Addressing Societal Divides

Stories of Bridging Leadership

Volume I

Asian Institute of Management
TeaM Energy
Center for Bridging Leadership
TeaM Energy
Strength in Synergy
TeaM Energy Foundation

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CHAPTER I

EACH TIME TESSIE FERNANDEZ would check on the operations of the non-government organization that she headed, she could not help but notice the bruises on the arms and faces of the female workers. Whenever she would ask about these, the women would often give excuses, but their voices and eyes often betrayed their words.

During their less guarded moments, some of the women admitted that the bruises were inflicted by their partners. Others were more open about the beatings they endured, speaking of these the way they spoke about their daily chores, as if being slapped and kicked was the most natural part of running a household. To Tessie's dismay, none of the women she talked to felt they could do something to end their suffering. It was their fate, they said, and there was nothing that could change that. When she asked village authorities, she found out that there were no legal or any other mechanism available to help the women.

Tessie knew she had to do something to put an end to violence against women, but she knew that piecemeal fixes would not work. Instead, she decided to do things differently.

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Esmail and Michael were born on the same day to totally different circumstances. Esmail, whose parents have had little formal schooling, was delivered by the village medicine woman inside their nipa-thatched hut in the fringes of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Michael, whose parents were both college graduates, was delivered by a team of health professionals who checked the baby's vital signs from the moment he was born up to the time his mother checked out of the city hospital three days later.

On the day of their birth, Esmail's and Michael's fates have been predetermined by their very circumstances—their race, their parents' income and education, their location, and their gender. Statistics indicated that Michael had a far greater chance of surviving his first year of life than Esmail did. From the outset, the odds seemed to favor Michael much more than Esmail: Michael could expect to complete 11 years of formal education, versus Esmail's less than one year; he could hope to live up to 70 years, compared to Esmail's 54. Esmail, on the other hand, was less likely to have access to clean water, sanitation, good schools, and good income opportunities, compared with Michael.

Esmail and other infants who share the same demographic profile would most likely not enjoy the opportunities that Michael would, and would most likely remain poor and uneducated throughout their lives—unless someone does something differently for them.

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The stories above illustrate the impact of complex socio-economic issues on the lives of people. They show the inequities that people live with and influence the lives of succeeding generations, often without the promise of change.

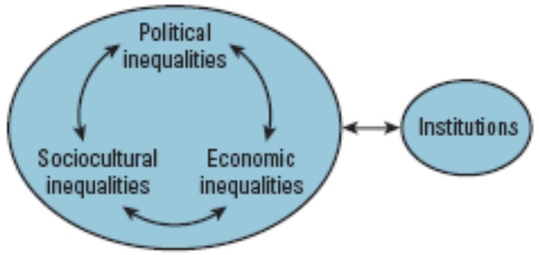
The Cycle of Inequities

Inequities occur because one group of people enjoys more advantages than other groups—not because of the works they have done but because of the circumstances of their birth. Often, this comes about from mindsets or behaviors that are embedded in and propagated by societal structures and institutions over the years.

Consider an agricultural laborer working for a powerful landlord. Illiteracy and malnourishment may prevent him from breaking free from the bondage of poverty. Moreover, he is likely to be heavily indebted to his employer, which puts him under the landlord's control. Even if laws were in place to enable him to challenge his landlord's dictates, his illiteracy would make it difficult for him to access the political and judicial institutions that might help him assert his rights. In many parts of the world, this distance between landlords and laborers is compounded by entrenched social structures: landlords typically belong to a dominant group defined by race or caste, while tenants and laborers belong to a subordinate group. Because social norms do not allow members of these groups to intermarry, group-based inequalities are perpetuated across generations. Over time, this cycle is entrenched in the institutions that govern the behavior of a state or society.

How, then, does one deal with inequities?

The Cycle of Inequities. *Source: World Development Report 2006*



In his book, "Solving Tough Problems", Adam Kahane posits that the reason why people are unable to solve many difficult problems is because people do not understand the "complexity" of the problem. The problems of poverty, poor access to health, and other inequities are simply too complex to be resolved using conventional problem solving methods.

To adequately deal with inequity, it is important to understand why and how it came about.

Having understood the anatomy of inequity, the next step is to identify the challenges that a leader who wants to take on social inequity would have to deal with. If inequities operate at the level of deep societal structures, conventional change management models will not suffice.

Having identified the challenges, the next step would be to find or create the leader who would be able to rally people toward reducing or ending these inequities. This leader should be able to account for the level of complexity of the situation and propose a way for people to address it.

The Search for a Leadership Approach to Address Inequity

Through the years, many leadership and social development programs have been undertaken by individuals and organizations. While these may have succeeded in making people aware of the magnitude of societal problems, none of these have addressed pervasive social inequity or had concrete development outcomes.

In addressing social inequity, technical solutions are the easiest to formulate and implement. The bigger challenge is getting people within communities and societies to recognize the need for change and agree to go through a possibly painful and difficult change process. This is no different from what Heifetz calls adaptive work. To take people through this process, one needs a leader who will take on the challenge.

Leadership approaches are usually defined by the context in which they are taken. Different situations require different leadership approaches. Since social inequity results from the superimposition of complex situations and has a deep-rooted yet continually evolving context, several questions beg to be asked: Is there a leadership approach that provides a way to address inequities or similarly complex social problems? Is there a leadership approach that proposes a way forward that accounts for the inherent dynamic, generative, and social complexity of societal issues? Is there a leadership approach that allows us to bring together people within a system to change their systems and institutions?

The pressing need for an effective leadership approach to approach social inequity provided the impetus to conduct research on Bridging Leadership. The Synergos Institute commissioned a global research project in 2002 to explore the emerging phenomena that was called Bridging Leadership. The project brought together practitioners from different parts of the world to write cases and articulate this leadership approach. It culminated in the development of 20 cases on Bridging Leadership and a paper by Steve Pierce entitled, "Bridging Differences and Building Collaboration: The Critical Role of Leadership". This research successfully established the existence of the Bridging Leadership approach; its appropriateness in addressing inequities; and its place within the existing universe of leadership approaches.

Although the global research project did not go beyond these papers , Prof. Ernesto Garilao of the Asian Institute of Management decided to continue the application of the Bridging Leadership framework and do further research on it. His vision was to bring it to more people, in the hopes that they would become the leaders that would address the roots of social inequity.

The Continuing Research of AIM

In October 2002, AIM ran the first Bridging Leadership training workshop for heads and senior officials of civil society organizations, using the Synergos cases that related the experiences of Tessie Fernandez, Parawagan and Howard Dee. Professors Gavino and Garilao handled the sessions, attended by the most prominent figures in civil society.

The sessions were very well received. The participants accepted the rele-

(continued on page 6)

Intra-country statistics show how social inequity plays out in numbers The table below illustrates how certain indicators change depending on where a person lives in the Philippines.

Quality of Life Indicators for Basulta and ARMM (Table 1)

Indicators	Basilan	Sulu	Tawi-tawi	ARMM	RP	Int'l Comparison
Population (2000)	332,628	619,668	322,317	—	78.6 M	
Life Expectancy at Birth (HDR, 2004)	60.2	52.3	50.8	57.4	69.8	Senegal 52.7 Benin 50.7
Probability at birth for not surviving to age 40 cohort (PHDR, 2002; HDR, 2004)	18.1	28.6	29.7	—	7.4	Gambia 29.6 Gabon 28.1
Infant Mortality (HDR, 2004)	—	—	—	63	29	Sudan 64 Lesotho 64
Families with Access to water (APIS, 1999. WDI, 2000; HDR, 2004)	55.9	29.9	11.4	61.6	86	Chad 27 Togo 54
Poverty Incidence (NCSB, 2003, HDR, 2004)	63	92	75.3	62.9	36.9	Zambia 72.9 Malawi 65.3
Ave. Annual Per Capita Income (FIES in PHDR, 2002)	P13,193	P 7,850	P11,349	—	P48,816 (MM)	—
Poverty depth (PHDR, 2002)	16.7	37.3	25.8	—	7.2	—
Per cent HS Graduate	28.6	18.1	34.2	—	—	—
Adult Functional Illiteracy (age 15+) (PHDR, 2002, HDR, 2004)	51.9	42.3	47.3	—	7.4	Chad 54.2 Sudan 40.1 Haiti 48.1
School enrolment of 6-12 yrs. old among the poorest (WB, 2003)	—	—	—	0.583	—	Senegal Mauritania
% Basic Enrolment Rate	82.1	77.7	—	—	—	—
Cohort Survival Rate (PHDR, 2002)	34.3	29.7	42.8	33.96	—	—

Source: as stated per indicator. National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB), Human Development Report (HDR), World Bank (WB), Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES)

The inequities are most pronounced in the case of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In short, people who live in Muslim Mindanao will likely live shorter lives, be less educated, have less access to infrastructure, have less economic opportunities, have limited access to health and generally have a poorer quality of life.

Resolving inequities requires far more complex interventions. They will, at the very least, require third order change, defined by Steve Waddell (2005, Societal Learning and Change) as change that is dynamic, social and generative.

Table 2. Different Levels of Change

Criteria	*First Order Change*	*Second Order Change*	*Third Order Change*
Desired Outcome	"More (or less) of the same."	Reform	Transformation
Purpose	To improve the performance of the established system.	To change the system to address shortcomings and respond to the needs of stakeholders	To address problems from a whole-system perspective
Participation	Replicates the established decision making group and power relationships	Brings relevant stakeholders into the problem solving conversation in ways that enable them to influence the decision making process	Creates a microcosm of the problem system, with all participants coming in on an equal footing as issue owners and decision makers
Process	Confirms existing rules. Preserves the established power structure and relationships among actors in the system	Opens existing rules to revision. Suspends established power relationships; promotes authentic interactions; creates a space for genuine reform of the system	Opens issue to creation of entirely new ways of thinking about the issue. Promotes transformation of relationships toward whole-system awareness and identity; promotes examination of the deep structures that sustain the system; creates a space for fundamental system change

Poverty in a community, for example, has multiple causes, and even if causes are identified, there are often a range of complicating factors and conditions that make solving them difficult.

Take the lower achievement scores of students in the municipality of Sta. Fe in the province of Nueva Vizcaya. The Department of Education was blamed for the poor performance of the students. Further analysis showed, however, that more than the deficiencies of the school, the students' socioeconomic circumstances had a great bearing on their performance. Some of the students went to school hungry so even with superior teaching materials and techniques, the students would not have been able to absorb their lesson. It was also customary for students to go on a 'vacation' from school to help with the family livelihood, affecting learning. Moreover, they were not encouraged to do their homework at home, impeding learning. Other factors that led to the problem was the peace and order situation in the area and the poor health of the children.

To address this, different stakeholders have to work on the various issues: education officials need to address the lack of facilities, teacher competency, and school materials; parents need to improve the student's study habits; the local government and civil society need to help address the families' socioeconomic and security concerns.

vance of the framework in their work; saw the importance of dialogue; and agreed on the importance of co-ownership. They also expressed the need to propagate the Bridging Leadership framework among more stakeholders.

As the clamor for more sessions intensified, AIM held more sessions, which were attended by participants from diverse sectors.

By 2004, AIM had conducted 10 Bridging Leadership programs. These programs had two objectives: (a) to develop the capacities of leaders who would be able to address societal divides, and (b) provide a venue to enhance the framework through the interaction with the participants. Bridging Leadership modules were also offered in the Masters in Management course and in the executive development program.

That year, AIM received an endowment fund to establish the AIM-Mirant Center for Bridging Societal Divides. The Center was formed to continue research on the BL Framework and to pursue programs in the actual application of the framework.

One program focused on Bridging Leadership formation. This was a two-year fellowship for 10 selected leaders to be assisted in bridging the societal divides they have identified. This gave the Center the opportunity to use the framework in Bridging Leadership formation.

The Center also took part in the formation of the Pagtabangan Basulta, a consortium of 15 Manila-based CSOs working with regional and provincial CSOs to improve the human development indicators (HDI) of the poorest provinces of southern Philippines. The consortium used human security as its development framework and Bridging Leadership as the leadership approach in addressing the problem of societal divides.

These experiences provided more insight that led to the further development of the
concept of Bridging Leadership. It also underscored the need to refine the thinking and revisit the foundations of this leadership approach.

AIM's Contribution to the Leadership Approach

AIM's role in the initial research project and its appointment as the institutional host of the Center came about due to its extensive experience in management education. In Asia. AIM has been running post-graduate programs on general management and development management for over 40 years. It is also one of the first academic institutions to integrate the study of leadership in its Masters in Business Management and Masters in Development Management programs.

The integration of the Bridging Leadership framework into AIM's academic programs somehow led to the integration of AIM's concepts into the Bridging Leadership Framework.

Leadership is personal

The first concept that AIM embedded into the Bridging Leadership framework is that leadership is personal. Dr. Eduardro Morato puts it very well when he said that, "the biggest propeller, as well as inhibitor, to achieving life's personal goals is the person himself or herself" and that it is ironic that "there is not that much emphasis, either from the school system or from the parents, to grow and nurture a person"

Leadership studies cannot simply look at the outward actions of the leader as he works to achieve his goals. It has to include an inquiry into his inner qualities which allows him to be successful. The study of leadership explores how a person's character, values, attitudes, motivations, and competencies are developed to enable him to achieve his goals.

Another aspect to explore in studying the personal nature of leadership is the role of passion. This is important because leaders who pursue goals with passion are more often successful than those who do not.

Bill George, in his book "True North", wrote that leaders "must first understand themselves and their passions. In turn, their passions show the way to the purpose of their leadership. Without a real sense of purpose, leaders are at the mercy of their egos and narcissistic vulnerabilities."

AIM thus posits that leadership development must align the purpose of the leader with the work that he is doing. This is, admittedly, a long process but it is a process that must be undertaken nonetheless.

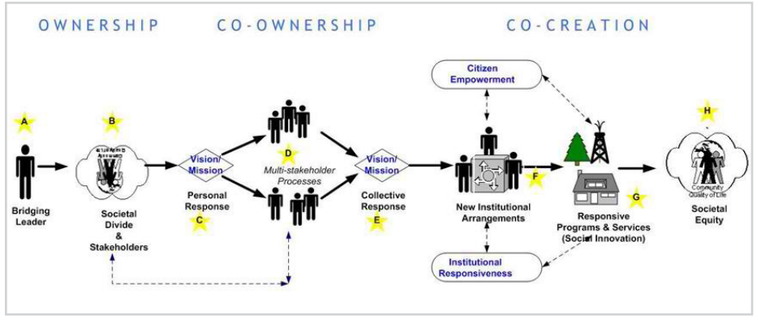
Defining acts of leadership

The second concept that AIM integrated into the Bridging Leadership framework involved defining "acts of leadership". AIM subscribes to the concept that leaders can be developed. Therefore, leadership can be developed within individuals who are willing to learn. This does not contradict the fact that there are people who, because of their circumstances, are predisposed to leadership.

From these concepts and the action research work that it has done, the AIM TeaM Energy Center posits the following framework to further define Bridging Leadership:

The Bridging Leadership Framework

The proposed Bridging Leadership Framework has three phases: Ownership, Co-Ownership, and Co-Creation. The acts of leadership for each phase are discussed below:



OWNERSHIP. The process of ownership begins with the leader. He realizes his leadership capital, the amalgamation of his assets: his values and principles; his sense of mission; his education and training experience; his social networks and his personal relationships. He looks at societal inequity as part of a wider system of systems and is able to see the different subsystems and components that make up this complex system. He can identify the different stakeholders involved and understands their interests in the issue; the resources they have and their capacity to support or to block the work to address the issue. Stakeholder analysis is important because it allows him to see whether convening these stakeholders is within the capacity of his leadership capital.

Once he is able to recognize the inequity and the systems that cause it, he decides that he wants to do something about the issue. The intensity of his response is dependent on whether he is able to relate his response to his life mission. This response can be articulated in a personal vision and mission.

CO-OWNERSHIP. Once the bridging leader commits to a response to the issue at hand, he brings together the different stakeholders to collaborate toward addressing it. The underlying processes used by the bridging leader are multistakeholder processes that facilitate collaboration and dialogue to bring diverse stakeholders together toward understanding and agreement.

CO-CREATION. This is the segment where collaborative agreements are operationalized into
collective action. These take the form of new institutional arrangements that will result in more innovative programs. The institutional arrangements would hopefully lead to a more empowered citizenry and more responsive institutions that would ultimately reduce inequity in society.

Having defined the qualities and the role of a bridging leader, AIM's next step was set: build up a cadre of bridging leaders—leaders with the character, values and competence to transform institutions and reduce societal divides through participative development. These will be leaders that people can trust, and who reinforce that trust beyond themselves by building institutions that promote equity, inclusion, peace and prosperity. They are to be the expression of AIM's mission to contribute to the development of equitable Asian societies.

Recognizing that mere workshops would not suffice in creating and defining leaders who can bridge societal gaps, AIM decided it was time to put its resources in a program that will focus on nurturing the skills of pre-identified leaders and provide them with the tools to carry out their work on the ground. These leaders would be mentored on specific problems they have identified, and provided technical guidance in the hopes that they may rally multiple stakeholders toward owning and addressing problems that have persisted and have oppressed people for so long.

Thus, the Bridging Leadership Fellowship Program came to be. Unlike the cases and workshops that merely discussed the dimensions of societal inequity from a conceptual level, the fellowship program was envisioned to influence the actual work of leaders on the ground, in the hopes of making them more effective. It aimed to strengthen the capacity and opportunities of the leaders so that they can make use their positions to address the systematic causes of inequity. By identifying these leaders and the specific issues they need to work on, and providing the leaders with the tools to address these issues, the fellowship program hoped to start the hard work of reducing inequities – right where they existed. In short, the fellowship program would bring the Bridging Leadership concept to life.

The fellowship program was also seen as a venue for the leaders to exchange their ideas and experiences. By bringing leaders together, more ideas can be hatched and more possibilities can unfold. Over time, the program could be the seedbed of collaboration among the fellows for lasting impact in the lives of people. With AIM guiding these fellows by the hand, the opportunity to help reduce inequity could be at hand.

Written by Prof. Jacinto Gavino and Marcia Czarina Corazon M. Medina, with assistance from Ton Reyes

The Bridging Leadership Fellowship Program

WIDE SOCIAL INEQUITIES CALL FOR BRIDGING LEADERS who have the vision, the will and the passion to work toward a society without divides; leaders who are able to analyze the dimensions of a divide clearly, identify all the stakeholders with whom they can form linkages of understanding and action, and pursue the vision to transform the lives of the marginalized. These leaders will embody AIM's efforts to eliminate existing divides that have kept many Asian communities despondent and hopeless for a long time.

In July 2005, the AIM-Team Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides announced the selection of the first eight members of the first cohort of the Bridging Leadership fellows. Selected through a competitive process, the chosen fellows would embody AIM's mission to the development of more equitable Asian societies, and Team Energy Corporation's commitment to ensuring sustainable development especially in Mindanao.

Through the program, the Bridging Leadership Fellows would receive guidance and tools to help them meet the complex challenges of nation-building, and pave the way toward lasting peace and inclusive growth in the Philippines.

To allow fellows to optimize their learning journey, the prototype program was designed to run over two years, in which they would participate in various activities designed to strengthen and harness their leadership capital so that they may engage stakeholders and find solutions to problems that create societal divides.

Program Objectives

- Utilize their leadership capital instilled with values of trust, integrity and stewardship to address societal divides;
- Analyze the dimensions of the divide and identify all stakeholders with whom they could form bridges of understanding and action;
- Convene and engage diverse stakeholders of the divide into owning the problem and seeking a collaborative solution to the issues;
- Build the capacity of the various stakeholders to translate their collaborative response into concrete strategies and effective programs by making existing systems more participative and responsive to the inequities; and
- Continuously develop self-mastery and enhance personal resilience to sustain the commitment to produce social outcomes.

Program Roadmap

The Bridging Leadership Fellows come to the program with a specific societal issue to address, and well-defined leadership goals in relation to the societal issue. It provides fellows with access to resource providers and opportunities to earn the confidence of potential partners. The program is designed to assist the fellows in their personal and professional development to meet leadership goals as a prerequisite to achieving social outcomes.

The program is structured in a manner that allows fellows to plan and regularly review their activities as they go through the various phases of the bridging leadership approach. It begins with the fellow going on an inward journey to understand his leadership capital, his personal vision and mission, before it takes him outside of himself to engage stakeholders and move toward collaborative action with them. The fellow then looks both to himself and stakeholders as he renews his commitment to bridging divides.

Selection of Fellows:

Three channels were used to call for prospective fellows: through the fellows' networks; AIM-Team Energy's network; and a public announcement.

Given the high expectations of the fellows, the fellowship slots were granted through a highly competitive nomination and screening process. The prospective Fellow first had to be nominated by individuals who were of a respected standing in a community or organization and who is serving at least, at the city or municipal level. The nominator must be able to personally attest to the accomplishments, character and resolve of the nominee.

The Center looked for distinct characteristics among the applicants to the Bridging Leadership Fellowship Program. They had to be Filipino leaders from civil society, the government (including its line agencies), or the military who, through their work, have demonstrated their commitment to addressing the complex social issues of the country.

They also had to have sufficient experience—at least 10 years of service—and should, in their current leadership capacity, play a demonstrable role in effecting policy reform or steering program success at the national or institutional levels to address societal divides, without being limited to the environment, energy or education.

Most importantly, they had to articulate clear leadership goals in regard to addressing the societal divide by defining the managerial interventions required and relating how the program would help in achieving these goals.

From the start of the program, the Center had made the decision to choose fellows who were in a direct position to bring about change by virtue of their roles in their organizations or networks. This is to achieve maximum impact at the quickest time. While the Center recognized that there were many others leaders who would benefit from the program, it also had to optimize its resources and put this where the potential yields were biggest.

Phase 1: Defining the Personal Response
- Leadership capital
- Analysis of the societal divide
- Personal vision and mission to address the divide
- Time-bound objectives and tangible outcomes to be achieved (key result areas and performance indicators)
- Strategies and resources to employ to attain the objectives

Phase 2: Engaging Stakeholders to come up with a Collaborative Response
- Analysis of stakeholders
- Engagement strategy to be employed
- Timeframe of engagement activities
- Analysis of the societal divide
- Collective vision and mission to address the divide
- Time-bound objectives and tangible outcomes to be achieved (key result areas and performance indicators)
- Strategies and resources to employ to attain the objectives

Phase 3: Collaborative Action
- Program Management
- Implementation Mechanism/structure
- Resource Mobilization
- Conflict Management
- Capacity-building
- Monitoring and Evaluation

Phase 4: Report to Stakeholders
- Outputs and Outcomes
- Remaining Challenges
- Sustaining the Collaborative Work
- Insights and Lessons learned

Phase 5: Renewal of Commitment
- Assessment of leadership capital
- Leadership goals in bridging societal divides
- Learning Support for the Fellows

The Program's selection committee evaluated applicants based on the submitted documents, referrals, and personal interviews. Prospective fellows had to clearly define their leadership goals for the duration of the program and articulate the impact of these goals on the resolution of the societal divide they are addressing. The chosen fellows had to demonstrate their integrity, dynamism and the resolve to make a difference in the divided communities they were bridging.

Three levels of screening were done. The first screening was done by the program officer, along with other staff, to check the completeness of the prospective applicants' documents and to ensure that basic eligibility requirements were met. Those who made it to the short list were sent to the second level of screening, which included the preliminary interview, conducted by the Executive and/or the Associate Director with the Program Officer. The interview, ideally done personally, gave the applicant the venue to elaborate on what he had written in his application documents. The third and final screening was the panel interview, which was conducted by the Advisory Board of the Center, including the Executive Director. At the end of the panel interview, the Advisory Board deliberated whether to accept or reject a prospective fellow.

By far, the selection process has worked efficiently, with most of the selected applicants finishing the course requirements and, more importantly, producing outputs that brought about considerable improvement in the lives of people they worked with.

The cohorts:

In 2007, sixteen applicants from the government, military and civil society were chosen to be part of the second cohort of the program. Although the AIM-Team Energy Center had initially planned to accommodate only ten fellows, they could not turn away so many promising men and women whose sterling credentials and passion for service made them worthy to be trained as bridging leaders. The Center also felt it was time to reach out to more potential leaders, and that there would be greater dynamism and shared learnings from expanding the cohort size. Until then, the program took in fellows from all over the Philippines.

This time around, the Center was more particular about its criteria that fellows should be in positions that would allow them to intervene directly. By then, the Center had recognized that the program required much more from the fellows than was originally expected, and that they had to have the combination of position, experience and commitement for them to effectively translate the program into real action on the ground.

In 2008, midway through the second program, the third cohort started the fellowship program, this time with funding from AusAid. Fifteen fellows comprised the third cohort—all from Mindanao, in support of AusAid's various projects in the island province. Likewise, all fellows in the fourth cohort were also from Mindanao.

Most fellows completed the program, with just one fellow from each of the cohorts unable to comply with all the requirements of the program.

Nominees for the Fellowship were evaluated according to:

- their demonstrated leadership record;
- the potential impact that the program may have in improving their ability to resolve societal divides;
- the breadth of their perspective;
- enthusiasm for continued learning; and
- their prospective contribution to the network of Bridging Leadership practitioners.

THE FIRST COHORT

- Major General Raymundo Ferrer , Commanding General, 6th Infantry Division, Philippine Army
- Mr. Ayi Hernandez, Executive Director, Tabang Mindanaw
- Dr. Danda Juanday, Executive Director, Bangsamoro Development Agency
- Mr. Harvey Keh, Executive Director, Pathways to Higher Education
- Mayor Sonia Lorenzo, Municipality of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija
- Ms. Deddette Suacito, Executive Director, Nagdilaab Foundation

From the cohorts, the most frequently identified divides existed in the areas of health and education. Fellows also encountered issues in housing, child trafficking, violence against women, and the absence of basic services to people. There were cross-cutting concerns as well – the rido, peace and order, armed conflict, cultural issues, and environment protection.

Over the course of the program, it was also demonstrated that the Bridging Leadership framework was not linear. Rather, it took on a snake-like formation. Fellows saw that Bridging Leadership was a dynamic process that allowed one to move from one phase to another—co-creation, ownership and co-ownership—not necessarily in that order. For instance, o-creation could lead to co-ownership which leads to ownership. Thus, these themes are interrelated and they affect each other.

Building bridging leaders

The process of building bridging leaders evolved with each cohort, with the AIM-Team Energy Center learning along with the fellows. "The program is very much a work in progress, and it continues to evolve, " said Prof. Jacinto Gavino, program manager. "We had a general idea of where we were going but we were willing to experiment and learn along the way about what works and what doesn't." Exercises and tools like the Leadership Journey, Leadership Capital, the Myerrs Brigs Temperament Index Testing and Processing, and Genogram Analysis were introduced as fellows expressed the how exercises that gave them glimpses of their strengths allowed them to grow as persons and leaders.

Linking leadership initiatives with development outcomes. Recognizing the shortcomings of other leadership programs in bringing about societal

SECOND COHORT:

- Lt. Col. Francis D. Alaurin. Commanding Officer, 37th Infantry Battalion, 6th Infantry Division
- Dr. Hannbal H. Bara. Professor, MSU Jolo, Head, Waqaf Foundation
- Ms. Ma. Easterluna S. Canoy, Executive Director, Kitanglad Integrated NGOs (KIN)
- Dr. Lorna D. Dino, Director, National Educators Academy of the Philippines
- Dr. Saffrullah M. Dipatuan, Vice Chairman, Bangsamoro Development Agency
- Dr. Abdullah B. Dumama, Director IV, DOH – Center for Health Development XII
- Col. Natalio C. Ecarma III, Commanding Officer, 3rd Marine Brigade, Philippine Marine Corps
- Hon. Munib Estino, Municipal Mayor, Panglima Estino, Sulu
- Lt. Col. Carlito G. Galvez, Assistant Chief of Staff, Civil Military Operations, G7, 2nd Infantry Division
- Mr. Malcolm S. Garma, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Education – Cabanatuan City Division
- Hon. Florante S. Gerdan, Municipal Mayor, Santa Fe, Nueva Vizcaya
- Mr. Vladimir A. Hernandez, Director for the Philippine Programme, Community and Family Services International (CFSI)
- Hon. Algerico H. Irizari. Municipal Mayor, Lanuza, Surigao del Sur
- Mr. Jose Mari M. Oquiñena, Head of Operations, Gawad Kalinga Foundation
- Hon. Albert Que, Municipal Mayor, Bongao, Tawi-tawi
- Mr. Teodulo R. Romo, Jr., Regional Director, DSWD Central Visayas

change, the Bridging Leadership Fellowship program defined leadership by relating their work with development outcomes. The Center noted that many leaders were working toward various objectives, but that these did not result in changes in human development indicators or related outputs. The Center saw the need to fill this gap by directing its fellows toward specific objectives. It likewise noted that most leaders knew each other socially, and that there was much to be achieved if synergies could be tapped. To create this synergy, it encouraged greater interaction among leaders with the end-view of getting them to work toward development.

Peer learning. As the program progressed, the facilitators saw what fellows found most valuable among the activities. Peer learning and the fellowships, for instance, were often cited for the depth of the insights shared and the appropriateness of the examples shared to the experience of other fellows. Many fellows said it was comforting to get together with people who shared and understood their exact thoughts and circumstances. The fellowship program offered a sense of sanctuary; it was a safe space to retreat to. To foster this environment, the Center took a more deliberate approach to sharing, fostering a sense of belonging among the fellows.

The power of networks. The network that the program brought was also valued by the fellows, who saw how this could enhance their development work. Even while the programs were going on, fellows tapped into the network to get things moving in their areas of work. When a truck bearing relief goods encountered a military blockade, for example, the managing director for relief aid in Cotabato called a military fellow in his batch who readily allowed the passage of the vehicle.

In another instance, three fellows from the second cohort—a mayor, a military officer, and an officer of an NGO--worked together to make a house building project possible in Sulu, a no-man's land due to security problems. For this initiative, Sulu Mayor Sanglimaistin provided the land, Gawad Kalinga director –mobilized the materials and labor, while General Ecarma provided security. As a result, housing was made available to community residents who would have never had these homes if these three fellows, who would never have delivered the houses individually, did not work together.

A structure and a guide. The Bridging Leadership framework, fellows acknowledged, was not entirely new to them in that they had been instinctively doing some of its components even before they joined the fellowship program. However, having a concrete framework was something that they found helpful; it provided a structure to what they were doing. Conversely, the framework made their individual activities part of a coherent whole instead of being random activities not grounded on a larger purpose. The Bridging Leadership framework served as a guiding tool and a roadmap that brought order, clarity and a system to the activities that the fellows were undertaking.

Moments of reflection. The fellows appreciated the moments of introspection and reflection that the program provided. Many of the fellows did not have this luxury of space and time to think about their priorities and their work, considering that many of them worked in conflict zones. Having a "quiet time" allowed them to step back and look at themselves and their stakeholders from the much wider perspective of development. Journal-keeping also proved to be a well-appreciated exercise, as it allowed the fellows to map the flow and evolution of their thoughts over time. As a result, more periods of reflection were introduced in subsequent sessions while journal-keeping was actively pursued.

Learning from the ground. Site visits also gained greater significance as the programs progressed. Initially, AIM relied on the fellows themselves for updates on how their action plans were moving either through phone or email conversations. However, long-distance arrangements could be very slow. Program managers saw how direct interaction with stakeholders gave them more immediate feedback and allowed for faster interventions. Indeed, the best stories to emerge from the program were those where the Center was actively and directly involved. As a result, there was a greater impetus for more site visits that would bring the Center and mentors closer to people on the ground. Fellows found this valuable and the Center found this worthwhile to pursue in spite of its logistical and financial implications.

Creating scale. As the program progressed, concerns were raised on how to make more people aware of the Bridging Leadership framework. The center promised fellows that it would find ways to bring Bridging Leadership to a core group of change leaders who could cascade this to others, in the process building scale for the program. Starting with the second cohort, core group building workshops were offered which eventually became a full-year program, fulfilling the fellow's expressed need for more full-time training and development. The Center also convenes social investors where Fellows can present their Bridging Leadership work which is helpful in mobilizing resources for the Fellows, and for advancing the Bridging Leadership advocacy.

The Evolving Role of Mentors

Mentors played a critical role in the fellowship program since they took responsibility for guiding and over-seeing fellows on a one-to-one basis as they implemented their action plan. A mentor was neither a formal trainer nor a professional consultant to his/her mentee. The mentor served as a colleague to the fellows with whom they can cultivate a mutually trusting professional relationship in which they can be honest with each other about professional dilemmas and where they can expect a robust but sensitive response. They were not around to provide solutions to the leadership challenges faced by their mentees, but rather – by asking appropriate questions – supporting them in finding their own solutions.

Mentors looked at ways by which the program will be able to capture the personal transformation of the fellows. They could be described as a "critical friend" and a competent "informal educator." The fellows and mentors were to have regular contact with each other, and, wherever possible, should have a pre-agreed agenda of issues to review or discuss.

For the first cohort, the mentors were mainly from AIM and, expectedly, had a more academic approach toward the program. Fellows had to approach their work plans using logical frameworks and project management systems, while paying great attention to detail.

Recognizing the value of perspectives from the field, the Center added practitioners to the pool of mentors of the second cohort, keeping a 50:50 ratio between professors and practitioners. Among the professor-mentors were Professors Ernesto Garilao, Jacinto Gavino and Jun Kanapi. Practitioner-mentors included Jaime Galvez Tan, undersecretary of the Department of Health and General Ferrer, who was part of the first cohort.

Mentors of the third cohort were mostly practitioners: Vic Ramos the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Dinky Soliman of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) were included in the list of mentors, with Prof. Garilao as the sole academic in the pool. A drill master guided the fellows in formulating their Vision and Mission statements, and in identifying key result areas and indicators for their programs of action.

Fellows were paired with mentors who have gone through similar issues: the Vice-Governor of Tawi-Tawi, who was working on the environment, was paired with DENR's Ramos; and an Assistant Secretary of the DSWD had Soliman as mentor.

Some mentor-mentee relationships went beyond the program. Mayor Sonya – of Nueva Ecija initially served as mentor of Mayor Disumimpta of Lanao del Sur but has since become his learning partner. Sonya took a keen interest in Disumimpta's program; she went to visit health units at the site and met with stakeholders. Long after the program ended, the two corresponded with each other on their concerns on the ground, with the Lanao mayor always referring to Sonya as his mentor.

Research and Evaluation

The Bridging Fellows program is a learning opportunity. Through the fellows' experience, the Center hopes to continue its research on leadership development as it applies to societal divides.

From the fellowship, possible research questions have emerged, among them:

- Where and how has the bridging leadership framework failed?
- What are the processes that worked?
- What are the top three deepest divides of the Philippines/ region?
- How can the example of Philippine bridging leaders be relevant to other countries in the region?
- How can local institutions move stakeholders in addressing hindrances towards social change?
- How is change leadership sustained outside our programs/ interventions?
- Assuming that improvements in the community were seen, how can we attribute these to BL (instead of other extraneous variables)?
- What are the relationships between and among divides?
- iWhat nuances should be made in the contextualization of BL: (a) BL to program design, (b) program to public?
- Is BL more effective in particular social issues than others?

Moving forward, the Center is keen on using the learnings from the program to contribute to building knowledge and theory on leadership for social outcomes. Through the evaluation of its work, the Center aims to gauge the effectiveness of the program, as well as the overall value of the fellowship award to the fellows, their organizations, and the attainment of societal goals and outcomes.

Evaluation will be done collaboratively, with the Center currently developing guidelines around research that will employ cooperative inquiry – a participative approach where co-researchers conduct research with leaders on leadership. This will be discussed with the fellows as soon as they

The Bridging Fellows Leadership Program Process

The Program's Learning Support to the fellows has four components:

- Cohort Training- At least three intensive 3 to 5 day seminars which focus on development of leadership capital, skills and competencies, personal commitment and renewal. It will also serve as a venue to share and provide peer review to the individual action plans of the Fellows.
- Seminar Workshop - At least two one-day group seminars focusing on knowledge acquisition and meeting with experts in the field. Opportunities to attend other training programs to suit the specific requirements of the Fellows are also available
- Mentoring - Four face-to-face mentoring sessions with designated professors of AIM over a 20-month period. Sessions will focus on issues and challenges of implementing the action plan
- Networking Opportunities- Group meetings with decision-makers, influential people and resource persons as well as one-on-one meetings with relevant institutions/individuals will also be scheduled.

First Leadership Workshop

Following the selection of fellows, the first leadership workshop formally starts the BLFP. The workshop is a combination of lectures and case discussions, reflection and sharing sessions, and structured and learning exercises and simulations.

