

**MINDANAO: The Emergency Situation & Urgent Need  
for Qualitative Intervention  
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November 2001**

Today, it is highly paradoxical that the island of Mindanao that used to be popularly known as the “land of promise” bleeds and cries out for urgent and qualitative intervention from all possible sides and corners of the country and of the world. Racked by decades-old problems, such a situation was all the more made complicated by former President Estrada’s “all-out war against the rebels” that escalated in 2000. The war in all its cruelty had caused and is causing unprecedented sufferings on our brothers and sisters in Mindanao - the Muslims, the Lumads and Christians. More than ever, they cry out to be helped in a qualitative manner so they can start the much-needed re-building of their broken lives all over again.

**The Roots of Internal Displacement in Mindanao**

Muslims and Lumads originally peopled Mindanao but over the years, the island’s fertile soil and rich natural resources attracted massive migration from Luzon and Visayas. Presently, the island’s 20 million population is composed of 4.5 million Muslims, 1.5 million Lumads and the rest are settlers. They are collectively known as Mindanao’s tri-people.

Historically, the massive inflow of settlers pushed the original inhabitants to the hinterlands leaving behind the land they have developed for years to the newcomers. Thus, internal displacement, originally an offshoot of land grabbing by the “Christian settlers,” has its roots since decades back. Later, this became a phenomenon due to the armed conflict between Muslim rebels and the military and the setting up of multi-million projects both by foreign capitalists and Filipino businessmen. Over the years, massive unrest intensified in the island characterized by the widening gap between the Muslims and settlers and heightened by the armed conflict between the military and the so-called “Muslim rebels.” According to Fr. Jun Mercado of *Kusog Mindanaw*, the situation stems from the following;

- 1) *Poverty* – Based on latest statistics, of the 20 poorest provinces in the country, 14 are found in Mindanao. Central Mindanao where Muslims live and the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) hold the highest rate of poverty incidence. The people’s poverty is caused by the large-scale acquisition of their land and means of subsistence by foreign multinational corporations and settlers. The fact that these two regions are noted for being the hotbed of Moro rebellion must have stemmed from the poverty situation. This runs contrary to the once popular saying, “anything dropped on Mindanao soil grows.”

- 2) *The politics of exclusion and inequality* – The tri-people more particularly the Muslims and Lumads are hardly included in governing their own political and economic affairs. They were automatically integrated into the national government and so-called development projects are simply imposed on them without proper consultation. Again, it is paradoxical that the Moro people who had proven themselves to have their own form of self-governance that dates back to their centuries of resistance against the Spanish colonizers were never given the opportunity to develop themselves in their own way. The development of their early skill on self-governance was stultified by their automatic integration into the national government since the Philippines supposedly acquired its independence from the United States in 1945. Since then, each of the successive administrations had its own unique way of responding to the Mindanao situation and the Moro problem in particular.
- 3) *The exploitation of natural resources that do not benefit the people* - Since decades back, foreign capitalists and Filipinos have been amassing wealth from the island's natural resources. They put up logging concessions as well as agro-industrial and commercial businesses, encroaching at the ancestral lands of the Muslims and Lumads. Some of the classic examples to this are the struggles of the Subanens against the Canadian-owned TVI Mining Company in Sibutad, Zamboanga del Norte, the B'laans who lost their land over the Dole Plantation in Polomolok and the Higanoons and the Manobos who are fighting to reclaim their homelands in Bukidnon. Generally, land is sacred to the people. For them, the encroachment of foreigners into their lands is tantamount to desecrating not only their fore parents and whole heritage but their lives and future generations as well. This explains why the Muslims and Lumads become "rebels" as the government and some people call them.

The creation of the ARMM during the time of then President Corazon Aquino was rejected by thousands of Moro people. For them, this would only serve as an automatic license to foreign capitalists to further exploit their resources. Yet, the Arroyo Administration's commitment to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and globalization may even be a more aggressive exploitation of Mindanao's natural resources.

### **Some Features Of A Displaced People**

The eruption of the war in March 2000 under the Estrada administration further uprooted the people from their livelihood and cultural practices. With this, an emergency situation took shape in the island particularly in Region IX (Western Mindanao), Region XII (Central Mindanao), Region XI (Southern Mindanao) and ARMM. The Estrada administration's "total war policy" supposedly against the "terrorists and criminals," had, in the process, caused the people's insurmountable sufferings thus, their displacement from their ancestral lands and territories.

