prayer as a coping and healing factor in their lives. Vanistendael's (1994) discussion focused on how faith or religion can develop resiliency in children. Religion could help an individual find good and beauty in all creation. Lumen, as an adolescent, prayed the rosary with her youth group and this healed her heart of heavy burdens. Later, as a mother, she prayed to Mary for guidance and protection for her family. Fr. Bert and his team translated the core values of their religions into healing action for their community. And this action also heals them in return. Fr. Bert's living out the Christian virtue of 'love for the enemy' healed his hatred towards Muslims. Andik's loving encounter with his Ilocano neighbor demonstrates that loving the enemy is a precept also shared by Muslims. Fr. Bert also emphasizes forgiveness. Despite her extreme pain from the cruel murder of two husbands, Lee tries with all her might to forgive and follow the way of Christ. "*Kung Diyos nakapagpatawad, ako pa kaya?*" (If God is able to forgive, why would I not?). Butch, Mike and Andik turn to Islam for guidance for their family life and their peacework, fervently believing that "Islam is peace." They draw from Islam's precious teachings: on the golden rule—"*Huwag mong gawin sa ibang tao yung masama sa iyo*" (Do not do unto others what you would not want them to do unto you – Mike's brother, Kadil); on neighborly sharing—"*Kabit maliit lang na tulong, basta makatulong ka sa kapwa mo*" (Help others even with the little that you can give – Andik); on goodness—"*Kabit ano ang mangyari, kabutihan din.*" (Do what is good even in difficult times – Andik); on truth—"*Magsalita ka totoo, labat ng gawin mo totoo.*" (Speak only of the truth. Do only what is true – Andik); and respect for creation—"*Sa giyera, tinatamaan yung creation ni Allah na walang kasalanan*" (War harms even the innocent creations of Allah – Butch). Ironically, the respondents' deep faith in their own religion push them to find a common ground, a meeting point that heals the division between their two religions. "*Yang ginagawa ni Fr. Bert is Islam.*" (The good things that Father Bert does are just like

Islam – Andik) “*Yung pananaw ng Islam sa peace, sa political, social, economic, walang pagkakaiba sa Christianity*” (The Islam notions on peace, and about political, social and economic issues are not unlike the Christian teachings – Butch).

But the spiritual healing that the survivors experience goes beyond religion. Fr. Bert reveals that he feels drawn to a ‘higher force’, a ‘higher authority’. His healing steps, which he first describes as a ‘decision’, go beyond these deliberate acts. As Fr. Bert shares this dimension of his healing, we find ourselves entering a mysterious sacred space, the undefined realm of the spirit. In the unlikely moments, the other respondents are also drawn to this ‘force.’ In the frightening moment when her husband was being shot, Lee was overcome by panic, almost losing her senses. Yet, she found herself praying. During times of crisis and confusion, Taya is also drawn to prayer. “*Lagi akong lumalapit sa Diyos, pag naguguluhan ako, kung may problema ako. Sabi ko, bigyan mo ako ng talino na mag-iisip, ng lakas ng loob*” (I always come to God for help. Whenever I’m confused or faced with a problem, I ask for wisdom and inner strength from Him). And during the time of intense inner turmoil, Fr. Bert dropped to his knees and desperately prayed to his intercessor, Bishop Ben. He placed great value on rational understanding for his healing process. But, in these moments of grace, Fr. Bert is at a loss for explanations. “It seems like a spontaneous process. *Hindi ko rin siya maipaliwanag. Parang may gustong ipagawa sa akin. Hindi ko ma-explain*” (I am unable to explain. It seemed like there was something that I had to do). He cannot explain why, despite all the evident dangers it would bring, he accepts the job as Inter-religious Coordinator. He cannot explain the dramatic transformation in his personality from the shy priest to a perennial speaker before groups and big gatherings of people. He makes his constant declaration, “*Pwede talaga! Peace is possible*”. We hear words based on experience but also words of faith in the invisible power of a “Divine”. The war in Pikit continues and is too enormous to be stopped or defeated by the small steps they have begun. But Fr. Bert and his inter-religious team, plods on- holding

only to their belief in the power of healing and their faith in God's steadfast love.

Thus, the narratives reveal two dimensions of healing: (a) the human dimension, the healing of psychological and material needs, which involves a logical, deliberate process - a decision, and (b) the divine dimension, which enters the realm of the mysterious. Fr. Bert distinguishes between being 'cured' and being 'healed'. Whereas the word 'cure' only has a transitive form, the word 'heal' has both transitive and intransitive forms. Thus, healing does not only occur through outside human intervention. There is healing that is silent, that comes from 'within.' It is this 'silent' healing that involves mystery and ambiguity. Fr. Bert retreats to his room when everything becomes too much and in the quiet space of his room, he heals 'in silence.' The children of Dalingaocn work out their trauma 'in silence.'

It is hard to fathom what happens in these silent moments of healing. It is in this mysterious space of the healing process that the dimensions of the human and the divine meet. One part acknowledges the inner resource of a person that makes self-healing possible. But there is another part that reveals a deeper source of healing beyond the person's efforts. In the circle of psychotherapists, there is still a great hesitation to go into this realm of the ambiguous. But the Pikit stories demonstrate that there is a dimension in the healing process that is beyond our grasp as humans. There is a space in the healing process where only the person and God can enter.

Andik and Taya, our Muslim Family for Peace, are beautiful examples of the double dimension of healing. Their wounds remain in the human level but on a deeper level, at their core, they have become purer in spirit, embodiments of pure love. While their healing still goes on, they become instruments of Divine love, angels of compassion for their community. This is paralleled by Fr. Bert as the hesitant peace leader, the angry priest, transformed into a strong symbol of the power of peace and healing.

Fr. Bert and the Peace team members describe their healing process as a 'conversion experience', a dramatic transformation and 'change of heart.' For Fr. Bert, the conversion came in the form of a 'shock'. His childhood trauma included many shocking experiences that agitated his world—the sudden disappearance of Quezon and his Muslim friends, the shocking early initiation to the harsh reality of war, the sudden violent death of Bishop Ben. On the other hand, it was another 'shock' that initiated his healing process. He recalls June 19, 1997, that day when he experienced war in its full magnitude and witnessed the massive evacuation of villagers in Pikit. Fr. Bert uses a Biblical word, 'exodus' that gives that event another dimension. The term implies that the people were not only escaping from war, but that they seemed to be 'summoned' to a safe place. There is the added element of 'divine guidance' during those troubled times. This event had a strong impact on Fr. Bert's life. It jolted him from his lingering hatred from the death of Bishop Ben and transported him to a completely different path. Fr. Bert admits being a completely different person from then on.

The two metaphors that Fr. Bert uses for his transformation are full of spiritual connotations. The first one, 'baptism of fire' connotes intense renewal and cleansing not only on the physical and emotional level but also on the level of the soul. The second is a metaphor of incarnation, 'word became flesh wanting to be born.' It is a picture of God's love becoming flesh in Fr. Bert and in Pikit. It involves a decision, a choice from Fr. Bert to allow this 'birth'. But it also implies a 'calling' from what Fr. Bert calls 'a higher force.' The word 'birth' implies that life is already there. This can be connected to the intransitive meaning of healing. Peace is already there inside the community. Healing is already alive in the person and just wants to come out and express it self.