The First Leadership Workshop aims to help fellows achieve the following:

- Understand the overall objectives, rationale, and roadmap of the Bridging Leadership Fellows Program;
- Understand the different segments of the framework as well as other framework-related concepts;
- Reflect on and articulate his/her authentic self as a leader, relative to the particular societal divide that s/he personally owns and responds to;
- Acquire the appropriate dialogic processes and tools to make the initial preparations for establishing co-ownership around the particular societal divide that is important to him/her and the community; and
- Begin visualizing co-creating the new reality that is important to him/her and the community

The fourteen sessions of the five-day Leadership Workshop are divided into three modules, following the Bridging Leadership Framework. These are as follows:

OWNERSHIP MODULE
– SESSIONS 1 TO 6

This module explores and makes explicit the underpinnings of the fellows' personal commitment to addressing a particular divide. It will also give the fellows the opportunity to study the systemic nature of the divide that they face, consider the stakeholders that are involved, and offer a personal response in the form of a personal vision, mission, objectives, key result areas, and performance indicators relative to the divide, as well as to his/her own leadership developmental needs essential to address the divide.

CO-OWNERSHIP MODULE
– SESSIONS 7 TO 10

This module will illustrate the importance of the step-by-step guidelines for moving from a personal to a shared response both within the organization where each of the fellows belong and eventually, with other stakeholders. In addition, the second module will showcase a survey of helpful processes for multisectoral and dialogic engagement, designed to lead to the development of co-ownership of the issue and the response to it in the form of a shared vision and mission.

CO-CREATION MODULE
– SESSIONS 11 TO 14

This module will demonstrate the development and implementation of social innovations that will lead to societal equity and that will be carried out through new institutional arrangements that are characterized by empowered stakeholders and responsive institutions partnering with each other.

The three modules are preceded by an Overview during which the Bridging Leadership Framework is discussed, along with other key concepts that support the framework.

The First Peer Learning Session

Peer Learning Sessions give the fellows the opportunity to review concepts from the preceding leadership workshop and share experiences, learn from their co-fellows, and garner insights from their experiences in the Bridging Leadership process. In this manner, it is hoped that the fellows will harness new energy, motivation and inspiration to continue their work

The first peer learning session focuses on reviewing and surfacing insights from Ownership and Co-Ownership phases of the Bridging Leadership framework.

Peer learning sessions are usually not required—i.e., the fellows are welcome to attend if they are available and have the resources to do so. The sessions aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Firm up and finalize the fellows' vision/mission and engagement plan, and ensure they are ready for multi-stakeholder engagement
- Review and provide more extensive input on the topic of Co-Ownership
- Surface learnings on the Co-Ownership phase of the Bridging Leadership framework by allowing the fellows to share with each other their experiences on engagement
- Process the fellows' learnings with the Center's trainers

The session is held for one whole day.

The Second Leadership Workshop

The four-day Second Leadership Workshop will be mainly devoted to discussing the theory behind, as well as the skills and tools necessary for, the third segment of the Bridging Leadership Framework: the Co-Creation of new realities. The First Leadership Workshop has allowed the fellows to reflect on and articulate their personal Ownership of both their understanding of and response to the societal divide that they have identified. In addition, the first workshop has equipped the fellows with appropriate tools and processes that will aid them through the Co-Ownership phase of establishing their Core Groups and agreeing on a shared vision and response. The fellows are then expected to come into the Second Leadership Workshop armed with sustained Ownership and accomplished Co-Ownership that effectively puts them in the perfect position to garner ideas and pointers on what specific Co-Creation interventions to undertake and how.

The objectives of the Second Leadership Workshop are for the fellows to accomplish the following:

- Reflect on their family background and gain an appreciation of how this affects their leadership qualities and capital as Bridging Leaders
- Share their leadership journeys after the First Leadership Workshop to the other fellows, especially with regard to establishing their respective core groups and reaching a shared vision and response
- Understand the theory behind co-creating new realities and acquire the necessary skills and tools, such as charting social innovations, transforming institutional arrangements toward responsiveness, building partnerships, and mobilizing resources, that will prepare them for the co-creation work in response to their respective divides, and
- Finalize their Co-Creation plan and have the opportunity to improve this by having their first session with their assigned mentors.

The Second Leadership Workshop starts off by allowing the fellows to reflect on how their qualities are grounded on their family background, which is done through the construction and consequent interpretation of Genograms.

After a series of learning sessions using different platforms, the fellows are given time to finalize their Co-Creation Plan. They will also be introduced to an array of social investors they can approach to secure resources to implement their Co-Creation Plans, and will be given the chance to draft their Resource Mobilization Plan.

The fellows will meet with their assigned mentors for a fine-tuning of all their outputs as they prepared to embark on leading Co-Creation once they go back to their respective assignments after the Second Leadership Workshop.

The Second Peer Learning Session

This whole-day peer learning session aims to gather the fellows and give them the opportunity to review the concepts from the preceding Leadership Workshop and surface insights in their Bridging Leadership journey so far, now with more focus on the Co-Creation phase of the framework.

The main objectives of the second peer learning session are for the fellows to be able to:

- Be familiar with where they are in the Program Road Map
- Take note of changes/shifts in the personal and group/collective level
- Share their experiences on Co-Creation since the Second Leadership Workshop
- Derive insights by listening to their co-fellows share their experiences
- Accomplish a timeline of activities for the remaining months of their fellowship

Journaling/Logbooking

Fellows are advised to keep a journal or logbook of the endeavors they do in achieving their goals in the fellowship. The journal allows them to document their reflections and derive insights from their leadership experience and at the same time, these will be helpful for the research purposes of the Center. The journals can be a goldmine for data for future cases, articles and other academic papers related to the fellows' leadership experiences to enrich the Bridging Leadership framework.

Site visits and customized workshops

These visits are held in between leadership workshops and aim to get a better understanding of each fellow's work with first-hand information in the specific areas. The site visits are conducted by the Executive Director and/or Associate Director with the Program Officer. The site visits are also opportunities for kumustahan or meetings for updating, monitoring, checking on how fellows are doing, and mentoring. If necessary, site visits are also the venues where the fellows work with the Center to conduct smaller-scale Bridging Leadership Workshops for their organization or community.

Mentoring

The mentoring component focuses on supporting the fellows as they go through their Bridging Leadership journey in bringing about positive social outcomes. Mentors will serve as sounding boards that will help the leader see their complex divides from another perspec-

tive. Mentors are usually invited AIM faculty and development practitioners from the Center's network. The executive director and the associate director of the Center act as mentors themselves.

Through this mentoring process, it is hoped that tat the end of the one-and-a-half year period, the fellow's leadership potential will be enhanced. S/He would have adopted certain processes and methods that will help produce the desired social outcome. S/he should be able to demonstrate a greater ability to deal with a particular situation than before.

The mentor is also responsible for the initial assessment of the fellow's report to the stakeholders. This will include a written report to the fellows and the center incorporating their comments on the stakeholder report.

Documentation, Research and Communication

More than just leadership training, the BLFP is also a research program that aims to develop the Bridging Leadership Framework, and to communicate these developments to the Center's stakeholders. It aims to:

- Document all major workshops and activities of the program and organize the leadership development efforts of the Center
- Document the progress of the fellows in terms of their application of the Bridging Leadership framework
- Disseminate the necessary information, documents, news and updates to the fellows, mentor and the Center
- Surface insights from the fellows' application of the Bridging Leadership Framework in their work
- Further enrich the Bridging Leadership Theory by validating the framework's assumptions and clarifying its definition
- Ensure that information and documents regarding the fellows and their organization are kept confidential

Written by Prof. Jacinto Gavino with assistance from Marie Antonette Reyes

Fellows Stories

Jainab Abdulmajid

Community Worker,
Patikul, Sulu

This write-up was written by Cecille Joyce Lao under the supervision of Philip Dy of the AIM Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership.

Jainab Abdulmajid first lived in Sulu when she was ten years old. Born in Leyte in 1970, her family moved to Cagayan de Oro in 1975 and then to Sulu in 1980, however, this time she moved only with her father and siblings, after her parents separated. The experience of moving around and growing up without her mother at such young age taught Jainab to be independent and strong. It made her very determined that nothing–not her family situation, not her gender, and not even other people's opinions of what she should and shouldn't be doing–would ever stop her from accomplishing her goals.

As president of the student government during her senior year at Notre Dame of Jolo College, she further developed these characteristics by challenging herself with new responsibilities and gained confidence after successfully fulfilling them. During one instance of a potentially explosive situation between Christian and Muslim students, she chose to put aside her own anger with students who were criticizing her and instead she encouraged everyone to work together for the sake of peace in the community. Her choice was neither easy nor popular, but one of the things she learned from that experience was, "To be a leader is to set aside my own feelings and interests when necessary so that I can help more people."

After graduating from college in 1991, Jainab began working for Child Survival Development Program of UNICEF that was based in the Sulu area. As a part of the engagement, she was trained in conducting social preparation, mobilization, and community-based planning activities on the ground. She also learned how to implement, monitor and evaluate projects.

It was only when she started working with the communities in Jolo and Panglimatahil that she realized how difficult the situations in those towns were. Before, her life was confined to school and her home. While she knew that many in Sulu struggled with poverty, she had never been confronted with the enormity of the situation. She said, "I didn't realize that they were so impoverished that they couldn't even go to school, that even the food on the table was very hard to produce every day. In island municipalities, they didn't even have water."

What really disturbed her, however, was how passive the people seemed to be in the face of their poverty and the neglect of the local government (LGU). "The people really didn't care that their situation was like that. It was like they had no voice to say that that shouldn't be the case, that that shouldn't be their condition. They seemed to believe that it was their destiny to be in that situation."

That was the point when she embraced the role of community organizer. As she understood the situation, what was missing was someone to "wake up the

LGU and remind them of their responsibilities, and to make the citizens realize what they could accomplish together if they wanted to". In line with this, she and her team began to help the community form people's organizations (POs) that would better articulate their needs and represent their interests.

When the intervention succeeded despite the project's challenges on peace and development, it became one of Jainab's most important sources of inspiration. The team facilitated linkages between the PO and various government and aid agencies to make it easier for them to access resources and to find solutions to the problems. "To think that that we managed to accomplish so much with just the support of UNICEF–what more can we do now with so many more line and aid agencies present in Sulu?"

The Challenge of Peace in Sulu

Jainab's engagement with UNICEF ended in 1993. In 1994, she began working as tourism officer for the Provincial Government, but her concern for the impoverished communities of Sulu remained. She looked at tourism as a source of income and pride for the people. However, as the security situation in the area worsened with the Sipadan hostage crisis, marketing the province as vacation destination became less and less viable.[1] Although the province had a lot of potential–it has a rich cultural heritage, beautiful beaches, and lush environment–she thinks, the enabling environment was not yet suitable for tourists.

However, it wasn't in Jainab's character to merely wait for the conflict to subside before she carries out her work. Wanting to be useful and to continue learning things, she began to renew her relationship with the civil society organizations (CSOs) in the area. There were two questions on her mind: What are the causes of the continuing conflict in the area? and Why had more than a decade of aid and other interventions not alleviated the poverty in the province?

In December 2005, Jainab became part of the Technical Team for the ACT for Peace Programme in Sulu.[2] Although she was only responsible in monitoring the impact of the program from within the Provincial Government headquarters, she insisted on accompanying the team to the front lines to gauge its effects on the people and the community. "I couldn't see the actual effects of the program on the communities from the office. How would I know if what they were telling me—that the program was successful because of this, this, and this indicator—really meant that life had improved for the people? I wanted to validate and to understand, so I began going with them."

As she returned to the practice of operating within a community context and listening to the everyday concerns of the people, she also found herself veering away from development efforts to take up peace advocacy.

"I found myself thinking that that was my place–in peace work. I realized that I felt more comfortable doing peace work than development work. That was my priority. I thought that the situation required that we talk to people first about how they could participate in advocating peace before we could even begin talking about development."

The two, she realized, were not mutually exclusive. Without framing development projects within the broader perspective of peace or accompanying peace talks with concrete solutions to everyday problems like lack of livelihood, poor schools, inadequate water, and insufficient healthcare, the mistrust and anger that give rise to conflict would likely remain. Moreover, neither peace nor development could be achieved without addressing the concerns of the community as a whole. Sulu, according to Jainab, is still a very conservative place. The barangay[3] officials are not always the ones with the most power or the best insight in the communities. That is why it was important to talk to informal leaders as well, and to verify findings with the rest of the people involved in the issue. As she put it, "Peace needs a holistic approach".

1 On May 3, 2000, members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) occupied Sipadan Island, a renowned Malaysian dive resort and abducted 21 hostages, including 10 foreign tourists and 11 resort workers. The hostages were taken to an ASG base in Jolo, Sulu. Two Muslim Malaysians were released early, but the ASG made various demands for the release of others, including the liberation of 1993 World Trade Centre bomber Ramzi Yousef and a ransom worth $2.4 million. In July that same year, a Filipino television evangelist and 12 of his crew offered their help and went as mediators for the relief of other hostages, along with 3 French television crew members and a German journalist. All were taken captive. Most hostages were released between August to September 2000, partly thanks to mediation by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and an offer of $25 million in "development aid". ASG members conducted a second raid on Pandanan, an island near Sipadan, on September 10 and seized three more Malaysians. The Philippine military launched a major offensive on September 16, 2000, rescuing all remaining hostages except Filipino dive instructor Roland Ullah. He was eventually freed in 2003, after three years of being hostaged.

2 The Action for Conflict Transformation (ACT) for Peace Programme is the fourth and final phase of the Government of the Philippines–United Nations Multi-Donor Programme (GoP-UNMDP) that started in 1997. The Programme represents the commitment of the two parties to peace and development in southern Philippines.

Bridging Leadership as a Continuing Process

Jainab was selected for the third cohort of Bridging Leadership (BL) Fellows in late 2008. It was not the first time she had encountered the framework. In 2007, she was acquainted with Col. Natalio Ecarma III, the Lead Convenor of the CSO-led Grassroots Peacebuilding Project of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) in Sulu. At that point, Col. Ecarma was the Brigade Commander in charge of the municipality of Patikul. He is a member of the second cohort of BL Fellows.

The relationship between Jainab and Ecarma did not show any promise at start. She was ready to confront Ecarma about his high-handed manner of dealing with the people over allegations that he violated the rights of farmers in the area by fingerprinting them without their consent. He, in turn, was surprised by her challenge– "She said I was 'a party to conflict.' Me, a party to conflict? How can I be a party to conflict? I'm the one wanting to solve the conflict," he recalled.

However, because they were willing to listen to each other, they were able to settle the issue. Jainab explained to Ecarma that because of the experiences of the people with soldiers who abused their rights, they had singled him out as the cause of the discord in the area. But it was exactly what Ecarma wanted to address– he did not want the people to look at the military as made up of soldiers who only serve the Christians or the powerful people in Manila, he wanted them to see the military as the people's soldiers.

Ecarma admitted that the reason for the fingerprinting may not have been explained to the farmers in a language or manner that they could clearly understand. He offered to apologize to them by visiting their homes, individually.

According to Jainab, "I was impressed. Here was a military commander who not only admitted his mistakes; he was even willing to say 'I'm sorry' to them. He was sincere. That's what made me think I could work with him." Moreover, the experience made her realize just how necessary it was to bring the various sectors in Patikul together to begin rebuilding trust and communication lines–especially at the community level–to order to lay the groundwork for peace in the area.

The commitment in creating a peaceful and progressive Patikul through non-violent means allowed Ecarma and Jainab to establish a partnership that served well their common goal. Before and throughout his BL fellowship, Ecarma engaged in his quest to change people's perception of the military. He promoted actual development on the ground by using a combination of barangay consultations and civil-military operations, such as medical missions and livelihood programs. Jainab, for her part, took on the key function of preparing the communities for these activities that allowed Ecarma and his Marines to deepen their engagement and maximize the effects of their efforts. She facilitated many of the consultative meetings herself, translating from Tagalog to Tausug, the local language, to ensure effective communication between the locals and the soldiers.

She used what she had learned in her previous engagements with CSOs to help Ecarma involve the informal leaders–who are sometimes the most influential leaders in the communities–in these meetings. She was also careful to explain the purpose and describe the different interventions means in an orderly manner to make sure that the people knew exactly what to expect. In addition, Jainab made use of her links with the provincial government to help communicate the people's concerns to the governor and give the communities prompt and honest feedback on those issues. This gave credibility to the efforts of the local government and assured the people that they were sincere in their efforts to address their problems. As Ecarma emphasized, "In dealing with people we build relationships. We build respect and trust. If we do not remember this, we will not succeed."

Later that year, when Ecarma was selected for the second cohort of Bridging Leadership Fellows, he took advantage of the opportunity to strengthen his efforts in Patikul and, again, Jainab played an important role. She became a member of his core group as the new executive director of Sulu's Area Coordinating Council (ACC) and, along with Pa Sali Ahalul, another respected CSO leader in the area, continued to help Ecarma in engaging the communities for projectssuch as the Cow for Peace Program.[4]

Her groundwork with the communities helped Ecarma solidify ties within the Patikul Team Core Group, a coordinating body composed of the mayor and representatives from the police, line agencies, academe, and NGOs. The team was conceptualized to pro-

3 Village.

4 The Cows for Peace program was a need-based cow dispersal program undertaken by the 3rd Marine Brigade under the leadership of Col. Ecarma and in partnership with Mr. Andy da Rossi of 3P Foundation.

mote dialogue, collaboration, and accountability among the government offices and other organizations for peace, security, education, livelihood, and health in the area.

In March 2008, Ecarma proposed a strategic plan for the group based on feedback from previous consultations with the different communities of Patikul. When members of the team questioned a number of his points, the citizens themselves defended Ecarma's ideas.

When Ecarma first began his Fellowship, Jainab was fearful that their efforts would be reduced to just another externally driven project like the failed BL roadmap prepared for Sulu in 2006. As the Patikul team core group began coming together, however, she reassessed her opinion of the framework. Although she had previously convened different stakeholders, asked them to analyze situations together, identify a vision that the group shared, and act collectively, the system of ordering them in a particular manner and framing each activity so that they encourage collaboration among stakeholders were new to her and proved to be quite useful. Convening the Patikul team core group, for example, and asking them to assess the situation in the municipal level made it easier to convince them to work together more closely with each other. In turn, allowing each member to choose to commit himself to the Team's vision thereby strengthening the dedication of each member to the work. They found it easier to work together with their shared analysis of the challenges Patikul faced and their newfound openness to one another.

In September 2008, Ecarma was promoted to Deputy Commandant of the Philippine Marines and was reassigned to Luzon. But the team had already been built into the system Patikul's LGU through an Executive Order. More tellingly, it has continued to function in his absence, holding consultations and meetings among team members and working towards making Patikul a more peaceful and progressive place.

Because of this experience, Jainab sent in her own application for the third cohort of Bridging Leadership Fellows. She began the program in late October 2008 as the executive director of Sulu's Area Coordinating Council. She hoped that the systematic approach to addressing social problems in multi-stakeholder contexts of the BL framework would improve her effectiveness in her position. It required her to manage different relationships and interests on a daily basis to ensure that everyone was headed towards the same goal–a peaceful and prosperous Sulu.

Unfortunately, almost as soon as she began her fellowship, she was relieved of her position in the ACC. The Governor of Sulu forbade her from leaving her post at the time because of the volatile situation in the area, and when he found out that she had ignored his instructions, he immediately replaced her. According to Jainab, "Not attending the first workshop then would have meant giving up my spot in the BL Fellows Program. The situation in Sulu had also begun to stabilize by then, so I thought it was okay for me to go."

Even as she struggled to overcome her feelings of shock and hurt, Jainab knew that she needed to push through with the fellowship. She still had her commitment to the people of Patikul and this did not change just because her own situation had changed.

True enough, when she returned home after the first workshop, it did not take long for situations to emerge that required bridging work and Jainab's particular skills. In early December 2008, Ecarma received feedback that funding agencies like the Asian Development Bank and USAID rarely provided grants to projects of local government units without first seeing their Barangay Development Plans (BDPs) and Annual Investment Plans. Technically, barangays in Patikul had these, but the quality of the materials left much to be desired. Most of them were cut-and-paste versions of another NGO's BDP and budget templates, and it was common practice for the barangay captains and their staff to prepare them without any input from the people. It was thus unlikely that aid institutions would find them acceptable.

So, Jainab's new role in the team and her main project for her fellowship was settled. She would be responsible for helping each of Patikul's 30 barangays create their own three-year development plans and annual budgets based on feedback from community members.

The Barangay Participatory Planning and Budgeting Workshops

From the start, preparing for the Barangay Participatory Planning and Budgeting Workshops (BPPBWs) was a challenge.

First, they needed to locate funding for the project. The estimated cost of transportation, materials, professional fees, meals, and other expenses for each barangay amounted to approximately PhP 30,000. Multiplied by 30, the total project cost was PhP 900,000. Research led them to Transparent Accountable Governance program of The Asia Foundation (TAF), which gave out grants for the proper conduct of development planning and budgeting workshops for barangays–exactly what they wanted to do. Unfortunately, by the time they found out about the project, it had already ended and TAF had moved on to new priorities.

Jainab narrated, "We asked Mayor Kabir to write a letter to Dr. Steven Rood, the country representative of the Foundation, explaining what we wanted to do and asking for their support. Fortunately, Dr. Rood agreed."

However, this brought with it a second set of problems. TAF was only able to release P300,000 for the project. That meant that they had what they needed for only ten barangays, or one-third of the required cost for all 30. The Mindanao Integrated Resource Development (MIRD), a Sulu-based NGO that they had been consulting with, gave them a way out.[5] After witnessing Jainab and Ecarma discussing how they could further reduce project costs to fit their budget, MIRD's Executive Director offered the services of their facilitators for free. The team was excited. They knew the quality of MIRD's work, and not having to pay professional fees for the planning and budgeting workshops cut their costs by almost half.

MIRD had a condition for volunteering their help: the barangay captains would have to contribute to the budget by covering food and transportation expenses for their workshops. This fitted in seamlessly with the Team's strategy. Asking the barangays to invest their own resources in the project would give them greater ownership of the process and its outcome and ensure that the change is more likely to last.

On February 2009, Jainab and her team organized a Bridging Leadership Seminar for Patikul's barangay captains in Zamboanga City. Not all the Captains were able to attend so they organized a second one in March. They had received feedback earlier that the captains remained divided along political lines, and Jainab knew that getting everyone on the same page and willing to cooperate were vital. In her words,

> "If we really wanted peace, we couldn't stop with the Patikul team. Organizing the officials at the municipal level would not make the change we wanted sustainable. Because of the work I'd done with communities previously, I knew we needed to bring the Patikul team's transformation to the barangays so everyone could embrace what was going on. The change needed to reach the frontlines, the communities."

The seminars gave the barangay captains the space and framework they needed to talk, to identify with each other's experiences, to analyze a problem that was bigger than any one of them, and to figure out their role in addressing their common goal: bringing peace and development to their communities. It also gave the mayor a chance to talk to the barangay captains in a setting where people were more open and willing to work with each other and explain to them the value of the planning and budgeting.

After the seminars, the barangay captains were excited and cooperative. All of them agreed to give counterpart funds for their planning and budgeting workshops and to do what they could to make sure that the stakeholders they needed to be involved–barangay officials, other community leaders and ordinary citizens–attend the activities.

Just as Jainab and Ecarma had finalized plans with MIRD and the Barangays Captains, they received news that TAF had released the project funds to the Bangsamoro Women Foundation for Peace and Development (BMWFPD), a Cotabato-based NGO that TAF had worked with before but that the team had no previous encounter. BMWFPD will work with them instead of MIRD. They were disappointed. In the first place, it was MIRD that prepared with them from the start for the planning and budgeting process. They also had confidence in the quality of MIRD's work based on previous partnerships with them. The team was not sure if BMWFPD whom TAF had selected was capable of navigating Sulu's unique context. Neither did they know if it would be willing to waive the professional fees of its facilitators so they could conduct the planning and budgeting program in all 30 barangays of Patikul. Ecarma recalled,

> "I was angry – but she was angrier. But if we both just stayed angry then nothing would happen, so I calmed down and mediated. We met with a representative of Bangsamoro Women and explained to her our side. Even though we only had enough money for ten barangays, we needed to do all 30. And we wanted the planning and budg-

5 Mindanao Integrated Resource Development, Inc. (MIRD) is a registered non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of people in the poorest parts of the Mindanao by providing assistance that is tailored specifically to their needs. MIRD is known for the integration of area-focused development with environmental and natural resource management and local governance–all key factors in bringing about empowerment and sustainable development in the rural sector. Founded in 2000, MIRD has implemented numerous projects in ARMM.

eting done following a particular process to make sure that we got the results we wanted."

Luckily, the Bangsamoro Women agreed to split the funds and the work. They would facilitate the planning and budgeting process for ten of Patikul's barangays and MIRD would handle the other 20. TAF's grant would be spread equally among the barangays and the technical team (composed of Municipal Planners and staff from MIRD and the Bangsamoro Women Foundation) that would facilitate the barangay workshops. Each team would attend its own training and planning workshop funded by the municipal government before beginning their work with the individual barangays.

Finally, in June 2009, they were able to hold the weeklong training for the technical team which would facilitate the planning and budgeting workshops. This group was composed of ten individuals from the Municipal Planning Team, MIRD, Bangsamoro Women, and even a representative from the military stationed in the area. They went over the details of the activities, the methods, the schedule, and the goals of the barangay workshops. They also familiarized themselves with the stakeholders who would be included in each stage of the process–the local officials, the *imam*, *hilot*, representatives from religious sectors, the youth, the women, and the farmers and/or fisherfolk in the barangay.[6]

One month later, they began making the rounds for the planning and budgeting workshops. The technical team was divided into two groups that ran the workshops simultaneously,s previously agreedon. The Bangsamoro Women took responsibility of ten barangays and MIRD of 20 barangays. Jainab shuttled back and forth to monitor the process and make sure that the workshops were being carried out as planned–that is, in a transparent and consultative manner that encouraged the people to articulate their concerns and showed them that their involvement in community governance was worthwhile.

Each BPPBW ran for five days. They began with explanations about the BDP, the barangay budget, the importance of getting the entire community contributes in the creation of a budget, and an overview of the workshop proceedings.

Then, the consultations followed. Workshop participants were asked to appraise the condition of their communities, especially in terms of problems and opportunities. They drew resource maps, social census maps, services maps, and transect maps for their areas. They also prepared diagrams identifying the government agencies, CSOs and other groups in their communities, and whether or not they were functional, as well as charts tracking the seasonal availability of their products and where they were being sold for higher prices. Finally, they prepared a list of the projects and interventions they believed the community needed and ranked them by voting.

Following this data gathering stage, the workshop participants got down to planning and budgeting. They began discussing the current conditions in their communities. Then they constructed their shared practical visions for their barangays in response to these conditions, including specific strategies for turning their vision into reality in the next three years. These were further divided into five groups–public administrations, the local economy, infrastructure, socio-cultural status, and the environment–before translating it into specific activities and programs for each year. Finally, they went on in identifying and prioritizing specific activities for the following year, utilizing the barangays' 20% Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) Development Funds to cover their corresponding costs. The drafted BDPs were then presented to the community and ratified in a Barangay Assembly.

The Process as Much as the Output

The final set of BDPs and barangay budgets were completed and ratified in late September 2009. Copies were given to the Mayor of Patikul, who reviewed them before presenting the completed plans to the barangay captains and their communities in December. The municipal government is now in the process of formulating its own Municipal Development Plan based on the completed BDPs, while the Patikul team members have restarted their efforts to source funding and projects that are in line with the needs of the communities.

The consultative method used for the BPPBWs was not only meant to lend credibility to the resulting BDPs and budgets, it was also meant to help the people find their voice and motivate them to use it. Most of them are farmers and fisher folks who had not finished high school, and many felt insecure in the company of those who were better educated or had more resources. Preparing the resource maps of their respective barangays and completing their product sale flow charts were activities that empowered them because the information came from them and everyone listened to them.

On the other hand, the BPPBWs provided the much-needed training and input to the barangay officials and allowed the rest of the community members to understand and appreciate their work. Moreover, the entire exercise helped restore the mutual trust between the municipal heads of various line agencies like the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (all members of the Patikul team) and the barangay officials. Because of the program, they are now more willing to deal with each other directly when discussing problems or opportunities for old and new ventures.

Like in the BL Seminars for the barangay captains of Patikul, the BPPBWs gave ordinary community members and local government officials alike a place to share their experiences and validate their impressions. It also gave them a platform to follow up on their concerns or to make suggestions, both to barangay and to municipal officials. Together, this has led to improved relationships among the various stakeholders and a greater sense of hope in the community. As a barangay kagawad[7] said to his audience during the ratification of their BDP, "Let's not be discouraged by the slow-moving development of our barangay. Instead, let us work together for the best."

Jainab, too, learned her own lessons from the process. With the completion of the planning and budgeting workshops, despite the absence of authority that her position as ACC Executive Director had lent her, she gained a better understanding of the networks that her own work and years of engagement with the people of Sulu had given her. She said,

"Sometimes, I think about what things would have been like if I had been a Mayor during my fellowship. People would have engaged with me because I have the power, authority, influence and resources. But I am proud to say that I am *not* a Mayor or Local Chief Executive, but together with the Patikul team and all the people we worked with in making a roadmap for Patikul, Patikul is no longer a place feared even by Tausugs, Patikul is a place to love, to enjoy."

Moreover, the process has helped enrich her perspective on success and the work that she still has to do. "Ordinary farmers being able to sleep soundly at night in their homes or shanties are measures of success and peace. A family having a sufficient supply of cassava on the table is already what the people call peace."

And for her, the very fact that the barangay captains and other community leaders that they worked with in the BPPBW are now following up on projects and priorities identified during the planning process is most encouraging. The conflict in Sulu has damaged more than just people's homes and families. It has affected the way they see themselves and relate to one another. Consequently, as important as policies at the provincial and national levels are in addressing the discord and underdevelopment in the area, initiatives at the barangay and municipal levels, particularly those that are aligned with a broader vision to restore relationships and return the people's ability to address their own needs, are just as important.

6 The term 'imam' refers to a leader in Islam, often of a mosque and/or a community. He is the one who leads the prayer during Islamic gatherings and the one that the community turns to when they have questions about Islam. The term 'hilot' ambiguously refers to both the midwife and the chiropractic practitioner in the community. It has deep roots in the Philippines' rural areas where practitioners use touch therapy as an inexpensive alternative to medicine.

7 Village legislator.

Governor Mohamad Khalid Dimaporo

Lanao del Norte

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Lanao del Norte Governor Mohamad Khalid Quibranza Dimaporo's leadership journey is characterized by a struggle between family legacy and his personal goals, between confidence in his skills and trust in collaboration with other persons in the community beyond his family. The Dimaporos maintain a stronghold in the province, and as a son he was expected to follow the family legacy. However, Gov. Dimaporo does not plan to stay in politics for a long time; he views his political career as "temporary, just like everything else in the world". Because of this, he wants to create his own legacy while serving as governor of the province of Lanao del Norte.

He says, "I don't want to be too committed unlike members of other political dynasties in the Philippines. The legacy of my parents, for me, is a burden. I just want to fix the province so I can leave." As he seeks to address his chosen societal divide, he realizes that he has opened Pandora's box.

Leadership Capital

Gov. Khalid Dimaporo is a descendant of the Dimaporo and Quibranza clans of Lanao del Norte, both are strong political dynasties. His grandfather, Sultan Mohamad Ali Dimaporo, rose from the local royalty to "being a provincial governor, congressman, university president, advisor to former President Ferdinand Marcos, and operator of the most powerful political machinery in Mindanao"[1]. From him, Khalid said he learned the value of loyalty and friendship. His father, Congressman Abdullah Dimaporo, became active in politics during the height of Martial Law in the 1970s and became the main actor in unifying Muslims and Christians in Lanao del Norte. The Dimaporos at that time operated the *Baracudas*, the Muslim private army based in Lanao del Norte. The private army clashed with the *Ilagas*, a group of Christian vigilantes. The marriage of Rep. Abdullah to Imelda Quibranza, a Christian woman from the political clan of the Quibranzas, symbolized the unity of Muslim and Christian communities and the end of the conflicts that plagued the province for decades. From his father, Gov. Khalid said he learned the value of keeping peace to enable further development, and from his mother he learned the value of compassion.

Despite his deep regard for his family legacy and history, Dimaporo did not bank on the influence of his family to come up with his own list of personal achievements as a student and businessman in the United States. He acquired his BA in International Economics and MA in Development Economics from the University of California. He has started taking his PhD in Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University in 2004; during this time, Dimaporo placed in the National Dean's List of the United States. Dimaporo was a competitive student who benchmarked his performance by utilizing international standards set by his professors and fellow students. He succeeded in meeting his goals without much help from others.

During this time, Dimaporo wanted to teach in the United States and to eventually settle there with his wife and children. However, his father called him back to the Philippines for the 2007 elections, telling him that, "it is his time to carry the torch of the family legacy". He was hesitant at first, but because of his deep respect for his father, he returned to Lanao del Norte to run for governor.

Running for governor was an eye-opener for Dimaporo. He relates that part of the reason in his decision to run in politics was the confidence that winning would be easy. In 2007, his mother ran for congress and he for governor. But it turned out that getting the posts for both mother and son was not that easy. His mother lost in her bid and the support that was promised him was not as strong as he expected. Since he was elected by a slim margin, he has made it a point to visit all *barangays* (local political units) in Lanao del Norte – a salient move to win back the trust of the local leaders and the people.

Before becoming a governor, Dimaporo has held a number of positions in companies and foundations, most of which are owned or affiliated with his family. From March 2005 to present, he has been president of two companies, A&A Ranches and Muslim Diversified Agriculture, Inc. Furthermore, he is the vice-president of the Dairy Division of Lanao Foundation, Inc. since April 2005, which has provided him ample opportunities to visit rural areas and relate to the locals. Dimaporo has also been a board member of Land-O-Lakes Foundation since January 2007. He is currently the executive vice-president of CONFED Mindanao and chairperson of the Infrastructure Committee of the Regional Development Council.

From June 2005 to March 2007, he was chairman of the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) Family Savings Bank. He entered the organization, in what he refers to as its "lowest point", while it was suffering from bankruptcy that hindered some of its functions, since the bank was dependent on the finances provided by GSIS every year. Dimaporo was confident that he could contribute something to the organization, primarily because of his background in economics. But this was not enough to build a successful work atmosphere as there are informal organizations within the bureaucracy that was difficult for him to penetrate. "I learned how to do collaborative decision making. I learned to listen to my people's suggestions and on how they view the problems," says Dimaporo. After lobbying for additional funds, Dimaporo and his team were able to raise more than PhP 50 million for the bank's recovery and eventual flourishing.

His involvement in these organizations enabled him to have a ready network for partnerships in his directives as governor. Dimaporo observes, though, that the Philippine management set-up is different from what he was accustomed to when he was in the US. "It's slower here than in the States. It's very hard to keep deadlines. For example, in my experience in the rural area with the farmers, I always have to follow-up on them – regularly, daily. It took me around a year to adjust," he says. However, Dimaporo did not lose the work discipline he learned from abroad and used this in bridging and leading the peoples of Lanao del Norte to a new working system.

AREA AND DIVIDE

Lanao del Norte is located in the Northern Minadano region and is divided into 22 municipalities. Like most of the provinces in Mindanao, Lanao del Norte is home to a diverse group of people–Maranaos, Higaunons, and Cebuanos. The population is predominantly Christian.

The province is one of the top gainers in terms of Human Development Index ranking in 2006. It rose from rank 33rd in the country in 2003 to 23rd in 2006. Its life expectancy at birth score has also increased: from 64.1 in 2003 to 65.2 in 2006 (*See Table: Lanao del Norte*[2]).

LANAO DEL NORTE	
Capital	Municipality of Tubod
Population (2007)	538,283
Human Development Index (2006)	0.604
Poverty Incidence among population (2006)	52.2%
Life expectancy at birth, in years (2006)	65.2

1 From "Mohamad Ali Dimaporo: A Modern Maranao Datu" by G. Carter Bentley, An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines (1994), Alfred W. McCoy (ed), Ateneo de Manila University Press. The article documents the rise of Ali Dimaporo and the decisions and conflicts he underwent throughout his political career.

1 The change in rankings is from the Philippine Human Development Report 2008/2009. (Retrieved from http://hdn.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/chapter-3-provinces-and-human-development.pdf). Other data are from the National Statistical Coordination Board (accessed at http://www.nscb.gov.ph/ru10/statwatch/statwatch3Q2009_p.pdf)

Compared to other provinces in the area, Lanao del Norte has kept a relatively peaceful environment for the last decade. However, the province still experiences some violent outbreaks caused by the conflicts in nearby provinces. Dimaporo dealt with a number of them during his term, which he described as "challenging leadership experiences".