According to Professor Taha M. Basman, Secretary General of the Philippine Islamic Council, the war situation in Mindanao affected 14 provinces, four cities, 89 municipalities and 502 barangays a total of 157,467 families and more than 700,000

individuals. This figure covers 7.7 percent of Mindanao's population. Prof. Basman further cited that in the last quarter of 2000, there were 190 evacuation centers where 22,170 families were staying. This is not to mention those who were living with their relatives in the town centers and cities and those who tried to return but could not proceed for security reasons so that they now live in the peripheries of their areas of origin. It is important to note that due to the emergency situation in Mindanao, thousands have migrated to as far as Bacolod City, Cebu City, Manila and even Baguio City.

A few months later, in March of this year, 2001, the number of displaced families in the whole of Mindanao was 26,758 composed of 144,953 persons according to the DSWD. Based on this data, the number of affected families and individuals has greatly lessened. However, BALAY, a human rights institution that focuses its psychosocial services in Mindanao, says that the DSWD figure only includes the people who have remained in the evacuation centers. This does not include people who tried to go back but have landed only in the peripheries of their places of origin, those who are forced to live with their relatives in the town centers and some 44,000 families displaced by military operations in the five towns of Sulu during the government's scheme of "completely destroying" the Abu Sayyaf in 2000. At the peak of the war in the same year and to some extent, up to the present, no one can go in and out of Jolo. When the Estrada administration waged an "all-out war" against an estimated 300-member Abu Sayyaf, it held captive the whole of Jolo. According to a resident, many people were since then forced to sleep in the pier of Zamboanga for fear of their lives.

Caught in the midst of warring parties, the people had to flee to safer grounds leaving their sources of livelihood and cultural practices. Having no place to go, some were forced to live with their equally poor relatives in the town centers and cities. Some landed in cramped evacuation centers where sanitation and privacy are remote possibilities. Just like other cases of human rights violations, women and children were most affected. With the schools closed, many children became war-freak. They would engage in war games as though life is so naturally filled with wars.

According to Atty. Armin Roxas from the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), during the commission's visit to Mindanao sometime in mid-2000, it discovered the following; 1) recruitment of children for armed combat, 2) use of women and children as human shields during emergencies, 3) taking of hostages which include women and children and even civilians, 4) employment of torture and inhuman treatment of captives, 5) death of civilians and non-combatants due to indiscriminate bombings, and 6) blockade that adversely affect the economic life of non-combatants and civilians.

In sum, the difficult lives of the people were all the more worsened by the war. Aside from the more visible effects cited above, most of them young and old were strongly affected psychologically and emotionally, too. Many of them find it very difficult to cope with the harsh realities of life. To further describe the IDPs in Mindanao, it might be good to borrow popular terms coined by psychologists – *wounded healers, wounded hearts and wounded tigers*.

The wounded healers are those who are capable of healing their wounds so that they are also capable of helping others heal their wounds. The *wounded hearts* are pained very deeply so that they find it very difficult to heal themselves more so to help others while the *wounded tigers* are those who became wild and aggressive after they have been wounded. People of the last category are ready to fight back anytime, anywhere and may even fight mistaken enemies. Clearly enough, the wounded hearts and wounded tigers might need the help of the wounded healers to be able to regain internal strength, go on with life meaningfully and once again become productive members of society. In a way, each and every one of us is wounded but that even while we are wounded, each one of us also has the capacity to become wounded healers. The challenge therefore is for all of us to become effective wounded healers and be responsive in a qualitative manner to our displaced brothers and sisters in Mindanao.

### **Interventions Done In Response to the Needs of the IDPs**

In mid-2000, then President Joseph Estrada created the Mindanao Coordinating Council (MCC). Having been the head of the MCC, the President further created a presidential task force that would take charge of the needs of the IDPs in Mindanao. President Estrada assigned the Director General of TESDA, Mr. Edicio de la Torre, to be the Chairman of the task force.

According to Professor Taha M. Basman of the Philippine Islamic Council, de la Torre's considerations in response to the needs of the IDPs were; *buhay* (securing the life of the IDPs), *bahay* (ensuring shelter) and *hanapbuhay* (ensuring their livelihood). Professor Basman further cited that some 3,000 houses were constructed under the shared responsibilities of the task force, local government units and some NGOs. It is not clear though whether there are opportunities for people to earn a living in these areas and whether mechanisms are provided for them to eventually get adjusted if, indeed, these are being prepared for their eventual permanent dwelling. When former President Estrada was deposed in January 2001, the MCC and the Presidential Task Force was, of course, automatically dissolved.