The *Pikit* stories depict acts of cruelty and inhumanity that make our stomach turn and our hair rise in shock and anger. How can humans be capable of such evil?

a. A Theology of Goodness

The Pikit stories depict acts of cruelty and inhumanity that make our stomach turn and our hair rise in shock and anger. How can humans be capable of such evil? The classic question emerges—Why is there evil in the world? Where does it come from? And yet another question comes out—Why does God allow such evil to exist?

In the above discussion of the divine dimension of healing, another question slowly emerges—what really is this mysterious force which they call 'divine?' I am reminded of the ongoing discussion in spiritual circles about the role of the divine in the events of the world. Some allude to miracles, acts of divine intervention. Lee asked for such an intervention, "*Sana liwanagin ang isip ng mga rebelde, na wag kami anubin*" (I prayed that light will suffuse the minds of the rebels and stop them from harming us). Others like Walsh (1995) say that these are not interventions or acts of God but are a result of human actions and mindsets. Some may call it 'serendipity.' The texts are full of 'blessed accidents'. The media van comes at the exact time when Taya desperately needed a ride home. Normina, with her freshness and zest, comes at an opportune time, helping Fr. Bert heal his loss of his young friend, Quezon. Fr. Bert is assigned to Pikit just a few days before the war that caused the great 'exodus.' Bibot and Adel came back to Pikit just at the right time to meet Fr. Bert, Butch and Mike, to form the Pikit Rehabilitation Team. After coming from many twists and turns in their individual healing process, their healing journeys converge in an amazing moment of serendipity.

Pondering on these different views, I recall Andik's native philosophy of goodness. Andik repeatedly refers to the power of goodness. The world for him is one big web of goodness and kindness. "*Basta ang tao matulungin, may darating din na tutulong*" (For as long as a person willingly helps others, he will not find himself lacking of the help he needs). His deep faith as a Muslim makes him believe that this human kindness is Allah's presence in the world. "*Basta*

nandiyan yung Panginoon, nandyang din yung tao na tutulong sa iyo" (Allah will always send out someone to help you in your times of need). He refers to the many sympathizers who helped his village recover from war as expressions of a great reservoir of Allah's unlimited love. "Maraming baon ang tulong ng Panginoon sa atin" (God's wellspring of help for us will never run out).

We can stand on this philosophy to better understand the healing process we witnessed in the Pikit stories. We glean from the narratives that war trauma is not only monstrous; it also brings about the element of loss of control. Even powerful institutions such as government and church seem powerless to control or stop war. And each war affects scores of people in a multitude of ways. It is just impossible to have a program to cover all the wounds and repair all the effects of war. How then is healing possible? If we look more closely at the respondents' experiences of healing, we discover that at every crisis and blow, somebody comes out and extends a helping hand, protecting the victims, cradling them and nourishing them back to wholeness and healing. We can visualize a net of interlocking goodness surrounding the world and humanity. A powerful insight comes out. Healing is possible because of the abundance of goodness in the world – an abundance that is so much more than evil! Because of this net of goodness, a miracle happens. During times of utter chaos, and in the period of healing that follows, the world opens its arm wide and becomes a sanctuary, a 'home' for survivors of war trauma.

We see the wisdom and truth in Andik's simple philosophy. This circle of healing and protecting love is Gods' presence seen in the goodness of people. Goodness is the stuff of which humanity is made of—plain, simple goodness that comes in ordinary and extraordinary forms; goodness that is catching, shielding and healing victims of trauma in their moments of loss and helplessness. Andik and the other respondents slowly heal and find security again as they realize that the world is full of 'sympathizers.' This faith in the power of goodness and God's unfailing love embraces all the re-

spondents and brings together the two religions. For Muslims and Christians alike, their unshakable belief in the power of goodness becomes a powerful shield in critical moments. Andik declares, "*Nailagay ko sa isip ko na hindi ako mamamatay*" (I have learned to believe that though I suffer, I will not be crushed), Merlie affirms this. "*Hindi kami pinababayaan ng Diyos*" (God never abandons us).

6. Healing is peace come to life

The respondents realize the magnitude of war and the breadth of its effects. War clearly spares no one and shatters the lives not only of their families but their communities as well. For this reason, many respondents saw their personal healing as intertwined with the collective healing of their people. Adel is emphatic that healing has to be realized "in the context of the community." Their healing process is definitely dependent on the presence of peace in their community and in the whole world. As mentioned, they need a 'safe place' in order to recover from trauma. They long to regain the peaceful sanctuary that their community used to be. Thus, all the respondents cry out for an end to war. Merlie speaks for everyone "*Ayoko na talagang maulit ang giyera!*" (I really do not want war to happen again).

Carrying only faith and this longing for peace, Fr. Bert and his Peace Team, with the help of families like the Andik Family, search for ways to rebuild peace in their war-torn communities. Their efforts bear fruit. The satisfaction they get from seeing the fruits of their work enhances their healing. Adel talks about the children's camp that BALAY conducted in Dalingaoen. "*May nangyayari. Transformation. Na-beal ang community. Naibalik namin ang relasyon ng Muslim at Christian*" (Good things happened. There was transformation. The community underwent healing. We were able to restore the good relations between Muslims and Christians). Fr. Bert fondly remembers Normina and his inter-religious committees. He recalls the convergence of Muslims, Christians and Lumads during that memorable ordination in 2003. The members of the Peace Team all talked about the 'Space for Peace' Pro-

gram which commanded the respect of both the MILF and military. Butch and Andik described their Culture of Peace seminars that have been slowly but effectively healing the layers of bias and mistrust between the once opposing sectors of their communities. Adel is excited about how this 'culture of peace' is catching even the military. Butch adds to the list of the successful peaceful actions like the 'Bantay Ceasefire' and the 'Bakwet Power' initiated by the Mindanao People's Caucus. These little successes and pockets of peace energies accumulate and convince the respondents that "peace is possible!" This increases their hope and determination to walk on. Butch proudly calls all these steps as "peace alive"

As mentioned earlier, war creates division and labels and harms the wholeness of humanity. Healing brings back the universal values of love, respect and goodness; the survivors' experience of 'shared pain' unleashes universal love that enables people to cross borders. Brofenbrenner's theory of the interplay between the micro, meso and macro systems is combined with the Pikit experience of the deeper dimension of faith and compassion. The theory then goes beyond mere rhetoric and becomes an acknowledgment of humanity as one healing Circle of Love. Pia Gyger and Thich Nhat Hanh, two modern visionaries for peace, also describe this new vision of humanity. Gyger (1996) in her book, *That We May Join Earth and Heaven*, speaks of the true calling of humanity to be one organism, one family. "We are witnesses to the development of the global man possessing the integral consciousness. People are evolving into humanity." Thich Nhat Hanh (2001) affirms this through his belief in the 'interconnectedness' of all beings. "Non-violence can be born only from the insight of non-duality, of inter-being. This is the insight that everything is interconnected and nothing can exist by itself alone." Adel's grandmother and Mike's brother knew it from their heart. "*Labat kayo magkakapatid.*" "*Yang nasa paligid ng babay mo, yan na ang kapatid mo*" (We are all brothers and sisters. Those people around your home are your brothers and sisters).