His first experience in conflict management happened in 2007 when violence broke out in Lumbac, Kolambogan due to a land dispute between Muslims and Christians. The conflict escalated when a lawless armed group ambushed some members of the police force. Dimaporo initiated a task force involving local leaders and the local government to bring back peace in the place. He aimed to mediate at the beginning, but when the conflict worsened, the mayor of Kolambogan had to ask for his intervention, and eventually, accountability was given to the provincial government. Dimaporo found himself trying to overcome the impression that since he is Muslim, he would be biased for the Muslim contesters. Hence, he sought the involvement of other stakeholders for the talks. Although the land conflict itself is still unresolved, Dimaporo realized the importance of the multi-stakeholder process from this experience.

The kidnapping of Owen Go in July 2008 allowed Dimaporo to realize his limitations as governor. At the height of the incident, Dimaporo sought for support of influential people who had relationships with the kidnappers in order to start negotiations. However, he had no connections of his own; all of his available connections were from his father's network. He was not able to "call the shots" to efficiently deal with the hostage-taking. A crisis committee, comprised of the police force, the military, and his father's connections, was created to undertake the negotiations. In August 2008, few weeks after the negotiation, Go was released unharmed and without ransom. Even with the successful release of the hostage, Dimaporo was not satisfied with the outcome. He realized that if he wants to make things happen, he has build his own network and relationships with partners whom he can depend on.

At the height of the talks on the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), in which the national government drafted a treaty with representatives of the Moro Islamic Liberation (MILF)[3], Lanao del Norte suffered from bombings from MILF forces. Earlier, MILF groups attacked Iligan City, but when the military pulled out from the conflict areas, the MILF furthered their attacks in the province. Dimaporo was quick to organize a committee to address the situation, and although eventually the violent incidences subsided, the experience was definitive for him in realizing the value of consultation with the different stakeholders. Dimaporo said that the military did not coordinate with the local government unit (LGU) before they left the conflict areas, hence he had to respond without ample preparation. And as a major stakeholder, he felt that they were compromised by the decisions made by the members of the military. According to him there are some things that are "beyond [his] control", but it did not mean that he would let such an incident happen to him again, or to any stakeholder he works with.

Dimaporo's realizations on these incidents reflect the conflict he had to face early on in his political career. His education and experience in the private sector indicate that he is personally able to solve problems, and yet as governor, these were not enough. Dimaporo learned that he could not achieve his goals for the province on his own, and that he would need to rally and keep the support of able actors to ensure the impact of the solutions he wished to enact. He learned to value the contributions of each stakeholder, and in the process, also guarantee that he will be consulted regarding major decisions. At that point, Dimaporo was experiencing a crucial turning point in his leadership journey. From a student-teacher-businessman, he was becoming a public servant.

Venturing into Health

After acknowledging the importance of prioritizing peace and order in the area and acting on the issues that have to do with this aspect, Dimaporo turned his attention to improving the healthcare system of Lanao del Norte He saw this as one of the ways for development to be included in the peace equation. He believes that peace cannot be achieved without a change in people's quality of life. This focus on the healthcare issue is geared towards enabling the local government to deliver tangible services to the people. He said,

"Prioritizing health quite fell on my lap. In 2007, when I came in as governor, there was absolutely no talk about health. Everything was about peace. But health receives the highest budget every year... And when I talk in the *barangays* [in Lanao del Norte], when I mention that we are going to work on health services, that's when the people really start clapping. And I realized that, health is something they can really identify as a need."

As the need was identified, Dimaporo planned and started the initial stages of the healthcare reform program for Lanao del Norte. It is at this stage that he got accepted for the Asian Institute of Management Bridging Leadership (BL) Fellowship program[4] in October 2008.

Health care programs were already in existence in Lanao del Norte even before Dimaporo's term as governor. In 2004, the national government launched "Plan Five Million", which aimed to give health insurance to five million people all over the country through the PhilHealth system[5]. For this program, Lanao del Norte was assigned 500,000 slots distributed to selected residents of the province. However, the program was not renewed in the following year, and people began to lose their PhilHealth membership. PhilHealth then marketed directly to LGUs in order to continue the program. Dimaporo's mother, who was governor then, launched a PhilHealth program in the province in which the LGU paid for the premiums of the citizens.

However, the PhilHealth program under Gov. Quibranza did not flourish because the hospitals in Lanao del Norte were not prepared to provide services within the PhilHealth program. Most hospitals were not PhilHealth-accredited, which meant they lacked equipment, manpower, supplies, and even medicines to accommodate all the PhilHealth members seeking health services.

When Dimaporo assumed the governorship in 2007, he aimed to revive and innovate on the health care program by working with his core group to reform the health system in the province. The core group was composed of his immediate staff, some of which have worked under his father and mother during their respective terms, and key officials in the provincial health sectors. Although he already knew the people who composed the core group, he said he had to further build on their relationships and because they had little chance to work on health as a team before, they had to "learn together".

According to some of the core group members, they had to adjust to Dimaporo because, "He has a different working style compared to his father." He was, they say, "more business-like" in his approach towards work. One of the core group members said,

"*Nag*-adjust *din kami, pero nakikita namin* his efforts to really blend in with all of us. *Una nagaral sya ng Bisaya, tapos kahit anong mangyari pag may* commitments *kami sa mga barangay, kahit gaano kalayo, pupunta at pupunta sya*. (We also adjusted, but we saw his efforts to really blend in with us. He learned the Visayan language, and no matter what happens, when we have commitments to go to villages, even if the places are so far, he will still go.) He has so much energy for his work. And that makes us feel we are working with a really reliable leader."

To reform the provincial health care system, Dimaporo and his core group conducted a study tour to gain insights from other health care models, and found out that Bukidnon enforces a health care system that generates income. The research-study tour on the Bukidnon model also became one of the activities wherein Dimaporo and his core group had a chance to 'bond' as a team.

Dimaporo also learned that the provincial government of Bukidnon sponsors PhilHealth programs and was able to distribute PhP 100,000 to its staff from the revenues of accredited hospitals in the province. PhilHealth membership is required for all the residents of the province, and the private sector makes it available to the

3 The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is one of the two liberation movements for the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao. The first group is the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), headed by Nur Misuari, emerged during the height of the Martial Law in the 1970s. When MNLF agreed to negotiations with the Philippine government on the formation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) among other political differences, Salamat Hashim and his group within the MNLF formed a separate entity, now known as the MILF. In 2008, a Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domains (MOA-AD) which sought to grant land ownership and independence to local groups in Mindanao was declared null and unconstitutional by the Supreme Court In December 2009, the MILF resumed peace talks with the Philippine government in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

4 The program covers a one-and-a-half-year of intensive training, mentoring, and application that aims to increase the capacity of selected leaders in addressing a specific societal divide they identified. Fellows learn to improve their ability to identify and understand a problem and its complexity and develop a collaborative response to address the problems. The selected leaders are then able to induce change within the context of their involvement.

5 PhilHealth describes itself as "a premier government corporation that ensures sustainable, affordable, and progressive social health insurance which endeavours to influence the delivery of accessible quality health care for all Filipinos". Its mission states that, "As a financial intermediary, PhilHealth shall continuously evolve a sustainable national health insurance program that shall: (a) Lead towards universal coverage, (b) Ensure better benefits for its members at affordable premiums, (c) Establish close coordination with its clients through a strong partnership with all stakeholders, and (d) Provide effective internal information and management systems to influence the delivery of quality health care services". More information can be seen at http://www.philhealth.gov.ph/.

poor. He was then able to identify a model to emulate for Lanao del Norte.

However, Dimaporo's core group observed that the Bukidnon model created an unintended competition with government health programs, primarily the Rural Health Units (RHUs), because all their operations are under the provincial government. RHUs, which are managed by the local Department of Health, compete with Philhealth for funding, equipment, logistical support, and attention from the provincial government. Because of this, in the Lanao del Norte model, the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) became part of the core group, thus aligning the activities of the local DOH with that of the provincial health programs. Dimaporo says he was careful that the DOH units in the province would still be able to fulfill their functions, and also, "be able to work smoothly with all the health programs of the province".

After their study tour, a health system business plan was made, with the program designed to become an economic enterprise[6] to maximize profits, and as Dimaporo says, "to protect the program from political transitions". In Philippine politics, when a project becomes too affiliated with a politician, and if that politician does not get re-elected, the successor usually ceases the LGU's support for it. This new design they implemented makes the health care program an economic enterprise enabling it to be self-sufficient and hindering political motivations from influencing its outcomes. Dimaporo called the health program enterprise for Lanao del Norte the "Provincial Indigents Healthcare Program" (PIHP).

Dimaporo and his team then initiated a review of the health system in Lanao del Norte. They found out that their hospitals lacked facilities, equipment, a steady supply of medicines, and that their doctors are migrating to Manila and other countries to receive higher salary. The review also looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the earlier health programs in the province. The study tour and their review of the health system enabled them to proceed with a strategy for healthcare reform.

As for its strategy, the provincial government spent PhP30 million in 2008 for Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) to improve the hospitals in the province. This was to prepare the hospitals in securing accreditation from PhilHealth at the soonest time, allowing hospitals within Lanao del Norte itself to accommodate indigent patients. The remainder of the funds were spent for the PhilHealth applications and memberships of the residents of the province, especially those who are unemployed or self-employed. With the support of the municipal governments and the *barangay* units, the provincial government distributed PhilHealth cards to residents as proof of their enrollment in the program, which they can use whenever they need financial support in cases of hospitalization and other health-related emergencies.

In 2009, the initial PhP 30 million for MOOE had a return of PhP 33 million in the form of PhilHealth claims of the indigents. This amount will augment the program's resources for medicines, supplies, management systems for personnel, facilities, and the marketing of the program. Every year, the program will induce increases in premium, but the capitation remains the same. "In ten years, the subsidies will go lower. The challenge is for the project to be sustainable and independent," Dimaporo explains. He constantly urges the municipalities to earn more with the capitation provided by the provincial government. Also in 2009, a trust fund was opened for further financial stability and development of the program.

BL Approaches To The Health Care Indigency Program

According to Dimaporo, the most important insight he acquired from Bridging Leadership is keeping the multi-stakeholder process active in all aspects of planning and decision-making.

One of the first steps that he undertook was to organize a Health Summit in February 2009. It was the first time that the provincial government went on a dialogue and consulted members of the private sector and civil society groups, members of the academe, and other non-government organizations (NGOs). It was a precedent for collaboration, and Dimaporo looks at his role as follows,

"As local chief executive, it is important that I set the over-all strategy of achieving an objective to harmonize the actions of all departments involved and ensure synergy. Since the issue is health service access, the Provincial Health Office should be at the core of the LGU's coordination mechanism."

6 Creating the health program as an economic enterprise means that its revenues and expenses would be handled by an entity outside the provincial government. The provincial government of Lanao del Norte provided the initial funds to establish the economic entity and the necessary infrastructure and manpower investments, but will not merge the funds of the health system with the provincial funds.

In the consultation during the summit, Dimaporo think that the stakeholders progressed to the levels of dialogue. First, it was an opportunity for all the stakeholders to synchronize their individual health reform agenda and activities with each other to increase the impact of health services under the Indigency Program. Second, impressions and expectations were managed. For instance, Dimaporo's core group noted that some groups in the summit thought of the Indigency Program as a way for the LGU to earn their favor, or "*magpa-pogi* points *lang* (just to gain public approval)", but did not turn their attention to the actual benefits of having PhilHealth membership. Another issue that surfaced was the uneasy competition between private and provincial hospitals. Doctors and staff from private hospitals would discourage patients from going to provincial hospitals because of the lack of medicines and equipment, while those from provincial hospitals would tell patients that if they do not go to public hospitals, their PhilHealth cards will be forfeited.

This conflict between private and public hospitals was resolved in the health summit. Since the citizens can avail of their PhilHealth claims in both kinds of hospitals, it was explained that there should not be competition. The indigents can go to the provincial hospitals, but since not all of them have the equipment and enough number of beds to accommodate all patients, there would inevitably be a good number of patients who would be referred to private hospitals in the province. And for the private hospitals, since all the member patients can claim PhilHealth benefits from them, they can be assured of a steady profit by accommodating those who need their services. A better referral system then was established.

Aside from tackling these issues, the health summit was successful in securing the commitments of the stakeholders. Doctors and religious groups volunteered to partner with the provincial government in conducting medical missions (e.g., circumcisions, medical, and dental check-ups) in far-flung areas, with a counterpart in the form of medicines from the LGU. A system for Volunteer Health Workers (VHWs) was also established. The health workers are volunteers from the *barangays* who make sure that every resident has the required documents (e.g., birth and marriage certificates) so they can avail of the PIHP benefits.

The health summit was a success, but Dimaporo likened it to "opening Pandora's box". He said,

> "When I did my VMO [vision, mission, objectives], there were things I didn't want to handle. But in the summit, issues like malnutrition came out, which is a divide in itself. Malnutrition is related to population management, poverty, livelihood and employment, infrastructure, among others. I want to solve all the problems but some of the problems cited are divides on their own."

Whereas Dimaporo recognizes that he cannot possibly solve all identified divides during his term, the realizations made during the health summit challenged him and his core group to innovate on efficient and effective systems for the implementation of the PIHP.

Facilitating the Indigency Counterpart

Since the program was launched, there has been a steady increase in the number of beneficiaries in the province. In 2007, there were 52,024 beneficiaries; there were 70,312 in 2008, and 77,148 in 2009. The LGU is moving towards universal sponsorship of the indigents, with an "open enrollment" policy. This means that even if the heads of municipalities or *barangays* are not affiliated with Dimaporo's political party, the residents of those areas can still avail of the program.

The residents are required to secure all the necessary documents for their PhilHealth applications. According to some *barangay* volunteer health workers (VHWs), securing documents is a difficult because not all residents have a birth certificate. This usually happens in far-flung *barangays* where most births are attended to by the local healers (*hilot*) and the residents do not understand the need for a birth certificate or do not have the means to acquire it, since most of them rarely leave the town throughout their lives. In other cases, couples build families without a legal marriage ceremony; as a result,their children, who are born without birth certificates, cannot be claimed by parents as their legal dependents.

In such cases, stakeholders from the provincial and municipal governments had to innovate to help the indigents secure their documents. Mass weddings are held to 'formalize' the cohabitation of couples without expenses on their part so that marriage certificates can be issued to them. Applications can also be processed through the VHWs, which means that residents of remote areas need not travel far and spend much on transportation costs. These are done in partnership with local census offices and local units of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

The operating expenses (transportation, food, honoraria) of the VHWs are provided by the provincial government so they can gather all the application forms of the *barangay* residents for mass-processing in the towns. The VHWs also undergo regular training with consultations to better enable them to talk to the residents and facilitate their needs. In addition, they are provided with first aid kits and trainings on how to give first aid treatments; the provincial government regularly replenishes the first aid kit supplies of all VHWs. The recruitment of the VHWs is ongoing; after which they will be sent to areas that are difficult to reach.

While the VHWs are there as the on-the-ground mechanism for the PIHP get access to identified areas, Dimaporo and the core group members themselves visit the *barangays* to promote awareness and encourage the citizens to enroll in the program. According to some residents in a coastal *barangay*, Dimaporo's presence during these visits is "inspiring", because they can see that the local government is serious about prioritizing the health program. These *barangay* visits allow residents to dialogue directly with Dimaporo and the stakeholders and express their needs and concerns, even those that are unrelated to the health program. According to the chairwoman of the coastal *barangay*, when Dimaporo visited them, they requested for a day care center and a health center, both were built and operational in less than a year.

The stakeholders on the *barangay* level are encouraged to meet regularly to identify their needs and priorities vis-à-vis the PIHP. The *barangay* leaders convene the people, together with the VHWs who have been oriented with the key components of the provincial health system. For this, the provincial government provided tents and chairs that the *barangays* can use in their meetings. The tents are also made avalaible by the *barangay*, upon request, during weddings or special occasions, as a token of "*pakikisama*"[7] which is essential in Philippine culture.

When PhilHealth applications are approved, the indigents do not have to go to the town to claim their PhilHealth cards. Instead, the local governments (provincial to *barangay*-level) and the VHWs facilitate the card distribution in the *barangays* themselves. This minimizes transportation costs for the indigents and encourages more residents to apply to the program.

To ensure that the indigents can claim their PhilHealth benefits, the provincial government provided "multicab" vehicles to every *barangay* so that during emergencies residents even from the far-flung areas can be transported to the nearest hospital. To encourage the proper use of the vehicles, gas allowances are given to the *barangay* every time its multi-cab brings a patient to the provincial hospitals.

According to *barangay* officials, this intervention from the PIHP has concrete contributions to the political culture on the ground level. Traditionally, when residents encounter emergencies in their family, whether health-related or during familial or village festivities, they approach local government officials for financial support. But because health care is already provided through the PIHP, government officials need not shell out their personal money to respond to such needs for additional funding during festivities. Even the provision of tents and chairs serves as the contribution of the barangay to these special occasions. The regard for community and familial relationships is very strong in the Philippines, such that a village is usually a group of extended families. And when local government officials do not give support for emergencies or special occasions, people usually regard it as "*walang pakisama*"[8], or that the official does not honor the bonds of the community.

Despite its cultural value, this spending money on community affairs by a government officieal is a recipe for corruption, since there is usually no other way for them to earn back the money they gave except to get it from government funds. But with the provincial government and the PIHP covering for the usual contributions of *barangay* officials, this situation is avoided and micro-level governance can be given better attention.

Infrastructure and Capacity Investment

In order to provide for health care services, the program invested on the development of hospitals and corresponding equipment, manpower, and infrastructure. For all the financial management required, the Provincial Resource Management Center (PRMC) was established, which is also composed of the stakeholders and core group members. The PRMC is in charge of restructuring and developing the hospitals and their operations, and has been authorized to open a separate bank account for the hospital income, to ensure its independence from the funds of the LGU.

In the process, the PRMC has centralized the procurement and storage of medicines and supplies. The system enables more efficient replenishment of hospitals supplies and better stock accounting of the earnings made by the enterprise. According to the chiefs of hospital of Kapatagan Provincial Hospital and Sultan Naga Dimaporo Provincial Hospital, they coordinate with the PRMC whenever the medicine supply of each hospital reaches only around half of its targeted inventory. The response time is quick, with deliveries made after a day or two.

However, the procurement process underwent some challenges when medicines purchased at cheap prices later proved to be less effective. Members of the PRMC say that they are devising a system that will allow them to purchase more effective but less-costly medicines.

The PRMC has also ventured into professionalizing doctors' fees in all provincial hospitals. When the team conducted a comparative study of the compensation and hiring scheme of four provinces in Mindanao, they found out that the procedure for hiring doctors and other personnel in Lanao del Norte observed no job orders. There was also no clear scheme for promotions and fee increases.

Moreover, Dimaporo says that the main problem of the health care system in terms of manpower is "brain drain", where trained and licensed doctors prefer to work in Metro Manila or abroad because of the low professional fees offered by the provincial public health system. In the core group's analysis of the professional fees of doctors in Lanao del Norte hospitals, they saw that the doctors' fees were still at par with the rates in the 1990s, and have not significantly improved over recent years. The system has been able to raise the professional fees of doctors because of its dependence on the annual budget allotted for health. The PRMC aims to raise PhP 14 million for the standardization of the professional fees in all provincial hospitals.

Aside from this, a selection board was created to supervise the hiring of doctors and staff for the provincial hospitals. The board is currently having difficulty in hiring specialized doctors. Most doctors who have specializations, such as oncologists, are based in hospitals outside Lanao del Norte, and they only report to provincial hospitals every now and then. Aside from services that they provide, specialized doctors also allow for PhilHealth accreditation of provincial hospitals to a higher status.

Dimaporo notes that because of the incapacity of the former health system to professionalize fees and follow a meritocratic hiring system for doctors and staff, their performance was generally substandard. The doctors and staff reported late to office, took frequent breaks, and held a negative attitude towards work. But with the adjustments enacted under the PIHP, there have been considerable changes in the performance of the doctors. According to the chiefs of hospitals, there is now a "sense of pride" among doctors who practice in the provincial hospitals. The LGU's prioritization of the health care system has changed their perception that they are "not just doctors".

The residents of Brgy. Bagong Badian, a village in a mountainous area of the province, attest to the change in the attitude of the doctors. The doctors and staff, they say, are now "*mas mabait* (kinder)' and more accommodating of the needs of the patients. One resident said, "*Siguro dahil ngayon alam nilang nakakabayad na kami… . May* [PhilHealth] cards *na kasi kami ngayon* (Maybe it is because they know that now we can pay [for their services]… . We now have PhilHealth cards)."

Aside from financial management and medicine procurement, another major investment of the PIHP was the improvement of hospitals. When Dimaporo assumed the governorship, there were only two operational provincial hospitals – both of which were under-equipped at that time. PIHP divided the province into inter-local health zones. These are areas where key provincial hospitals are located (Sultan Naga Dimaporo, Kapatagan, Baloi, Kolambugan, and Kauswagan) to make health services more accessible to indigents.

The capacity of Kapatagan Provincial Hospital was then 25 in-bed patients, but usually served 70 patients per day. Because of this, the staff of Kapatagan used to build make-shift structures they call *amakan* just to accommodate patients. Under the PIHP, PMRC allotted funds for the hospital's renovation and expansion that allows the hospital now to accommodate 80 patients at a time. Medicines are in sufficient supply and are frequently replenished through PMRC's centralized procurement system.

7 "Pakikisama" is a traditional Filipino value, wherein Filipinos treat others as one of them. It assumes that whatever one receives and gains in life should be shared with others, in the spirit of the tightly-knit community relationships and the member's regard to the equality of everyone's humanity and dignity. For a more detailed discussion, refer to Virgilio Enriquez' "Kapwa" in Sikolohiyang Pilipino: Batayan sa Kasaysayan, Perspektibo, Mga Konsepto (1979; Diliman: National Research Council of the Philippines).

8 "Walang pakisama" means the lack of "pakikisama". Refer to the preceding footnote.

According to the Chief of Hospital in Sultan Naga Dimaporo Provincial Hospital (SNDPH), they used to refer patients to other hospitals when they run out of medicines. Aside from this, the hospital was hardly accessible for some people because of the absence of a concrete road. The hospital underwent renovation for four years (2002-2006), and when it re-opened in 2007 and placed under the PHIP, their old problems with supplies were minimized. The provincial government also spent for the construction of a concrete road that made the hospital easier to reach for the indigents. SNDPH also showed a good track record as regards its income. In 2006, it profited only Php100,000 for six months. Under the PHIP, it earned around Php700,000 in 2008, and more than PhP 2 million in 2009. According to the Chief of Hospitals,

> "We were given goals to meet… . But as we are able to meet the target profits, it became easier for us to make requests for the hospital improvement… . We also had a team building activity in 2008. *Naging maganda yung* effect *noon sa* relationships *ng mga* doctors and staff. *Mas maganda ang* attitude *nila ngayon* (It had a positive effect on the relationships between the doctors and the staff. They have better work attitude now)."

For 2010, SNDPH seeks to apply for Level 2 PhilHealth accreditation and to increase its capacity by 30 more beds.

A hospital was earlier located at Pantao Ragat but needed to be transferred because of security concerns. The municipal government of Baloi donated its hospital to the provincial government, under a contract that the Baloi Provincial Hospital will be built. The construction of the building is now nearing its completion, and its operations – procurement, hiring, and investments – are placed under the management of the PMRC.

Meanwhile, the Kolambugan Provincial Hospital received computers for better record-keeping, among other facility upgrades.

The case of Kauswagan Provincial Hospital reflects the hiring standards that the selection board is using. The Chief of Hospitals has been in position for less than a year, replacing an earlier officer who had been reported to go to office under the influence of alcohol. The PIHP core group gave positive feedback on the leadership of the new chief of hospital, as she facilitated the improvement of relations among the staff. Meetings and consultations with the staff in the hospital are conducted every month.

The hospital also received a new X-ray machine and its accessories and a perimeter fencing project. Its capacity is being expanded by 20 more beds, as the PRMC acquired a nearby lot for the hospital's expansion.

For its counterpart, the Kauswagan Provincial Hospital conducts free consultations for out-patients and free clinics to increase its number of patients; two of the medical programs were conducted in 2009. In March of 2009, the hospital's capacity had been 50% filled, and since July 2009 it has reached a capacity of 85-90%.

Changing Work Culture

Dimaporo's discipline and efficiency in work is like a "contagion" among those who work and meet with him. His core group attests to his professionalism. One of the core group members said,

> "*Kay Gov.,* straight to the point. *Wala nung* traditional *na bolahan sa pulitika. Pag trabaho, trabaho talaga… . Lalo na sa* deadlines *at* targets, *mahigipt yan… . Pero nasanay din kami.* (With Gov., everything is straight to the point. There's none of the traditional politics' fooling around. If there's work to be done, we do it… Especially in terms of deadlines and targets, he's very strict on those. We got used to it after a while.) And true enough our work became more efficient. We were reaching our targets well."

Those who work close to Dimaporo also noted that he does all his speeches and presentations by himself. And when it comes to technical matters concerning projects, Dimaporo studies documents and comes up with his recommendations, which he forwards to the stakeholders. "It's a good example for public officials, and any other boss for that matter," one core group member noted.

The systems that the program put to place provided opportunities for a better work culture to exist. The employees in the provincial government use biometric machines to properly account for their work hours. To facilitate the reporting of employees on time, the LGU acquired two buses that serve as the employee's transportation service to work, given that most of them live in areas far from the provincial government office. Team-building activities have been organized and year-end performance bonus have also been given.

The chiefs of hospitals also said that they had to make adjustments to "follow the pace" of the new working culture under Dimaporo. However, they also expressed that the "results-oriented" work attitude has helped them achieve many successes over a short period of time. In the *barangay* levels, the residents said how the Dimaporo's "seriousness" gives the impression that they can trust his word, such that, "*pag may sinabi syang gagawin para sa amin, alam naming mangyayari yun* (when he says he'll do something for us, we know it's going to happen)". External stakeholders, such as PhilHealth officials and volunteer doctors, also mentioned how efficient doing business is with the local government now compared to previous and other local governments they have worked with.

Despite the discipline to enforce the new systems, Dimaporo makes a conscious effort to relate to the people. When he was elected governor, he knew very little of the native Visayan tongue. Dimaporo studied the language, and though he still makes mistakes in pronunciations even in public speeches, the citizens show appreciation of his effort "*na maging katulad din namin* (to be one of us)".

Trying to learn the native tongue is not just for the relational aspect of Dimaporo's work. He said,

> "I am a very young governor talking to very old *barangay* officials. They might not listen to me, especially that it is more natural for me to speak English. It was something I had to deal with personally. I had to gain their trust… .that I was one of them, that I care for their needs. I want them to trust me."

Furthermore, to ensure that the processes within the PHIP are professionalized, a Citizens' Charter for Health is being drafted. The document contains all the guidelines and procedures that every indigent should know in claiming their benefits and going through the processes of the program. The Citizens' Charter for Health is targeted to be ready for distribution in early 2010.

Personal Insights and Challenges Faced

The multi-stakeholder processes that Dimaporo undertook have taught him to value internal stakeholders, "to not take them for granted". He also said that the key to keep their commitments high is to constantly communicate with them.

> "I inherited most of my staff from my father and mother, and I often wondered how to give them the momentum to change the province, until BL came along… . I learned that being an executive does not mean [those I] employ understand or believe my vision, well, until we had the health summit. Those who attended said that was the first time they ever heard a governor ask for their help… . I learned to dialogue with them… which was the way to make them understand."

As for external stakeholders such as funders and project-based partners in the province, Dimaporo says that they "cannot be depended on for co-creation". Their commitments are often short-term and not sustainable, and they are highly interested in results. However, Dimaporo said, "For external stakeholders, the principle is, the more the merrier."

Dimaporo described his personal leadership experience as "humbling"._This realization did not occur to him, until he attended the BL workshops where stakeholders' co-ownership of goals and programs were given emphasis. He shares, "Before I felt I was God. Now I feel like a slave. Before I would tell people what to do, now I ask them, 'How can I help you?'… and I suppose, the best way for a younger person to approach older *barangay* captains is to say, 'What can I do for you?'"

In October 2009, Dimaporo has visited 60% of the *barangays* in Lanao del Norte, with the goal of visiting all the rest. However, his personal efforts garnered criticisms from political rivals. Dimaporo pointed out that there has been difficulty in the trust-building process because his initiatives were perceived as political moves for the 2010 elections. To this Dimaporo said, "It's part of the political reality, and I cannot answer that by denying that I have plans to run again for the 2010 elections… . I do want to have health as part of my legacy in public service. But that's the point really. It's public service." But during the consultations and interviews with the people in the *barangays*, the residents are conscious of the potential for sustainability of the program and of its independence from possible political changes.

In so far as sustainability is concerned, the continuity of the PIHP is within the framework in which it was built – independent of political transitions and the LGU's future allocation of funds. However, Dimaporo thinks that the entire project is still in its "infancy stage". Despite the many successes within a short period of time, Dimaporo said the stakeholders are "still establishing co-ownership and co-creation," since his benchmark is a self-sustaining health program for the province. He hopes to achieve this vision in a couple of years.

Dimaporo is open to the possibility that he would move onto a different governance agenda later on, especially when the health program already runs independently. He says, "When it comes to health care, I know that this is not all [that the people need]. This might be the priority now, but then later on we have to move forward."

The Sulu Roadmap for Peace and General Benjamin Dolorfino

On October 27, 2007, General Benjamin Dolorfino and Professor Ernesto Garilao organized a Sulu Roadmap Closure Workshop to re-convene the stakeholders of the Sulu Roadmap for Peace, a multi-stakeholder effort for peace in the province of Sulu. This process, lasting over a year, spanned a series of meetings between stakeholders in the province and brought together the different sectors involved in the complex issue of peace in the province.

The workshop has two objectives: (1) to reflect on the events that had happened during the roadmap process so as to distill insight, and (2) to revisit the vision of the roadmap and discern the value of continuing the process.

Many things had transpired since the process began in January 2006. At the very least, the workshop provided an opportunity to learn from the effort exerted. Going into the workshop, neither General Dolorfino nor Professor Garilao knew if the relationships in the group were strong enough to be worth pursuing further. Both men were eager to find out.

The Province of Sulu

Sulu, an island province of the Philippines, is located in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The province, whose capital is Jolo, occupies the middle group of islands of the Sulu Archipelago. Situated between Basilan and Tawi-Tawi, it had been the site of the deadliest clashes between the Moro rebels and the Government forces for decades.

Despite several attempts of international agencies, the national government, and non-governmental organizations to solve the problem of poverty in the province, Sulu remained one of the poorest provinces in the Philippines.

The lack of infrastructure, access to basic services, and poor governance contributed to the poverty and underdevelopment of the province. Although hostilities between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) officially ceased when the 1996 Peace Agreement was signed, the economic, political and security conditions of the province did not improve. A major factor was the inability of the Regional Autonomous Government, tasked at mainstreaming the leadership of the MNLF, to deliver the requisites to a better quality of life. Tension between the military and the MNLF persisted and was sometimes coupled with armed clashes. In almost every armed encounter between the two groups, civilians were compelled to abandon their homes and livelihood.

Violence initiated by lawless elements such as alleged terrorist groups associated with Jama'ah Islamiya and Abu Sayyaf, occasional skirmishes between the MNLF and the AFP/PNP, and local clan wars deepened the already wide social divides and problems. Problems included the lack of livelihood opportunities, the inadequacy of health services, the poor quality of education, and environmental deterioration. These problems, in true cyclical fashion, were blamed for the series of armed conflicts plaguing the province (see Exhibit 1: Human Development Indicators of the Province of Sulu). Thus was the situation of Sulu when General Dolorfino, a veteran of Mindanao conflict, arrived.

Moving Towards Sulu

Ben Deocampo Dolorfino[1] was born on November 10, 1954 in Dumangas, Iloilo. His parents, Agustin Dolorfino and Amalia Deocampo, were elementary school teachers who later on retired as district supervisors. Agustin had wanted to join the military but did not qualify due to physical impediments. Thus, when his sons came of age, he tried to convince the older one to enroll in the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) rather than in medicine, but for naught. Ben, being next in line, pitied his brother who was being forced into joining the military. To resolve the dilemma, Ben volunteered to take the entrance examinations for the PMA. In preparation for the exams, he enrolled for one semester in an engineering course. He was later on accepted to the PMA.

At the PMA, his experiences were tough and challenging. After the summer camp training, he was visited by his parents who failed to recognize him. According to Ben, "I was already standing in front of them but they just passed by me. I called out to my mother, and when she turned around she was so surprised at my appearance that tears streamed down her cheeks."

Because of the rigid schedule and tough exercises, Ben had lost a lot of weight and grown darker. "My mother wanted me to resign right there and then. I was very thin and was coughing a lot. I thought to myself, 'But isn't this what my father wanted?' I refused to resign and carried on with my training." Over the years, Ben rebelled against his parents' wish for him to resign. "I was determined to see it through."

In 1976, he graduated with the Philippine Military Academy "Magilas" Class. He started his field career as Mess and Supply Officer of RPS Datu Kalantiaw (PS-76), Naval Defense Forces in 1977. General Dolorfino recounted,

My parents gave me strict instructions not to join any unit other than the Philippine Navy. At that time, the Philippine Constabulary was mired in corruption charges, which was why my mother did not want me to join the PC. She also did not want me to join the army and air force because she thought that their assignments were too dangerous. She said "You may only join the navy."

At the navy, my superiors recommended me for flight training in the Naval Air Group. I only told my mother about it after I graduated from the training and became First Pilot. That was in 1977, at the height of the armed rebellion in Mindanao. As a pilot for the naval air group, I flew the helicopter for the marines in Mindanao. My group's tasks were to evacuate the marine casualties and bring food and supplies to wherever they were assigned". He moved on to be the Administrative Officer of Headquarters and the Headquarters Support Squadron, Naval Air Group in 1978, after a year of being on official flying status. In 1979, while assigned in Zamboanga, General Dolorfino met and became engaged to Ann, a Muslim whose lineage was part Chinese and part Tausug[2]. Ann's mother required that General Dolorfino be converted to Islam.

In 1981, General Dolorfino was promoted from First Pilot to Senior Pilot of the BO-105 helicopter. Thereafter, he assumed various administrative and operational duties in the Philippine Navy. Since he was doing well in his career, he proposed to his fiancé

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1 Some parts of this biography were lifted from the case written by Cecilia Ubarra entitled, "Forging the Peace in Buliok: Colonel Ben DeOcampo Dolorfino and the 2nd Marine Brigade", 2005: Asian Institute of Management, Makati City, Philippines.

2 The name Tausug, which means "people of the current", refers to a Philippine ethnic group in the northern part of the Sulu province. One of the distinctive characteristics of this people is their preference for houses on stilts near the sea. The Tausugs were known for their carvings, metalworks, woodworks, tapestry and embroidery, mat making and basketry, textile and fashion, pottery and other minor arts. <http://www.pinoyfarmer.com/dti/people_tausug.html>

and got married that same year. The couple has three sons: Abraham, Jan Michael, and Marvin. In 1985, Ben Dolorfino was invited to transfer to the Philippine Marines.

As pilot for the Marines, General Dolorfino received several awards including the Distinguished Service Star; the Distinguished Aviation Cross; the Bronze Cross; the Silver Wing Medal; the Military Merit Medal; the Military Commendation Medal and Military Civic Action Medals; the CBT Badge "Kagitingan" (bravery); and the Senior Naval Aviator's Badge.

One of these was in recognition of his skill in flying a helicopter while on a rescue mission in Corregidor.
A boat had capsized because of stormy weather, but some civilians were able to swim to the shore and cling to a cliff wall. General Dolorfino flew the helicopter as near as possible to the civilians so that a rope could be lowered to them. He also kept the helicopter steady so that it would not crash into the cliff while the rescuers assisted the civilians in going up the rope amid the stormy weather.

From 1985 onwards, his military career surged ahead, as he assumed various positions in the Philippine Marine Corps. He excelled in many of his assignments. For example, while he was assigned to Infanta, Quezon, he had to contend with illegal logging. After just one and a half months, General Dolorfino filled the battalion headquarters and the compound of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) with confiscated logs. He accomplished this feat by putting up checkpoints near the three sawmills in the area so that loggers had no option but to undergo inspection. Some illegal loggers tried to bribe him with PhP 500,000 plus an undisclosed amount as monthly stipend, but "I told them the good name of the Philippine Marine Corps was not for sale and cannot be bought," narrated General Dolorfino. Because of his unit's excellent performance, the DENR awarded him PhP 50,000, which he turned over to the battalion commander who replaced him.