It is recalled that within the same period, the government released a total of P75 million to the IDPs through the Task Force. The government further announced that it would release an additional P75 million so that all in all, P150 million was allotted to the IDPs. While the amount appears to be a huge sum of money, it has to be noted that this was intended for more than 700,000 people. This is also a sharp contrast to the P25 million or more that the government was spending in a single day at the peak of its all-out war.

NGOs like the Ecumenical Commission on Displaced Families and Communities (ECDFC), Moro Human Rights Center, (MHRC), BALAY, Inc., etc. provided direct services to the IDPs, too. Through the funds and other resources gathered from partners and supportive friends at home and abroad, they provided food, medicines and other basic needs of the people. Their services are clearly responsive to the needs of some

communities but of course, these efforts are but limited considering the thousands of IDPs in Mindanao.

At this point, it might be good to share the experience of BALAY, an NGO that already had regional centers in Western and Central Mindanao prior to the intensification of the war in 2000. BALAY decided to make a strategic shift to some war-torn communities in Western, Southern and Central Mindanao. As much as possible, the institution also provides direct economic support to the IDPs but these are situated within a holistic psychosocial rehabilitation work or PRW. The institution is fully aware that with its current human and material resources, it can only serve a few communities. With this realization, BALAY is more than willing to share its experiences to interested NGOs and other bodies so that these can be duplicated and enriched in other IDP communities. (Attached is a brief description of the implementation of BALAY's PRW in war-torn communities in Mindanao.)

In the National Capital Region, joint efforts by NGOs and some concerned government individuals and agencies were launched in response to the issue of displacement in Mindanao. This includes the maximization of the multi-media and holding of symposia, forums and round-table discussions to help people outside the island become more aware of what is happening in Mindanao.

According to House Representative Loretta Ann P. Rosales during her talk in the round-table discussion in UP, "The recent and still ongoing fighting in Mindanao with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf has highlighted the problem of internal displacement in the Philippines." Honorable Rosales filed Resolution No. 1259 calling for the adoption of the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. The Lower House of Congress adopted this resolution. Unfortunately, the Senate was busy with other issues including the impeachment case of the former President so that it was not able to do its share.

Atty. Rene Sarmiento of the ECDFC said that the Presidential Committee on Human Rights (PCHR) headed by then Secretary of Justice and now Senate President Franklin Drilon issued Resolution No. 91-001 entitled, *A Resolution Providing for Guidelines on Evacuations* in 1991. Almost all the provisions in said resolution were found in the *United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* that came out seven years later. However, this was not translated into a law of the land so that it was not able to serve the country well. Thus, the phenomenon of internal displacement had escalated since 2000 with its continuing effects up to the present ushering in the worst case of internal displacement in our country since the World War II.

During the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, House Representative Grace S. Singson filed House Bill 1336 entitled, *An Act Providing Reasonable Compensation and Benefits for the Loss of Lives, Injuries, Damages to Properties Suffered by Non-combatants and Individuals in the Course of Military or Police Operations and For Other Purposes*. As its title clearly expresses, the bill once enacted into law aims to provide support to IDPs. However, it does not comprehensively respond to the internal displacement issue. For instance, it

does not speak of internal displacement as a crime, of punishing perpetrators and of preventing future internal displacements. The bill was not able to take off until the Congress ended to give way to the national elections in May 2001.

The new administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo somehow responded to the Mindanao situation. In January 2001, the President created Interact-Mindanao to attend to the relief and rehabilitation needs of the IDPs. However, based on the Philippine Daily Inquirer (September 23, 2001), she abolished this relief and rehabilitation agency because it was “possibly usurping some of the authorities of the ARMM.” According to the PDI, the President declared before the 10<sup>th</sup> Mindanao Business Conference in Cotabato City held on September 22, 2001, “Only P10 million remains from an initial funding of P40 million from the President’s Social Fund.” This was supposed to be the funding used by Interact-Mindanao. In the same occasion, the President also cited that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) would take over the work of rehabilitating evacuees from conflict-torn areas.

In another PDI issue dated September 24, 2001, it was reported that - “The joint venture agreements were forged among Filipino, Malaysian and Singaporean traders and centered mostly on palm oil plantation projects and orchard projects in war-torn Matanog, Maguindanao.” The PDI further reported that P36.35 billion worth of business agreements was forged and that local traders dubbed this as the “rebirth” of the East Asian Growth Areas (EAGA). Sometime in September, the President also inaugurated the Japanese-funded Malitubog-Maridagao irrigation dam in North Cotabato, one of Mindanao’s flagship projects.