War has wounded not just one town or nation but the whole of humanity. The process of healing from the wounds of war brings out the definite reality of humanity being connected as one whole. When we can realize this, then we can really heal the wounds of war. "One world, one body." The supra system, the interconnected web of life, it is a hope, a vision and a necessity. Taya, the youngest respondent expresses this wish, "We are wishing, hoping and praying, that not only Nalapaan is a space for Peace but its nearby barangays and towns as well, and if possible the whole world." The Pikit narratives are powerful testimonies of this vision slowly becoming real in the communities of Nalapaan, Dalingaoen and the whole of Pikit.

Conclusions

1. Healing from war trauma is possible.

Healing is facilitated by the natural coping instinct and inner resources of trauma survivors. The family serves as a life-support system and a seedbed for the individual's healing. When the family resources are not enough, healing is further facilitated by support from the family's support network, which provides a wide sanctuary and 'home' for the healing process. Healing takes effect when people connect with each other, regain their sense of power and control, restore rational understanding and redeem their dignity and self-esteem, thus regaining their over-all sense of wholeness and integration.

2. Healing is both a chronological and spiral process.

Healing produces a ripple effect and occurs in a cyclical pattern, linking the healing of the individual with the healing of the family and the family with the larger meso and macro system. Thus, individual and family based approaches need to be combined with community based approaches in order

to tap and release the resources of those who are able to reach the families in need.

3. Healing of the consciousness and/or spirit helps in making well the other damaged aspects of the human being.

There is a level of healing that goes beyond the logical and deliberate process of human intervention. There is a divine dimension of healing that occurs from within, that enters the realm of the mysterious. Healing is possible because of the abundance of goodness in the world, because of a net of interlocking goodness surrounding the world and humanity. This net includes the family, the community and all the "sympathizers" and volunteers in Pikit and other war-torn areas. This circle of healing and protecting love is an expression of Gods' unwavering presence that cradles survivors of war trauma and shields them with the undeniable truth that healing is indeed possible. This is perhaps the most important insight from this study.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings from this study, especially the four sub-themes of the healing process—connectedness, sense of power, rational understanding and dignity—point to significant implications for practitioners working with trauma survivors including counselors, facilitators, caregivers family educators and family therapists. These insights, plus the importance of reconnecting with nature and creation in the healing process, may aid in designing innovations for training, treatment and rehabilitation programs for individuals and families recovering from war. The insights on the Pikit experience may also be helpful for enhancing efforts for the collective healing of communities and nations. The study affirms the decision of BALAY and other NGO's to use the community approach in their psycho-social interventions. The findings from this study may be used to propel more daring and progressive social policies and the provision of support structures for the processes of peace building, healing and reconciliation. Particu-

lar attention should be given to the 'Space for Peace' Program, which may yet emerge as a real formula in effecting people-powered peace in war-torn communities.

The limitations of this study may be overcome in future researches where further questions can inspire further phenomenological studies about the healing of trauma. It is hoped that the findings and insights from Pikit study may encourage researchers to conduct phenomenological studies on the experience of other similar peace zones in the Philippines. It is further recommended that parallel studies be done on the healing experiences of children war survivors.

It may be said that the most important contribution of this study is the harvest of ten beautiful stories of healing which give flesh to the theories of healing that we read in books or discuss in conferences. The liberating experience of the Pikit respondents should encourage other researchers to work with other war survivors in other communities in the Philippines and elsewhere to produce more stories of healing from war trauma. The more stories are written the more hope we can bring to the world that healing from the wounds of war is indeed possible. More importantly, it is hoped that these ten Pikit stories, and the others that may follow, can produce a chain reaction of 'breaking the silence' to create a great healing space for the earth and the whole human race.

The Filipino Concept of *Kapatiran* as a Healing Response

BY PROF. RUDY RODIL

When there is conflict and the practice of community settlement takes place to bring together the conflicting parties for reconciliation, we use the word "*sandugo*". *Sandugo*, among the Tagalog all over the Philippines means one blood. It is "*dyandi*" among the various Lumad communities of Mindanao, while they call it peace pact in the North, in the Cordillera. There are all kinds of names, but the effect, the end result, is the same—we become like "*magkapatid*" (brothers and sisters). Sometimes we say, "*parang magkapatid*" (just like brothers and sisters).

I was speaking to a Manobo sometime back and he said that, "when we go through a ritual, we transform our conflicting relationship into that of "*magkapatid*." He said, "That is even more sacred than the relationship between real brothers and sisters, than the real *magkapatid*. Sometimes our habit is to hit our younger sibling, in jest, on the head. But when you are in the *sandugo* relationship or in the *dyandi* relationship, you cannot do that to your *kasandugo* (fellow compact-keeper). You cannot hit him on the head. You are violating a ritual, something that is sacred.

Conflict is not regarded merely as a fight between individuals. It is always regarded as a fight between families. It brings about disorder in the community; the whole social order is disrupted. That is why when the above mentioned

event (*sandugo*) comes, it is demanded that all the families are present during that ritual. There is a process of resolution simply because there has to be. You go to the assessment of the damages, how much payment should be made, who had been hurt, how many died in this family, how many died in that family, what kind of injuries were effected, etc. In the final assessment the intention is that through a compensation package, they are able to settle the issue of balancing, or making even. And when it is over, everybody acts as if nothing happened; order is restored in the community.

So, there is this cultural context of the *sandugo*. In all the stories of *sandugo* or *dyandi* that I have researched on, I noticed that when the conflict is over, it does not matter how many got killed or how many got injured. When they say it is over, we are now like brothers again; it is as if nothing happened. The *kapatiran* spirit is healing the injury done. That is the social context wherein we use the word *kapatiran*.

Last month, I had very long interviews with an MNLF commander. I found out what he had to go through from the time conflict started in Mindanao in 1971 up to the present—how it has affected him; how the peace process is affecting him; his comrades in the field; how the split within the MNLF and between the MNLF or the MILF is affecting him, affecting the entire Muslim community and the entire peace process. That was when I thought, I had really reached the very depths of the meaning of *kapatiran*.

The description of the commander was something like this:

Back in 1971, he was 19 years old and a first year law student in Iligan. One evening his cousin came home running, pursued by several Christian fanatics. Because of that incident, they had an emergency meeting in the evening with the whole family. That meeting saw the end of his time at school. After that, he had to attend guerilla trainings, and along with that, were discussions on political and social issues. They were also taught how to organize the masses for an uprising. An uprising, as the way things were developing

then, was necessary. For them, there was no other way left to deal with the situation.

The year 1971 was a bloody year. Not a day passed without somebody getting killed. The code of conduct among some people in Bacolod- the Bisayans of Bacolod during that time was, "they kill one of us today, we kill one of them the next day, too". The killings had a multiplier effect. That is why in 1971, we had several massacres. This was punctuated by the massacre where 39 people got killed on the spot. The victims were not there to fight a war, they were just passing by. Citizens were halted at the checkpoint. In fact they had to lie down on the side of the road and inspected for firearms. Suddenly, a shot was heard and then the machine guns of the military were fired too. At the end of that episode, 39 people emerged dead while 4 men were detained and 54 wounded. The military people who were involved in that incident were charged in court. However, they were all eventually acquitted for lack of sufficient evidence. Another similar incident was the Manili massacre in Cotabato wherein 71 Muslims got killed.