One of the toughest challenges of his career was when he was a Brigade Commander. After being assigned to Lanao del Sur, he and the 2nd Marine Brigade (2MBDE) were transferred to Pikit, North Cotabato to maintain peace and order after a recently concluded war between the military and the MNLF in the area. They were also tasked to convince the evacuees that it was safe to return to their respective barangays[3]. However, this proved difficult because of the civilians' distrust of the military.

To diffuse the tension, the first things that General Dolorfino and the 2MBDE did were to clean and renovate the mosque of Barangay Gli-gli in Pikit. This act produced the desired effect such that when the 2MBDE returned to the barangay to build a detachment the next day, the residents offered to help them. Thereafter, the General launched the Community Service Day whereby every Saturday, the 2MBDE would go to the barangay to help the residents clean the area, build or fix infrastructure, undertake a medical mission, or provide other forms of assistance. He likewise called on other individuals and organizations such as the local government officials, NGOs/ People's Organizations, and other AFP/ PNP units to help in the program. The Community Service Day proved effective in fostering good relations between the soldiers and the civilians. Within four weeks from the 2MBDE's arrival, most of the families in evacuation centers had returned to their villages.

It was during his command at Pikit that Ben Dolorfino first came across the Bridging Leadership Framework. He had then accompanied General Senga who was his Division Commander to a Bridging Leadership Workshop organized by the AIM-Mirant Center for Bridging Societal Divides for the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) in Davao. Ben Dolorfino and General Senga were invited to represent the AFP in the communities that they were trying to develop. It was during this three-day workshop that they honed their skills in multi-stakeholder engagement and interacted with their actual stakeholders in the security of their areas of responsibility.

After noticing how most LGU officials were not visible in their respective jurisdictions, he thought of organizing a People's Day that would bring together civilians and officials of national and local government agencies and NGOs in one venue so that they could discuss the problems of the community and arrive at solutions. Such discussions would also help avoid the duplication of services offered by various parties and ensure the equitable distribution of resources across communities. The first People's Day, which was held in Barangay Gli-gli, was successful. Representatives from the mayor's office, national government agencies such as the DSWD and DepEd, NGOs and POs attended the consultative meeting to dialogue with the residents about their needs.

After a few months in North Cotabato, General Dolorfino was redeployed to Lanao del Norte and tasked to lead the Joint Task Force Lanao, which focused on addressing security threats and maintaining peace and order in Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, and the cities of Iligan and Marawi. A few days after he was conferred the royal title of Datu Sri Romapenet (peacemaker) by the Sultan Ditsaan Ramain of Lanao del Sur in recognition of his accomplishments peacemaking, General Dolorfino (then Colonel) was promoted to Brigadier General. He worked for the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPPAP) and started his immersion in the field.

The First Step Towards Peace

After General Dolorfino's assignment to Lanao del Sur, he became involved in the peace process as the Chairman of the GRP Ad Hoc Joint Action Group. Although the peace process meant to focus solely on the MILF, the group thought it also necessary to re-engage the MNLF. The General recounted,

"We thought of re-engaging the MNLF in the peace process because we saw that, assuming they would have a disagreement with the MILF, peace in Mindanao would not be assured. So our objective in reengaging the MNLF was to promote responsibility and power sharing between the MILF and the MNLF [4]."

To start the talks between the GRP and the MNLF, General Dolorfino approached the Chief of Staff of the Bangsamora Armed Forces, Hajid Jolham Misuari, who is Nur Misuari's nephew. General Dolorfino asked him the reasons his group remained in the mountains despite the peace agreement.

Misuari cited two reasons for their position: the arrest and detention of Chairman Nur Misuari, and the inadequate implementation of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement. Thus apprised, the General offered to reopen the discussion of the two issues, on the condition that the MNLF would cooperate in the peace and development projects of the government. Misuari agreed to Dolorfino's condition and set forth his own: that government would give the MNLF socio-economic assistance.

After settling matters with the Chairman's nephew, General Dolorfino delivered the good news to Nur Misuari. In their conversation, Chairman Misuari expressed his concern over the insincerity of the government. He, however, later agreed to General Dolorfino's proposal, provided that bloodshed would be avoided in the pursuit of the criminal groups.

After talking with Chairman Misuari, General Dolorfino sat down with Director Ryan Sullivan of the OPAPP. Together they drafted the MNLF roadmap on how to achieve peace in Sulu. General Dolorfino noted the necessity of a roadmap that would complement the 1996 Final Peace Agreement. In an interview he said, "A peace agreement cannot promote lasting peace. It is merely a departure point to solve the real problems on the ground. The society should be involved in creating new realities because the present realities are the causes of the conflict in Sulu. The agreement is useless if the society itself does not promote these things." In less than a month, the president approved the roadmap, and preparatory moves to implement it immediately began.

Even after the roadmap was approved, General Dolorfino had to contend with implementation problems. It was highly possible that his group would be unable to gather enough support from the people of Sulu for the initiative. As the possibility of failure hung in the balance, he thought of ways to engage all the groups in Sulu, however daunting the process appeared.

Fortunately, two years ago, he was able to attend a seminar on Bridging Leadership in Davao, which focuses on a multi-stakeholder process to resolve conflict. He thought of the best possible way to engage all the stakeholders in Sulu and ensure the full implementation of the roadmap. Coincidentally, Professor Ernesto Garilao, the executive director of the AIM-Mirant Center for Bridging Societal Divides, talked to General Senga about the possibility of conducting training on Bridging Leadership for the AFP. Their conversation eventually paved the way for the integration of Bridging Leadership in applicable courses in the AFP.

Upon hearing this, General Dolorfino proposed to Professor Garilao and

3 Villages.

4 The Moro National Liberation Front was organized in the 1970s by Nur Misuari to create an independent "Moro nation". The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is an offshoot of the MNLF. It was formed in 1981 when Hashim Salamat and his followers split from the MNLF due to the latter's reluctance to launch insurgent attacks against the Philippine government forces and to move towards a peace agreement (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moro_Islamic_Liberation_Front).

General Senga that Sulu be taken as a laboratory case where the Armed Forces and the stakeholders would be trained on Bridging Leadership. Both agreed with his proposal so that the roadmap created by General Dolorfino became the centerpiece of the discussion during the seminar.

Pre-workshop Activities

General Dolorfino and Professor Garilao knew that the Bridging Leadership Workshop scheduled for March would not be a regular workshop. They knew that for the workshop to succeed, the participants and the facilitators should be prepared for the dialogue. A series of activities was thus conducted to prepare both groups.

1. First Stakeholder's Consultation.

There were two consultations prior to the workshop. The 1st Consultative Meeting took place in Zamboanga on February 26, 2006. Present were representatives of the MNLF named by Misuari, the CSOs, and the military. The Governor and some mayors from Sulu came later. General Dolorfino explained the objectives of the workshop. After the presentations, the group talked about their assessment of the situation in Sulu. Different conceptual maps helped facilitate the discussion.

Different concerns were raised, such as the need for room to vent one's anger, which was seen as crucial to building effective relationships between key stakeholders. There were also discussions regarding other individuals or groups that should be invited to the workshop, among them other Islamic leaders and mayors who were unlikely to come but should still be invited. An interesting realization dawned on the groups: "There is [an] agreement that we are working for peace and development, and the implementation of the peace agreement; we just have to define the process to bring people together." The stakeholders whom General Dolorfino wanted to convene were:

• **THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR ON THE PEACE PROCESS (OPAPP)**. This office which directly reports to the President of the Republic of the Philippines was involved in seeking peace agreements between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the different insurgent groups, notably the following: the Communist Party of the Philippines–New People's Army (CPP-NPA), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the military rebels. OPAPP was seeking an agreement with the MNLF regarding the Misuari breakaway group. General Dolorfino headed the coordinating task force. Aside from General Dolorfino, the OPAPP team was made up of people from the Program Implementation and Monitoring Office headed by Susan Marcaida. This group was active in the writing and the development of the roadmap but it was really General Dolorfino that was driving the process.

• **THE MILITARY.** The military in Sulu is composed of contingents from the Marines and the Army. The overall on-the-ground commander was General Albert Aleo, who reported to the head of the Southern Command, General Habacon. The deputy of the Southern Command was General Dolorfino. There were two brigades in Sulu and their commanders were (then) Colonel Juancho Sabban of the Marines and General Nehemias Pajarito of the Army who reported to Gen Aleo. Each brigade commander had four battalions under him. Even if General Dolorfino was the deputy commander of the Southern Command and technically held a higher rank than the commanders in Sulu, the Sulu ground commanders did not report directly to him. General Aleo did not openly oppose the process proposed by General Dolorfino but was also not very supportive. He was often unavailable for the pre-work leading up to the first workshop. General Pajarito was also not very involved because he was already transitioning into a new post outside of Sulu. He would not be very involved in the whole roadmap process. On the other hand, Colonel Sabban openly opposed the initiatives of General Dolorfino mainly because of his belief that there was already an existing peace agreement with the MNLF and additional roadmaps were unnecessary. More information would surface when the stakeholder interviews were done about the positions in the Military.

• **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOS).** The CSOs encompass the entire spectrum of civil society organizations in Sulu. The Pagtabangan Basulta 5 convenors were the most involved but other organizations were brought in as well. There were generally two perspectives of the civil society in Sulu. One perspective was borne by the Pagtabangan Basulta convenors and their allies. These groups were open to the dialogue process with other stakeholders and were willing to improve their capacity to undertake development projects for communities in Sulu. Prominent leaders within this group were Fr. Jose Ante of the Social Action Center of the Archdiocese of the Vicariate of Jolo, Dr. Hanbal Barra, a professor at the Mindanao State University-Jolo, and Abdulsali Ahalul, a businessman and member of the Sulu Chamber of Commerce. The other group consisted of advocacy based civil society organizations that mostly worked on improving community awareness of what they believed to be the growing militarization of Sulu. Notable leaders from this perspective were Cocoy Tulawie and Atty. Ulka Ulama, both from a group called the Concerned Citizens of Jolo. An inclusive process was undertaken such that presentations were made to all the CSOs interested in the process. Efforts were exerted to ensure that the CSO group included those normally outside the network of Pagtabangan Basulta as well as those who, in the past, expressed negative views of the military or some other stakeholder.

• **THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS (LGUS)**. The elected officials of the province and the municipalities of Sulu constituted an important stakeholder. They are important personalities in the area as they decide on how local government funds should be spent. Although invitations were sent to the Governor and all the mayors of the 18 municipalities of Sulu, invitations to mayors of municipalities with identified MNLF presence were prioritized. Funding support for this initiative was provided by the Governor of Sulu, Benjamin Loong. Gov. Loong had known Prof. Garilao since the latter was in the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP). The other Pagtabangan BaSulTa is a network of social development organizations who operate on a national scale and local multi-sectoral leaders in Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. The program is a collaborative approach between different stakeholders in BaSulTa in order to bring about vibrant communities. It operates primarily at the provincial level, where local initiatives and projects are implemented by development organizations in partnerships with local civil society organizations and communities together with the local government and other relevant stakeholders. The network engages and supports local leaders and other multi-sectoral constituents to develop lasting solutions to the poverty, conflict, and marginalization in the region. Supportive local elected officials were Mayor Salip Aloy Jainal of Indanan and Mayor Al Kramier Izquierdo of Jolo.

• **THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP)**. Many of the issues in Sulu that dealt with the maintenance of law and order are generally viewed as police functions. Each municipality in Sulu has a police contingent tasked to work with municipal governments to maintain order in the areas. The PNP Provincial Director, Col. Ahiron Ajirin was involved in the process as well as Col. Sajiran Sakilan, Chief of Police of Patikul, and Col. Usman Pingay, Chief of Police of Indanan. These municipalities were identified because they are areas with the strongest MNLF presence. Their presence was secured because of the directives issued by the governor and by General Dolorfino.

• **THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF)**. The standing peace agreement between the MNLF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) signed in 1996 stopped hostilities for many years. In Sulu, however, there remained a group of combatants in the hinterlands called the Misuari group which, led by former Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Governor Nur Misuari, resumed the armed struggled against the government in November 2001. While Nur Misuari had already been captured, the group still maintains armed camps in Sulu and engages in numerous armed encounters with the military over the years. The notable commanders of the MNLF in Sulu are Chairman Khaid Adjibon and Ustadz Habier Malik. It would, however, be impossible to conduct a dialogue with them because there are issued warrants of arrest for them. The dialogue involved MNLF leaders who were not engaged in the armed conflict. A number of former political officers of the MNLF remained within the bounds of society to continue advocating the implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement and the release of Nur Misuari. This group included important members of Sulu society like Dr. Samsula Adju, a professor at the Mindanao State University-Sulu and Engr. Joselito Jilhano who was connected to the Jolo Water District. Gen. Dolorfino met with Nur Misuari and sought his approval for the initiative. Misuari recommended Kong Jamasali to be included in the dialogue who was immediately contacted and invited. These leaders did not have authority over the MNLF commanders but had open communications with the armed groups.

2. Generative Interviews.

After the first consultation was done, generative interviews were conducted from March 1 to 10, 2006 with select respondents from the different groups. The questions operated on different levels. They ran from "Would you mind if I asked you a personal question?" to "What about the situation in the province of Sulu, do you think it will improve or do you believe that things will get worse?" Topics ranged from the personal (experiences, convictions and roles performed) to the social (current reality, predicted future) realities of the respondent. Experiences recounted at

the personal level concretized the theoretical reality usually passed down as filtered, "censored" data.

The interviews gave the facilitators a unique chance to share in the reality of the people in Sulu. Dialogue Interview questions were prepared and pieces of information were collated and given to the facilitators. The specific representatives for every sector that were interviewed were the following:

Sector Name Designation / Office

- Military Gen. Alberto Aleo Commanding General, Task Force Comet
- Military Gen. Nehemias Pajarito Commander, Philippine Army Brigade
- Military Col. Juanco Sabban Commander, Marine Brigade
- Police Col. Ahiron Adjirim PNP Provincial Director
- Police Col. Sajiran Sakilan Chief of Police, Municipality of Patikul
- Police Col Usman Pingay Chief of Police, Municipality of Indanan
- MNLF Dr. Samsula Adju
- MNLF Joselito Jilhano
- MNLF Asjad Muksin
- Mayor Salip Aloy Jainal, Municipality of Indanan
- Mayor Tambrin Tulawie, Municipality of Talipao
- Mayor Al-Kramier Izquierdo, Municipality of Jolo
- Luis Go, Jr. , President, Sulu Chamber of Commerce
- Atty. Ulka Ulama, Concerned Citizens of Sulu
- Ustadz Habier Mohammad, Sulu Ulama Council

There were varied answers in the generative interviews. A respondent from the PNP said, "I would really be happy if military operations ceased, so that my family won't have to evacuate from time to time." Someone from the AFP said, "I hope to see Jolo demilitarized... . If demilitarization is not possible, then even just a reduction of forces will do." A CSO respondent declared, "We will have to achieve peace first before we can see progress." "Who would not like to have a peaceful life? Everybody knows by experience that war destroys, while peace builds. Only fools would want war and poverty…," an MNLF respondent said. Apparently, peace was a running theme in their answers. Despite efforts, however, peace remained elusive except for certain sectors in the government. Many respondents pointed out how Sulu remained in the dark. For instance, an MNLF respondent remarked, "Since when did we become better off? We did not experience that because it is not allowed to happen to us Muslims by the Christian government." A CSO representative said, "Everybody wants a decent and honest living. But how can you make it in an environment like this… ?" But they also agreed, "If left alone, things will get worse… ."

Amid all the gloom, little sparks of hope remained in these people. Sincerity and honesty in service were two virtues identified by some respondents as key to improving their situation. And an important insight was best expressed by another respondent who said, "If I'd be [given] the chance, I will talk with the leaders in Sulu. I will persuade them that it is time for us to think about the future of the next generation. We only have one life to live, we should make the most of it by living it well." The comments struck Professor Garilao because, according to him, "The interviews captured their hope and dreams, fears and inadequacies, and most importantly their goals and direction."

Divides among the sectors were most apparent, as were their differing perspectives on the same issue. For example, who should claim credit for improvements in the area: the military or government? There were tensions, too, between the national military and the local police in terms of discrepancies, of situation and roles. It was the general sentiment of some in the military that they were taking on what should be the function of the police when they conduct operations to stabilize the local peace and order situation. On the other hand, the police believed that they were not equipped to deal with local criminals and armed groups and that it was the military that should handle these groups since they have the larger force and better equipped. The MNLF and CSOs were pessimistic, while government was optimistic. One thing was certain, however: they would share the same future.

The people were similarly aware of the discrepancies between the current reality of Sulu and what they dreamed it could be, and it was this dissatisfaction that pushed them to act in the only way they knew how. The problem lay in the development of the process and how to get everybody to agree in following it.

3. Second Consultations with Stakeholders

With the design finally in place, it was now important to give the stakeholders the final draft of the design, the objectives, processes, and expectations. Professor Garilao went to Sulu and first spoke with the CSOs leaders assembled by the Pagtabangan Sulu and the Peace and Unity Task Force. Most of those who raised objections were unfamiliar with the BL process. That they viewed or interpreted terminologies in the same manner could not be presumed. Some of the issues raised during the consultation were:

- "Why do I have to co-own the problem? The problem was created by outsiders; why do I have to own it?"
- "The Americans have to get out of Sulu. Will this be discussed? Americans could be out of the picture."
- "Will the senior military officers be there?"

Professor Garilao clarified that the workshop would be an opportunity to thresh out matters because the senior military officers would be present. He also assured CSO leaders that the local government officials, particularly the mayors, had been invited. Professor Garilao mentioned that the two MNLF representatives he met looked forward to the meeting.

The last session was done with the military. General Aleo was not available, but the brigade commanders of both the army and the marines were present. As soon as Professor Garilao started presenting the design he could sense the restlessness of the participants. Apparently, while discussions and agreements were made with the top commanders, this did not necessarily mean that the ground commanders were in agreement. Professor Garilao recounted the conversation with the battalion commanders,

"Why talk peace with the MNLF? Aren't they finished? Are we going to revive them? Why not just concentrate on development?" Why were we not consulted for this road map? We should get our act together. General Dolorfino is not from Sulu. He does not know the conditions here. We bore the brunt of the fighting here. The people go to us since the local government officials are not in the stations most of the time. Only the military is around. Why are we talking about the release of Misuari when he is guilty of corruption and many crimes? He was given his chance, and he had nothing to show for it. Why are we soft on Misuari when we are tough with the military offenders? Why not make him pay for his crimes?"

Professor Garilao reflected,

> "The resistance was obvious. I could sense why they were actually saying what they did. First was the lack of consultation. They had not been previously consulted and I could see that they could not pick up the idea that they were part of the process in coming up with the final roadmap.

"Second, they were in pain. Their complaints against the police and the local mayors had not been acted upon and yet they were being asked to put their lives in danger on a daily basis. I could also sense marine politics between Sabban, the highest-ranking Marine commander in Sulu, and Dolorfino with regard to [other issues]. I would later also find out that both Sabban and Dolorfino were front-runners for the Marine Commandant position as soon as it became vacant."

After the exchange with the officers, Professor Garilao thought it futile to continue the consultations. He thought that the group was stuck and was not open to further discussion, although he did tell them that he would communicate their concerns to General Dolorfino. He also recommended that General Dolorfino should meet with them before the training.

Professor Garilao immediately called General Dolorfino in Zamboanga to report his recommendations. He asked if the attendance of the military officers could be made optional, but General Dolorfino said that there was no such thing as 'optional' in the military. Professor Garilao further conveyed his concern that the military officers might walk out of the workshop given their issues; but General Dolorfino assured him that the officers would not walk out and that the workshop should proceed as planned.

Following the conversation, Professor Garilao decided to modify the plan. As early as Day 1, the workshop would gather all the stakeholders so that the military would immediately face the police and the MNLF; the Sulu Peace road map would be tackled on the fourth day. It was also agreed that the General Dolorfino would meet the different officers prior to the workshop and he did, one day before the workshop. General Dolorfino recounted how it went,

"The military clearly did not like the idea to include MNLF in the discussions. They had two major armed clashes in the last year, and wondered why they had to include them. I understood their sentiments. They had just fought; and now they were going to be involved in a discussion about the problem.

"I ended the consultation by telling the military that they were hiding in their box, like hermits. They had to get out of the box and dialogue with other stakeholders and come up with a collaborative assessment. I said the Sulu situation was a complex problem. If you are going to change society without their concurrence, you will have to use force and if you use force, there will be resistance. You have

to get out of your box, I said, interact with the other stakeholders, dialogue with them, learn more about the problems that you are confronting so that they will have co-ownership of the problem and will collaborate in coming up with solutions toward creating new realities. The present realities are the results of the present problems, I said. I then showed them how the problems are multidimensional and interdimensional."

In that meeting the military admitted that they were all part of the problem. That was the beauty of the meeting; they admitted to their role. They said, "We are also contributing to the problem. We use too much force. Because of the bombing and shelling, civilians get displaced. In the process, there are military abuses, human rights abuses and insensitivity to the local culture." I replied and said "Great! During the seminar I will say this: that you reported that you are part of the problem." In the end, they softened up and their resistance to participating was less."

The Bridging Leadership Seminar

During the first day of the seminar, many problems began to manifest themselves. Sectors began forming their own groups and the way the participants were speaking was highly intimidating. Interactions across sectors always ended up in debate. Professor Garilao eased the tension by saying, "You cannot achieve anything by debating. You can only dissect the problem if you will dialogue. This involves actively listening to the one talking and seeing the problem in his eyes or having empathy for the speaker." Eventually the atmosphere changed and the military and the MNLF started to talk rather than debate.

Another problem encountered came in the form of a group of foreigners who wanted to join the seminar. One of the foreigners was a representative of the American forces, while another belonged to the GRP-MNLF Peace Working Group, which an NGO called the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) had put up[5]. Civil society did not want any foreigners around during the seminar. The one participant who spoke for civil society explained:

"We, as a group, decided not to allow the foreigners to attend the seminar because they are not stakeholders in this issue. They cannot be one because they have their own programs and agenda in going to Sulu."

Consequently, the foreigners were not allowed to attend the seminar, which led to the GRP-MNLF Peace Working Group's feeling threatened. They then allegedly started to spread malicious text messages about General Dolorfino and the seminar.

As soon as the General found out, he talked to the group and explained why they were not allowed to join the seminar. One, civil society did not feel comfortable with foreigners present in the seminar. Second, the 1996 Final Peace Agreement was a sensitive issue. It was a tripartite peace agreement between the Government of the Philippines, the MNLF and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC).

Involvement in security and political matters by other groups would violate the agreement. General Dolorfino did offer them the option of participating in future meetings as a socio-economic working group. Until December 2006, CHD had not decided whether they would.

The aforementioned was not to be the most serious problem encountered during the seminar. At about 2 p.m. of the same day, a bomb exploded in the Notre Dame of Jolo Cooperative Store in downtown Jolo, killing eight people and wounding many others. A Marine officer near the vicinity of the explosion became suspect because he was found carrying a plastic bag with wires[6].

Rumors about the involvement of the military in the bombing immediately circulated, disrupting the seminar as some Marine participants left to "rescue" their man from the police. Other military officers also went to the scene for support. Still other participants left to secure their families, fearing that the military and the police might have an armed encounter because of the arrest. The following day, the military participants explained why there was tension after the bombing. Everyone was reassured that it was just a matter of miscommunication between the two parties.

Sulu Bridging Leadership Advocacy Group and the Sulu Roadmap for Peace

The seminar succeeded in opening lines of communication and establishing relationships between the stakeholders. After the seminar, some of the groups convened on their own. Aware that sustainability would be an issue based on his experience[7], General Dolorfino organized the group that attended the seminar and called it the "Sulu Bridging Leadership Advocacy Group". Instead of the usual organization consisting of a president, a vice-president, etc., a convener for each sector was assigned. Then committees were created to focus on each dimension to implement the necessary projects.

During the seminar, the roadmap that General Dolorfino and Director Sullivan made was presented. Originally containing three components, namely, security, socio-economic, and political, it was modified by the participants to include two more: cultural and environmental. It was also agreed upon at the seminar that the group would make its own roadmap, which would thus be a localized roadmap. Given the time constraints, however, it was agreed that the Manila-based members of the advocacy group would take care of reformulating the roadmap and would present this to the whole group later on.

General Dolorfino did not have an easy time drafting the roadmap in Manila. "Our first meeting was a failure. We weren't able to write anything because there were so many different ideas. So I thought, I would write it out first, then present it to the Manila group," General Dolorfino recalled. It was in the second meeting that the Manila group was able to finish the roadmap which was then presented to the other members in Sulu.

Although the initial roadmap was created under the auspices of the OPAPP, the final roadmap would later become localized, with all the members of the Sulu Bridging Leadership Advocacy Group contributing their respective outputs. It was then decided that the adopted roadmap would be implemented by the area coordinating center of Sulu.

Roadblocks to Peace

Not all members of the military welcomed the opening of communication lines and the forging of new relationships between the military and the MNLF. Not everyone was ready to break out of their shells, as clearly illustrated during the visit of the OIC to pave the way for the resumption of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement.

General Dolorfino, in accordance with the Sulu Roadmap and in coordination with the MNLF representatives of the Bridging Leadership Advocacy Group, had organized the OIC's visit to the Philippines. This was to serve as a fact-finding mission to determine the problems in Sulu and which provisions in the agreement had not yet been implemented in preparation for the meeting of the tripartite council three months later.

In order to facilitate the meeting of the MNLF with the OIC, the GRP decided to implement a Suspension of Military Operations (SUMO). Kilometer 4 in Jolo was set as the assembly area but the AFP provided some conditions to ensure the security of the OIC: Kilometer 4 was designated as a strictly no-firearms zone. Two holding areas Timbangan for the Panamao group and Buansa for the Indanan side were put up two kilometers away from Kilometer 4 in order to ensure that the order was strictly implemented.

The MNLF requested that they be allowed to carry at least five guns, a request the general in charge initially granted. Later on, however, the general changed his mind because it would indicate a show of force. General Dolorfino personally thought, however, that the military should not attempt to hide the issue of having a show of force because this was specifically what the meeting was about. He met with the Indanan group who no longer wanted to go to the assembly area any longer because they were afraid. They said, "General, if you want to go to Buansa, ask for some security from the Marines." Failing to do that and despite the risk, he went ahead to Buansa with the wife of the leader of the Indanan group. The other MNLF members did not want to join him.

On the second day, at two in the afternoon, he talked with another general. This general accused General Dolorfino of working for the MNLF. The general's unit heard the radio transmission of the MNLF saying that the MNLF troops were waiting for General Dolorfino before making their move. General Dolorfino explained that he was going there merely to pick up the MNLF to ensure that they were going to comply with the terms set by the military. After a lengthy explanation and some clarifications, the other general reluctantly believed General Dolorfino.

5 This NGO mediates and facilitates the resolution of armed conflicts. <http://www.hdcentre.org>

6 The Marine was about to have his radio repaired when he heard an explosion. He immediately went to the site and took some pictures because he was with the intelligence division. <http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2006/mar/29/yehey/top_stories/20060329top4.html>

7 Two years ago, he and other military officers were trained on Bridging Leadership in Davao but there was no follow-up activity afterwards. As a result, agreements reached during that seminar were not pursued further.

It was late in the afternoon and General Dolorfino still had not eaten. He had to go back to Panamao, which was an hour away, to see the other MNLF group. He told the other general to advise his detachment in Timbangan to let the MNLF pass and the general agreed. However, on the way to Timbangan, he saw a 6x6 truck barricading the road near the Headquarters of the 51st Infantry Battalion of the Army in Barangay Bayug in Timbangan. When he spoke to the soldiers guarding the area, they said that their general's instruction was to not let the MNLF pass. He tried calling the general's cellphone but it was not accessible. He then called the Southern Command of the AFP and asked if they could contact the general through the military line. They did and the general said that he had changed his mind and would let the MNLF through the next day.

However, the next day would be too late for the MNLF to go Timbangan. The other general offered to call General Dolorfino by radio but the call never came. General Dolorfino grew alarmed because it was getting dark and the MNLF would not be able to go anywhere as it would be too dangerous. There was also the threat of a mis-encounter. Adding to his worries was the embarrassment that the GRP would be subject to if the MNLF failed to attend the meeting the next day. So General Dolorfino called the commander of the AFP Southern Command to explain the situation. The commander called the general who had not wanted the MNLF to pass. That general said he would call General Dolorfino and instruct his men to let the MNLF pass. It was five in the afternoon by then and still the general had not called. So General Dolorfino decided to resume his trip to the Panamao group. Along the way, when he passed another military detachment, he hoped that the instruction had already been relayed by the general. It had not.

By the time he arrived in Mt. Bitan-ag where the Panamao group was, the Dolorfino's vehicles had already made a U-turn because they had been waiting an entire day. He talked to the leader of the group, Ustadz Malig, who said, "It is apparent that the military does not want us to pass. We know that there is a 6x6 truck blocking the road. We are ready for peace. We have our wives and children with us and of course, our guns for our security. Our wives are even wearing make-up and are wearing native dresses. We are ready for peace, but if the military does not want us to pass, then we'll just see each other in war. But you are not included there General, you are the exception."

General Dolorfino returned to Jolo, arriving at seven in the evening. There he learned that the Indanan group found out about what had happened to the Panamao group, and to sympathize with them, they decided not to attend the meeting. General Dolorfino tried to iron out the situation that night by calling and sending messages to various personalities. Due to the low capacity of cellular sites in Sulu, however, he failed to reach anybody. General Dolorfino said, "I wasn't able to sleep that night because I thought of all the things that I had done and how they were possibly wasted in just one day. I even thought of not doing anything so that the two generals would take the blame, but I could not do it." At five in the morning the next day, he was able to contact the commander of the AFP Southern Command. He explained the situation and proposed a remedy. Thinking it too late to reorganize the entire visit of the MNLF, he decided that the OIC representatives should be the ones to go to the MNLF camps.

The commander agreed with General Dolorfino and the plan was immediately put to action. At that time, the other general who had refused access to the MNLF was panicking because he realized the implications of his actions. He instantly became accommodating to General Dolorfino but rather than lecture him, Gen Dolorfino merely accepted their cooperation.

The OIC first went to Buansa for the Indanan group after which the group joined the OIC on their trip to Bitan-ag where the Panamao group was. The military could not do anything at this point because of the presence of the OIC representatives. In Bitan-ag the military, the OIC, government representatives and the MNLF converged in a scene never before seen. It was quite a sight to behold: the military and the MNLF, both carrying machine guns, walking beside each other toward the MNLF camp. During the program in Bitan-ag, all commanders and General Dolorfino spoke. After the program, all the commanders, government representatives and the OIC representatives gathered for a meeting to talk about the situation in Sulu. Secretary Jesus Dureza of the OPAPP said it was about time for a cessation of hostilities in the province.

It was decided then that the military would extend the SUMO indefinitely. An informal tripartite agreement was passed to end the hostilities in the province. The meeting proved to be a success because the OIC gained an appreciation of the real problems. They saw the rationale behind the hesitation of the military to allow the MNLF through the other day. Somehow, the cancellation of the initial meeting became a blessing in disguise.

After the OIC visit, some people in OPAPP urged General Dolorfino to have the two generals relieved in Jolo so that he would be able to proceed with his work unimpeded. To the surprise of many, General Dolorfino turned down the suggestion. He reasoned that it was better to have officials who had learned their lesson rather than a new set of commanders who might possibly give him the same problem.

Through the Bitan-ag visit, the first objective of the security component of the roadmap to promote ground stability was achieved. The informal tri-partite agreement to cease hostilities was similar to the ceasefire mechanism of the GRP-MNLF. In terms of implementation, however, it was somehow different. According to the new agreement, the civil society would be part of the local monitoring team. A team was also organized to facilitate military operations in or near the MNLF area to prevent armed confrontations between the military and the MNLF. This team was necessary because armed encounters between the two groups often occurred whenever the military went after the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the latter hastened to the MNLF camp or near the camp. In the process, the MNLF became involved because the military encroached on their territory. So this team would facilitate the operation of the military near or in the camp of the MNLF and prevent armed confrontations between the two forces.

Continuing the Dialogue

On May 1, 2006, about 90 percent of the original participants met again in Jolo and was presented the roadmaps. Prof. Garilao presented the Sulu Roadmap crafted during the training. A refresher course on the key concepts and theories discussed during the training followed. General Dolorfino came next to present the proposed Sulu Roadmap that the BL group members in Manila had revised. He gave extensive details on each of the components of the new roadmap which used the framework of the Final Peace Agreement in 1996.

General Dolorfino admitted that he used to believe that military action was the solution to the Sulu problem. Seeing how the same problem still existed after thirty years, however, he acknowledged the need for a different approach. An open forum was conducted to deal with the concerns of the other participants, to clarify certain concepts, incorporate suggestions and continue the ownership of the stakeholders of the roadmap.

The group saw that it wanted to go ahead and establish itself as a link between sectors. To better improve the organizations, they organized themselves into the BL Advocacy Group Organization in the hope that this would facilitate future meetings between the sectors. The BL Advocacy Group Organization initially had a hierarchical structure (a president and other officers) but eventually it was decided that a convener/representative structure with the groups taking turns at becoming the secretariat be installed. The secretariat staff of Pagtabangan, Sulu, another project of the AIM-Mirant Center, was assigned the lead secretariat whose role was to train the other secretariats.

The group discussed the mechanisms to bring forward the intended results. There were plans to form joint groups between the GRP, the MNLF and the CSO that would serve as the local monitoring and coordination mechanism for the cessation of hostilities between the MNLF and the AFP. Incidents such as kidnappings would be addressed by the Joint Task Force Unit (AFP-PNP-CSO) and the Joint Action Group (MNLF-GRP).

Having groups monitor the resources for development interventions, such as the joint planning and oversight by the AFP and PNP of the funds given to the other sectors to ensure their proper use, would promote multi-sectoral participation and transparency in the transactions. There were other concerns raised such as the inclusion of education in the socio-economic program, crimes against Christians in the area, and others, which were discussed in the dialogues of the different parties. After this, the groups formally adopted the Sulu Roadmap.

Days after the general meeting, the pace at which Bridging Leaders set their vision to reality accelerated. On May 2, 2006, the Area Coordination Council for Sulu approved and adopted the Sulu roadmap, and the members of the committee for the ACC who were elected mostly came from the Bridging Leadership Advocacy Group. After the workshop, General Dolorfino met separately with some of the committees to help them develop their plans and programs. These plans and programs were finalized when the group met again on July 29, 2006.

Agreements on Security

The security arrangements made to minimize the collateral damage of military operations were deemed one of the notable results of the work of the dialogue group around the Roadmap document. These arrangements were designed around the operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). In the process of catching the Abu

Sayyaf in Sulu, one of the problems encountered by the military was the tendency of the ASG to move closer to the MNLF camps whenever the Military would mount operations against them. Consequently it would seem like the Military were moving against the MNLF positions, thereby almost always resulting in a mis-encounter[9] between the Military and the MNLF. This would leave openings for the ASG to escape and would displace residents who fled from the fighting.

The security committee had members affiliated with the political arm of the MNLF. While they were not the commanders of the armed MNLF forces, they had open lines of communications with those commanders. General Dolorfino used these connections to broker an agreement with the MNLF commanders around a large military operation called Oplan Ultimatum. The agreement was that, during the operation, the MNLF forces would withdraw to three designated areas prior to launching the operation. It was also agreed that the MNLF forces would drive away any ASG elements that would try to get into their areas. The Military agreed to not go into the MNLF areas but were free to hunt the ASG outside those designated areas without a threat of any mis-encounter.

The agreements were put in force when 'Oplan Ultimatum' was launched on September 1 , 2006. There were some difficulties in coordination but, for the most part, the agreements were held. During the initial months of the operation, it was reported that there was better coordination in the operations to catch the ASG and there were fewer skirmishes with the MNLF. As a consequence, too, the incidence of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in the areas went down.

Dialogue on Military Operations during Ramadan

Military operations began in September 2006 but continued up to October, the beginning of the month of Ramadan[10]. Led by their Muslim religious leaders, the communities affected by the ongoing hostilities had two issues regarding the continued fighting. The first has to do with religious significance of the month of Ramadan. Saying that no blood should be shed during this month, the leaders openly advocated the cessation of all operations during Ramadan. The second was the preparation for Eid'l Fitr, the Muslim celebration marking the end of the month of Ramadan. Being one of the most important Muslim celebrations, it was customary to have a large celebration on this occasion. Many people who had farms within or close to the areas where Military operations might occur were scared to go to their farms lest they be identified by the Military as members of the ASG and be shot. On the other hand, the Military purposely discouraged entry into areas where military action was likely because they wanted to minimize the possibility of loss of lives. However, the people needed to go to their farms to harvest their produce in preparation for the Eid'l Fitr.