This early, the new President’s two main responses to the Mindanao problem seem to be taking shape – responding to the IDP problem through the DSWD and the NDCC and “promoting peace, development and justice” by inviting foreign investors to set up multi-million projects mostly in agriculture. While we hope that all the IDPs are accounted and that services are not only focused on those who are still in the cramped evacuation centers, we also hope that the multi-million projects now being set up would benefit the masses and would not create further displacement on Mindanao’s tri-people.

### **The Much-Needed Re-building, Reconciliation, Peace and Justice in Mindanao**

As described above, the Mindanao problem is, indeed, complicated so that this requires a comprehensive response from all sides and corners of Philippines society. It would be great if the government, NGOs and the people themselves complement their efforts towards one and the same direction. Since this may not be achieved easily, some of the past efforts cited above can possibly serve as starting points. In the process of implementing concrete responses to the people’s needs, a concerted qualitative and comprehensive response might eventually take shape.

Gathering from the views and opinions of some NGOs who work with the IDPs, human rights defenders, concerned government people and some IDPs, the problem may be approached at two levels namely; the curative and the preventive/proactive levels. With the thousands of IDPs, we are confronted with the gargantuan task of addressing their present needs and problems. Hand in hand with this, we must also exert all efforts to prevent the further occurrence of internal displacement.

In a related manner, the road to peace and dialogue must seriously be taken not only by the two warring parties but also involving the people who were most affected. Of course, it is not easy to speak of peace and reconciliation when people lost their loved ones and their properties but initial steps towards this direction can at least be taken. For this to take place, the war with its different forms must first be stopped. It has been proven by our very painful and damaging experiences as a people that the war is never a solution.

For the two complementing approaches cited above to be implemented, a group has to start somewhere. In this regard, one suggestion may be to form a **National Consultative Body (NCB)** composed of concerned government agencies, NGOs and representatives of the IDPs. The group or some interested members of the group that conducted a round-table discussion on the internal displacement issue at the UP Law Center on November 23, 2000 may serve as the Adhoc body at the initial stage of the NCB. (A brief description of the round table discussion is presented below.) The NCB can start its work by coming up with a concept and an action plan. Some of the tasks of the NCB may be as follows:

1. Initiate a participative, in-depth study on the situation and problems of the internally displaced peoples in Mindanao.

A concerted, painstaking effort in deeply studying the situation of the IDPs is a must if we are to come up with a qualitative and sustainable intervention. This kind of intervention may serve as the grounding for the people's much-needed re-building of their lives. It is unjust when human beings simply become parts of huge figures and statistics. Behind the figures are individual persons and families each of whom are bestowed with the inherent and indelible right to life and development as parts of humanity.

The situation of the IDPs may have commonalities but that these also have differences. Thus, it is not possible to simply respond to their needs and problems with 'blanket solutions.' For instance, earlier efforts reveal that the IDPs are now living in three different situations; some are in evacuation centers, some live at the periphery of their places of origin and some have integrated themselves in town centers and cities. Thus, it is important to deeply study the particular problems, needs and plans of these three groups of IDPs. Definitely, those who are living in the periphery of their areas of origin and those who are living with their relatives in the town centers and cities still carry the effects of displacement and must be helped, too.

2. Continuously responding to the basic needs of the IDPs

Comprehensive and qualitative responses to the basic needs of the IDPs will have to be simultaneously done with the proposed in-depth study cited above. In fact, the study may be done well in the process of providing the much-needed basic needs of the three groups of IDPs.

For their part, NGO responses must be intensified and the modest experience on facilitating a holistic psychosocial rehabilitation work among the communities may need to be duplicated. NGOs that already engaged in this type of service must initiate in duplicating their experiences by conducting trainings among the people themselves, other interested NGOs and bodies. Exposure to so-called ‘rehabilitated communities’ may also be an important step in duplicating the initial experience in other communities.

### 3. Filing a court case on internal displacement

The idea of filing a court case on internal displacement initially came up during the round table discussion cited above. This will be a test case considering that a case of this kind will be filed in court for the first time. Coupled with this pioneering effort, the NCB may have to come up with a program similar to that of the DOJ’s Witness Protection Program considering the length of time and security problems usually entailed in the filing of court cases. It is also possible that the NCB coordinates with the DOJ and demand that this government agency give appropriate protection to the families who file their cases in court. The witnesses must also be protected and provided with their basic needs while the cases are going on.