The MNLF commander further said that before 1971, his family had many good friends- family friends who were Muslims and Christians. They ate and slept in each others' homes, feeling happy and safe. Then in 1971, suddenly there was polarization. The commander said, "Christians and Bisayans saw each other as enemies. It was easy to recruit warriors for the revolution. Christians and Muslims were enemies. We saw it, we saw the revolution as our answer to the problem. We needed to survive. We had to fight the prevailing social order to be able to survive. The young kids were encouraged to join the guerilla training. If they didn't have a gun yet at that time, they would really save up money and look for a gun that they could buy."

So, that is the meaning of a people's war. The overall result of that war in the terms of governmental statistics is that by 1976 there were about 120,000 people who were dead. Of this figure, 50% were MNLF, 20% civilian, and 30% military. We were not yet talking about healing in 1976.

The dialogue affair came in around 1978 and 1979. It was called the Muslim-Christian Dialogue. After that, the *Duyog Ramadhan* came. The Christians who felt they should express their brotherhood with Muslims shared the sacrifices of Ramadhan. The *Duyog* means to share, to sympathize. Thus, the people observing the event expected others to accompany them in Ramadhan. However, there were only a few people doing this. Even my own family, we saw the Christian and the Muslims as enemies to each other.

So quietly, I did my own historical research on Christian and Muslim relations with the intention of proving that this is not so. In my research which started in 1973, I discovered that, before, there were different autonomous religious streams. The Spanish colonization created several streams of Christianity. On the other end, there were also several streams of the Islam. A century before the Spaniards appeared the various streams of Islam joined together and became one big stream. The Spaniards wanted to join the two big streams but they failed to do that. So 333 years ago, a war of colonization was perpetrated by the Spaniards against the Muslims. They used thousands upon thousands of Christian converts, Filipino converts, as fighters against the Muslims. When the Muslims counter-attacked at a time they had the capability to do so, they were hitting these Christian communities, mostly in the Visayas and in the coastal towns of Luzon. The result was a deep-seated, deep-rooted bad blood between the Muslims and the Christians, which is still very much there up to the recent times. These are inherited from way back and are still carried over to the present. Whenever there is an incident that triggers, all wounds revive and conflicts are reactivated all over again.

At this point, we have to move back to the *Duyog Ramadhan*. In the late 70s, people were trying to bridge the strain. They were trying to make corrections. That was the time when the peace agreement was about to be signed. There was a negotiation between the MNLf and the government. In 1982 and 1986, something was supposed to be up for signing, but the people were not ready for it. The hesita-

tion was partly due to the fact that in the negotiations, the MNLF would become the head of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development covering 13 provinces. The said council was due to be only a transitory mechanism. However, it was not the government but the Christians who reacted negatively. They said, "How did it happen that we are suddenly under the MNLF?"

It was then my task, as member of the negotiating panel, as a representative of the Philippine government conducting negotiations under the direct instructions of the President, to move around Mindanao to explain. I was bombarded with negative energies. They were not asking me questions; they were telling me how they felt and did not even read the document. Luckily, after two months, the President said, "Okay, you release all the documents to be used." But despite that, peace was however still postponed.

Speaking of reconciliation and healing, I was also happy that as a result of the peace agreement, a lot of people came together, both government and the many peoples from various quarters and standpoints, to discuss how we could go about in handling this kind of situation. Most of us believed we could not allow war to happen. So that was how peace advocacy was born in great numbers. When I say great numbers, I am not saying they are enough. I don't think that they, the participants, are enough at this point. It is still undersized. But there is a saying which goes, "If you (the peacemakers) are at 5% of the population, there will be peace." But I am not so sure when we will reach the 5%. This is the reality that

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we have to face. Let us say we have all the schemes- the majority scheme, the Muslim scheme and then the Lumad scheme. The question is, how do we bring them together? There are interconnections here and there. But the greater number is still flowing as separate streams, not exactly liking each other because they are threatened by each other. So there is still plenty of peace work to do.

I talk about *kapatiran*, which is the only common cultural experience that I can cite. It has been forgotten because of the use of English. My agony is that because of the long colonial experience we have had, we are forced to discuss our very innermost problems in a language that is not our own. It would have been a lot better and much faster way if we used our own language. When I use the word *kapatiran*, I am sure everybody understands it immediately. I didn't have to talk about *Sandugo*. I didn't have to talk about *Dyandi*. All we have to do is describe a little and then we can recall how it was in the past.

The first disruption that the Spaniards did with *sandugo* is the following. When Ferdinand Magellan came, he entered into a *sandugo* with the natives of Samar and they promised to help each other, to not take advantage of each other, and treat each other as brothers. However the Spanish did not do what they signed. The next thing they did after the first Eucharistic Mass was plant the big cross, and Magellan said, "By this sign, I take possession of the Philippine islands" (see Pigafetta logbook). Our Catholic Church celebrates that moment as the greatest moment of God, of Christianity. I said it is not; it was the moment when our history took a turn for the worst. When you say we celebrate the Mass, please do not forget the planting of the cross. The cross was used as an historical landmark to take possession of the Philippines. So when in 1865, the king of Spain told Augustinians to go back to the Philippines and settle it, he had specifically cited "that cross, that is our land." That was followed by the 333 years of war I was talking about earlier.

Religion did not provide a heavenly experience during the war between the Spaniards and the Muslims. In the Ten

Commandments, the 6th one says "Thou shall not kill." But every Spanish expedition to Mindanao was accompanied by a friar. Usually before they went out to battle, they had a Mass, in which a sermon was said and a communion given out. In the sermon, the friar's favorite line was: "The world is divided into two forces, the forces of good and forces of evil. The forces of good are the forces of God and the forces of evil are the forces of the devil. There's only one true Church and that is the Catholic Church, the one that belongs to the forces of good. Islam is not the true church; it is false so it belongs to the forces of evil." The priest would never say; "Go and wipe out, or go and kill." What they said was; "it is the obligation; it is the responsibility of the forces of good to wipe out the forces of evil."

One of the good things that are happening today is the attempt to make connections among the various streams—using religion for reconciliation, redefining religion for reconciliation, for healing, for peace. We are now seeing the growth of a different kind of church, not the kind of Catholic Church we used to have, the Spanish-speaking kind or the one reminiscent of the Spanish colonial days. And we also have citizens, the NGOs using the language of healing reconciliation—all for peace, using the language of brotherhood, *kapatiran* for peace.

But most importantly, we have to recognize that there is a social problem, there is a social disorder brought about by a very long historical process and we indeed need collective hands to bring about convergence once again. My favorite expression is, "*Sinabong nila tayo, ngayon wala nang sabungero nagsasabong pa rin tayo*" (We were then pitted against each other by the colonialists as though we were gamecocks; they are gone now but we are still wrestling with each other). Let us look back at our history as a cock-fighting country. There were two roosters; the *sabungero* (cockfight handler) is the one who holds the roosters. He makes the roosters aggressive and puts metal spurs or gaffs on their heels to provoke them to fight. The *sabungero* is the Spaniard. One of the roosters is Christian and the other one is

Muslim. So they were there to fight. That was before; now that the *sabungero* has been gone a long time, we are still fighting. It is now time for us to put our fate in our own hands and design our future. That is why the language of *kapatiran* is very important here. Our agony, of course, is that our own culture is losing the battle with the English language and the false sophistication it brings.