A meeting was organized on September 15, 2006 to monitor the progress of the dialogue group and, more importantly, undertake a dialogue among communities, the military, and some members of the MNLF concerning the different issues surrounding military operations. General Dolorfino was able to schedule the attendance of General Allaga who was then Area Commander for the Southern Command, which included the military forces in Sulu. At the meeting Professor Garilao reviewed the different concepts of dialogue and bridging leadership, especially for the participants who were not part of the original workshop. Then the community leaders, religious leaders, and MNLF leaders began voicing their positions on issues surrounding the ongoing military operations. Most of the people asked if the military operations could be suspended during Ramadan. On the other hand, the military officials stressed the importance of the ongoing military operations to the long-term security of the Philippines, as the operations were targeting top terrorist personalities wanted internationally. The different sectors spoke honestly and passionately while Professor Garilao had to occasionally clarify points and make sure people understood the different positions of the stakeholders in the dialogue.

As the dialogue proceeded, General Dolorfino tried to summarize the different opinions by framing the statements as the sacrifices that each stakeholder group was making to achieve peace in Sulu. The Military, for example, was making sacrifices in terms of the lives of its men. The MNLF was making sacrifices in terms of having to curtail its movements and remain within the agreed containment zones. The civil society and local governments were also making sacrifices in continuing to live in a situation of armed conflict. He reiterated that this was in the pursuit of a long-term peace, free from bandit groups like the ASG. The dialogue noticeably improved after this reframing.

In the end, the group agreed on certain points. Civil society and the religious leaders agreed with the Military that there was a need for continuing operations even during the month of Ramadan. For its part, the Military agreed to allow people into the areas of military operations as long as there was prior coordination with the military units involved. The military agreed to refrain from using aerial bombing and heavy artillery to limit the encounter areas and the effect on civilian communities during Ramadan. These agreements were approved by General Allaga and were published in a news article the next day.

The Dialogue Process Breaks Down

The group was convened again in December 2006 and February 2007 to continue the work and follow up on the group agreements and plans. However, the facilitators found that many of the plans were not being done and that there was a noticeable decrease in the enthusiasm of the group. Looking back, Professor Garilao and the other facilitators saw a few things that had to do with the Military. For one, General Dolorfino was reassigned as the commanding general of the NCR Command. While he had permission from his superiors to continue his work in the Mindanao peace process, his new responsibilities did not allow him to spend the same amount of time he used to with the local groups in Sulu. Aside from the decreased presence of General Dolorfino, many of the brigade commanders had finished their tours of duty in the area and, as was the normal practice in the Military, these commanders were transferred to other commands. This meant civil society and the MNLF members of the group had to deal with new commanders who were unfamiliar with the discussions and processes that had transpired during their predecessors' time.

The facilitators also noticed an increase in the number of "mis-encounters" between the Military and the MNLF forces. This they also attributed to the change in the leadership of the AFP battalions, which meant that the new heads were not part of the original group that had made the arrangements with the MNLF.

The bigger number of encounters with the MNLF required that General Dolorfino spend time mediating and coordinating between the MNLF commanders and the government to keep peace. One such encounter happened in January 2007, where more than 10 MNLF fighters were killed. The scale of the encounter was so large that it had to be mediated using 'blood money'[11].

Another point of tension between the groups was the tripartite meeting between the MNLF, the GRP, and the OIC. Agreed upon when the OIC representatives visited the camp in Bitan-ag, the initial date of the meeting was set in October 2006, but was repeatedly postponed by the Philippine Government. As of February 2007, the schedule of the meeting had not been finalized. What prevented the tension from boiling over was the relationship of General Dolorfino with the MNLF representatives and the MNLF commanders.

In February 2007, these tensions finally came to a head when General Dolorfino visited Habier Malik, a top commander of the MNLF, in their camp in Mt. Bitan-ag. Their meeting which took place after that of the advocacy group sought to formalize the 'blood money' arrangements made to settle the mis-encounter with MNLF forces. Things were going well and the arrangements were finalized as planned during the visit. However, as the group was about to leave, Undersecretary Ramon Santos of the OPAPP remarked that the planned tripartite meeting would be postponed yet again. This angered Malik who, at first, prevented the group from leaving until some clarification was provided about the postponement of the meeting. When USEC Santos insisted on leaving, the situation quickly turned into a hostage situation. General Dolorfino was able to ensure that there would be no fighting between the MNLF forces and his own security team.

It was a tense two days while the party was being held at the MNLF camp. General Dolorfino and his companions were treated with respect, taken care of, and allowed to use their mobile phones to update people on their condition while they were in the camp. They were just not allowed to

9 The Military described a mis-encounter as an unintended skirmish between them and some armed group that they did not intend to engage.

10 (Arabic: month of the Islamic calendar in which participating Muslims do not eat or drink anything from dawn until dusk. Fasting is meant to teach the person patience, sacrifice and humility.

11 'Blood money' is a local practice where the aggrieved party receives a commensurate amount as reparation.

leave, however. Meanwhile, government representatives were trying to negotiate the release of the party while the local military commanders were also preparing for the possibility of military action to rescue the party. The community was concerned because the scale of military force required to attack a major MNLF position would have to be very large and the collateral damage could be great.

The situation was eventually resolved peacefully, with Malik finally accepting the word of government representatives that the meeting would be scheduled as soon as possible. It is also believed that Malik finally began to listen to General Dolorfino who repeatedly said that an armed confrontation would be imminent if the situation persisted. Should that happen, it would not serve the purpose of the MNLF.

Finally, the party was allowed to leave the MNLF camp peacefully, but there would be ramifications on the part of General Dolorfino. After the hostage situation, the military leadership no longer allowed him to get involved in the affairs with the MNLF. Some sources also said that the hostage incident soured the relationship between the government and the MNLF, and made the government less inclined to pursue the peace process with the MNLF.

The Fighting Resumes

The fighting officially resumed on April 13, 2007 with Habier Malik launching attacks on military and government positions in Sulu before going into hiding. The attacks again polarized the stakeholders and made it very difficult to have just one account of the reasons behind the resumption of the armed conflict. Among other things, there was no longer a venue for the views to be discussed. The information gathered presented the accounts of the different stakeholders about the resumption of the fighting and why it happened[12].

1. The MNLF Perspective

In November 2001, MNLF forces in Sulu launched a massive attack on the AFP Sulu Headquarters. This incident took place near the capital municipality of Jolo. It left scores wounded and dead, while thousands had to evacuate the populated areas.

According to the MNLF, the main reason for the 2001 incident was the passing of the law expanding the ARMM Act by Congress, without consulting the MNLF leadership. The government countered that the passing of the ARMM expansion and its being submitted to a plebiscite were in accordance to the 1996 Peace Agreement. The 2001 incident which took place in the last months of the ARMM governorship of Misuari led government to arrest Misuari, alleging that he masterminded the said MNLF offensive against the AFP forces.

The MNLF for its part said that the AFP and the government were not sincere in pursuing the 1996 Final Peace Agreement as manifested by the continued postponement of the GRP-OIC-MNLF Tripartite meeting that was supposed to review the implementation of the peace agreement. The MNLF claimed that the continued detention of its chairman was a breach of the peace agreement.

In between the 2001 incident and 2007, major and minor armed skirmishes between the MNLF and the military took place. The MNLF claimed that these incidents showed the government's insincerity toward pursuing lasting peace in Mindanao, particularly Sulu. Most of these skirmishes pertained to the continued incursion of the AFP into MNLF territories, allegedly in the guise of pursuing elements of the Abu Sayyaf Group.

The 2005 MNLF offensive led by Habier Malik against the AFP was in response to the murder of an MNLF commander and his family in Kapuk Pungol, Maimbung. Elements of the Philippine army allegedly perpetrated the killing of two MNLF members, one woman and two children. The resulting MNLF-AFP clash saw close to 10,000 families evacuating their homes in Panamao, Talipao, and other municipalities in Sulu. It hit the news especially when MNLF mortar fire killed Colonel Dennis Villanueva of the Philippine Army. The 2005 major clash led to the AFP's occupation of the MNLF camp in Bitan-ag, Panamo. After the brief occupation of the camp by AFP forces, the MNLF moved in.

There were other such incidents like the killing of MNLF commander Kaddam and six civilians in Timpo, Patikul. It happened in January 2007 when a military patrol chanced upon a meeting of MNLF regulars and engaged them in a firefight. The AFP later reported that those who died were ASG members. Several military personnel were also killed. This incident stood out because it took place when there were supposed to be security arrangements between the MNLF armed forces through Habier Malik and the AFP through Maj. General Ben Dolorfino signifying the cessation of hostilities for the purpose of trust building.

There were also several other incidents of AFP incursions into MNLF territories while in pursuit of ASG elements, particularly in the camp of MNLF State Chairman Khaid Ajibon in Marang, Indanan. Again these were allegedly conducted in violation of the security arrangements. The MNLF suspected that these alleged mis-encounters were intentional on the part of the AFP since the military ground commanders were aware of the boundaries of MNLF territories as set in the so-called security arrangements. The motive of the AFP, so the MNLF alleged, was that the military was "aching for a fight with the MNLF" while using the Abu Sayyaf as a convenient excuse.

As far as the MNLF was concerned, they had been too accommodating with the government. Many times they cooperated with the AFP during operations against the ASG simply by denying ASG elements safe haven in MNLF camps. The MNLF also claimed to have exercised extreme patience in the face of the continued government default insofar as the long pending tripartite conference was concerned.

The tripartite conference was critical to the MNLF cause as it would provide a venue where they could point out to the GRP the many peace agreement provisions it allegedly violated. In addition, the continued detention of Nur Misuari remained a sore point in the MNLF-GRP relationship.

Furthermore, because of the disillusionment of a big part of the MNLF leadership and members over the previous government agreements, the agreements started through the BL process also suffered. Many said that the BL was doomed from the start since the process called for the sincerity of all the stakeholders. The MNLF maintained that the AFP had no real intention to pursue peace in Sulu.

2. The Military Perspective

The Armed Forces of the Philippines had always been part of the Moro rebellion history of Sulu. In the 1970's, the AFP was a major player in the infamous 1974 bombing of Jolo. Within this context and given the closeness of majority of the people of Sulu with the MNLF forces, the AFP had always been viewed with suspicion. As such the AFP leadership and personnel in Sulu always had to assume the position of trying to win the trust of the locals, while maintaining its policy of relentlessly pursuing the Abu Sayyaf and other lawless elements.

According to sources, the AFP's main strategy in combating the Abu Sayyaf took in the form of intensive civic-military operations achieved by way of development projects and civic activities. Military commanders shared how people in the communities approached them for assistance, ranging from water projects to the repair of school chairs. Thus when the BL process took place, their initial pessimism was dispelled. Many military commanders expressed optimism at the whole prospect of continuing dialogue with the local MNLF leaders and communities. However not all military officers during the time thatthe BL process took place were open to dialogue. The overall commanding general of the AFP forces in Sulu Maj. General Aleo did not sign the Sulu Road Map for Peace. Many viewed his mistrust of the MNLF as something that the BL process did not help address. In late 2006, the AFP had a new set of ground commanders in Sulu, including the overall commander of Task Force Comet.

Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, the officers who underwent the BL process and were part of the security arrangements were pulled out of Sulu. During the time of the AFP officers' reshuffling and with the coming of new AFP units such as the Army's elite Scout Rangers and Special Forces relative to the intensified manhunt for Abu Sayyaf members and alleged foreign terrorists, the Road Map and the BL process hit a snag.

The AFP's General Rafael claimed that they were extending the hand of dialogue to the MNLF leadership. To some extent the security arrangements forged during the peak of the BL engagement were honored and continued to be honored by the AFP. In an earlier military operation against the Abu Sayyaf, the AFP operated in close coordination with the MNLF, particularly in Buansa, Indanan where a major MNLF camp was also situated. In August 2006 General Dolorfino, with some ground commanders, had clearly established the demarcation line where the military could conduct its operations without encroaching on MNLF territory. The operations lasted several months.

However, the April offensive of the AFP against the Abu Sayyaf conducted in almost the same area in the municipality of Indanan, happened differently. Initially, the AFP gave ample notice to the MNLF state chairman Khaid Ajibon regarding

12 The views of the Local Government and of the Police are not included because the original representatives of these groups were no longer in position and were unavailable for official comment. The Local Government representatives did not win in the 2007 elections and the police had been reassigned.

the impending operations. According to sources Khaid Ajibon's aides were in constant contact with Colonel Ramon, the deputy commander of Task Force Comet. However, it was alleged that the military had encroached into the MNLF camp during the operation, which precipitated the gun battle between the two forces. Two fighters each from both sides were killed. The same incident led to the MNLF offensive led by Habier Malik against the forces of the AFP. It started on April 13, 2007 when security arrangements were broken. While the AFP leadership claimed to have open communications with some MNLF commanders on the ground, there was an unspoken belief within the ranks of the AFP that some MNLF commanders were helping the Abu Sayyaf. The MNLF leadership denied these allegations.

The military acknowledged that one Abu Sayyaf tactic was to camp near the boundary of the MNLF camps so as to draw the MNLF and AFP in an open war. The April incident resulted in an offensive's being launched by Habier Malik and some MNLF commanders against AFP forces. The AFP leadership in Sulu would like to note that it showed its willingness to re-engage the MNLF in a dialogue using the BL process. Bridging Leadership training should have been conducted in February 2007, but the AFP's preparations for the national elections and increased operations against the Abu Sayyaf put the planned BL session in the back burner.

3. The Civil Society Perspective

The Sulu CSOs were characterized as being organizationally weak, having limited program implementation capacity and having inadequate skills in engaging the AFP, MNLF and LGUs toward a lasting peace and sustained development in Sulu. However, these CSOs also viewed themselves as the voice of the civil sector that was the most affected by the ongoing conflict between the AFP and MNLF.

With this in mind, the Sulu CSOs who affiliated themselves with the Pagtabangan BaSulTa consortium made inroads in engaging the AFP leadership. To date, the AFP had been consulting with the CSOs on how to proceed with the civic military projects. The MNLF, on the other hand, maintained close ties with the CSO leaders. There was a serious discussion among the ranks of the PB-affiliated CSOs on talking with Habier Malik. However, the word was that the MNLF armed wing was closed to the idea of dialogue until the tripartite conference was finally held. This left the CSO leaders to hold off in engaging the MNLF of Habier Malik and Khaid Ajibon.

In the meantime there was a growing concern in the CSO sector about the mounting reports on the human rights violations of the military. There were accounts of civilians killed by the military on suspicion that they were Abu Sayyaf members, when in fact most victims were actually farmers and forest product gatherers.

What shook the CSO sector was the fatal shooting of a child by members of the Army's Scout Rangers in March 2007 in Tagbak, Indanan. The boy was walking home from his aunt's house where he watched the evening TV shows, when Army troops accosted him. Fearing the soldiers, the boy started to run, thereby prompting a soldier to shoot the boy and kill him instantly. His wounded cousin was taken into custody by the MNLF's Khaid Ajibon. It turned out that the victim was a grandson of the MNLF state chairman. A CSO leader facilitated the dialogue between the AFP and the victims' family, and the matter was settled. Among the ranks of the CSOs there remained a general feeling of mistrust with the AFP, but this did not stop the leaders from engaging the AFP leadership in Sulu in a dialogue.

The Sulu Roadmap Closure Workshop

The one-day workshop provided many insights on what the group went through in the Sulu Roadmap process. The experience showed how a multi-stakeholder could address a complex situation, just as it highlighted the challenges inherent to working on such complex issues like peace.

Among other things, the group discussed how the stakeholders were able to convene and organize themselves into the Bridging Leadership Advocacy Group that would work on the Sulu Roadmap. The group was able to arrive at informal agreements to keep peace, but these agreements were not formalized because of many reasons. These informal agreements were not enough to change the long-term situation, however. Furthermore, the group discussed how factors external to the dialogue process complicated it.

The group discussed the future prospects of the dialogue process after talking about the insights gleaned. The relationships developed during the process remained, as evidenced by the quality of the conversations during the workshop. However, the group was very much aware of the differences in the conditions at present. General Dolorfino was still not allowed to involve himself in MNLF affairs while the OPAPP was still not actively pursuing dialogue with the MNLF. Also, theadministration that supported the Sulu Roadmap process had been replaced by a different set of elected provincial government officials. A new governor won in the 2007 election and seemed to be distancing himself from the Roadmap process. Sources believed that his stance stemmed from the fact that the initiative was very clearly identified with the previous administration. While the possibility of pursuing the dialogue remained, most agreed that it would follow a route different from that which the Sulu Roadmap took.

Conclusion

In the end, even if the prospects were bleak, the group agreed that the Sulu Roadmap process provided an example of how peace in Sulu could be achieved in a sustainable way. The conditions might not be conducive at the moment, but the possibility of stakeholders' coming together remained. The stakeholders and facilitators of the workshop came out of the process with a better understanding of what this kind of work entailed and would be better prepared to undertake a dialogue when the conditions improved. Professor Garilao expressed his insight on the value of this process, "Whatever it was, the Sulu Roadmap process provided one year of peace for the people in Sulu. It ended after a year but the economic and social effects, even if they were difficult to quantify, were possibly very great."

General Dolorfino also believed that despite the setbacks, the process in Sulu was not a waste. The stakeholders learned a lot from the process. For a short time, prejudices were set aside and the process of healing began. They learned that everybody who is part of the problem is also part of the solution. They learned that everyone has a distinct role in the process and that each person or organization has their own pool of resources that they can contribute in order to solve to problem. No one organization has all the resources needed. That is why each sector's noncooperation would jeopardize resolution of the problem and what is needed is cooperation and collaboration. The process also opened up new paths of communication and established crucial relationships needed that could possibly sustain development initiatives. One of the local organizers of the seminar stated,"The seminar resulted in a change in relationship between sectors. Now stakeholders have access to each other and are now able to discuss things. In the past, that was unheard of."

However, as he reflected on the process in Sulu, it became clear to General Dolorfino that it will still take a long time before the problem can be fully resolved. He recognized that there are still a lot of things that he has to learn. His continuous involvement in the peace process and bridging leadership serves as his training ground in his continuing work to build peace. His sentiments on the process can be summed up in his statement,

"All of us are aware that the problem cannot be immediately resolved. There are still different areas that need to be addressed. But it is good that everyone realized that they need to act now to start the healing and the progress. There is still hope for Sulu."

Lt. Col. Gavin Edjawan

Battalion Commander, Philippine Army

This write-up was written by Marcia Czarina Corazon Medina, under the supervision of Mr. Philip Dy and Prof. Nieves Confesor of the AIM Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership.

The mere mention of Maguindanao elicits fear. The province is one of the most conflict-ridden areas in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Maguindanao recently figured as the place where the most heinous political crime in modern history, the Maguindanao massacre[1], happened. The massacre, which claimed the lives of 57 people – including Muslim women and 30 journalists – caught international attention and acquired for the Philippines the infamy of being the most dangerous place in the world for journalists. Many may find it hard to believe that peace and security can still prevail in the area, but those living in the areas of Matanog and Parang find that there is hope, as different groups work together for peace and development through the leadership of Lt. Col. Gavin Edjawan.

Passing through Narciso Ramos Highway near Langkong Junction on the way to Camp Iranun, Edjawan recalls there was nothing in the area except for tall grass on unused lands when he first took that road in February 2008. But after only a year, the land is planted with corn and other crops, and young children play freely by the roadside. He considers this a manifestation of how peace enables residents to stay in a permanent place and invest on sustainable farming.

Personal Background

Edjawan views the world as composed of "interdependent human beings in superficial groupings," as tribes and nationalities cause a fundamental divide that hinders people from respecting each other, and from valuing other people's rights. He has believed in this since he was a young boy living in a peaceful environment. His father, whom Edjawan describes as an "open-minded man", never physically punished him for any wrongdoing he committed when he was a boy. He influenced his outlook and inculcated in him that every person must be treated as humanely as possible. He remembers his father telling him to "treat other people with compassion".

He was not influenced by anyone in his family to enter the Armed Forces. What persuaded him to enter the service was the thrill he found in military life after reading books on the topic in his high school years at the University of Sto. Tomas. He was most interested in the journeys and battle strategies of Napoleon Bonaparte. Today, he continues to read war-related books, and of all the insights he has gathered, Edjawan is most stricken, and keeps on going back to this part of Sun Tzu's Art of War: "Therefore one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the most skillful. Seizing the enemy without fighting is the most skillful."

1 On November 23, 2009, a convoy of 57 people was on its way to file the certificate of candidacy of Ismael Mangudadatu for governor of Maguindanao. They were attacked and brutally murdered – all of the members ofthe convoy including journalists and civilian women. The suspects from the rival Ampatuan clan are still under trial.

At first, Edjawan found it hard to believe that this is possible at all. However, he was to find out later that it can be doneHe entered the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) in 1982 to pursue his dream of becoming a soldier. He says that being a cadet does not only entail extensive training in combat fighting, it also includes managerial and leadership-character training in the PMA standards of courage, loyalty, and integrity. Edjawan cites the honor system that says "You should not cheat, lie, or tolerate those who do" as one of the most important values he acquired from the PMA. He considers his graduation from the Academy as one of his greatest accomplishments, as it was where his personal leadership journey began.[2]

After graduating from PMA, Edjawan was commissioned into the regular force of the Philippine Army (PA) where he exercised leadership in his various assignments as Platoon Leader, Company Commander, and Battalion Commander. Edjawan recalls his first assignment in Aklan as a Second Lieutenant pursuing some forces of the National People's Army (NPA)[3]. Edjawan recalls that the NPA groups were staying in a community that was directly affected by armed encounters with the NPA on the boundary of Aklan and Antique, In one of the houses lived a "one-year old mestiza girl" who was caught in crossfire. The images of that incident remain etched in Edjawan's memory:

"Encounter nun at may mga civilian na nasa area. Tapos nung binomba ng NPA yung community, diretsong tinamaan yung bahay nung bata. At ganon na lang yun. Nakita ko na lang yung batang babae na putol na ang isang kamay… Naisip ko noon, paano na ang future ng batang yun? Ang bata-bata nya pa tapos naputulan sya nang kamay eh wala naman syang kasalanan (There was an encounter and there were civilians in the area. When the NPA bombed the community, the house where the child was took a direct hit. I saw the little girl with her hand blasted off… I thought that time, what will her future be like? She is so young and has lost her hand, but she is innocent)… . I realized that these people are not collateral damage in battle. They have lives to live."

The experience shaped Edjawan's view of the war. He learned that on-the-ground battles demand for a leader to be a "responsible soldier who observes social responsibility" and who avoid casualties as much as possible. He calls it, "fighting to win the peace".

Aside from field positions, Edjawan was designated chief of various offices in brigade and division levels, as well as in the headquarters of the army and the general headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Edjawan says that his assignments in the Intelligence and Audit and Inspection departments contributed to his high regard for integrity in his work. His experiences – both in the field and in the formal office space – shaped the managerial side of his leadership and his character, which was about to be tested in his next assignment.

Test of Character

His stint as Battalion Commander of the 51st Infantry Battalion (IB) in Basilan and Lanao del Sur is what Edjawan considers as the "most trying times" in his leadership journey. He formally assumed the position on December 1, 2006 at a time when the peace process between the GRP and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was on-going[3].

But later that month, battles occurred between the government forces and the classified armed lawless group of Amil Mingkong in Sumipsip, Basilan. The MILF claimed that the lawless group attacked by the military was part of their bona fide membership and accused the military of dishonoring the primacy of the peace process. The conflict would have escalated into full-blown armed encounters had not Edjawan initiated dialogues with the

2 Aside from the PMA, Edjawan was also educated at the University of Malaya, Malaysia where he earned a diploma in Strategy and Defence Studies and underwent military schooling under the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College in 2004.

3 The New People's Army (NPA) is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines. The communist movement has been actively operating in the rural areas and key cities all over the country for more than 40 years.

4 The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is one of the two liberation movements for the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao. The first group is the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), headed by Nur Misuari, which emerged during the height of Martial Law in the 1970s. When MNLF agreed to negotiations with the Philippine government regarding the formation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, among other political differences, Salamat Hashim and his group within the MNLF formed a separate entity, now known as the MILF. In 2008, a Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domains (MOA-AD) which sought to grant land ownership and independence to local groups in Mindanao was declared null and unconstitutional by the Supreme Court which led to the non-signing of the MOA-AD. In December 2009, the MILF resumed peace talks with the Philippine government in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia.

MILF leaders. He sought the involvement of MILF spokesperson Satar Alih, and after a series of talks, the tension diffused.

In February 2007, Edjawan stood as negotiator between two conflicting families in Pualas, Lanao del Sur. There had been armed encounters between the clans that lasted for two days until Edjawan engaged them in a series of talks. He brought in the talks other parties to intervene such as the local government officials, local leaders, and the ulama[5] for a collective effort to end the fighting. Both families were convinced to cease fighting for three months to give way to negotiations between the leaders of both families. With this experience, Edjawan says, "Conflict is not that simple, but you can start somewhere." It was then that he realized that collaborative efforts among able parties could help make the most heated conflicts subside.

But perhaps the most challenging situation Edjawan has experienced is the hostage-taking of five of his men in Lumba Bayabao, Lanao del Sur. In March 2007, a group of alleged MILF members under Commander Mercury raided and burned the house of a Commander of the Delta Force in Brgy. Taluan. Because of this, Edjawan ordered some of his men to investigate on the event and to establish blocking-battle positions along the road leading to the barangay[6]. Although they recovered some weapons from the alleged MILF group during the operation, Edjawan learned that five of his men were taken hostage by the group after one of the lead soldiers was asked by the group's commander to enter a mosque for a supposed talk. The lieutenant left the rest of the squad and their armored vehicle behind and entered the mosque with four of his men. However, upon entering the mosque, instead of having the talk as promised, the five soldiers were held captive.

When Edjawan consulted his superiors, no attack order was given. He said,

> "They gave me no explicit order to attack. Sabi nila, bahala na daw ako (They said, I can decide), that I use my best judgment. And because I respect the primacy of the peace process, I decided to negotiate with the MILF… . But if I were given a direct order to attack, I would. That's what I am supposed to do, follow orders from higher-ups. But they gave me the option to choose. I chose to save my men. That was the mission I would not compromise."

Edjawan negotiated with the MILF group through various intermediaries to facilitate the safe release of his men. He tapped the local police and government officials in the area and members of the Local and International Monitoring Teams of the peace process. On the same day, Edjawan's men were released. Their firearms and personal belongings were returned the following day.

Despite the success of the negotiations, Edjawan received intense criticism from some military officers and was removed from his post as commander of the 51st IB. But he has no regrets about the decision he made during the hostage-taking. Regardless of the criticism, he viewed his decision as honorable and a reflection of his credibility. He said,

> "I opted for the release of my men through negotiations, avoided [the] escalation of the conflict, thus preventing civilian and military casualties, and still followed command responsibility… . It was the greatest trial I faced in my life. Ipagmamalaki ko yun kahit pa na-relieve ako (Even if I was relieved from my post, I will always be proud of it)… . If I were in the same situation again, I would definitely do the same thing."

At the start of the negotiations, the MILF were hostile and were using the hostages to block the movement of the military. He said that the members of the MILF felt that the dialogue was meant to deceive them, so Edjawan chose to negotiate in a mosque despite the fact that his men had been tricked into capture the first time they were invited to enter the mosque. And since no such thing happened, the MILF learned to trust the sincerity of Edjawan and his men to proceed with the negotiation. Edjawan said that because of an earlier successful negotiation with the MILF, he was able to gain their respect and trust.

Through this experience, Edjawan affirmed that the use of dialogue depends on the situation, and that decisions should be based on a greater consensus and not merely on the power that one wields.

5 Ulama is a group of Muslim religious leaders and scholars who are considered the equivalent of Christian bishops in the Islamic religious hierarchy.

6 Village.

Edjawan said that the negotiations he took part in tested his character and have enabled him to his job as a peacekeeper in the area better:

> "…The people I worked with trust me, and that definitely helped in my succeeding partnerships with the groups in my area, even the MILF. Trust is essential in building a partnership, and I believe enemies can be good enemies. Yung may respeto kahit magkalaban (Respect can exist even if you are enemies). It's not a secret that some of these groups also want development to happen... . And for the good of those they care about, and to prevent the loss of lives, somehow, they might be able to work with us."

After being relieved from the 51st IB, Edjawan was assigned Executive Officer of the 102nd Brigade based in Ipil, Zamboanga. His assignment was to manage of the operations of the battalion and to follow directives on counter-insurgency campaigns. When Italian missionary Fr. Giancarlo Bossi was kidnapped in June 2007, Edjawan took charge of the foreign journalists and their visits in the kidnap site. He also led a Scout Ranger company which gathered intelligence on Bossi's whereabouts. Edjawan said he continued fulfilling his duty as a soldier during this time while pursuing the community outreach programs and medical missions of the military in villages in Zamboanga. These activities were done in partnership with the local government units.

Since February 23, 2008, Edjawan has been assigned as the Commander of the 37th IB stationed in Camp Iranun, Sitio. Bombaran, Barangay Tugaig Barira, Shariff Kabunsuan.

Area and Divide

When Edjawan was assigned in the 37th IB, Shariff Kabunsuan was in the process of establishing itself as a province independent of Maguindanao under the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 201. The creation of Shariff Kabunsuan province was the result of a referendum held in October 2006 which was later ratified by an affirmative majority. However, in July 2008, the Supreme Court declared the creation of the province of Shariff Kabunsuan void and argued that only the Congress has the power to create legislative districts.

The time Edjawan spent as Batallion Commander coincided with the long process of Shariff Kabunsuan's appeal to be recognized as independent province. However, in January 2009, the Supreme Court reaffirmed its earlier ruling and rendered Shariff Kabunsuan as again part of Maguindanao.[7]

Edjawan's area of operations covers the six municipalities of Barira, Buldon, Matanog, Parang, Sultan Mastura, and Sultan Kudarat, covering a land area of 207,612 hectares. The entire area has 114 barangays and a total population of 349,906 in 2007. Eighty percent of the population is Muslim and 20% Christian.

More significantly, Edjawan's area covers Camp Iranun, the military camp in the former Camp Abubakr. Abubakr had been the primary stronghold of the MILF until the government forces gained control of the camp in the all-out war launched by former President Joseph Estrada in 2000. His area of operation is also the site of the two present political seats of the MILF: Camp Darapanan, and parts of Cararao Complex, the mountain stronghold of the MILF. In the post-conflict situation, the area continues to be threatened by security problems of rebellion and lawlessness, including rido or clan disputes.

The historical context of the camp became significant to Edjawan in June 2009, when armed conflict erupted in areas of Lanao after the MOA-AD was declared unconstitutional.[8] Edjawan received an intelligence report that the MILF would attack the camp to recover Abubakr, so he immediately strengthened the camp's defense. Some areas of the camp were bombed by MILF forces first on June 12, destroying a tower in the front area in the camp, and then on June 25 with an RPG round, fortunately, destroying only a toilet. Edjawan responded to the threat by activating patrol bases and was able to secure the camp within the day. The following day, June 26, Edjawan called his brigade commander, Barira Maguindanao Mayor Alex Tomawis, and the General Headquarters Base commander to start peace negotiations with the MILF. The talks lasted until August 2009, and no attacks have occurred since then.

7 For more information, refer to "SC rules Shariff Kabunsuan no more" in the Philippine Daily Inquirer, http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20090111-182653/SC-rules-Shariff-Kabunsuan-is-no-more.

8 Several bombings have been reported following the Supreme Court's rejection and declaration of unconstitutionality of the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domains (MOA-AD), which aimed to pursue the independence of areas in Mindanao as claimed to be ancestral domains by members of the negotiating panel from the MILF.

The incident was a "defining moment" in his stint as Battalion Commander. Edjawan said,

> "Nung dumating ako sa Camp Iranun, dinatnan ko na yung (When I came to Camp Iranun, I received the) general direction of putting primacy in the peace process. We had to follow through the peace process… . But it becomes difficult at times like that when identified MILF or lawless groups attack us. But we were able to do it… . And it helped me realize that keeping the peace in the area meant going into development. Peace and development efforts have to be both given attention."

When he was assigned to the area, Edjawan reinvented the Special Advocacy on Livelihood and Advancement of Muslims or SALA'AM program, which is part of the Civil Military Operations approach of the military. Under this program, soldiers are assigned for immersion with the people on the barangay level for a minimum of 45 days. While they are there, soldiers participate in livelihood and empowerment projects of the people. In the process, the soldiers understand the people more, while the people learn to trust the soldiers. "Baka kasi isipin ng mga tao wala kaming ginagawa o takot kaming makisama sa kanila. Kailangan nasa front line kami palagi (We don't want the people to think that we are not doing anything, or that we are afraid to relate to them. We always have to be on the front line)," he said. He hopes that the program will let the people believe that indeed they are "soldiers of the people". The program is still ongoing, with eight more barangays added to the list of immersion sites in 2008.

All this work enabled Edjawan to be accepted in the Bridging Leadership Fellows Program (BLFP) of the AIM-Team Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides.[9]

BL Approaches to Peace and Development

Setting up New Institutional Arrangements

At the start of his Bridging Leadership (BL) work, Edjawan took into account the rotation of military officers assigned in different areas of responsibility. This means that he would not be assigned in Maguindanao for a long time. Because of this, he sought to establish new institutional arrangements that can operate and continue the peace and development orientation within the IB even after the duration of his assignment.

He initiated the formation of the Parang Peace and Development Convergence Center (PPDCC) and the Matanog Peace and Development Convergence Center (MPDCC). PPDCC was launched in August 2008, before the formal MOA-signing by the members in September 2008. Meanwhile, MPDCC was launched in the third quarter of 2009. The activities of both groups focused on empowering the citizens, and in the process addressing the key issues that the stakeholders identified themselves.

Edjawan said that he could not build institutional arrangements without establishing good, trusting, and lasting relationships between him and the stakeholders, and among the stakeholders themselves. However, he was aware that he possessed none of the traditional leadership capital that would enable him to engage in possible partnerships with people in the area. He neither occupied a government position that would enable him to issue directives to agencies and departments nor was he a native of the area that would have allowed him to lead being "one of them". He therefore banked on his leadership credentials as a military officer and renewed the military's relationship with people on the ground.

Even if Maguindanao is conflict-ridden, most of the impressions of the people on the military stems from their experience of Martial Law in the time of President Ferdinand Marcos, during which the military was accused of countless human rights abuses. Edjawan's initiative to dialogue with the groups in the grassroots, even those who were traditionally considered "enemies", contributed significantly in initially building trust that allowed the stakeholders to come together. As the leader of the MNLF Camp in Ragisi said,

> "[Si Col. Edjawan] mapagkaisa, nakikipagtulungan… . Marami na akong nakilalang military simula pa noong Martial Law, pero iba sya… Dati [sa ibang mga officers] tinatago ko lang ang nasa loob ko, pero ngayon kaya ko na silang kausapin dahil sa kanya (Col Edjawan tries to be one of use, to help us… . I have met many military officers since Martial Law, but he is different… . Before, when I meet military officers, I would keep my feelings to myself, but now, because of him, I can find it in myself to talk to them)."

Edjawan does not claim sole credit for the harmonious relationships established by the military with the stakeholders. He cites his predecessor in the area who built an "emergency text" system that enabled citizens from the barangay to directly report incidents to the military for quick response. However, despite the openness of the military to accommodate the immediate concerns of the people, the system did not become sustainable because the response mechanism was not collaborative. The military ended up responding to each report instead of working with other institutions to address immediate concerns, which resulted in difficulties in the management of time and resources on the part of the military. However, the project paved the way for Edjawan to come in and continue the trust-building process with the people.

Edjawan revived the emergency text system, but instead of being a sole military effort, he housed the system within the Peace and Development Convergence Centers. These centers are composed of key representatives of different sectors in the area, and most significantly, the local government unit (LGU), whose involvement had not been fully engaged in the previous emergency text system model.

Even if the preliminary grounds for partnerships were set during the "emergency text" system, the initiatives of the local government, people's organizations, foreign-funded projects, religious groups, and the military were disjointed. But Edjawan saw an opportunity for unification especially that, "they can provide for each other's needs". According to Edjawan,

"When I came in, I came to see that the LGU was looking for partnerships, and that was important because they can provide funds. NGOs were also looking for beneficiaries. So we started building the PPDCCs to bridge the anonymities. It would put all efforts together. PPDCC builds the credibility of the LGUs since they are financing the projects and go to the barangays… There are also many intangible things built along the way. The LGUs work with all sectors now. Lahat sila nagsusuportahan at involved. (They all support each other and are involved in all activities.)"

The groups that Edjawan mentioned became part of the PDCC core groups. The core group members attest to Edjawan's role in building their relationships. They said that Edjawan's primary contribution was to bridge the organizations together into one group that has constant communication and paved the way for more collaborative activities.