The test case may spark long-range efforts in fighting for justice for the IDPs. Justice would entail giving appropriate punishment to proven perpetrators as well as indemnifying and rehabilitating the victims. It is only when justice is achieved that peace and reconciliation may begin to reign and that the IDPs can start rebuilding their lives. Aside from deterring the further occurrence of internal displacement, the victory of a test case in the court battle may encourage others to file their cases in court.

4. Setting up of special projects geared towards building peace among the tri-people of Mindanao, i.e. moving “schools for peace” for both Muslim, Lumad and Christian children and facilitating the setting up of other joint and sustained activities and projects which are beneficial among and for the island’s tri-people.
5. Serving as a “watch dog” that would document and publish disturbing activities of multi-million projects being set up under the present administration to help ensure that these are beneficial to the people and would not cause further displacement on them.
6. Coming Up with an Intensive and Sustained Advocacy Work at the Local, National, Regional and International Levels



The advocacy work referred to here include four main components namely; public information and campaign, lobby work, education-training and alliance building/solidarity work. These four components will be implemented at the local, national, regional and international levels.

a. On Public information and campaign

Issue projection by maximizing the multi-media, conducting a series of forums, symposia, theater presentation and coming up with regular and special publications on the issue as well as achievements in the resolution of the issue. Conducting multi-sectoral mass actions geared towards the achievement of specific calls on the IDP issue; i.e., gathering the widest support possible geared towards the enactment of the internal displacement bill into law, etc.

b. Lobby work

b.1. Lobbying for the Ratification of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UNGPID) among 60 countries worldwide; (Note: Please, find attached copy of the UNGPID)

b.2. Filing a comprehensive bill on internal displacement and working on its enactment into law. This will have to respond to the immediate needs and problems of IDPs and will also stress on the deterrence and eventual eradication of internal displacement in our land.

b.3. Lobbying with other national and local government officials in support of the internal displacement issue.

c. Conducting education and training on holistic psychosocial rehabilitation and advocacy work among the IDPs, interested NGOs and other bodies.

d. Building the widest alliance and solidarity possible within the country. As much as possible, the NCB must forge partnerships with people's organizations, government agencies and other entities that work among the IDPs in Mindanao. In a related manner, the NCB will also establish partnerships with people's organizations in different parts of the world more particularly with organizations involved in the internal displacement issue.

e. Gathering the much-needed political, moral and material support for the internal displacement issue from all possible sources at home and abroad.

### **The Long, Arduous Road That Lies Ahead**

The successful implementation of the tasks presented above may only be among the initial steps in the building of lasting and true peace, reconciliation and justice to the victims of internal displacement caused by the cruel war in Mindanao.

Over and above what has been written in this paper, the Moro people's long-drawn campaign for total development and self-determination remains to be a much longer and much more arduous road that will have to be collectively taken by the people themselves with the support of all the levels of our government and the rest of Philippine society. Suffice it to say at the moment that the gradual achievement of the concrete targets and objectives presented in this paper in response to the particular issue of internal displacement in the island may serve as initial grounding in the eventual development of strategic solutions to the strategic problems of Mindanao's tri-people.

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References:

House Representative Honorable Loretta Ann P. Rosales, *A Discussion on The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 23 November 2000

Atty. Rene Sarmiento, *Legal Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*, 23, November 2000

Fr. Jun Mercado, *Inputs, Bayanihan International Solidarity Conference*, August 24, 2001

Professor Taha M. Basman, *Situation of the Displaced Persons in Mindanao*, 23, November 2000

BALAY publications and institutional papers

Discussions with BALAY's Executive Director and staff, some leaders of the Moro Human Rights Center and individual human rights advocates

Issues of the Human Rights Forum published by the Philippine Human Rights Information Center (Philrights)

Philippine Daily Inquirer

Attachment:

1. The Round-Table Discussion dubbed - **Internally Displaced Persons: Collateral Damage or Victims of Human Rights Violation?**

This was conducted on November 23, 2000 at the UP Law Center co-sponsored by BALAY Inc., the UP Institute of Human Rights, Ecumenical Commission on Displaced Families and communities, UP Muslim Student Association and the Alpha Phi Beta Fraternity.