In the school where I teach, they told me that there are only three legal languages you can use—that is Spanish, English and Filipino. I said, the Philippine Constitution does not say that Filipino is Tagalog—it says Filipino. And in Iligan, it is Bisaya. So for that reason, I was never called to the office to explain. After a semester, I think we succeeded in empowering the students to use Bisaya. They could not believe it. They said, “*Ay, puwede diay*” (Oh, it is okay after all). “*Puwede diay magbinisaya sa classroom*” (*Puwede pala mag-bisaya sa classroom*/It is okay to speak Bisaya in the classroom). You know, they were amazed. They never realized we can use Bisaya in the classrooms especially in the discussion of Philippine history. It was a very good exercise and training for cultural empowerment. We called it empowerment because the students realized there is power in using their own language. They can use it to talk about themselves, about their history. Before that, they never had the confidence. They had a very low esteem for Bisaya as a medium of communication.

All this is not just a question of three streams—the Lumad, the Muslims and the Christians. This is also a question of recognizing that there is power in the respect for and use of each others' languages, and that there is power in interconnecting these languages. It strengthens our cultural practices.

I call all of these healing because *kapatiran* in Philippine culture is always a kindhearted association, an agency for healing. It is a relationship or an environment for the social healing of a social injury. Conflict is an injury in a social order that in time creates disorder. On the other hand, settlement is always a product of “*busáy*” (being or doing well). *Husay* means, if you are frowning at a Visayan, you

can also later choose to smile in an effort to put right the previous demeanor. Those who are fighting use it (*busay*) and say "*Husayin nga ninyong tallo. Husayin nga ninyong relasyon ninyong dalawa*" (Try to make right your relationships).

On the other hand, the English phrase used by peace advocates in the West is "conflict transformation." This seems to mean that there is conflict, and out of conflict a state of harmony is established. That is my interpretation of the said phrase. But in the same way as the western activists, our peace advocates are using that word as if it is the most natural thing in the world. For me, it is not natural. The more natural word to use is *busay*. It carries a similar but more correct content. There is conflict, and there is also an automatic response—to try to settle it and bring back a social order. It is also viewed as settling a social conflict. We can use the same thing for the Muslims, Lumads and Christians - for all those who have the human eagerness and capacity for the *Kapatiran*, just like us.

Psychosocial Response to Restore and Strengthen Community Well-being in Pikit

BY ERNESTO A. ANASARIAS

We in Balay presently call our institutional work a community-based psychosocial development response in conflict-affected communities. We want to describe it as a work in progress because it represents our continuing attempt to understand the significance of what we do, especially in terms of its relevance to the people we serve, and the institutional learning we are able to generate out of many years of practice.

Beginning in the final years of the Marcos dictatorship in 1985, BALAY had been involved in the rehabilitation of the victims of torture and their families. During that period, we provided psychosocial support for detainees who were released from prison. Much of the programs were largely directed to the victims of political violence during the Martial Law years. When the political regime changed over after the ouster of the Marcos government, at which time changes in the human rights landscape in the country were also seen, BALAY made corresponding adjustments in its programs and services. The core mission to serve and promote human rights, however, has stayed the same.

It was in 1992 when our board of directors decided to concentrate more on the phenomenon of internal displacement. The decision to do so was finalized at a time when the

number of people who were being driven away from the communities where they live was rising. The people were being removed from their communities to give way to the development goals and strategies of the former President Fidel Ramos who wanted to fast-track the relevant expansion and construction programs all over the country. At that time, many political prisoners were being released, while the number of torture cases that were reported was on a downtrend. Meanwhile, the huge number of people being uprooted from their homes and communities was becoming a very perceptible phenomenon and was emerging as another ugly face of the human rights violation against the people. As statistical data continued to increase, the cases of internal displacement have also caused tremendous suffering to a huge number of people.

Beginning in 1992, we started to do community-based rehabilitation work in Luzon and Visayas. We were however at that time still re-learning the new ground application of our earlier approaches and methods, which catered to our original clientele—the victims of torture and their families. Part of the learning we had to gain was making our technical capacities more attuned and responsive to the needs of the IDPs because the knowledge and skills were still programmed as “family systems based” support work for the families of those who survived political detention and torture. In 2000, BALAY decided to devote at least 60 percent of its resources to the Mindanao region following the outbreak of the total war clashes between government troops and the local rebels—an episode that displaced more than 1 million people in the region.

When we came to Pikit in 2000 which was our first assignment in psychosocial rehabilitation work following the BOD decision, we introduced ourselves to the community people as BALAY—a Bisayan term for house or a shelter. When the locals have heard about this, many IDP's came to us asking if we were giving away houses. So it took us great effort and some time to explain the nature of our work and the kind of services that we provide, which were usually not

in the area of material support. We said that we do not give out food or houses, but provide psychosocial counseling and debriefing, especially to those who were severely affected and find it hard to cope actively and effectively in the aftermath of the displacement.

At that time, psychosocial counseling and debriefing was a kind of support that was alien to them. Their reactions were often a mixture of cynicism and disappointment. "What counseling? What debriefing? We need to repair our houses. We need to replace our resources that were destroyed." These were the typical reactions. From time to time, we also heard some IDPs asking questions regarding how to restore relationships with neighbors who did not want to talk to them anymore following the armed hostilities. All these preliminary encounters and inputs from the field have shaped our understanding of the concept of psychosocial work through the years.

As you can see, in our concept paper for this forum, we wrote: "Celebrating the various notions about trauma." I have sensed that the use of the word "celebrate" has triggered some confusion. I have also sensed the confusion is perhaps because of the fact that social trauma is an ugly reality, and a very painful condition. Many can only wonder—why celebrate?

Well, we can only begin to see the reasons for celebrating when we try to look beyond social trauma as a problem. When we look beyond the pain, beyond the despair and the helplessness of the victims, but instead look at the resources - whatever is left of these, it is only then that we regain perspective for celebration. In BALAY, we call this hope—the remaining capacities and possibilities people have that can be tied together to cope constructively and change situations, change the social environment. We believe hope is a reason to celebrate.

I would like to introduce the concept of well-being as the more appropriate analytical lens for looking at and understanding psychosocial healing. I believe it is also a correct

domain of human rights because well-being covers things pertaining to freedoms and civil liberties such as the right to life, right to means of subsistence, right to self-determination, right to peace and to development.

Well-being is subjective and context bound. In some of the literatures that we have come upon, well-being was described as something portraying the absence of negative conditions and feelings. We would like to add that well-being is also the ability to act and the freedom to obtain a quality of life befitting dignified human existence and interaction. We feel that recognizing the ability of people affected by social trauma to act in the face of difficult conditions is a tribute to and a celebration of the human agency. We celebrate the fact that whenever an environment is disrupted by violence, the human agency may be temporarily weakened or diminished but not totally put out, not totally extinguished.

We once asked our community partners what they thought of when "well-being" is mentioned. The answers given by our respondents varied according to a number of factors such as personal circumstances, age, educational background, etc. I will share some of the outstanding responses that we received. One of our resource persons, an Arumanen-Manobo, described well-being as having a simple life. He

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said, "That (the answer) is simple. When I want to eat, there is rice and perhaps some viands to go with it. If I want to rest, there's no problem, I can go ahead and rest. When I want to talk to my neighbors, nobody is going to stop me from doing so. It is a simple life; *walay problema* (There is no problem to bother with)."