Each of the PDCCs from Parang and Matanog actively involves local chief executives (LCE), i.e., the mayor from Parang and the vice-mayor from Matanog. The local government units (LGUs) are able to facilitate resources to fund and support the PDCCs' activities. Furthermore, Edjawan said that their participation gives a greater chance for the system to continue even after he is re-assigned elsewhere.

For both the PPDCC and MPDCC, after the initial meetings that set the vision and mission, the core groups underwent a series of capacity-building workshops such as basic organizational leadership, financial management, and maintenance technician training. Edjawan sought the support of Tabang Ako Siyap ko Bangsa Iranun saya ko Kalilintad ago Kapamagayon Inc. (TASBIKKA) for the community organizing programs.

Edjawan says he was acquainted with TASBIKKA during one of hydroplant ground-breaking activities he attended in Bulbong in Parang, Maguindanao. The hydroplant was funded by foreign-funded, but during the first parts of its operations, the community was not able to manage and maintain the hydroplant's operations. Hence TASBIKKA became involved in training the community to organize themselves. Edjawan says, "Nagulat ako noon. Sabi kasi nila sa akin walang NGOs sa area. Meron pala. (I was surprised back then. I was told there were no NGOs in the area. Apparently there was.) So when we needed community organizing training for our programs in Parang, I thought of partnering with them."

According to one of TASBIKKA's officers, Edjwan and Mayor Abo approached him to partner for the PPDCC. He recalled:

> "Sabi nila kung pwede daw babaan yung costs para makatulong sa grupo, dahil kapag walang training yung mga nasa organisasyon, mahihirapan sila sa mga gagawin nila. Syempre pumayag kami, kasi ganon naman talaga ang gusto namin. Yung matuto ang mga organisasyon na maghandle ng operations nila. (Ed-

9 The program covers a one-and-a-half-year of intensive training, mentoring, and application geared towards increasing the capacity of selected leaders to address their selected societal divide. Fellows learn to improve their ability to identify and understand a problem and its complexity, and develop a collaborative response to address the problems. The selected leaders are then able to induce change within the context of their involvement.

jawan and Mayor Abo asked us if we could lower down our professional fee so we can help the group, because if the organization members won't receive training, they will find it hard to manage their projects. Of course we agreed, because that is precisely what we want to do – that organizations would learn how to handle their operations.)"

TASBIKKA reduced its training program costs to support the efforts of the PDCCs. The amount that was paid to TASBIKKA was funded by the stakeholders themselves, especially the LGU heads. TASBIKKA also became part of the core group of Parang PDCC, and continues to give community organizing trainings for the partners and beneficiaries of the PPDCC projects.

The core group members of PPDCC and MPDCC have their respective sub-core groups to work with. When the core group makes decisions, the members relay the message to their organizations. The sub-core grouphen align their activities to support the PDCCs. For instance, Edjawan uses what he calls "shuttle diplomacy" in coordinating with the MILF commanders in the area. His relationship with Barira Mayor Tomawis enabled him to talk with MILF Commander Jimmy Balitok, while his relationship with Matanog Vice Mayor Bai Sirkit Lidasan Ampatuan allowed him to communicate with MILF Commander Jamero Watamama. Edjawan has also established a relationship with Commander Bra Macapeges whom he contacts directly for consultations.

But the co-ownership process was not easy for Edjawan. He cannot expect all the stakeholders to follow deadlines strictly, as he is used to in the military. He could not command the stakeholders to follow orders, unlike what he can do within the military structure. However, Edjawan said,

"Just don't give up on them. Kung kailangang mas regular yung meetings to keep them grounded and involved that's what we do… , And you can be surprised. For all we know maraming patriotic Filipinos around just waiting for opportunities to do something for their communities… . Those who want to serve are never alone."

Multi-stakeholder Projects

As the core groups were established and strengthened, both PDCCs ventured into development initiatives for their respective areas. Edjawan facilitates the meetings and activities of the core group, and continues to reach out to more partners to execute the plans. As have been envisioned, the PDCCs serves as councils in which the different stakeholders brainstorm, plan, and execute their projects together.

For example, the PDCC followed the SALA'AM program model of the Philippine Army for development initiatives such as environment protection programs, tree planting activities, sports development, cleanliness and sanitation activities, livelihood programs, values enhancement and interreligious dialogue. Because the army can reach far-flung areas, coupled with the funding provided by the LGU and the community organization activities, the PDCCs were able to send out services to different villages in the area. From February to September 2009, nine SALA'AM batches of soldiers underwent immersion in different areas in Sultan Kudarat, for three months each. Aside from the main immersion component, the SALA'AM program also includes Medical and Dental Civic Actions Programs (MEDCAP).

From February to August 2009, 14 MEDCAPs have been conducted in different barangays in Parang, Sultan Kudarat, and Buldon. The MEDCAPs cover consultations with physicians, dentists, and health workers. The programs also distribute medicines and conducts circumcisions. All these MEDCAPs reached 2,703 beneficiaries for the medical missions, 404 for circumcisions, and 547 for dental services.

The PPDCCs partnered with the US Military officers who are assigned in Mindanao to fund the expenses of the MEDCAPs for one year, aside from other infrastructure projects. Edjawan said that he and his junior officers invested much time and effort "courting" the foreign aid-givers:

"Maraming nag-aagawan syempre sa funders (Many groups compete for foreign funds). So what could be our advantage? We showed them how hospitable we can be, sinasamahan talaga namin (we accompany them) anytime and for any length of time when they want to do site visits… . In the process you build a certain friendship with them and they start to trust you, well, aside from the projects really deserving the funding of course."

Aside from the MEDCAP operations, Edjawan was able to secure foreign funding (including subsidies) for infrastructure projects of the PDCCs. They installed water wells in Sitio Sadasab and Poblacion in Manion, Parang; Sitio Budakan in Nituan, Parang; and Sitio Bugasan Norte in Matanog. They built roads in East and West Nabalawag Crossing. These were completed in January 2009 and have been operational since then.

They built a school building with comfort rooms and reservoir in Sitio Calaan, Tugaig, Barira through the efforts of the different groups represented in PPDCC. The facility, which costs PhP 2.6 million, was turned over to the local government of Barira on May 21, 2009. They also rehabilitated a road and constructed a spillway from Brgy. Proper Nabalawag to Magdalum, Nabalawag in Barira which benefits 1,000 people. Aside from these, they also constructed a building in Brgy. Nituan, Parang that is used for PPDCC activities such as stakeholders' meetings and other workshops, interfaith dialogues, partnership meetings, weekly conferences, and meetings with important guests.

In 2009, Minrico Lumber Enterprises Co. (MINRICO) became MEDCAPs primary sponsor when it donated medicines for both Parang and Matanog projects. The partnership with MINRICO has been ongoing since 2006, when it began supplying seedlings for tree-planting activities of the PDCCs and the military. As MINRICO's corporate social responsibility (CSR) component, it distributes seedlings for free to the people in the area who are usually unemployed and unable to make use of the vast lands. When the seedlings have grown, the trees can be sold back to MINRICO, although not exclusively.

Edjawan and the stakeholders were able to plant lanipao, molave, antipolo, laurel, and talisay seeds in different barangays of Sultan Kudarat. A total of 6,390 seeds were planted from March to August 2009 alone.

The partnership with MINRICO was secured when Edjawan learned that its owner, Albert Chua, has been friends for a long time with Lt. Jose, one of his junior officers. Jose first approached Chua if a partnership was possible, and Chua saw it as an opportunity for the company's CSR component to reach more partner communities. The military and the PDCCs' core group members have the means, contacts and resources to frequently visit the barangays. With their intervention, the people are given long-term livelihood opportunities. Chua narrates:

"When you go around the areas here, you will see there is so much unused land. And the people do not know what to do with it. When we introduced tree planting to them, sabi nila natatakot silang kunin namin yung lupa nila (they expressed their fear that we might grab their lands). So we went through several consultations and dialogues with the PDCCs and the military to explain to them na hindi naman ganon (that their fears wouldn't happen)… . And now, when we visit the areas, sustainable naman yung programs (the programs are sustainable). Inaalagaan ng mga tao yung mga puno. Nakikinabang sila sa sarili nilang lupa. (The people take care of the trees. They benefit from their own lands.)"

Chua added that a major factor in the success of the tree-planting program is the prevailing peace in the area, which gives people an assurance that if they plant the seedlings today, they can still be there to reap the rewards of their hard work after 10 or so years.

The invigorated execution of the SALA'AM components of immersion, tree-planting and MEDCAPs has had a tangible and positive impact on the relationships among the military, the PDCC members, and the stakeholders on the ground.

For instance, in Brgy. Narra, Mastura where a SALA'AM program was conducted, barangay councilor Bra Ali and the elders of the village shared how much the people's perception on the military has changed after the soldiers stayed with them for a couple of months. The soldiers built a basketball court in the village where they played with the youth in the afternoons. They also conducted situation analysis of the needs of the village and coordinated with the LGU in the construction of a school for the children. Most importantly, the trauma they had because of Martial Law in the 1970s that was instilled in the community dissipated. Ali narrated,

"Noong paalis na yung mga sundalo, nag-iyakan yung mga nanay-nanayan nila kasi ayaw na silang paalisin. Magbabarikada pa nga daw para lang hindi na sila umalis… Nawala yung martial law phobia ng mga taga-dito sa mga military. Mababait naman pala sila (When the soldiers were leaving, their adoptive mothers were crying because they didn't want the soldiers to leave. The people even teased that they would set up barricades to prevent the soldiers from leaving... . Their phobia for the military from the martial law era disappeared. They said the soldiers were good people, after all)."

Needs-specific interventions

Aside from the components of the SALA'AM program, the PDCCs conducted several school symposia and inter-faith dialogues; the communi-

Needs-specific interventions

Aside from the components of the SALA'AM program, the PDCCs conducted several school symposia and inter-faith dialogues; the communities identified the need for these as very important. Members of the core groups who are affiliated with schools initiated a series of symposia that covered lectures on key issues in Mindanao and calamity preparedness. There were stories shared and films shown, all directed towards capacity-building among the students.

In Matanog National High School, a symposium was held to increase awareness among the students on drug addiction, as the proliferation of illegal drugs was identified as a key issue of the youth. In Parang High School, a series of lectures was held on promoting peace, disaster management, and fighting drug addiction. In these symposia, an Islamic perspective was incorporated into the lecture, as the school officials themselves co-designed the lecture content with the core group members. The lectures were also sensitive to the diversity of cultural background of the students. According to teachers from both Matanog and Parang High Schools, the occurrence of the brawls among students was significantly reduced following the symposia.

The projects also donated books to Linayen National High School in Bongo Island, Litayen, Parang; Matanog National High School, Bugasan Sur, Matanog; and Datu Usngan Mastura National High School, Pinaring, Sultan Kudarat. A total of 228 books were given to the three schools, from foreign donors and civil society partners. They also distributed school supplies to 450 top student performers in 29 schools in various barangays in Parang and Matanog from June to July 2009 as the supplies are limited. The PDCCs gave these as incentives to the top students.

The PDCCs also conducted inter-faith dialogues in the grassroots level. The first two inter-faith dialogues held on June 6 and 13, 2009, were attended by various Muslim leaders occupying different positions in the police force, barangay and local government units, the press, academe, and council of elders and a Christian priest from the Philippine National Police assigned in ARMM. The third inter-faith dialogue held on June 20 involved 20 imam, pastors, and chaplains, members of Council of Elders from different barangays, members of the laity, and representatives from the police force of ARMM.

According to a Christian pastor and a Muslim religious leader, after the dialogues, they conveyed their insights to the people in their respective churches. The pastor said,

"For now we are in the process of making connections between the faiths. I observe na sa mga pag-uusap namin sa church, mas accommodating na sila sa beliefs and ideas ng Muslims (I observe that when we talk in the church now, they are more accommodating to Muslim beliefs and ideas). And we're hoping that the effects of understanding other religions would be strengthened."

In July 2009, after an explosion in Cotabato City killed five people and wounded 51 others, the PPDCC conducted two improvised explosive device (IED) seminars in Parang that taught citizens the correct response mechanism when the presence of IEDs is reported. The core group members from the military, the Philippine National Police, and the LGU provided the input for the seminars. According to Edjawan, aside from the awareness and readiness it brings, holding seminars about emergency situations builds the trust of the people in the military and the police.

Challenges and Possibilities for Sustainability

The primary challenge that the PDCCs face is the inevitable reassignment of Edjawan, a reality in military service. However, Edjawan has made sure that LCEs were involved in the conceptualization of the PDCCs in Parang and Matanog. According to Matanog Vice Mayor Ampatuan,

"Kung aalis na si Colonel, ako na mismo ang magko-convince sa mga (If the Colonel leaves, I will be the one to convince the) stakeholders to continue with what we've started… . From the start very facilitative ang naging role ng military (the military's role has been facilitative)… . But we really cannot rely everything on them para maging successful yung efforts namin (for our efforts to be successful)."

Nevertheless, some core group members expressed their concern that the projects might not continue if Edjawan is reassigned and the LGU heads they have been working with would not win in the 2010 elections. In the Philippine political culture, when a program becomes closely affiliated with a political personality and that politician doesn't win, the successor will most likely not support the program as continuing the program means reinforcing the earlier politician's legacy.

Even if this is the case, the core group members are strong in their resolve to continue with the PDCCs. "In the end," one of them said, "this is our challenge. Kami ang nagsimula nito kaya dapat we see to it na magtutuloy-tuloy lahat ng pinaghirapan namin (We started this so we have to see to it that all our efforts will be sustained.)."

Within his leadership capital, Edjawan has taken steps in training his junior officers and inculcating social responsibility and the "BL framework" in their actions, so that if the succeeding officer is inclined to continue his peace-building activities, the partnerships established with the junior officers could continue. Edjawan said,

"This is how I deal with the sustainability challenge. And even if these officers would also get re-assigned to other places, I am hoping that they would show the same initiative to engage the community and stakeholders there. Kahit hindi na sa Mindanao, sana ipagpatuloy pa rin nila yung natutunan nila dito nung senior officer nila ako (Even not in Mindanao, I hope they continue to apply what they have learned here when I was their senior officer)."

The junior officers have been speakers in the school symposia and have been active in consulting the communities through the SALA'AM program. They also assist in the tree planting and water well projects with their troops.

However, there were events that went beyond the control of Edjawan and the core group members and challenged the existing peace in the area. In November 2009, the Maguindanao massacre happened which resulted in a martial law that was briefly enforced in the entire region. Once again, Maguindanao was under scrutiny of the local and international media.

After the martial law declared by President Gloria Arroyo was lifted, the areas covered by the PPDCC and MPDCC were "very peaceful." Edjawan cited two reasons for this:

First, when the partnerships for the PDCCs were being established, they were working with municipal mayors, and not with governors, especially since that Shariff Kabunsuan was on its way to becoming a province independent of Maguindanao.Edjawan said, "Hindi naman kami Maguindanao before, kaya na-generalize lang kami when martial law was declared. We really weren't much affected by the issue." Edjawan did not have a close working relation with the provincial government of Maguindanao as he had a different assignment.

Second, although Edjawan recognized that there were initial anxieties, Edjawan was quick in reinforcing the relationships being established. He met with the mayors and other local leaders individually to assure that the military will continue with its peace-building and development activities and will not do anything to break the commitments it has made. Edjawan narrated:

"With the local leaders, we conducted dialogues with different groups. And there I felt how much the local leaders trust us. Sabi nila (They said), the fear is really coming from the martial law experience during the time of Marcos, pero hindi naman ganoon ngayon (but that is no longer the case). Sabi nung mga mayor, 'Bakit kayo matatakot? Kilala nyo naman sila. Anong ginawa nila dito sa atin? Hindi ba MEDCAPs, SALA'AM, tree-planting? Bakit kayo matatakot?' (The mayors said, 'Why would you be afraid? You know the military. What have they done here? MEDCAPs, SALA'AM, tree-planting? So why would you be afraid?) And there the people were pacified. The credibility of the BL approach was affirmed. Biglang lumaki yung range at impact namin as peace-builders (Our range and impact as peace-builders suddenly increased)."

Peace-Keeping with Combat Readiness

Peace-keeping efforts, however, require a high standard of combat-readiness. "Part of being able to keep peace is to show that you are strong. And as an officer, I have to protect the persons I am responsible for. At dapat kung aatakihin nila kami o yung mga barangay (And if they attack us or the villages) around the area, we should be able to fight. That's combat readiness," Edjawan said.

He explained that combat-readiness consists of three aspects: (a) preparedness, which includes prevention, intelligence, training of soldiers, contingency planning, and a complete supply of weapons; (b) deterrence, which includes "show of force" or the "threat to use force" if given the impetus; and (c) actual combat, which aims for successes in missions. All of these Edjawan made sure were fully accounted for. The combat-readiness of his brigade was tested in several instances.

In August 2008 in Gumagadong-Caluag (formerly known as Molina), Parang, an MILF group tried to "reclaim" an area, which they claimed to be an area grabbed by Christian groups. The MILF were armed and were building camps near the Christian barangay. Upon receiving the report, Edjawan sent a group of soldiers to protect the Christian community in case the MILF group would attack, after which he sent two SIMBA vehicles, weapon carriers, mortars, and a full complement of soldiers. "We were trying to give the impression that we were capa-

ble of engaging them if they decided to attack. After two days, without firing a single shell, the MILF group just left," Edjawan recalled.

He called this action a preventive form of combat readiness, to "show force" before an actual encounter happens. Edjawan said, "I do not want to count civilian bodies before I act."

The second incident happened in Dinganen, Buldon. At that time, the military was directed to put primacy on the peace process. However, an MILF group arrived and threatened Dinganen by setting up camp in the area. The people sent SMS messages to the Company Commander assigned in Dinganen. Edjawan responded by sending an entire company of heavily-armed soldiers. Although there was already a strong Civilian Auxiliary Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) force in the community, Edjawan said he had to respond immediately because reinforcement would be difficult to send once violence broke out, since Dingayen was at the boundary of North Cotabato and Maguindanao.

When Edjawan's troops arrived in the area, the MILF group pulled out from their camps and resettled on a hill overlooking the community. However, the MILF would fire random shots at night for two weeks, "taunting" the military to fight, as Edjawan described. He narrated that the Company Commander then asked permission to fire rounds of caliber 50 (without targeting the MILF or the civilians), just to show the strength of the military. Edjawan gave the permission, after which, the MILF group left their camp.

Edjawan upholds combat-readiness because it contributes to the leadership capital of a military officer. He said, "I have to be capable within my organization before I can become capable for those outside the military institution."

Changes and Challenges as a Bridging Leader

Edjawan is proud of the fact that ever since he was assigned to the 37th IB, no armed conflict has occurred that directly involved the identified armed groups in the area. Even when MILF groups were attacking nearby areas in Basilan in August 2009, Edjawan's jurisdiction remained peaceful. He combines developmental strategies with combat readiness to ensure that the peace is kept. However, this is not without consequences on his reputation, at least within the military. He explained,

"Sa military nandoon pa rin yung body count, yung bilangan ng body bags. Ibig sabihin nun lumalaban talaga kayo, kaya nawawalan kayo ng tao. Eh ako, for the last year or so zero casualties ako. Kaya zero daw ako. Pero hindi naman yun ang mission ko (In the military, there is still the body count mentality, they count body bags. This means you are really fighting, which is why you end up losing people. But in the last year or so, I had zero casualties. So they say, I am a zero. But that is not my mission). I am winning without losing a man… . My role is basically… a manager of violence. I do peace-building and humanitarian efforts. [But] if I am told [by my superiors] to fight or go to war, [then] I fight or go to war."

Throughout his leadership journey, Edjawan has found himself becoming more comfortable and confident in engaging with stakeholders. As a military officer prior to his BL Fellowship, he has kept his introvert personality and has stayed "within my own boundaries, such that hindi ko na pinakikialaman yung hindi ko na kailangang pakialaman (I won't meddle with things I shouldn't be concerned about)". However, because of his training and the mentoring he had received under the BL Fellowship, he realized that he cannot keep on doing this if wants to sufficiently address his chosen divide. He realized that in peace and development, the solution is not and cannot come only from the military. The stakeholders that have the capacity to affect structural change are the heads of local governments, while funds and other resources can be tapped from external donors and even the people's organizations on the ground.

Aside from this, Edjawan learned the value of co-ownership and aligning his projects with those of others. He said,

"When you are in the military, it's easy to have a messianic complex. Kaya nga maraming nagiging coup plotters. Hindi nila alam kung paano ang (That is why there are a lot of coup plotters. They do not know the) best way to engage the issues they see on the ground. But that is not the path to change things. We should all start [from] a position of trust, so we can work with others."

Edjawan does not expect to be able to visit the area as much as he would like to when he gets re-assigned to a different area. But he said that he can continue being a bridging leader no matter where he may be assigned. He simply hopes that the work and relationships he built and facilitated among the stakeholders will continue without him. "Di ba yun ang challenge sa atin bilang isang bridging leader (Isn't that the challenge to a bridging leader)? The co-ownership process must be able to stand even without me… . In my heart I am hoping it will," he said.

Edjawan has already been re-assigned as Executive Officer in the Office of the Inspector General of the Philippine Army. He is in charge of assessing the performance of missions, operational readiness, effectiveness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of missions, and the morale and discipline of troops. With the change of assignment, Edjawan is strong in his resolve to continue being a bridging leader. He said:

"My BL journey has focused on the issue of peace in Maguindanao. But quite honestly, hindi lang naman sa Maguindanao ang issue ng peace and development (the issue of peace and development is not just found in Maguindanao). It's everywhere. That is why kahit maglipat ako ng position (even I get assigned to different positions), I can still have impact in all that I do, whether it be policy-making or doing inspections. My BL learnings will sustain my advocacy in all endeavors."

Major General Raymundo Ferrer

Commander, Eastern Mindanao Command,
Armed Forces of the Philippines

"You cannot be part of the solution if you are not part of the problem. The Mindanao conflict is everybody's fault. It is the fault of the government, civilians, and the military. That is why everybody must unite and come up with the solution to the divide we are facing."

For two days in June 2007, Major General Raymundo Ferrer, then Commander of the 6th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army based in Central Mindanao, together with 25 of his commanders from different brigades and battalions of the Division, attended a Peace Building and Conflict Management Seminar conducted by the Konrad Adenaeur Foundation and the Institute for Autonomy and Governance of the Notre Dame University.

While it appeared unusual for the military to attend a seminar with such a topic, the seminar was a timely undertaking for the 6th Infantry Division given that General Ferrer had become an advocate of the transformation of the military from an institution traditionally preoccupied with body-count to a peace-building one. General Ferrer felt that the military needed to clarify its role in peace-building immediately, as the ceasefire agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) had become tenuous.

Furthermore, General Ferrer believed that he and his men could play an active and critical role in building peace and in paving the way for the final signing of the GRP-MILF Peace Agreement. The General realized that the military's challenge in these times was to prove itself a responsible advocate for lasting peace.

Background

Raymundo B. Ferrer was born on January 23, 1956 in Makati City, Metro Manila. He studied at the Murphy Elementary School in Quezon City from 1962 to 1968. After initially enrolling at the Quezon City Science High School for two years, he completed his secondary education in Ruam Rudi International School in Bangkok, Thailand.

Upon graduating from the PMA, he joined the Philippine Army as an Infantry Officer. He began his military career as the Platoon Leader of the "C" Company of the 45th Infantry Battalion in Eastern Samar.

In June 1978, then 2nd Lieutenant Raymundo Ferrer joined the Scout Ranger Group, Special Warfare Brigade (Airborne) of the Philippine Army then based in Camp Capinpin, Tanay, Rizal. After three years, he was assigned to the Southern Command 2, AFP in Zamboanga City where he was exposed to different staff duties. He later joined the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) in 1984, rejoined the Army in 1993 and took up a military career course in Fort Bonifacio in 1997. He was appointed as Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations in SouthCom during the major offensive against the MILF in 2000, and was reassigned to ISAFP again in 2001 after the ouster of President Joseph Estrada. He received numerous awards as a military officer over the years.

On January 26 , 2004, then Colonel Raymundo Ferrer was designated Brigade Commander of the 103rd Brigade that was based in the Province of Basilan. By October 2005, he was promoted to Brigadier General and by September 2006, he became the Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division stationed in Pulacan, Labangan, Zamboanga del Sur, owing largely to the successful peace building initiatives he led in Basilan. As Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division, Northwestern Mindanao constituted his area of responsibility.

In March 2007, then AFP Chief of Staff General Hermogenes Esperon, Jr. personally requested General Ferrer to bring his peace building work to Central Mindanao, which consisted of the provinces of Shariff Kabunsuan, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and North Cotabato. On March 16, 2007, General Ferrer became Commanding General of the 6th Infantry Division which was based in Shariff Kabunsuan. General Ferrer was promoted to Commander of the Eastern Mindanao Command of the AFP on January 25, 2009[1].

Leadership Capital

Duty and responsibility were two core values that characterized General Ferrer. As Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G2, of the Philippine Army, he immediately acted on the telecommunications and supplies-related debts of the past administrations. His decision ran counter to the opinion of his budget officer who pointed out that paying the said debts would mean sacrificing their Christmas celebration. Nonetheless, General Ferrer was firm in his decision. He wanted to ensure that the debts of his office would not accumulate during his term so that the next head would not be burdened by something that General Ferrer considered his responsibility. He attributed his sense of duty and responsibility to his father who worked hard and surmounted various difficulties in order for his son to graduate from the PMA and provide a better life for his children.

General Ferrer also ascribed his service orientation to his father: "My father had influenced me to think of military service as a sacrifice and service to people. The pay is meager in the military, but when you enter, you must have made up your mind to serve and not to boss people around. As a commander on the ground, I wondered, what good can I do for the area? What can I contribute to the development of people and to improving peace and order conditions in their communities?" In his search for answers, he would go out of his way to hear from other people.

General Ferrer also maintained, "I was very conscious about protecting my credibility. For example, during elections, all politicians will approach me to ask for help. But I have to clearly show that I have no personal interest and that I maintain my neutrality, otherwise my credibility will suffer." He believed that his credibility encouraged all parties and stakeholders to trust and engage with him.

General Ferrer had likewise imbibed lessons from joining various Bridging Leadership trainings since September 2004. According to him,

> "The Bridging Leadership Sessions gave me the right tools for dialogue and engagement, which allowed me to be strategic in conducting military operations. Through dialogue, communication lines were opened, and this means that we did not have to conduct indiscriminate military operations. Because people began to trust us, they gave us the information that we needed to be selective and calibrated in our operations, minimizing unnecessary damage."

The Bridging Leadership trainings also broadened his social capital and network because during these trainings, he became acquainted with other leaders. Moreover, their shared experience during the seminars facilitated those occasions when they had to work together. Part of working with other leaders was the value of doing stakeholder analysis. General Ferrer stressed, "Bridging Leadership taught me to work with my natural allies first and then with others, that's the time that we can work on convincing the neutral and even the enemies."

The Military's Contribution to the Societal Divide

Throughout his years in the service, General Ferrer realized that deep and divisive assumptions underpinned the conflict between the military and the Muslim armed groups. The nearly four decades of fighting had given the military the image of perpetrators of violence. Communities feared soldiers and their presence was associated with bombings, killings, plundering, and the destruction of peoples' homes. Soldiers, because of how they traditionally acted, were regarded as enemies and occupying forces, rather than protectors and partners in peace.

The write-up was written by Philip Dy under the supervision of Professor Jacinto C. Gavino Jr., DPA of the Asian Institute of Management.

1 The highest AFP authority in Mindanao covering Regions 10, 11, 12, 13 (Caraga), and Maguindanao.

General Ferrer himself observed that the military tended to treat the locals, especially Muslims, as enemies. The long history of violence between the military and the communities in Mindanao was partly to blame for this. During Martial Law, young officers and soldiers were tasked to blindly fight "enemies" in Mindanao without knowledge of the context of the operations. Such practice may have sparked the dominant military paradigm whereby body-count during encounters was the basis for promotions. According to the body-count standard, more deaths on the side of the enemy meant victory for the military.

In addition, when military units were ambushed, the soldiers immediately assumed that communities within 100 meters of the ambush site were sympathizers of the enemy. This presumption seemingly justified the soldiers' retaliatory moves that included rounding up civilians and conducting more operations within the vicinity of the ambush site.

Clearly, long-held prejudices against each other produced a system of protracted conflict and escalation of hostilities between the military and its perceived enemies. As more encounters erupted, the more frequently the military conducted indiscriminate operations in communities believed to be sympathetic with the enemy, even if the aggressors were not connected with these communities. Similarly, the more the military conducted operations in communities, the more the image of the military as perpetrators of violence was reinforced, thereby intensifying the communities' fear and hatred of it.

In 2004, when General Ferrer was first reassigned to Basilan, he observed how the people's fear of the military had persisted. He reflected on this phenomenon and from dialogues with the communities found out that the stories of military abuse dated back to Martial Law years. He narrated: "There I was, I realized, a senior officer talking to people in the barangay[2] for two, three hours. They had various concerns that at first seemed trivial when compared to concerns I had heard from the non-government organizations (NGOs) doing health and nutrition projects. They said they were afraid of the soldiers. It was the way they looked, how they spoke, how they held their guns like they were ready to shoot. And the incidents of abuse they narrated to me went back to Martial Law days. I said the soldiers are not like that anymore. I realized there had been no healing process. How do you fight people's perception that you are the enemy?" Given the system of conflict escalation, confrontations were not uncommon. Communication between the military and the communities was either non-existent or heavily doubted.

The conflict was further aggravated when the military became involved in community conflicts. *Rido* (or vendetta), as called by Muslims, refers to personally resorting to killings to resolve clashes among groups, usually clans. Due to the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the formal justice system, individuals and clans would prefer to take the law into their own hands to find redress for their grievances. Rido could become violent and protracted, especially if honor is violated. It triggers cycles of retaliation and counter-retaliations between clans to avenge the deaths of their respective family members.

Oftentimes, clans involved in rido exploits either military resources or the resources of the rebels as reinforcements to the personal fights they wage. The involvement of the military in such feuds among clans further polarizes the warring families and, in many instances, fuels the cycle of violence until it becomes almost unstoppable.

The effects of this seemingly ceaseless cycle of military aggression and community alienation hit General Ferrer hardest when he was reassigned to Basilan in 2004, exactly 10 years after his previous assignment in the area. He recalled, "I saw changes in Basilan from 2004, thanks to the Balikatan Exercises[3]. Roads improved, were widened and stabilized. Old schools had been repaired, new schools built, and even health centers constructed."

Despite these physical changes, General Ferrer saw how relationships had not changed, however, "I saw that people still had fear." This fear was manifested by the fact that people did not volunteer to help out in the repair of schools and the health centers; just as potential beneficiaries did not avail of these services. He also observed that when the military would call for a dialogue or meeting with the people in a community, only few showed up mostly women and old men.

Personal Response

During his major assignments in Basilan and Shariff Kabunsuan, General Ferrer's personal vision was one shared by most development-oriented groups and institutions in the province—to have a "peaceful and secure Mindanao conducive to development". His repeated assignments in Basilan made General Ferrer realize that for his vision to be achieved in a truly lasting way, the military should be willing to change not only the way it conducted its operations but also the way it worked with other stakeholders.

The condition of Basilan was a personal challenge to General Ferrer who was first assigned to the province from 1979 to 1980 as a Scout Ranger Lieutenant. At that time, the military's style was to quickly penetrate the communities, neutralize the enemy, and then leave just as quickly after operations. The roads at the time were in bad shape such that it took five hours to travel about 70 kms while living conditions were miserable for both the local people and the military assigned to the province due to lack of potable water and very poor sanitation due to lack of toilets. General Ferrer admitted that after leaving Basilan for new assignments, he did not want to return to the province.

But in 1994, by then a Major, he was assigned as Executive Officer of the 18th Infantry Battalion. At that time, the problem with the Abu Sayyaf[5] was growing more intense following the kidnapping of Fr. Cirilo Nacorda,a Catholic priest. From Buug in Zamboanga del Sur, Major Ferrer's battalion was transferred to Basilan to replace the Philippine Marines. The years 1994-1997 were a time of transition in Basilan. The military during that period fought two different enemies using two different styles: with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) the military observed ceasefire situation; with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) it was full pursuit and open fire.

But the peace agreement with the MNLF finally happened in September 1996, and soon in April 1997 General Ferrer ended his assignment in Basilan. He recounted his experiences during those times,

> "Those three years with all those operations going on, there was no significant development in the province. People used the same bad roads and bridges that were close to collapse. Business activity was very low… . I saw only the copra transport going out. Its jeep often got stuck in deep mud so that we would need to pull it free as the military was the only one with a truck capable of traversing muddy roads. In the town, the people's fear was evident. By 6 p.m., all stores closed and people got off the streets. Only the soldiers were to be seen. Pagkagat ng dilim, sundalo lang ang lumalabas (When darkness came, only the soldiers were out). Life was very hard.
>
> "I also considered personal danger. In 1994, while it took 5 hours to traverse 70 kms because of the bad roads, every kilometer there was the possibility of ambush. There were 40 kms of ambush-areas. We rode with two escort trucks. Only the road segment of Lamitan-Isabela was paved and relatively safe.
>
> "That is why after 1997, I said, "I am finished with this assignment. I have already done my tour of duty and this is enough. I have no personal interest in this place. Life is so difficult here. And now, more than ever, I don't want to return.""

Then in late 2003, when Lieutenant General Efren Abu became the Commanding General of the Philippine Army, General Ferrer was asked to return to Basilan for the third time. He recalled being asked by Major General Romeo Tolentino then the Chief of Staff of the Army, "Is Basilan OK with you?" and his replying hesitantly, "Yes Sir! That's OK Sir!"

By January 2004, ten years after his second stint in Basilan, General Ferrer said he saw some improvements which he credited to the intervention of the Balikatan Exercises and the National Government that started in 2002, "Mainly, the roads had been widened, made more passable because of the gravel pavement. Life was somewhat better, people said. Maganda na at guminhawa ang buhay (Life has improved), except for the peace and order situation. Tension was high because of the encounters with Abu Sayyaf."

He went on, "So I found Basilan like that—the hard-line military approach prevailing. I saw that the people's fear remained. Their attitude towards the military had not changed since 1997–

2 The barangay is the smallest political unit in the Philippines.

3 The Balikatan Exercises is a joint military training between the armed forces of the Philippines and the United States of America.

4 The Abu Sayyaf is a local terrorist group that is based in the southern islands of the Philippines.

galit pa rin sa military, parang kami ang kontra bida (they were still angry, like we were also their enemy). I thought there had to be a better way of doing things."

Thus General Ferrer's questioning of the way the military conducted its operations began—with the realization that the traditional military approach in Basilan over more than two decades (1979-2004) when he was in and out of the province, achieved nothing.

His appreciation of the cycle that accounted for the conflict and fear in his areas of responsibility throughout his years in the service made General Ferrer realize that the military and how it conducted itself were partly to blame for the continuing conflict. The General became increasingly convinced that military operations should be radically reconfigured in his areas of responsibility, lest they continued to stoke the vicious cycle of conflicts, prejudices, and vengeance. He said, "If I just do things exactly as how we always do them, then what will change?" According to him, the military simply cannot aim at killing more and more enemies any longer because killing more people would only breed more hatred against the military. General Ferrer cited that it was common knowledge among the communities that many of the Abu Sayyaf members were the orphaned sons and relatives of former MNLF fighters. Their involvement in the Abu Sayyaf was possibly an expression of retaliation against the military for the deaths of their fathers and relatives. Traditional military operations, whose main rubric was body-count, could not solve the divide and might well aggravate it, General Ferrer thought.

General Ferrer also realized,

> "Eliminating the fear of the people and addressing their true needs will need not only purely military operations; we have to engage others so that they can be part of the answer in really helping people. Problems concerning peace and development are simply too complex, that is why the military should learn to work with other stakeholders if true progress is to be made. At the same time, engaging others will go a long way in battling long-held mindsets and biases, which will likely be transformed in working with each other. After being drawn into the insurgency problem long enough, the AFP has acknowledged that winning the hearts and minds of the people is critical for us to get the support of the masses. Popular support is the decisive point in any insurgency war. Moreover, the AFP has long realized that military operations alone cannot solve the decades-long problem of insurgency and conflict in areas of Mindanao."

Reflecting on these, General Ferrer's approach in Basilan in 2004 veered away from indiscriminate military operations and the body-count standard. Instead, he started to engage people and develop relationships with the different stakeholder groups in the province.

He talked and listened to the residents of Basilan so that he would understand their perspectives, gain their trust and support in more effectively addressing the conflict. In particular, General Ferrer had an informal dialogue with the priests and nuns in the area and asked for their suggestions and insights on what could be done to improve Basilan's situation. A very important part of the dialogue was the discussion of the Lamitan Siege of 2001[5]. When discussing the siege, one priest suddenly cried in front of General Ferrer, expressing disappointment over the military's handling of the siege. The priest lamented that three years after the event, not one military officer had approached the people to discuss the matter, much less apologize for the Abu Sayyaf kidnappers having escaped, virtually unharmed.