The speakers were House Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales, Atty. Rene Sarmiento and Professor Taha M. Basman, Secretary General of the Philippine Islamic Council.

The Reactors were Atty. Armin Roxas of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and Atty. Noel R. del Prado of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

The participants of the round-table discussion were NGO representatives as well as leaders and members of Muslim organizations.

The terms ‘collateral damage’ used by the government especially the military was strongly criticized by Hon. Loretta Ann Rosales. According to her, the tri-people of Mindanao must never be considered as simply ‘collateral damage’ of the war. They are victims of human rights violations. They are human beings who are made to unjustly suffer in the process of the armed conflict between the military and the MILF or the military and the Abu Sayyaf.

There were no resolutions made during the round-table discussion. This was only an initial step to study the Mindanao problem. The body and other equally interested organizations may be called again to form the National Coordinating Body (NCB) that would respond to the IDP problem in Mindanao.

2. On the *United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UNGPID)*.  
(Please, find attached copy.)

The UNGPID is the latest legal protection for the IDPs at the international level. This was crafted by a team of international experts working under the direction of the UN Secretary General through its representative on the IDP issue. The instrument was presented to the regular session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in April 1998. Since then, the words ‘internally displaced persons and communities’ or IDPs became universally accepted terms for peoples who are displaced within their own countries through so-called development projects or armed conflict.

3. A Brief Description of BALAY’s Psychosocial Rehabilitation Work (PRW) Among the IDPs

Since its founding on September 27, 1985, BALAY has defined itself to be an institution that caters to the psychosocial rehabilitation needs of victims of human rights violations. For several years after its founding, BALAY has been working among the ex-political detainees and their families as well as families of victims of involuntary disappearance and ‘salvaged’ victims. The main approach or strategy used by BALAY is the ‘Family Systems Approach.’

While catering to the needs of victims of human rights violations cited above, the institution, in its General Assembly in 1992, decided to provide services to the IDPs. However, due to the lack of resources, BALAY could only start to work among the IDPs in mid-1996. In December 1998, the institution conducted a summing up of its 2½-year work among the IDPs. With this, two important institutional documents were produced: *Our Work Among the IDPs for the Past 2½ Years* and *Our Psychosocial Rehabilitation*

*Work Among the IDPs.* The last document is basically a concept paper on the holistic psychosocial rehabilitation work among the IDPs. This is now fondly called by BALAY as the PRW. Holistic here means that BALAY caters not only to the psychological and emotional needs of the people but also to the latter's more basic needs.

BALAY continued its work among the IDPs through its regional centers in Western Mindanao, Western Visayas, Southern Visayas and the National Capital Region. The challenge by then is that of implementing the PRW among communities and not anymore only among individuals and families. By this time, the institution decided that 60% of its services would be given to the IDPs while 40% would be for other victims of human rights violations. This decision was based on the recognition of the prevalence of internal displacement due to the so-called development aggression and the armed conflict.

In mid-2000, at the peak of former President Estrada's "all-out war against the Muslim rebels," BALAY decided to make a strategic shift to some war-torn communities in Mindanao. With its limited human and material resources, BALAY worked among eight "focus communities." The institution's entry point was by sponsoring or co-sponsoring fact-finding or relief missions together with other NGOs and concerned government agencies in war-torn communities or in evacuation centers. During the missions, the institution provides what it calls "psychosocial first-aid" largely composed of de-briefing sessions and provision of the basic needs of the people like food, medicines, etc. During the de-briefing, BALAY tries to determine individuals who possibly have psycho-emotional problems or those who appear to be "wounded hearts and wounded tigers." (These terms were defined in the paper.)

Programmed counseling and therapy sessions are usually conducted with these two categories of wounded people while other forms of support are continuously done to the whole group or community either with the help of other NGOs or with the institution's own meager resources. Meanwhile, those who appear to be "wounded healers" are also helped to enhance their capabilities and skills. They usually become the leaders and healers of their own communities.

Over a period of one year or more, a series of activities are done at different periods to help the people pinpoint their main problems and eventually cope with their situations. Leadership trainings, as well as human rights education and other appropriate trainings are facilitated among the people. BALAY uses a clear criteria on 'rehabilitated communities or groups' or indicators of success before moving on to other communities or groups of IDPs.

At this point, BALAY is more than willing to share its modest experience on the implementation of a holistic psychosocial rehabilitation work among communities and groups of IDPs to other NGOs and equally interested entities in the interest of thousands of IDPs in Mindanao.

*22 October 2001*