The other respondents said similar things such as: having peace of mind, being able to sleep without suffering from nightmares, waking up refreshed, and sleeping through the night and not being disturbed by the sounds of gunfire. Still for a few others, having good relationships with those around them was considered an aspect of well-being. This was true for the farmers, wood-cutters and fishers in Pikit and Pagalungan, Pagagawan, who all valued good relationships formed with their Christian and Lumad neighbors.

It is also very often that our respondents referred to one's sense of security as a most important attribute of well-being. They would also speak of the absence of war and other violent conflicts. Other items constituting the basic rights such as education, livelihood and development, also found their way at the top of the list of aspects recognized as indicators of well-being. We note that while the responses seemed to include a wide range of conditions and basic rights that are desirable for a good quality of life, the answers were interconnected and consistent.

As our psychosocial workers in BALAY individually and jointly reflected on the responses and had later engaged in discussions along the ideas of well-being, we were able to come up with a firmer view, a unique Filipino notion of well-being. This notion matches the collectivist and the communitarian ideal which is the characteristic of the Filipino society, or of the many societies in the Philippines, as some would prefer to describe it. The Filipino notion of well-being is achieved in a social context; the personal feeling of contentment is derived or takes place in social interaction and engagement. Related to this, I remember a passage I have read from a book in which it was said and I quote: "My peace is derived from your peace; I can never have peace

for myself and on my own if you, on the other hand will remain in a state of un-peace."

In another book containing a related research, a national survey spanning Luzon and Mindanao that was done by Sycip and De Luna of the University of the Philippines, identified several domains that would explain what constitutes Filipino notions of well-being. They came up with an interesting top three domains: 1) spirituality, 2) social relationships, and 3) doing good (things) for others. However, when we BALAY staff-members, tried to examine the three sets, we thought that the outcomes were not as representative as they ought to have been. The places where the data were collected included key cities all over the country. They had respondents in Mindanao, but only from Zamboanga, General Santos and so forth, which were places dominated by Christians and upper class communities—in other words, by the educated population. We realized that the responses ruled out the perspectives coming from other sections of the multi-oriented Mindanao societies. We thought that if the survey was also done in the interior barangays—those inhabited by indigenous peoples, different other pictures of well-being could have been described, too.

All the same, the Sycip-Luna study opened doorways for us to want to learn more. After months of vigorous cultural and practical interactions by our BALAY volunteers with the residents in the communities of Pikit, we were able to also come up with several domains of well-being—our own version and somehow equivalent domains that matched the findings of Sycip and de Luna. These are the domains of culture and values, which include spirituality; network of social relationships, shared history as embodiment of collective consciousness, and human capacities.

The Filipino domains of well-being can indeed be a deep resource for healing, development, empowerment and transformation for the family and community. It is a reliable resource because when one is well and able to do things, he or she reaches out to others and form meaningful and energy-giving associations with them. The person's wellness contrib-

utes significantly in producing a network of supportive relationships. Between or among relationships, identities are also formed. For example, the Manobo and Maguindanaon who share a significant relationship would be engaged in reciprocal transactions that at the same time set apart and bring together their personhood, and hence form their respective identities.

The network of relationships pertains to social belongingness and interdependence. It is, however, not only something related to social relationships. Beyond this, it includes being connected to or in touch with the natural environment and the realm of the divine. In sum, this network of relationships includes the family, the tribal kinship and community, and interestingly, even the peace pact partners, and everyone in the "*kapatiran*" (fraternal association). We were amazed to know from our colleagues in the tribal communities that being a peace pact participant is not merely a diplomatic arrangement or a direct declaration of brotherhood with your fellow people. Rather, it is a contract sealed by something more powerful than people and human associations. It has a divine component. The *kapatiran* is not a simplistic gesture of goodwill but something that carries moral and spiritual obligations at the same time.

This kind of framing goes the same for the concept of neighborhood. Neighborhood physically means a cluster of houses—the people living in these houses. At least in the Maguindanaoan area, however, they have and are using this term "*kainged*", a word that transcends the simple term or concept of neighbor. The word neighbor in the local use refers to the person or family who lives in the few houses immediately next to yours. On the other hand, a *kainged* could be a house, a family, or a household, not related to you by blood or by intermarriage, but serves as a reference point, structure or relationship, and whose life naturally touches and links with yours. This is someone you have shared your life with, who has gone through good and bad times with you, and with whom you have developed loyalty and trust. The *kainged*, being part of a community's social relations has

been mentioned and articulated quite well in narratives of personal experiences among the early settlers in Pikit. In Maguindanao for instance, it is often told that even during the times when community residents were forced to flee their homes, they could leave their houses, chickens, and other belongings, to the *kainged* in the next house. The returning family would find everything intact when they come back. None of their possessions will be missing. The Christian families would also refer to the *kainged* in whose care they usually left their little children whenever they had business to attend to away from home. The Christians felt at ease knowing their children were in the good hands of the *kainged*. Thus, the concept of the *kainged*, and the social values it contains such as mutual responsibility, trust, and mutual support, is a remarkable part of the network of relationships in Mindanao's inner communities.

The aspect of culture belief systems and spiritualities as another domain of well-being had been discussed quite extensively both as concepts and practices in actual life in Mindanao's rural communities. Culture belief systems and spiritualities define so many things in the people's lives. They define the values, govern how experiences may be interpreted, and influence local notions of what a good life is. They also serve as guide and context to anchor and understand one's responses to social trauma.

An example of how culture belief systems and spiritualities fuse with community life is shown in an anecdote of the tribal peoples. A group of Arumanen-Manobo had talked about a story wherein a dream supposedly visited the community *Babaylan* (a spiritual leader). In that dream, the spirit had warned there will be a big disaster coming, and to avoid harm, the people were to leave quickly and go somewhere safe. The warning seemed to have come true as military assaults broke out shortly and disturbed the areas surrounding the Arumanen-Manobo community. The residents, who had fled earlier to heed the tribal priest's vision were spared. Indeed, for the tribal folks, culturally-attached interpretations of reality have gained some kind of control over their lives.

The belief system becomes a way of life, a lifeline for survival, and an anchor for their identity as a people.

From cultural belief systems and spiritualities, other domains of well-being come to light. These further domains that we have realized at this point are the shared history and the trans-generational experiences of the people. These domains embody the consciousness and the collective life as discussed earlier. They include resources, capacities, and knowledge.

Having said all of these, we now come to a point when we can say there seems to be a paradox in this facetious meaning of well-being. Given the various aspects or domains of well-being, we have been provided specific areas in determining the capacities of communities as well as the risks they are vulnerable to. In other words, the domains of well-being serve as resources for the healing, development, and transformation. At the same time, however, the same resources and capacities making up the well-being may also entail risks for the possessors of these resources and capacities, especially for those who exert influence on the others. The risks involved may be towards manipulation, revision, or a persuasive pressure made by an external source by providing a romantic and false notion of an ideal or aspiration to another. Throughout time, there have been instances when parties have used history to justify certain actions and events even when the effects these brought about saw minimal benefits to the interest and welfare of the majority and/or the entire community.