General Ferrer's encounter with the priest made him sense some greater purpose in his continuing assignments to Basilan. He was, especially now, in a better position to initiate changes; and the realization strengthened his resolve to do things differently. More and more, he became convinced that traditional military operations were not enough to solve the insurgency problem and that the military alone did not have all the answers.

In the course of purging the enemy, military operations killed or maimed civilians, terrified communities and disrupted livelihood. Aware of all these, General Ferrer felt that the military was responsible for a deeper, negative impact, "One side of the conflict was the Abu Sayyaf; the other side was the victims of the encounters. I could not help but ask—Are we promoting poverty?" The military's transformation into an institution responsive to the needs and sentiments of the communities where they were embedded was imperative. As General Ferrer's personal mission aptly summarized, the central challenge was "to develop the officers, soldiers, and CAFGUs[6] into responsible fighters and effective peace builders responsive to the security, peace and development concerns of the stakeholders."

According to General Ferrer, it was the unresponsiveness of most local government units in Basilan which prompted him to engage and urge non-government organizations such as the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) and the Nagdilaab Foundation Inc. (NFI), to play bigger roles in delivering basic services. This proved difficult at the start, again because of the web of prejudices prevailing. According to General Ferrer, non-government organizations were wary of the military's sincerity and intentions while the military often assumed that non-government organizations present in the Abu Sayyaf and MILF areas were sympathetic to them. General Ferrer saw the need to establish his credibility and build positive relationships with these groups. He recounted,

"I started with informal conversations and engagements and I made it a point to sincerely show my interest in what they're doing and in the prospect of partnering. At the same time, I remained open-minded and I actively listened to their concerns. I found that acting in this manner made them open to giving their suggestions after which we simply found ways to support what they were doing, especially because in talking with others, I always asked: How could I help and how could we help?"

Eventually, these informal conversations led to more formal partnerships. Slowly, these dialogues showed the stakeholders that the military was "not after everybody" and did not consider everybody as "enemy."

Among other things, General Ferrer highlighted the social impact of military operations. The fear was that if military operations intensified, civilians would be displaced. NGOs explained that their organized communities would evacuate, and their health programs and nutrition programs would be affected as the community dispersed. These were the social impacts of military operations. "I saw that it was only right that their social programs not be disrupted. We are all part of a bigger society. I started to think about the possibilities for subordinating military programs to overall concerns of the people. I heard from them how they also wanted their project areas secured by the military, and they gave suggestions where to put the detachment so that the projects would be secured and not disrupted."

He stressed that the military's main priority was to ensure that "military actions would have a positive impact on the people." His assertion reflected an aspiration beyond the traditional top-down approach of the military.

Understanding the New Approach

The new military approach that General Ferrer espoused, according to him, rested on two principles. The first was having the discipline to look at the conflict and the peace-building effort from a multi-dimensional perspective. Central to this was the military's being conscious of the social implications of its involvement or non-involvement in a conflict. In a very real sense, the military had to confront the 'humanity' of the communities it served. Human relations had to go hand-in-hand with military operations because sincerely respecting the people and their plight could generate reciprocal respect. Military operations, if mindful of social implications, would put a human face to the perceived Muslim enemies.

The second principle was putting a premium on initiating dialogues with the people to generate more ideas on how to resolve conflicts and build lasting peace. The dialogues could help the military and communities determine a common ground on which to work together to achieve peace and development. Peace and development should be a shared responsibility rather than the military's alone.

In 2005, General Ferrer attended the Mindanao Peace-Building Institute Seminar on the Fundamentals of Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Skills in Davao City. This seminar, he believed, gave him a deeper appreciation of peace. He said,

"In the military, we don't use the word peace. We don't even try to understand what peace means. Our common notion of peace is the absence of armed

5 In June 2001, the Abu Sayyaf kidnapped a group of American and Filipino tourists from the Dos Palmas Resort in Palawan and brought them to Basilan where they joined more hostages taken from Basilan, at the Jose Torres Memorial Hospital in Lamitan City.

6 Citizen Armed Force Geographic Units.

conflict. But I realized that it is a very broad concept. As I tried to understand what peace means, my perspective broadened and I applied it as a leader in the military. I also realized that we still have so many things to do after the fighting. You have to regain the trust of the people and heal old wounds."

General Ferrer further recalled of the said seminar,

> "I was invited to represent the military organization. I met heads of NGOs and businesses there, the religious and other diverse groups–key leaders of various areas experiencing armed conflicts. I asked myself why I had not met with them before and realized then that I had had no capacity to convene. I realized that I could not convene diverse groups if I imposed my agenda of security. I learned that as a leader, I could only convene if my agenda were broader and derived from the concerns of the participants. Clearly, other groups will not help us if our only concern is to look for the enemy. They wouldn't want to be part of the fighting. The larger group must have a broader and common agenda. I realized that if we focus on just the military concerns, no one will be interested. Peace and security are the larger group's concerns too, but they have other concerns and I must respect those, if they are to work with us."

In short, General Ferrer realized that the work of peace-building did not end when the last gunshot was fired. Rather, the end of the armed conflict signaled but the beginning of the longer and more important process of resolving deep-seated and underlying conflicts.

Internal Challenges in Implementing the New Approach

In 1977, four years after the armed conflict between Muslim groups and the Philippine military started, General Ferrer was sent to Mindanao as part of the peacekeeping troops. He remembered that time how the senior officers constantly reminded them of the reason they were in Mindanao: to fight the Muslims. As a result, he said, he developed this bias, which he carried for many years: that all Muslims were to be considered enemies.

According to General Ferrer, it was probably this bias, which many shared, that also prompted the military to conduct operations without regard for social implications on the greater Muslim communities. The military simply cleared areas, uncaring of the displacement of entire communities. The military also conducted patrolling and military offensives without talking to communities that its operations might affect.

General Ferrer further added that the practice of the military to reward or promote officers responsible for the most number of dead "enemies," reinforced this bias. In most instances, the most highly decorated generals were those who had launched damaging offensives in enemy territories at the cost of the lives and homes of the so-called enemy sympathizers. Thus, transforming the military from war machine to peace-builder and conflict-manager remained daunting, notwithstanding the existence of a few from the outfit who asked what real peace demanded of them. The primacy of the warrior ethos could not be discounted. Moreover, peace-builders in the military were not as highly regarded as the successful combatants. The military system did not award soldiers who established peace.

At the same time, General Ferrer said that under the strong top-down and seniority culture of the military, young soldiers learned to "obey first before questioning." This stifled creativity and progressiveness among the younger soldiers because they were expected to merely defer to the commands and values of those above. General Ferrer himself admitted that occupying such a high rank, despite his deviating from military tradition, was a milestone in itself.

The New Military Approach in Action

The new approach of General Ferrer and his men in addressing insurgency, while not devoid of challenges in implementation, was starting to demonstrate results. Two major violent incidents in Basilan illustrated the new military approach in action: the abduction of a Councilor's daughter and the assassination of the Mayor of Isabela City.

When the daughter of a Councilor in Basilan was kidnapped in 2005, the situation was initially confusing because there were no clear suspects. The immediate reaction was to point to the MILF forces in Tipo-Tipo Municipality as the abductors retreated toward that area. However, General Ferrer did not easily accept these presumptions. Instead, he coordinated closely with all sectors that were in a position to help in the resolution of the incident, including the MILF. In the end, the MILF forces were the ones that arrested the kidnappers and safely brought the victim to the Crisis Management Team which was convened for that purpose.

Mayor Luis Biel III of Isabela City was assassinated in March 2006. This incident was allegedly a consequence of the decision of the Isabela City Government to demolish a mosque that stood on government property. As expected, the allies of the assassinated Mayor first blamed General Ferrer and his men for failing to protect the Mayor, even as the Mayor's bodyguards were with him during the attack and killed the assassin afterwards. The Mayor's allies also demanded that the military initiate investigations leading to the punishment of the perpetrators of the crime.

General Ferrer noted how the city government was the only stakeholder group that did not cooperate in the dialogues on the disputed mosque. The city government instead insisted that the court had already resolved the issue in favor of the planned demolition. The stubbornness of the mayor and the city government was believed to have stirred negative sentiments among some sectors of the Muslim population.

This showed General Ferrer that a balance should be struck between legal and socio-cultural considerations because while the city government had the legal right to reclaim the land where the mosque stood, the socio-cultural dimension attached to the mosque as the Muslims' place of worship ought not to have been ignored. Through it all and despite pressure to make a stand on the issue, General Ferrer and his units in the 103rd Brigade decided to remain neutral. General Ferrer believed that had the military forced the issue or sided with one of the parties, the conflict could have escalated and turned violent.

Leading the Way

The discipline and professionalism of General Ferrer's soldiers might be credited for the fact that civilians in the General's areas of responsibility had not filed any criminal or administrative case against any of his military personnel. Moreover, at the height of political destabilization activities in Manila in February 2006, not one military officer based in Basilan joined the adventurism. According to General Ferrer: "It is an indicator that we know our role in society and we are focused on our mandated mission."

In the face of the many challenges, General Ferrer continued to hold dialogues between his men, on the one hand, and the communities and civil society organizations, on the other. Experience had shown him, after all, how dialogue could be a venue for healing wounds. Such dialogues could convince civil society to begin seeing the military as sincere and open to listening and working with them to attain peace. Similarly, the dialogues and other formation initiatives offered opportunities for the soldiers to rectify their misconceptions about Muslims and the communities. In this regard, not only did General Ferrer lead by example; rather, he deliberately trained his men in this direction. He believed that the quality of his relationship with his men should reflect the quality of the relationships of his men with the communities.

At the same time, General Ferrer continued to advocate this new approach to the other Generals and soldiers. He led efforts for his colleagues to come together to find new ways of solving the four-decade conflict at their different levels and areas of responsibility. That more officers began to question the default body-count standard somehow indicated that his ideas were gaining headway. Moreover, in the communities and the different sectors General Ferrer had worked with, his superiors noticed his handiwork. During one visit of then Department of National Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz with all the senior commanders of Western Mindanao in Zamboanga City, he cited how Basilan had become a success story and praised General Ferrer's approach in resolving conflict and building peace.

Initial Results

Subtle changes were noted in the peace and order situation in Basilan after General Ferrer left the area. By the time General Ferrer left Basilan, the military and communities had better working relationships built on trust that was increasingly being regained. The communities and the stakeholders that General Ferrer worked with declared that they were happy about how the military operated; they mentioned how the military's efforts had real impact on the people. No longer were the local residents wary or afraid of military officers. Instead, they perceived the military as important not only in ensuring security and protection but also in promoting progress and development. Basilan, which was formerly known as a terrorist haven was able to enjoy relative peace. Aware of the fragility of this peace, however, General Ferrer sought to ensure that prior to his transfer, structures and mechanisms would be in place so that the unit he left behind would continue to work on people's minds ("clarifying perceptions") and hearts ("healing the hurts").

The work of sustaining the gains that he began in Basilan was a challenging task, General Ferrer admitted. He shared,

"I left Basilan in 2006. Before Basilan was turned over to the Philippine Marines in 2007, the Philippine Army units under 103rd Brigade led by Brigadier General Raynard Ronnie Javier was still responsible for it. I can say that the peace and order situation did not deteriorate after I left, but that is not an excuse to be complacent. The positive relationships that I built with the people in Basilan were not something that I could not pass on to the next Brigade Commander; but he would have to personally build good relationships with the stakeholders. At least, General Javier was open to the importance of the new approach, especially with regard to engaging with stakeholders.

"But what I think is most important in sustaining the gains in Basilan is the fact that a good number of the local leaders there have been trained in Bridging Leadership also, like me; and that is why they are now empowered to initiate the engagement with whoever is the Brigade Commander, including General Javier, and even with the Marines, when the area was turned over to them. Also, since Major General Benjamin Dolorfino, who is the Commandant of the Marines, has been trained on Bridging Leadership, he is very deliberate about training his Marines on how to engage. He has even asked me to help in the trainings a couple of times. The crucial point is to maintain the good relationships with the communities and the stakeholders, whoever the leader is."

The results of General Ferrer's efforts in Basilan were the very goals which then AFP Chief of Staff General Esperon wanted General Ferrer to achieve in Central Mindanao when he was reassigned to the region. As such, within three months of assuming his post in 6th Infantry Division in Shariff Kabunsuan, General Ferrer initiated action within his ranks for them to have a deeper understanding of the Midsayap, North Cotabato conflict. The said conflict at that time figured prominently in the headlines because of what it had triggered: violent encounters between military forces and the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces. Upon examination, he saw that the conflict essentially concerned land disputes; the military had merely been dragged into it.

General Ferrer supported the Inter-Agency Task Force[7] (IATF) formed to address the conflict. In one particular meeting in May 2007, General Ferrer reassured the members of IATF that the military was committed to help peacefully address the conflict. The military's attendance was a landmark and symbolic event that emphasized its commitment to become part of the conflict's peaceful resolution under General Ferrer's leadership.

General Ferrer supported the IATF not only because he believed that it was the best way to proceed, but also because the military's participation was an opportunity for him and his men to understand the conflict in Midsayap. He wanted to train his men to be responsible conflict managers, willing to make an effort to understand the conflict before initiating any form of intervention. General Ferrer believed that soldiers trained to be responsible conflict managers could contribute more to strengthening the peace process between the GRP and the MILF because no authentic talk on peace could be achieved without an accurate appreciation of the nature of the conflict to begin with.

On Being a Fellow and Lessons Learned

In his Statement of Purpose as a Fellow of the Bridging Leadership Fellows Program of the Asian Institute of Management – TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides, General Ferrer declared: "Being admitted to the… Fellows Program is a good backstop for my unconventional approach… because in our culture, nobody will write about your good practices unless you are the Commanding General of the Army or the Chief of Staff of the AFP. When you write about yourself especially your success stories, some of your seniors become insecure and start treating you as a threat to their career."

The Fellowship strengthened General Ferrer's resolve to change the traditional military culture. As his experience proved, the military could dispense its responsibilities using a different, untraditional method. General Ferrer led by example and advocated real change in his area of responsibility, hopeful that he would be able to influence his superiors and colleagues to value and follow the new approaches espoused by his men and himself. He did all these despite his full awareness of the prevalent culture and mentality of the military: to focus on the body-count.

The Fellowship also reinforced the importance of partnering with stakeholders. General Ferrer was aware that as the military did not have the time or resources to build a critical mass of soldiers cum peace-builders, engaging like-minded civil society organizations that could provide support for training soldiers in peace-building and conflict-management was crucial. For example, he partnered with the Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc. during his brief stint in the 1st Infantry Division to give peace-building trainings to his officers and soldiers. When he was already based in Shariff Kabunsuan, he continued the training of his officers and soldiers in peace-building, this time in partnership with the Notre Dame University's Institute for Autonomy and Governance. At the same time, General Ferrer was open to working with local government units and the Philippine National Police in his area of responsibility, toward attaining a secure and peaceful environment for everyone.

The Fellowship likewise gave General Ferrer the opportunity to reflect on and articulate the lessons gained from his experiences, which allowed him to grow as a public sector leader. He said,

"As a leader, I learned that I had to elevate my strategic thinking: I could not just be concerned about day-to-day matters. As a leader, I should have a personal vision from seeing the bigger picture and I should remember that my organizational vision ought to be an expression of my personal vision. Without a clear personal vision, business-as-usual will prevail and for the military, that means that the body-count standard will remain unquestioned.

"At the same time, I have also learned to become more organized and deliberate when it comes to action because a clear personal vision provides the basis for all these actions. The bigger picture influences the tactical actions. Hindi na bara-bara lang [It's not anything goes anymore.]. There is a greater vision that directs all actions to contribute to the bigger picture.

"I also learned that I cannot do everything, and that I just have a role to play. Part of this is learning that I do not have all the answers. You cannot tell people what's good for them anyway. You have to get to know what they want and then customize your actions to satisfy their concerns so that there is impact."

Finally, the Fellowship made General Ferrer more conscious of the personal costs that came with being a leader. In clarifying his leadership vision and mission, it became clearer to him that instigating changes in the military was his true calling, though it oftentimes cost him quality time with his family. Because of the amount of work that needed to be done in his areas of responsibility, he had to spend long periods away from home several times in the course of his career. Nonetheless, he exerted utmost effort to include his family in what he was doing so that they would understand his work and why it was very important to him.

Despite both professional and personal challenges, General Ferrer remained committed and hopeful. As he himself said, "After I retire, I will continue to pursue a career in resolving conflicts and involve myself in the peace process. It has become my life's mission."

The Work Continues

On July 10, 2007, a group of militants ambushed a Marine convoy in the Municipality of Tipo-Tipo in Basilan. Fourteen Marines died due to the attack, 10 of whom were beheaded. After all the peace-building work that General Ferrer had done in Basilan, he reflected on the incident and noted,

"Peace is so fragile, and so structures and mechanisms for stakeholder collaboration to build and protect peace have to be built while we work through people's minds, to clarify perceptions, and hearts, to heal hurts. I see this as a challenge to strengthen local peace formations and coordination between GRP and MILF."

7 The IATF is composed of representatives from national line agencies (such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Agrarian Reform,and the Department of Agriculture), the Joint GRP-MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities, the International Monitoring Team, the 6th Infantry Division, the Philippine National Police,the Registry of Deeds, the concerned local government units including barangay officials, and civil society groups.

Malcolm S. Garma

Schools Division Superintendent, Cabanatuan City Schools Division, Department of Education

This write-up was written by Jose Rafael S. Alarilla under the supervision of Prof. Ernesto D. Garilao of the AIM – TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership.

On December 5, 2008, the Cabanatuan City schools division held a teachers' congress at the Nueva Ecija Convention Center with the theme "Taas Noo, Teacher Ako". The event was a celebration of the role of education in the city and, most importantly, the people behind it–the school principals and teachers of the 57 elementary schools and seven high schools of Cabanatuan City.

The commemorative video from the congress shows the many positive changes in Cabanatuan City schools division such as infrastructure improvements of the division office and new classroom buildings. The short film interspersed the showing of these improvements with candid vignettes of school leaders, members of the faculty, and division personnel sharing a renewed hope they have for education in Cabanatuan. Each of them gave thanks to their leader, the current city schools division superintendent, Malcolm Garma.

Background

At 38, Malcolm Garma is far from the typical profile of a leader in the Department of Education (DepEd). His personal leadership journey finds roots in diverse experiences that, in his words, "all eventually came together and brought him to this point."

Garma's first brush with leadership was serendipitous. Coming in late for ROTC as a freshman in the University of the Philippines Diliman, Garma found himself with the rest of the day's latecomers in a separate platoon, which was incidentally for the Cadet Officers Candidate Corps. His commitment to the program eventually allowed him to lead as cadet officer, during which he developed a strong sense of discipline and leadership. Garma pursued a degree in Education, taking an internship as a classroom teacher at the UP Integrated School (UPIS) prior to his graduation. He was sufficiently impressive that his internship eventually yielded an offer to teach full-time at UPIS after his graduation.

In 1992, Garma joined the UPIS faculty and immediately showed strong leadership and facilitating skills. As a result, he became one of the few junior faculty assigned to positions of responsibility. He was appointed adviser of the Grades 3-6 Student Council for SY 1993-1994. In the same school year, he organized the school's Debate Society. Garma was well received by students, parents, and fellow teachers for his work. The positive feedback he earned led to his appointment as Vice-Chair of the UPIS Student Welfare Committee for two consecutive school years (1994-95 and 1995-96). Garma's leadership skills were instrumental in the committee's work on student needs and addressing student discipline.

Despite his busy schedule as teacher, Garma completed the academic requirements for a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning program from UP Diliman in 1996. Though he would be appointed that year as adviser of the Grades 7-10 Student Association, Garma resigned from UPIS in 1997 and was subsequently appointed as planning officer and acting director for Community Relations of the UP Diliman campus. His new perspective on planning and development was key in addressing the many challenges in UP Diliman, most notably that of informal settlers. His new responsibility, however, tested his leadership and character more intensely. "I was quite literally chasing down informal settlers and spending my time negotiating with them," Garma shared of the tough and often difficult nature of his job. In addition to honing his skills in conflict resolution and multi-stakeholder processes, Garma matured as a leader despite his young age. Leading an office with with members who directly reported to him and who were all older than he was a challenge that Garma overcame and as a result he earned respect from. One colleague described Garma as "bold but endearing," referring to his youthful exuberance, idealism, and concern for those within and outside the office.

The idealism that Garma displayed as leader was a source of inspiration for the Community Relations Office. However, it was the same trait that inevitably unearthed the real dangers of dealing with informal settlers. At one point, Garma even received threats from a syndicate of informal settlers operating at UP Diliman. Deciding that the job had become too risky for him and his family, Garma relinquished his position and focused on entrepreneurship. His departure from the UP System coincided with his completion of a Master's degree in Business Administration from the Ateneo Graduate School of Business in 2003. Garma engaged in various ventures, including a bar and then an ice cream franchise. His business undertakings brought him practical knowledge in management, especially in handling finances.

Entering the Department of Education

Although Garma's foray into entrepreneurship was rewarding, his intellectual curiosity led him to a totally different path. Garma's parents were both public school teachers. His father was the regional director of DepEd Region 4A. Garma was intrigued with a form his father took home one day, which was in fact an application for the Educational Management Test (EMT)–the eligibility exam given to those seeking Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent positions in the DepEd. Relying on his degree in education and his brief background in teaching, Garma decided to take the examination. Though he was not optimistic for his EMT results, he passed the exam in May 2005 and became eligible for the assistant superintendent position with the DepEd. Initially, Garma opened himself to the DepEd opportunity primarily as a means of earning a regular salary to support his growing family. But as his formal appointment came in 2006, with the Cabanatuan City Schools Division as his first assignment, Garma's natural passion for leadership and development would soon emerge.

The Societal Divide: Cyclical poverty and the lack of education

Garma described his first days at work in DepEd's Cabanatuan division office as instrumental in changing his perspective. The idealism he had as a young assistant schools division superintendent (ASDS) opened his eyes to many deep-seated practices within the division that he sought to change. "Of course when you are young, relatively new to the environment, and are coming from a management background, you see so many things that you want to change," Garma said of his start as ASDS. One thing he noticed included the lack of professionalism among division personnel. Many of them came to work without wearing proper uniform, and it was common to have offices in the division filled with children of the employees. "The uniforms, professionalism, and the identity of our division… these may be small things but they speak of the lack of motivation within DepEd Cabanatuan." Garma found that many problems within the division office directly affected teacher morale and performance–problems like an inconsistent career ranking and promotion system, unresponsive

allocation of resources, and poor teacher training and compensation. These issues yielded poor academic achievement from Cabanatuan's elementary and secondary level students.

In addition, rice farming, which is the primary source of income of the city, is also part of the cycle of poor education and underdevelopment. Many fields in the city are poorly irrigated and yield harvest at subsistent level for farmers. A good portion of rice that is sold in the markets of Cabanatuan is still taken from neighboring provinces such as Quezon. Most disturbing, Garma confided, is that farming has actually proven detrimental in many cases to education in the city. Many parents keep their children out of school to help them work in the fields. The same parents tell their children that it is better to earn a small income now than to go to school–a shortsighted view that gives the impressionable children in Cabanatuan little incentive to pursue education. The cycle continues; the children of Cabanatuan mature without an education and resort to driving tricycles for hire and inefficient farming that do not contribute much to the development of the city. To Garma, the lack of accessible, high-quality education results in the lack of empowerment and resources driving social and economic changes.

As ASDS of Cabanatuan City, Garma saw that his work in improving education was critical to his vision of Cabanatuan as home to empowered, well-educated citizens actively involved in economic development. He began by taking steps to change the division from within–a critical foundation for the collaborative work he would later undertake.

Relationship building as the Assistant Schools Division Superintendent

Garma was keenly aware that his role as ASDS obligated him to defer to the Superintendent's (SDS) decisions. In spite of limitations, he found space within his responsibilities to influence positively the people around him. The way Garma approached the ASDS position was fundamentally different from the tradition of the division. Many were surprised, when they found that Garma displayed interest in listening to those who would approach him. Supervisors, teachers, and support staff described him as an ASDS whom one can "talk to like a friend" and who "was strict but compassionate".

Garma shared that his relationship with the people in the division was born from experience and the caution he exercised as new member of the division: "From my cadet officer and business background, I applied analytical, performance-centric approach. But I also drew the 'heart' from my days in teaching and community relations. All these plus the fact that I was new and still learning the ropes helped me gain the trust of my boss and my people." Acting as a liaison between the staff and the SDS was a role that he embraced fully. In this way, he was able to influence several key areas of the division he sought to change.

Ranking and Promotions

As the ASDS was the chair of the Ranking and Promotions Committee of the division, Garma found himself in a position to effect the dwindling morale of the teaching staff. The committee was in charge of managing vacant teaching positions and evaluating teachers applying for these vacancies based on a strict ranking system. Ideally, the committee would endorse the top-ranked applicant to the SDS, who would then approve the appointment. However, this was inconsistently adhered to, causing discontent, poor performance, and even questionable ethics among teachers in the division. One teacher remarked, "We had become used to a system of 'whom you know' rather than 'what you know.'" Garma addressed this by openly stating that the committee would unequivocally follow the ranking system and that only applications submitted before or on the deadline of submission of documents would be honored.

Another challenge was to ensure that the SDS would honor the decisions of the committee. Garma said of this, "Of course, the SDS would still have final discretion on the appointment. The SDS could appoint someone the committee did not endorse, but I tried to influence the SDS to consider the negative effect it would have on our division's transparency and fairness." The seeds of transparency that Garma planted took root in the ranking system, particularly because of its profoundly personal effect on many of those who had given up hope in the promotion system. One school leader confided, "My teachers actually started working harder. Because of Garma's focus on bringing integrity and transparency to the system, they have hope."

Teacher Ethics and Motivation

Despite making a clear statement about the transparency of the ranking and promotions system, many practices remain to be changed. Garma was aware of the "whom you know" mentality that members of the division. He witnessed the extent to which some teachers, principals and non-teaching staff would go just to gain his favor or the SDS's. "Sometimes it can be difficult to distinguish between plain hospitality and a 'hidden motive,'" admitted Garma, who also conceded that it is characteristic of Cabanatuan residents to prepare food, drinks, and *pabaon* (gifts, usually food.) "This is acceptable behavior when welcoming visitors from outside the city. But as I experienced it–seeing teachers secretly splitting the bill over expensive meals meant for me or paying for the SDS' entertainment – it's no longer hospitable. It's something else."

The context of the behavior of the teachers towards promotions was born of their financial difficulties. Garma admitted that the salary of teachers is small and that this problem has been difficult to solve with direct augmentation. But as ASDS, he did not find this a valid reason for teachers to resort to questionable practices in order to be promoted or to supplement their finances. Teachers or principals independently collecting fees at the start of the school year and even profiting from the selling of film tickets for classroom activities were, in Garma's opinion, practices that degrade teachers' dignity. Even as they provided some benefit to the teachers, they kept teachers from actually pursuing their responsibility as teachers as the activities ate up much of their time; furthermore, some of these films that they require the student to watch did not have any bearing on their students' academics.

Addressing what is behind the motivations of teachers was something Garma frankly described as difficult: "I tackled this issue with honesty, and the fact remains that it is too difficult as of now to commit to an increase in teachers' salaries. What we have focused on is returning dignity to their profession." He did this by surrounding himself with personal practices that caught the staff's attention. Garma prohibited faculty from preparing any meals (or feasts as they would often do) during his school visits. He discouraged the holding of large birthday parties and preparing *pabaon* for visiting officials. He pushed for the strict adherence to the DepEd's "no collection policy" and discouraged selling of tickets for film showings, and the like. One school principal recalled this "as extremely motivational and touching for us teachers. He said to us 'you should not be paying to entertain us. We are up here, we have more, we should be the ones serving you.'"

Unresponsive School Support

Garma soon equated his commitment to the welfare of the teachers of his division as manifestations of "servant leadership." This realization encouraged him to find creative ways to instill transparency and empowerment in the division. He turned his attention to the school level issues. Unresponsive or ineffective resource support had long been the problem of school leaders. Some schools received many blackboards but not have the classrooms. Others received physical education gears instead of much needed reading materials. Garma attributed this to a lack of transparency in the use of the Special Education Fund (SEF) and items charged under maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) and the lack of a clear channel through which school leaders can voice their actual needs.

To address this problem, Garma implemented a series of orientation seminars on bidding and procurement procedures for the division. To promote maximum transparency and empowerment, all personnel, even utility workers, were oriented. The impact of the orientation would come later, but the effect on the personnel was immediate. The people in the ranks felt a sense of professionalism and inclusion, and the focus on transparency as a core value of the division was cemented. More importantly, the school principals felt more comfortable that their professional responsibilities could be better met and supported by the division.

Bridging Leadership as a Key Component of School Based Management

Garma spent two years, between 2006 and 2007, laying the founda-

tion for transparency and empowerment in the division through influencing personnel behavior and practices. This foundation was critical to Garma's mission of improving education in Cabanatuan through the efficient implementation of School Based Management (SBM), as mandated by Republic Act 9155 in 2001. The Department of Education and its school divisions should function primarily in support of their component schools through development and implementation of education development plans, personnel management and development, management of division funds, and supervising schools' operations and compliance with accreditation standards. Based on the same Act, the school head or principal will determine school-specific concerns such as a school's vision, mission and objectives (VMO), curricular implementation and development, personnel development. and the physical development of a school facilities. Garma recalled his first months as ASDS as "a daily effort in preparing the whole division to strictly adhere to the (R.A. 9155's) mandate of SBM and adopt it as the framework for the division's efforts."

The thrust of R.A. 9155–school head empowerment, and transparent and accountable school based management—were not without challenges. A particular point in R.A. 9155 was difficult for the principals: establishing school and community networks and encouraging the active participation of teachers' organizations, nonacademic personnel of public schools, and parents-teachers-community associations. While the principals are comfortable in discussing their needs and plans amongst themselves, they had much to improve in collaborative leadership. Garma described the principals' weakness as similar to that of the SBM system: "The SBM is a very technical framework that guides school leaders how to do everything–fundraising, financial management, curriculum development. and many others. But what SBM does not teach is how to first frame and own the school's problems, and then involve the community."

In late 2007, Garma was given the opportunity to participate in a fellowship program offered by the Asian Institute of Management. The program was based on Bridging Leadership (BL), a framework based on the use of dialogue, multi-stakeholder processes, and collaborative leadership. Garma immediately saw two benefits of BL in his work as ASDS of Cabanatuan City schools division. First, BL could be used to instill and maintain a culture of transparency, accountability, and participation in the support staff of the division. Second, the school leaders could use BL to generate the same transparency, accountability, and participation in their respective communities.

Garma was convinced that BL has great potential in addressing SBM's weak point and described BL as "the 'heart' missing from SBM's highly technical approach to managing and leading schools." In January 2008, Garma shared with the 64 school leaders of the division his experience as fellow of the program and solicited applications for the first batch of principals to be formally trained in the BL framework. After a rigorous selection process, the 15 principals were admitted into the first batch of trainees. The same set of school leaders would form Garma's "core group" in piloting BL as the primary method of delivering SBM.

Turning Point: from ASDS to SDS

In September 2008, a major turning point came in Garma's leadership journey–he was appointed new Superintendent (SDS) of Cabanatuan City Schools Division. Garma was grateful and excited of his appointment, especially of the many plans he had in line for the division. "When I was an ASDS, I was limited to persuading and encouraging people, and smaller-scale implementation of programs. Becoming an SDS meant that I could move into actually instituting change in the division by enacting policies that would ensure that transparency and empowerment truly become part of who we are and what we do."

As he did during his stint as ASDS, Garma started by laying a strong foundation for a new DepEd Cabanatuan. The first issue he addressed was professionalism within the division. Under his leadership, the construction of a new administration building was completed. Unlike the arrangement in the previous office, which featured a totally open floor plan, the new building featured separate rooms and sections for specific departments. Each department room was clearly labeled in order to identify the personnel's functions and responsibilities. A visitor service lounge was placed at the entrance so that parents, teachers, and principals could make themselves comfortable while waiting for their turn to be served. Also, a new front entrance facing the city's main highway was built, with a large signage to identify DepEd Cabanatuan.

The effects of the physical improvements to the division were deeply felt, especially by the personnel and officers. Emma Santos, administrative officer of the division, witnessed these changes and their effects on the staff,

> "Sir Malcolm's first project as the SDS was to truly give the division an identity. When we were still sharing an entrance with the (Nueva Ecija) East Central School, nobody knew that DepEd Cabanatuan existed. Ask a tricycle driver to take you to DepEd Cabanatuan and he would bring you to the provincial office (DepEd Nueva Ecija, which is also in the city). Because of the new façade and signage, more and more people are now aware of our service.
>
> "Having rooms per section (department) of the division seemed simple and logical at first, but it gave each member of the division immense pride in their work. The professional-looking signage outside every room made us feel that our work was important."

Garma also focused on bringing in dialogue and collaboration to the division. On the one hand, he had a core group of principals who were undergoing formal training in the BL framework. On the other hand, he tapped previously unutilized opportunities in order to bring transparency and participation in education to a wider audience. Garma accepted an offer by an owner of a local radio station for a 90-minute slot every Wednesday night for his own radio show, dubbed "DepEd Hour." Through the show, Garma would invite school leaders and teachers to talk briefly about their respective schools and plans. The program, which still airs to this day, discusses different topics every week, ranging from student health to parent involvement. All listeners from within or outside the division are free to send their questions and suggestions via SMS.

The radio show was instrumental in establishing Garma as a different kind of leader. Instead of keeping his distance as SDS, Garma made himself easily accessible to all. Even the radio station's owner, the former city mayor, was pleasantly surprised that Garma was the first Cabanatuan schools division officer to ever accept his offer for a radio show. Garma coupled this with his constant dialogue with the division's schools to cement the culture of transparency and participation in the community. The school leaders and teachers were, for the first time, faced with an SDS who spent his time really listening to their concerns. They collectively felt that if Garma could reach out to his people, so could they to their own communities.

From Physical Improvements to Human Performance

Together with initiating physical improvements in the division and the radio show, Garma invested in other new initiatives to build on the enthusiasm of the division staff. He held weekly meetings that encouraged personnel to voice their problems and concerns, allowing them to solve many less complex concerns on the spot. Every end of the month, a fellowship activity brought the whole division together. Garma recognized "employee of the month", as well as a suggestion box open to all employees and visitors. In return for lifting the employees' spirits, Garma found that the division personnel began to "co-own" the issue of quality education within their specific functions. Santos described the involvement of the office personnel in co-ownership,

> "We have begun implementing new, more specific performance matrices for the non-teaching staff. The previous practice was to use a generic performance matrix, which did not motivate the personnel to perform well within their responsibilities. Through Sir Malcolm's efforts in cultivating a BL perspective, the staff members are open to working with the new matrices and performing job-specific functions, even if it represents a radical change in the way we do things.
>
> "In the end, the staff and I see that what Sir Malcolm has encouraged us to do through high quality and professional work is to be better servant leaders. Even the clerks who were known to be unapproachable have become much friendlier. We all see teachers, principals and parents as clients whose students and children we are responsible for."

Instituting Positive Changes in Individual Behavior

The clarity in specific individual responsibilities was something that Public Schools District (I) Supervisor (PSDS) Nora Pineda appreciated. To her, SDS Garma's effort in instilling BL mindset was both effective and inspiring,

> "Since Sir Malcolm took the helm as SDS, my duties as a district supervisor became well-defined. I clearly know my role of coordinating, providing professional assistance and instructional leadership to the ten schools in my district. In short, my role has been to empower the principals in my district. Because of the new approach within the division, I can focus on this without having to do specific class observation (which is the responsibility of the Education Supervisors).
>
> "Introducing BL as a way of strengthening SBM among the school leaders has made my role more productive. SBM is important because school leaders should be well versed in all aspects of school management. When BL was not yet present to help principals tackle conflict resolution and community involvement on their level, they were always dependent on us (supervisors.) Now, they make most of their decisions themselves, in consultation with their respective PSDS. In the future, we aim for true independence in the spirit of SBM."

Garma would be recognized as SDS who followed through on the many changes he started as ASDS, especially those concerning transparency. Education Supervisor Virginia Sy-Domingo, a member of the ranking and promotions committee, was one of many who experienced and carried out the change firsthand,

> "In my primary function as Education Supervisor and concurrent ALS coordinator, I had become used to schools asking me to visit them only when they were sufficiently prepared to present well; they thought that I was around to be impressed. Under Sir Malcolm's leadership, I am free to visit schools and ask them 'can we be of help to you?' I feel that I am serving more. The same goes for my work as a member of the ranking committee–we don't need to be entertained (with gifts and food). We knew that our focus was on servant leadership and that meant being fair and just. Our work in the committee is very tedious, but the honest service we render in producing the open ranking is instrumental in raising the morale of the teaching staff."