While we now understand well-being as a resource, we also have to understand another aspect which forms part of the whole dynamics—violence contradicts well-being. In fact, violence works as an anti-thesis to human well-being. As we have come to understand it, at least through our experience in Mindanao, violence also presents a paradox. On the one hand, it is an application of force to maintain social order. On the other hand, it can be an act of reprisal by people who felt they have been oppressed by another group. It can be resorted to as a means to settle conflicts. So while organized

violence is systematic, deliberate, and often perpetrated by the parties to a conflict, it is usually most harmful when in the hands of those who are in power. But even when violence is an instrument of the powerful, it is hardly their monopoly. The affected communities or representatives of communities can also justify the use of violence through reasons that have to do with various issues—to survive, to exact vengeance, to obtain justice, to preserve their own power, or to pursue a political-military strategy towards the attainment various causes.

In some literatures, the inclination of people to resort to violence is seen as a response to or an indicator of having been affected by social trauma. But while violence is a double-edged sword, there is sense in asking whether people who take up arms in order to resist their oppressors or simply to survive or to defend themselves from those who want their rights curtailed could be categorized as a manifestation of social trauma. In contrast, another interpretation would consider it as a form of empowered action because the people are merely actualizing a choice, and were not allowing themselves to be paralyzed by fear.

Whichever way we look at violence, either as a positive or a negative phenomenon, the implications are invariably and generally unpleasant. It disrupts the domains of well-being or transforms them to destructive resources. When violence invades the physical

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and non-physical spaces of the communities, it turns the collective well-being upside-down: there is no peace of mind, the natural resources are destroyed, and the social fabric is disturbed or injured. It challenges, it argues against the community's assumptions on safety and security. It creates a crack at the positive value of self-respect. It diminishes or destroys the capacities of people. When resources are gone, people see no more reason for continuing to meaningfully work and persevere. And they practically lose the energy to start a new life.

Interestingly, some people and groups well-known to be proponents of social transformation through radical and extreme measures, believe that violence could create opportunities, other than risks and actual damages. They argue that violent interventions are needed to open the way for structural changes and point to the fact that after violent events have taken place, opportunities to rebuild, to replace old things with new ones, also present themselves.

The implications and impacts of violence are also determined by the level of capacities and the degree of vulnerabilities present in the community. Although some communities may have been adversely affected by the impacts of violence, the residents claim many of them were not traumatized. In BALAY, we have seen for ourselves this capacity of the people to bear through crises and to bounce back. People who were repeatedly displaced and have survived numerous wars still possessed a certain level of functional capacity. Their internal resources have remained intact. Some were even able to build a better social network of protective factors after, and despite, the experience.

As we contemplate on these observations, we also come across another important aspect of well-being—the use of labels. For example, our colleagues have asked the people in one community why they considered themselves as sufferers of trauma. No one knew the reason for sure. So we asked them where they heard the term “trauma”. They answered that the word was previously unknown and not a part of the local vocabulary. They said it was merely brought in by out-

siders who had once come into their village claiming to be working for an NGO. They were told that various forms of services and basic provisions would be given freely to those among them who can confirm they are suffering trauma.

The said anecdote sounded strange, but it tells us something important—that although it is good to use labels and other specialized terms to present ideas, concepts and notions, there is also a significant risk to it that the term-users have to be cautioned of. Labeling is dependent on who is forming the label, on who is making the definitions and the criteria. According to a related literature, the concept of trauma comes from the medical and psychological domains and disciplines. The term was coined in an attempt by the authors and proponents to describe the horrors of war and its impacts on the affected peoples. It is easy to accept that people affected by violent conflicts may suffer to some degree. But there are relevant questions that have to be dealt with furthermore. For example, is it inescapable to be considered as traumatized even when people are suffering in a very normal way or to a degree or extent that is natural and thus to be expected? Are all the indicative conditions manifested or satisfyingly present in these persons to consider them traumatized? Besides, even when people say they suffer symptoms of trauma, does that mean they are sick, or is the condition right away pathological? These are some of the issues that need further reflecting on to understand trauma within the context of our understanding of well-being.

When violence collides with the well-being of people, we usually deal with its impacts as observable symptoms and manifestations and therefore link them to social trauma. So far we have used a definition of social trauma “as a blow to the protective factors of social life”. We say that when trauma takes place, it impairs the sense of community that beforehand has characterized the way of life of the people in that community. We have also come to understand social trauma as a blow to the primary tissues of social life.

Finally, we have come to know that the appropriate psychosocial response must be multi-dimensional and able to

address the population level. This means that while the psychosocial interventions that deal with trauma as a collective community condition are applied, equal care must be taken so as not to overlook the need for parallel remedies or for other forms of responses for particular individuals within the families. Notwithstanding emphasis on individualized care, the individual and the family who are suffering and are a part of the community trauma must be attended within the wider social context.

What makes trauma a serious case for intervention is its effect on the quality of life of a person, its effect on the human functionality, and thus the need to correctly and carefully address the psychological and emotional implications. To have a more far reaching healing effect, there is a need to work on the repair of the social fabric from where the causes emanate. Special attention should be given for addressing as well the issues that are underpinning the phenomenon of violence.

The goals of psychosocial development response must include promoting the well-being of people, their dignity and their rights. In BALAY, we do this through strategies that enable people to regain and enhance their psychosocial protective factors. We operate on the domains of relationship, spirituality, values, history, shared life, capacities and resources.

It is also the goal of psychosocial development response to enable, assist, or to work with people, towards mobilizing their ranks in addressing psychosocial stressors such as social violence, discrimination and poverty. An example of this kind of psychosocial development response was shown in June 2003, through an event called the *"Bakwit Power"*. In this event, the evacuees themselves decided that, with or without the support of the local and national NGOs, they were going to march out of the evacuation center to make a peaceful, nonviolent, and sincere appeal, for the parties in conflict - the rebels and the government troops, to immediately end the armed hostilities and return to the negotiating table for the settlement of the issues once and for all. The evacuees anchored this huge petition on ceasefire with concrete and

simple, yet very legitimate and justifiable calls: respect for their right to go home, to go back to the fields they have planted and harvest their rice and corn crops. Besides these appeals, the evacuees did not raise demands that were complicated and unrealistic. They were careful not to be distracted nor to muddle the issues they want immediately resolved. The evacuees held vigil for almost two days after which the MILF was finally persuaded to accede. Later, the government followed suit. A bilateral ceasefire was eventually declared a month after.

To this day, the evacuees who have returned to their respective communities in Pikit are still struggling to sustain fragile peace in a newborn peace zone called Space for Peace. But in addition to a fledgling ceasefire, the local movement to build the conditions for peace in the region has reached a new landmark - an experience they could rightfully call their own. The "bakwit-power" phenomenon, the first of its kind to be seen in North Cotabato, was something that the people decided to resort to and have launched on their own. The show of self-reliance in that collective action has redefined the bakwit population as a new force for action and participatory change on the ground towards a peaceful Mindanao.

Thus, having realized especially the resources that are available in collectivity and thus what they could do together to change their lot, the former evacuees are now even involved in the local peace process as support workers for the ceasefire monitoring activities of the Mindanao People's Caucus.

Learning from Mindanao's displaced bakwit communities and taking even more seriously the help we can provide these marginalized populations, BALAY has developed corresponding multi-disciplinary programs and services based on its understanding of social trauma and the significance of the domains of well-being as a resource for healing, development and transformation.

The programs and services now operate based on the following summary of how we understand psychosocial development and transformation must be conducted:

The manifestation of the problem in a given community may often appear to be psychological in nature, but the causative factors such as the violent conditions, the acts of op-

Managing conflicts through peace-building activities is also a component of the institutional programs on healing and instilling a culture of peace. The programs are also about encouraging and working with the people on the ground to rediscover their own indigenous ways of settling conflicts using their customary laws, their cultural belief systems and basic spirituality.

pression and the like, which lead to social traumatization, are the crucial issues that have to be dealt with more keenly and actively. It is one thing to address the manifestations of trauma such as shock or anxiety; it is another thing to look for the causes and to help bring about conditions for foundational remedies and solutions. If the sufferer's relationship with the significant others in the community is not restored, then he or she will remain in a constant state of anxiety. At some days, the sufferer's ability to cope might seem to improve but the source of the stress or the state of trauma would likely stay.

Therefore, we have developed together with our community partners, a program that raises awareness and promotes an alternative understanding of the phenomenon of trauma. This program offers another way of addressing the implications of violence by using multi-dimensional resources. An example is by providing livelihood support or educational assistance. By doing so, we restore functionality in some aspects of the family life as we also hope that a normalized environment, that is, normal to a degree pos-

sible, would facilitate the necessary conditions in the process of recovery.

When we speak of healing, we heal something that has been broken or shattered. Based on this, we have come to

realize again that a developmental support program is not about dispersal seeds per se, nor about perfunctory provision of income generating activities. Rather, at the core of this intervention is helping promote better understanding, cooperation, solidarity among the community members, and most importantly, increasing their capacities for constructive coping.

Managing conflicts through peace-building activities is also a component of the institutional programs on healing and instilling a culture of peace. The programs are about encouraging and working with the people on the ground to help them rediscover their own indigenous ways of settling conflicts using their customary laws, their cultural belief systems and basic spirituality. For example, conflict settlement between the Maguindanaon and the Manobo does not really require elaborate and sophisticated negotiations. When both parties have declared and sworn that the conflict is over, that will be as compelling as sacred law. It will not be just a token gesture of conciliation or lip service to peace, but a declaration of commitment and responsibility for each other as brothers and sisters. Both tribes make a sacred declaration. It has a cultural and spiritual dimension. It is a pact believed to have been sealed by the Divine and thus breaching this commitment is like destroying a covenant with the Divine Himself. To breach a compact is seen as not only an affront to the other compact-keepers, but a violation of a divine commitment as well.

There are different ways to promote and sustain community solidarity and self-reliance. Mostly it is through mechanisms of genuine interaction and convergence. In the peace camps that we conducted for the young people from the communities, we asked the participants what they thought of when concepts such as peace, peace-building, and the like are mentioned. The answers we received were straightforward and simple. We realized that the young people, despite the question of maturity and the transitional and developmental issues they have to cope with, are able to compensate because they could be sensible and unpretentious. They

do not think in abstract and sophisticated terms (that are often the cause of miscommunication) but in plain and very real symbols and expressions. Being thus more aware of this, the peace camp became a springboard for a more dynamic exchange among the young people. We trainers benefitted as well. We taught and learned from them and from each other; the mutual learning was an effective process. The peace camps proved to be a healthy venue for the healing and strengthening of the inner resources of the younger population. The camp's environment for free and unprejudiced interaction removed whatever barriers were present. It helped one see the other in a normal setting, that is, outside the margins of war, and this softened their biases and allowed them to reexamine through a more open and accepting lenses the other or the next person.

We have also introduced programs that encourage people to exercise their rights and capacities and allow them to solve their own problems. Through these programs, they will learn and regain control of their lives and not rely on external support by looking inward to the resources within themselves and their community. Eventually, moving forward can begin.

The 'Suara Kalalintad' or the "voices for peace" project, for instance, has been one of the community-initiated undertakings that indicate human capacities. Under the said project, the IDPs had decided to work together to build communal shelters for themselves especially after promises of aid by the government failed to come in time. While the people strictly subscribed to the wisdom of self-reliance, they also learned that obtaining help from those who were able and willing to provide assistance, is not always wrong. To some degree, and for the correct reasons, asking to be helped by others is sound and constructive. Considering this, they asked for material assistance from the NGOs. They also solicited building materials such as scrap lumber, flat wooden boards and iron sheets from neighbors and friends within the community. Those who could provide manual labor and other skills for construction work were also invited to help out.

The completion of 50 housing structures to date is proof of the strong motivation and capacity of the community residents to rise above their own difficult conditions. In the Suara Kalalintad, BALAY had only played supporting role as motivator and facilitator. Occasionally, the institution provided material support to augment the resources needed.

While we emphasize community participation for social transformation and development as one of the salient aspects of the recovery program, there are other conditions that must also be present to increase the possibility of the process of renewal and healing. This further condition is the political resolve of the community residents. We refer to this political aspect not as something that concerns party politics nor something ideologically rooted, controlled, or aimed towards a certain agenda, but rather a collective political motivation and will to act as a community. Through this aspect, people rediscover and regain their capacities especially for control and for decision-making towards constructive possibilities.

So when community participation for social transformation and development are harmonized with political resolve, a range of possibilities can be done to aid the community's recovery program—from practical actions like repairing dikes or improving irrigation canals, to "more mature or more advance" advocacies such as working with civil society partners in negotiating for local ceasefire, formulating a collective position and coming up with a manifesto for peace, or marching together on the streets to dramatize humanitarian concerns. There is a need for a political decision, a political capacity and action to choose the change they want, and achieve that change in the way they can, in the way they know how. When communities are able to decide for themselves, we know that healing and recovery are not far off.

To summarize, we say that violence and human rights violations, when these occur in the social environment, attack the human well-being. Violence may be systematically organized and practiced by agencies wanting to maintain or monopolize power, but it can also be spawned and exercised

by the same ones who are being attacked as their way of reacting, those who are in fact resisting the unpleasant and harmful effects of violence. When the latter happens, violence becomes reciprocal and cyclical. The condition of social trauma itself triggers and influences actual social interaction and engagement.

On the other hand, the domains of well-being can be a resource of resilience, power and vulnerability as well. Psychosocial dysfunctions put a strain on the social fabric but at the same time they also serve as opportunities to harness the people's capacity to be actors for change. Finally, the psychosocial development response must be multi-disciplinary, empowering and transformative.

I want to end by saying that in BALAY, we try to capture and utilize the core essence of our work—what we have so far understood about social trauma and how psycho-social response could be best and most meaningfully practiced, that is, not in isolation from the possessors of experience and the source of our learning, but in healthy partnership with the people, the survivors of trauma. What we learn, we give back to them. In the process, we make possible a dynamic healing phenomenon that is contextually appropriate and useful, and which is largely our own.

About the Presentors

George Radics studied sociology at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA). He joined the Balay study group which conducted a psychosocial inquiry on the phenomenon of social trauma in conflict-affected areas in Pikit, North Cotabato.

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Balay Rehabilitation Center is a non-profit organization that offers psychosocial development response to individuals, groups and communities affected by torture and organized violence. The population that it serves includes civilians displaced by armed conflict and those deprived of their liberty due to political circumstances and social violence. It advocates for peace, justice, and human rights. It supports social healing, multi-cultural dialogue, community empowerment and social transformation.



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