Indeed, Garma's successful institution of good practices based on transparency and participation empowered the non-teaching staff of the division. More so, the principals and teachers, who saw their supervisors carrying out examples of ideal leadership, were motivated to carry out the same principles in leading their schools through a combined SBM and BL approach.

Instituting Changes in Cabanatuan's Schools

In line with changes Garma instilled in the division, he developed the "Ang Guro, Magturo" (Teachers Must Teach) campaign, which included adhering to "no collection policy" and discouraging non-educational extracurricular activities such as film showings (and the selling of tickets for these). This move was appreciated across the division by school leaders, most of who were troubled by the many interruptions in actual teaching and learning resulting from the old practices. Garma described the campaign as one that focuses on making education constant and accessible to children leading to improved academic performance of school children in Cabanatuan.

In addressing the problem of parents keeping their children from attending school, Garma found the Stakeholder Analysis from the BL framework a critical method in designing creative ways to bring children in Cabanatuan back to school. "To me the parents from the rural or farm areas are stakeholders," said Garma, "but they were stubborn ones, partly because they too were uneducated. I thought of attracting the children instead as an interested party in their own education." He focused on attracting the children by encouraging each school to build a playground in their premises (*Palaruan sa Paaralan*). The idea of making schools a place of fun and learning worked as children gradually became the ones convincing their parents to take them to school.

Garma did not give up on directly involving the parents in increasing the enrolment. Using dialogue, he was able to speak to school leaders and parents through various parent-teacher-community associations (PTCAs) to come up with a multi-stakeholder solution to the problem. In their discussions, Garma shared with the teachers and parents the idea of a supplementary feeding program called "Power Lugaw." He encouraged parents to raise funds for rice to be stocked in the schools. The teachers would then prepare *lugaw* using the rice and existing vegetables from the previously implemented "Gulayan sa Paaralan" (Vegetable Garden at the School) program. The feeding program was a success, with many of the schools following an ideal contribution scheme: parents who were mostly busy at work but earned a larger income would mainly contribute in cash; while those who were less gainfully employed helped the teachers cook the food and feed the children. More importantly, the feeding program attracted many parents of lower income families to send their children to school, where the children were assured at least one nutritious meal. The program was so successful that one principal, in jest, shared that many children were in school for the sole reason that they will be fed, "The challenge for me and my teachers now is to actually convince these children that they are in school to eat *and* to study. It's difficult, but it's definitely better than before. We've reached out to a lot more families through the feeding program."

After addressing the children's health and motivation through the *Palaruan* and *Power Lugaw* programs, Garma focused on reintroducing traditional values and culture through the *pagmamano* and *Laro ng Lahi* campaigns. School principals were encouraged to include traditional Filipino games such as *patintero* and *sungka* in their physical education and sports curriculum. Likewise, teachers promoted the practice of pagmamano and the use of po and opo as a response to the increasing exposure of children to contemporary values from television, video games, and the internet. Garma convinced faculty and the parents in Cabanatuan of the importance of values education by reasoning that children left uneducated are more prone to becoming delinquents and criminals that would plague the city in the future.

Finally, Garma's commitment to change in the division was capped with major developments that represented the start of truly transparent and responsible use of the Special Education Fund (SEF) of the division. Under his leadership, a new school building for each of 47 schools in the city was built. Totaling 125 new classrooms, the buildings were completed through construction and labor counterparts provided by Cabanatuan mayor, Alvin Vergara. Several schools also received SRA Reading Lab kits, costing PhP 19,000 each, in line with the division's thrust to improve reading skills across all grade levels. The school leaders welcomed these developments for they were the targeted needs that the school leaders themselves identified and they represented the transparent use of the SEF. To quote one principal, "We felt like our bosses were truly listening to our specific needs. The division, at that point, seemed much more effective because we could see that our SEF was being spent wisely and judiciously."

School Principals as Bridging Leaders

Garma's support to the school leaders through new programs and resources was not meant to replace the hands-on management the school leaders would provide their respective schools. In fact, the school leaders were given freedom to apply the BL framework they learned in order to customize the new programs depending on their community's environment and need. In particular, Garma's core group of 15 school principals found that the BL framework was helpful in bringing out SBM's spirit of transparency, local accountability and participation in their communities. It also allowed them, through dialogue and observation, to identify which particular aspects of their school required the most attention:

Honorato C. Perez Memorial Science High School: Principal Teodorica Palomo

> "The framework helped me lead with both heart and mind. As a science high school, we should be committed in producing the most proficient graduates, especially in math and science. It has long been a problem that, out of pity, the school would admit freshmen and advance other students through the years even if they lacked the most basic reading skills. I have learned to be compassionate but firm in dealing with these students and their parents. This is something I am trying to instill in my own teachers, that the quality of our students is something we cannot negotiate.

"Our school's environment, however, leaves a lot of space for collaboration on things that are more flexible. We have a lot of deserving students who come from lower income families. The same parents are often the ones who think that the government will come in and fund everything. Through a multi-stakeholder process of presenting my specific SBM vision – that of a science high school that exists in its quality and facilities, not only by its name – the school was able to gain the commitment of barangay officials to improve security in the area, and we raised PhP 100,000 in a week of fundraising from various sources. BL also gives me the confidence to seek out sponsors for our indigent students' school supplies."

Through the BL framework, school leaders found a way to promote SBM initiatives to the greater community. Likewise, the collaborative nature of BL supported SBM by opening the schools and their leaders to innovation:

Mayapyap Elementary School: Principal Mercy Cariaga

"Realizing that the parents are key stakeholders in our schools, I've learned to make them feel important. Even small gestures of praise for their help go a long way in ensuring their cooperation to move forward. BL processes have breathed life into SBM by opening the school up to greater involvement. One new program, a CD-ROM of lectures and review materials for the National Achievement Test (NAT), came from a member of our IT support staff. We are looking forward to more new projects as a result of the community's new culture of co-owning education."

Finally, the skills and processes that the school leaders gained were instrumental overcoming their deeply ingrained traditional perspectives of being a school leader:

Camp Tinio Elementary School: Principal Marcelina Arenas

"BL has changed my perspective of gaining my teachers' cooperation. I admit that I was once one-sided and had preconceptions of teachers whom I thought were against me. But after engaging these teachers one-on-one, we understood each other better. Attitudes have changed in the school. As a principal, I no longer subscribe to the old idea of getting what I want. Through dialogue and servant leadership, we continually achieve results that the whole community wants."

Personal Change and Challenges

The members of DepEd Cabanatuan–principals, teachers, and non-teaching staff–are all quick to place Superintendent Garma at the center of what they all agreed to be a new era for the division. Garma himself attributed his success to the convergence of all his past leadership experiences. "In UPIS and UP Diliman especially, I was used to looking after people and engaging in dialogue, so I approached my role as an ASDS in the same way," he said of the beginnings of his stint in DepEd Cabanatuan. "What changed over time was the awareness I had of what I was actually doing." Garma attributed to the BL framework, "putting structure to my own idea of dialogue and collaboration, allowing me to share the same concepts with my people through training." According to him, the framework also pushed him to identify new stakeholders and design extensive and innovative campaigns–the DepEd Hour radio show being a prime example of identifying new spaces and widening his reach. Finally, the fellowship program itself was a source of inspiration for him, more than anything. He was motivated with the knowledge that he could turn to his fellow leaders if he needed advice in certain areas or just wanted to share his own progress.

Garma acknowledged that a challenge he has faced as SDS is the lack of immediately measurable data to indicate the success of his programs, most of which were based upon setting up new practices and abolishing counterproductive ones. Even programs that represented direct contributions–such as the 47 school buildings and the SRA kits–are expected to affect performance indicators such as enrolment rate and average NAT scores in the next 2-3 years. However, the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the schools indicated that the division is on the right track. Intangibles such as the increase in morale of division personnel and the renewed enthusiasm teachers and principals feel for their work were acknowledged as improvements in their own right.

Not to be overlooked is the inevitable conflict and risk that faces a leader whose basic principle is transparency. Garma was the target of threats when he instituted new division-wide practices concerning professionalism and the more focused performance assessment of division personnel. Garma realized that as a leader, he could expect rough times. "That's what leaders face," he concluded. "It's all part of the job."

Sustainability and the Future

Sustainability remains the biggest challenge for a division that attributes its success to its leader. Should Garma be assigned to a larger division, how will transparency, empowerment and professionalism persist in DepEd Cabanatuan?

One way he has ensured this is by expanding the division's efforts in education to associated activities such as advocating responsible payment of taxes. "He has proven through transparent spending and the many education improvements in the city that taxes, which contribute to the SEF pool, are crucial in developing the next generation," said Councilor Tina Wycoco-Paulino, who worked closely with Garma on the contract for the 47 new LGU-constructed school buildings. "He has also been working with the LGU to pass this and other education-centric efforts into law, so that the policies we institute will live on through future changes in leadership."

Garma's loyal group of leaders volunteer their own commitment as a way to keep the spirit of bridging leadership alive, regardless of whoever takes the reins in the future. Santos, the administrative officer of DepEd Cabanatuan and one of the coordinators for Garma's taxpayer responsibility initiative, believed that the staff's responsibility is to widen the net of people they involve, noting that "these changes were all about building strong relationships among all stakeholders and tapping their various resources." Cariaga, Mayapyap Elementary's young principal, agreed, and added that the members of the division should not lose sight of who they are working for: "Should a different SDS come in, perhaps, even one who might not be as idealistic as Sir Malcolm, I will not forget that in my school, I have 24 teachers, over a thousand students and a community to serve. In the end, my commitment is to the community and the children. I can still do something about it."

Garma himself agreed that at 38, there are still plenty of opportunities for him to experience greater responsibility. Currently, he hopes to sustain the gains made by the division from the BL framework by formally training the next batches of school principals. He is also considering formal BL training for district supervisors and other non-teaching personnel. However, he admitted that as much as he would like to design and run these programs by himself, his busy schedule as SDS keeps him from doing so in a timely fashion. "I've thought of this too, and think that in the future, I can use BL to train my supervisors to take my leadership down to their level," he confided. "But I will still make time to personally visit schools along the way, as I always have." When told that his hands-on, personal approach to his people drew constant praise from the division, Garma responded with the same humility: "I want them to tell a story of their own success, that they worked on the ground to make this division a success. I'm here to serve them, but they are the stars of this show."

Florante Gerdan
Municipal Mayor
Santa Fe, Nueva Vizcaya

This write-up, based on Florante Gerdan's firsthand account, was written by Philip Francisco U. Dy of the AIM TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership under the supervision of Prof. Ernesto D. Garilao, faculty at the Asian Institute of Management.

My Leadership Story and the Journey of Santa Fe to Change

Background and Entering Politics

I was first elected mayor of the Municipality of Santa Fe, Nueva Vizcaya in 2004. The upland community has about 3,200 families spread over 400 square kilometers of mountains and rivers. Access to schools and health centers remains a perennial problem, while farming in the mountainous terrain continues to be a challenge. Local government figures in 2007 recorded about 570 households living on less than PhP 5,000 a month (classified as very poor), while about 810 households averaged PhP 5,000 monthly (classified as poor). Over 1,300 households earned between PhP 5,000 and PhP 7,000 a month, considerably lower than the PhP 11,271 monthly poverty threshold set by the national government for the province.

I never imagined I would enter politics, much less become mayor of a town where I did not come from originally. My father was from the nearby province of Ilocos and my mother from a neighboring town in Nueva Vizcaya. When I reached high school, my parents sent me to Santa Fe where I lived with Pastor Delbert Rice, a Methodist missionary who had stayed in the municipality for a long time. Pastor Rice had other young boys under his wing; evening meals were punctuated with animated discussions. These gave me my first experience of interpersonal dialogue that led to the resolution of problems and issues in a family setting. Pastor Rice also gave us other leadership lessons such as tempering discipline with understanding, strength with empathy, and courage with wisdom. Unknown to me, such experience would leave permanent mark on my person, one that would become evident in my approach to community service later on, as mayor of a town.

It was in 2004 that I chose to run for mayor. I won by a slim margin of 120 votes. Shortly after assuming office, I saw the challenges the municipality of Santa Fe and I were up against.

My First Term

During my first term as Mayor, I confronted many challenges. First, due to prevalent political harassment and divisiveness under the previous administration, I faced a bureaucracy steeped in patronage politics. The residents were unwilling to work with government.. Typically, supporters of the losing candidate would refuse to work with the winner. Furthermore, the Sanggunian Bayan[1], which the opposition dominated, was determined to take exclusive control of the appropriation of Santa Fe's Internal Revenue Allotment of more than PhP 30 million.

Second, the bureaucracy was complacent, and the employees were not motivated. Employees saw their work as merely their means to provide for their families. As such, the bureaucracy was slow and incompetent for it always settled with minimum requirements, which stood against the output-oriented leadership that I insisted. The municipal government had limited programs and services addressing the livelihood, education, and health needs of the people. These services were seldom done in collaboration with other sectors of the community.

Third, the residents had a dole-out mentality. They expected and even demanded an increase in financial doleouts as political payback for their support at the polls.

Fourth, nobody could tell me how many of the families in Santa Fe, which had a population of about 14,000 were poor because statistics were unreliable, outdated, and incomplete, research being virtually non-existent.

Burdened with such challenges, at that time I thought that the best way to proceed was to rule with an iron fist. I lost my temper a lot and scolded department heads and employees for failing to meet targets and outputs. I did not bother to forge good relationships with the people in the bureaucracy, much less with the opposition because I believed that I did not owe it to them: I strongly felt that they did not deserve my efforts to engage and work with them. I thought that if they didn't like to work with me, I didn't like to work with them either.

Under tremendous pressure, I resorted to overbearing tendencies, which I believe can be traced to having a hangover from my experience as a military leader. As a military cadet for three years, I learned to follow orders and as an officer for 11 years in the Philippine military, I learned to give them. I was also a scholar at the Royal Military College in Canberra, Australia for a year and a half, and that experience added perspective to my military life. Assigned to the front lines, I faced anti-government forces in Samar and Leyte, both poverty-ridden provinces with long history of rebellion and siege.

While military life indeed taught me many things, chief among which are teamwork and camaraderie, it taught me little about engaging in constructive discussion and dialogue. In the military, whenever orders are given, soldiers are expected to obey without question. Moreover, we were target-fixated and output-oriented. Our main priority was to get things done at all costs.

I was guided by this mindset during my first term as a mayor: I would insist on meeting targets and delivering outputs, over having good and meaningful relationships with my fellow officials and staff. I always pushed hard for accomplishment; even if most of the time I was being too unreasonable and demanding.

On top of all of these, the Sangguniang Panlalawigan[2] suspended me for two months during my first term for buying a bus that would provide college students of Santa Fe free transportation to their schools in nearby towns. I had secured authorization from the Municipal Development Council to use savings from the 2004 Municipal Development Fund for the purchase. I had also obtained the approval of the Sangguniang Bayan in one session with them, but they did not pass the appropriate ordinance.

As early as the start of my first term, it was clear that there was so much to be done. I knew then that the journey to change would be painstaking. I wanted to start right away, even if I really did not know where to begin.

Personal Change

Little did I know that the journey towards change has to begin with me.

The Bridging Leadership program that came to Santa Fe in 2006 and my consequent inclusion in the Bridging Leadership Fellows Program in 2007 helped me realize this.

In terms of skill, Bridging Leadership taught me that one of the skills that I had to learn as a leader is to listen. It is important that I don't blow my top right away. Leadership became easier for me when I started to listen because through listening I won the trust of the people and showed them that I acknowledge the fact that they had something to share. It also opened up possibilities for working together to achieve what we all shared. I was able to build new, stronger, and more productive relationships with the stakeholders that enabled us to work collaboratively to achieve greater results.

On a deeper level, Bridging Leadership gave me the opportunity to step back, reflect, and ultimately link my own sense of personal purpose to my role as mayor. Being the mayor of Santa Fe is a difficult responsibility. I

1 The Sangguniang Bayan is the legislative body in the municipal level of the Philippine local government system.

2 The Sangguniang Panlalawigan is the legislative body in the provincial level of the Philippine local government system.

found out that if that was all there was to it, if being Mayor was mere responsibility for me, then I have a million reasons to quit: I get into fights, my own personal safety is jeopardized, I lose time with my family, and I am not even compensated that well.

But the moment I was able to connect my being mayor to the strong sense of service that I have always possessed as a person, the work and responsibility became its own rewards because I saw how my job as mayor truly served the people. The challenges became worth addressing, as these are the challenges that I had to overcome so that I can truly serve the people. In undergoing personal change, I became a servant–not mayor–first. This is why I now stand on one of my most powerful convictions: losing politically does not matter to me anymore because all that matters is that I maximize the opportunity to serve.

As such, with the newfound ability to listen and with a renewed sense of purpose in being a Mayor, I took on the same challenge of governing the municipality of Santa Fe in my second term and started to do things differently.

External Changes: Mainstreaming Peoples' Participation

When I was re-elected mayor of Santa Fe in 2007, the development problems that we faced remained too complex and challenging for the local government unit alone to handle. Consequently, one of the first actions I did during my second term was to engage external stakeholders. I saw the need to bring the many stakeholders of Santa Fe into the process of participatory development as this was the only way we could realize a better future for the municipality.

We encouraged stakeholder participation in government bodies and processes, which was, in fact, the brand of participatory development promoted by the Local Government Code of 1991. The Code stipulates that representations from various sectors should be guaranteed in local legislative assemblies and local special bodies, that is, women, agricultural workers, urban poor, disabled, or indigenous cultural communities should be put in local health boards, peace and order councils, school boards and–more importantly–local development councils. The Code also mandates public consultations in the planning and implementation of projects, while it encourages active partnerships with people's organizations and non-government organizations in the pursuit of development objectives, one such local special body allowing the direct participation of citizens is the local development council. The Code explicitly states that accredited people's organizations and non-government organizations should represent at least one-fourth of the total membership of the council.

The underrepresentation of some sectors in determining how to divide the development fund of a local government remained a matter of concern in many rural areas that functioned under a monopoly of power–Santa Fe included. The local development council should determine through a participatory process how the 20 percent development fund obtained from the Internal Revenue Allotment should be spent. For many years, this was not followed in Santa Fe. The development fund used to be appropriated at the behest of the mayor and was rubberstamped by the local legislature. Projects were determined and planned under the sole authority of the Mayor.

Then, during my second term, we started to bring in the non-government organizations, barangay[3] captains, and representatives from sectors of agriculture, the elderly, education, health, and indigenous peoples to local government bodies and processes. In doing so we were able to revolutionize and make participatory the appropriations of our municipality's local development fund, among others.

I convened a multi-stakeholder council to prepare the appropriations. Instead of working from fixed figures for each item, which was usually the case, all items began with zero appropriation, so that means of making the budget would truly proceed according to the needs of the people. During consultations, each sector put forward its own projects and proposals, which the council then assessed for inclusion in the local development fund.

Participatory budgeting was not easy. At certain points, I had to moderate differences among the sectors represented. As everyone thought his/her problem was the most important, I had to hold everything together and keep everyone working towards the same goal.

Beyond what is provided in the law, we also initiated numerous barangay consultations and sectoral summits where the people of Santa Fe were given opportunities to articulate their key concerns and identify possible programs that could be implemented collaboratively.

We conducted a development summit, an education summit, and a health summit, among others.

Overall, the effort to encourage and institutionalize people's participation in governance was our way of implementing "right-to-left planning.[4]" Everyone concerned first set overarching objectives, after which the strategies to meet these goals were determined. Whenever I engaged external stakeholders, I made it a point to ask them not only why they were there or what they wanted to achieve, but more importantly, I asked them: "How can you be part of the solution?" and "What can your contribution be?" These two questions might have sounded basic, but I believed them crucial in transforming Santa Fe politics. The residents are yet to grow accustomed to this new style of public discussion, a style that went beyond dole-outs.

The "right-to-left planning" proceeded by identifying key result areas and performance indicators for each objective. Baseline data for each performance indicator was supplied alongside three-year performance targets relative to the baseline data. Each of the performance targets, in turn, was matched to proposed programs and projects, and by the resources necessary to meet the targets.

By mainstreaming participation and opening both formal and informal channels to citizen involvement, I increasingly had to let go of the top-down command that I was used to, given my military background. It was not easy. Unlike top-down decision-making characterized by swiftness and relative ease, participatory governance could be tiring and frustrating. Moreover, it was imperative for me to demonstrate that participation was not a futile political exercise at all, but an actual step forward in delivering results. I particularly had a hard time convincing the Sangguniang Bayan–with whom the approval of the budget rests–that participation would enhance their political capital and that, in the end, it would pay off.

More and more, the local government leaders, including I, had to learn the softer, more interpersonal style of leadership that was all about listening to people's needs and acting on them. Slowly, we were able to galvanize all sectors of Santa Fe: the local government, the non-government organizations, the missionary communities, the environmentalists, the farmers, as well as the poor and largely illiterate community.

Participation had since become Santa Fe's brand of governance and came to characterize the different functions of the local government such as budget appropriation, conflict resolution, development planning, and environmental conservation. In fact, the participation of local leaders from various sectors in governance was institutionalized through the creation of PART[5] Santa Fe. PART meets regularly and discusses matters pertaining to the development of Santa Fe that can be brought to the attention of the local government unit. At the start, I convened and chaired the meetings of PART. However, in order to make PART independent from the local government unit and be an effective mechanism for check and balance, I decided to no longer be directly involved in its operations.

Although we were making tremendous headway in getting more external stakeholders to participate in governance, I noticed that my own bureaucracy lagged behind; in fact, sometimes conflict between external stakeholders and the members of my internal bureaucracy erupted regarding what projects to implement and how to implement them. I saw the limits of what can be achieved if I became content with movement outside the local government unit, without addressing the complacency within the local government unit. It was imperative for the bureaucracy of Santa Fe to turn around.

Internal Changes: Turning the Bureaucracy Around

To begin to understand why my bureaucracy was complacent, the first thing that I did was to conduct a gen-

3 Village.

4 Right-to-left planning is a management tool that emphasizes the importance of clarifying the long-term and overall vision. The vision, according to the symbolism that the tool subscribes to, is the rightmost end in usual texts. As such, after clarifying the vision, one should work leftwards through the mission, objectives, key result areas, performance indicators, and finally strategies (with their accompanying programs, activities, timetable, and resources) that will all ultimately lead to the vision.

5 PART is an acronym for Panagtitimpuyog ti Agnanayon nga Rang-ay Pagiti Tattao in Ilokano, which can be translated to "Moving Together for the Sustainable Development of the People."

erative dialogue with all the department heads and employees of the local government. Through the generative dialogue, I found out that the main reason for the inaction of my bureaucracy was inadequate salary.

While I told them I respected that, I also made it clear to them that if they wanted higher pay, they needed to have a good return on investment. I wanted the employees to realize that I cannot raise their salary by myself without their help. It is the responsibility of the entire bureaucracy as the only way their monthly pay can be raised is by increasing the income of the municipality. As such, department heads and employees alike must work hard together so that the local government of Santa Fe will be responsive and efficient and hence maximize municipal income. In this way, not only will the local government be in the position to increase salaries, it can also provide more and expanded benefits to its employees. I believe that this was pivotal in turning the bureaucracy around because it changed their motivation from targeting higher salaries as the end-goal to first ensuring that everyone does their share to make the local government perform its responsibilities in the best way it can.

Through the dialogues, we reached a management-employees' union agreement that covered various areas, ranging from salaries to tax collection. I increased salaries across the board, added loyalty pay and hazard pay, and included a bigger 20-year pay for local government veterans. However, in return, I insisted on outcome-based planning for all local government departments. I also insisted that each employee must be able to show objectively that they had done their part in promoting tourism, attracting investments, increasing income and tax collections, and even properly using government supplies, among others.

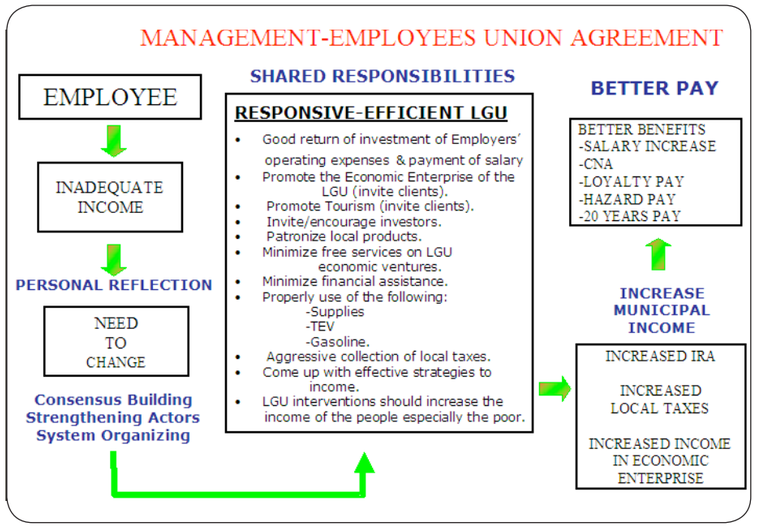

Figure 1: Result of Dialogues & Consultations

Figure 1: Result of Dialogues & Consultations

Eventually, I also personally helped organize and formalize the employees' union, placing them in a better position to clarify their grievances and have these prioritized by the management on a regular basis. The transformation of our local government bureaucracy included the creation of the Santa Fe Employees' Association for the rank and file employees and the organization of the Santa Fe LGU Management for the elected officials and the heads of departments. Institutionalizing these bodies did not only facilitate better dialogue between the management and the union; more importantly, it facilitated the sharing of responsibilities by the two bodies that met regularly for comprehensive bargaining agreements and other matters. The inclusion of department heads as part of management has changed their mindset from being mere employees to being managers as well.

The creation of Santa Fe Employees' Association and Santa Fe LGU Management paved way for the current implementation of Performance Management System. The system enumerates and categorizes all tasks of each employee; it indicates the maximum time allotted for completion of individual task and the points earned when the task is completed.

As early as 2004, I already raised the idea of measuring the performance of every employee in an objective manner; installing a Performance Management System was my goal and aspiration. Nevertheless, I met stiff resistance from almost all employees so that the idea was shelved at that time.

Upon my re-election in 2007, however, I was determined to put up a Performance Management System for job order employees. I designed one and started to implement this in June 2007. As permanent employees during that time refused to believe in the system, I limited its use to job order employees.

But I had the opportunity to realize my aspiration when in June 2008, the Civil Service Commission of Region 2 came to Santa Fe to inform both permanent and contractual employees that the commission had a new directive for government agencies to quantify and qualify the performance of their employees and offices. Establishing a Performance Management System became an imperative. The commission left the decision on the method in evaluating performance to the local governments.

At this juncture, I convened my department heads and tasked them to be the Calibration Committee that would lead the crafting and implementation of Santa Fe's bureaucracy-wide Performance Management System. To make the process of designing the system participatory, we involved the rank and file, the job order employees, and the department heads. Everyone was asked to list down all his/her tasks, which were then reviewed together and assigned corresponding points. The idea behind the system was to make explicit the level of effort that each employee puts in every task to earn the required 8 points per day.

Eventually, the system made it possible for us to determine whether the work force in an office or in a project exceeded the need. For example, if my driver wanted to earn the required number of points, he could not merely drive me to and from the office and just sit around for the rest of the time. To meet the required number of points, he had to find other ways to be productive, such as driving for others or doing errands.

Meanwhile, because of the involvement of everyone, the task of coming up with a good Performance Management System was not too difficult. It took the Calibration Committee three months to finish the draft of the system.

On 1 September 2008, the Local Government Unit of Santa Fe began the test run of its new Performance Management System, and after making few adjustments, we decided to formally launch the system on 23 September 2008.

To complement the Performance Management System, the LGU of Santa Fe, spearheaded by a taskforce, started to work for the Santa Fe Citizens' Charter in February 2009. The Citizens' Charter contains the list of all the frontline services that the local government offers, our commitment in terms of response time for each of these services, and the people and departments that are in charge.

In the end, it was when external and internal positive changes finally coincided that the opportunity was ripe for us to transform institutional arrangements toward introducing a new anti-poverty program and reviving an old tradition for conflict mediation.

New Arrangements in Action: The Anti-Poverty Program and the Strengthening of the Tongtongan System

The success experienced in making institutional arrangements more inclusive and participative was most evident in the changes made on our anti-poverty program. This was important to me as poverty reduction and livelihood generation have always been my top priorities. It is also my goal to increase the income of farmers, primarily through crop diversification and better market price.

Previously, anti-poverty programs for farmers were limited to dole-outs of goats and chickens. Hardly were there collaborative partnerships. In addition, farmers–most of them illiterate–were reluctant to cooperate with local government projects. There were no concrete arrangements between the service providers and the farmer-beneficiaries in place. Livelihood programs, as a result, were not intelligently planned and executed, leading to low return on investment. Previous programs promoted low yield and low-value crops and products made from raw materials unavailable in the municipality. Furthermore, marketing was not carefully studied and strict supervision was absent.

We wanted to change this set-up and help farmers. For this reason, we exerted great efforts to understand what hindered their increased incomes.

From our studies and conversations with the farmers, we learned that the traditional tendency to keep chickens in one's own backyard was actually counterproductive because not only do chickens destroy farmers' produce, but the cost of feeding them is actually higher than the actual market price of the chickens. We also learned that our farmers did not diversify their crops, making them extremely vulnerable to external shocks such as typhoons. Finally, we learned that our farmers actually had a lot of idle time and that the contribution of family members to farming activities was not maximized.

Based on the findings, we set aside PhP 1 million for the anti-poverty fund devoted to providing strategic loan support to deserving farmers. An anti-poverty team consisting of lo-

cal government representatives from the departments involved in social welfare, agriculture, economic enterprises, development and planning, as well as the Mayor's Office, determined the appropriation. The anti-poverty team met every Wednesday to discuss, monitor, and deliberate on livelihood issues affecting the 16 barangays of Santa Fe.

The team's primary goal was to ensure that no one in Santa Fe remained poor or went hungry. To this end the team worked together to make sure that the people were provided appropriate economic opportunities. We also ensured that the problems were answered without delay by meeting for urgent concerns on days other than Wednesday, if need be.

The team met regularly with religious organizations that provide relief goods during emergencies and calamities, cooperatives and local banks, provincial-level government representatives from trade and industry as well as agrarian reform, representatives from the regional office of the Department of Agriculture and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and with representatives of non-government organizations for coordination and additional support.

Another important feature of the anti-poverty team was the rotation of presiding officers during the team's meetings; I did not chair the team's meetings all the time. The assigned presiding officer on a particular meeting was expected to set the agenda of the meeting. This arrangement reinforced our commitment in sharing the responsibility of helping the farmers and that we all had to contribute towards this end. This arrangement was different from that of the past when people always turned to me for answers whenever problems arose.

Under the new anti-poverty program, instead of the regular dole-outs of goats and chickens, each family was encouraged to apply for assistance. Thereafter, the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office endorsed the applicant family to the anti-poverty team. After validating that the family was indigent and had been given orientation regarding the project, the applicant family was asked to list its regular farming activities so that idle time and the present contributions of the different family members could be determined. Such information were vital in determining what else the family could do to augment its income, aside from the usual farming activities they engaged in. It is then asked to come up with a livelihood plan. Also crucial to the process were the interviews conducted by the local government departments and the representatives of the training programs, including values orientation, for the whole family. Once the anti-poverty team approved a family's livelihood plan and proper validation done, the Municipal Agricultural Office (MAO) provided the necessary technical assistance, guided, and monitored the progress of the family each step of the way.

The major steps that an indigent applicant family must undergo to avail of the anti-poverty assistance are as follows: first, the applicant had to prepare the land before MAO could release the seeds. Next, the fertilizers were issued once it was verified that the seeds had indeed grown. At every stage of the planting, the release of the succeeding farm inputs depended on the success of the previous stages. Thus, what were provided were only the materials and help needed, and only those that consistently worked were supported. This practice differed from the previous one when farmers were given all the inputs at the start, leading them to sell most of these inputs one the crops failed.

Further, under the new system, as soon as the crops were harvested, the local government, through the Municipal Economic Enterprise Office, accompanied the farmers when they sold their products. This move was strategic because it gave the local government the opportunity to collect payments for loans and interest, as soon as the farmers had cash in hand. We learned it was hard to collect payments when farmers already spent the money received from selling their produce as this only increased their indebtedness and made them even poorer.

We also applied this participatory model in the empowerment of indigenous peoples, since Santa Fe is an indigenous community. I spoke Ikalahan fluently and, in fact, I considered myself part of the Ikalahan tribe, a sub-group of the larger indigenous peoples of the northern Cordilleras stretching as far as Benguet and Ifugao Province. One of my core interests is strengthening the tongtongan system, the traditional system of conflict resolution among the Ikalahan. As they had been doing for centuries, the Ikalahans often resolve their problems by presenting them to an informal council of local elders. The accuser and the accused would stand before the informal council; before which, acknowledgement and acceptance of conflict was both immediate and straightforward. Under the traditional system of conflict resolution, there was no room for denial; acceptance was a prerequisite. We began to document the tongtongan system process and encouraged the involvement of the youth in learning this important process of governance to ensuring its sustainability.

Initial Results

Given the changes initiated in the operations of the local government, working with other local stakeholders, and providing services, especially poverty alleviation programs for our farmers, we began to see initial results and small victories.

In terms of reforming the bureaucracy, we saw how the creation of the Santa Fe Employees' Association and the Santa Fe LGU Management, together with the newly introduced Performance Management System, improved working relationships in the local government. At the same time, the performance of our local government in almost all fronts of service provision has become better because the employees are now more productive and efficient. Aside from our own beneficiaries being satisfied, many residents of neighboring municipalities began to avail of our services.

After making governance a shared responsibility, we began to enjoy better working relationships with various stakeholders and attracted new partners. For education, an agreement was forged among the three main education stakeholders: the local government, the Department of Education, and the parents. The good working relationship of these three groups enabled them to help the students do better. As testimony to better working relationships, I made it a point to provide construction materials for all the schools during the Brigada Eskuwela[6] conducted in preparation for another school year. While formerly it was an ordeal for education stakeholders to approach the local government for assistance in the procurement of construction materials for schools, now there is no need to ask for what is needed because it is simply provided, thanks to the greater sharing of information among the education stakeholders, based on the new relationships.

Simultaneously we worked with Jollibee Foods Corporation in providing agro-enterprise trainings to our farmers. The farmers included in our program were on their fourth of eight steps in the "mastering process." They went to Manila as part of their training and met potential institutional buyers of their products, among them mall outlets and distributors in wet markets.

On the environmental front, we partnered with the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement to implement a participatory forest-management program with a livelihood component for some of our farmers. National government line agencies, such as the RDA, TESDA, and DTI, participated in this project.

We are beginning to see how these efforts to make the bureaucracy more responsive and collaborative with various stakeholders are reflected in the lives of the people in the grassroots. The repayment rate of the successful beneficiaries of our anti-poverty program on its first semester of implementation, for example, was 95 percent. As of February 2009, we increased the profit of our farmers by PhP 4 pesos per kilo of beans, bell pepper, carrots, and tomatoes. In terms of health, we managed to increase PhilHealth coverage to about 85 percent of indigents, from 60 percent. We plan to increase coverage to between 95 and 100 percent in the succeeding years. In addition, our rural health units are now open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Conclusion

At this point, I can say that the people of the Municipality of Santa Fe and I had gone a long way. Though far from perfect, our new brand of governance is a work in progress, especially since the goal of comprehensive participation that we are slowly institutionalizing has yet to be translates into quantifiable results.

Nevertheless, we remain committed to the changing politics in Santa Fe so that true empowerment, as evidenced by participation in governance, can be achieved. We remained hopeful that the changes initiated thus far would be carried over, even after my term.

I have no plans of being a politician forever even as I would dare admit that part of what changed me throughout my leadership in the journey of Santa Fe towards change was the absence of fear in losing. Winning ceased to be my main concern and this attitude freed me to do what I had to do and to do what was right. I also realized that because I have personally changed, so have the people around me.

Inspiring people by being true to myself and believing in and upholding justice despite the limitations, I realized, was highly possible, then helping not because one had to obey orders but because one was inspired to help.

6 Brigada Eskuwela is a yearly undertaking, initiated by the Department of Education in 2003 where local volunteers contribute time and resources to physically prepare their schools for a new school year, such as cleaning and repairing classrooms as well as painting old desks.

KALAHI-CIDSS is the Philippine government's flagship poverty-alleviation project implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development through the financial support of the World Bank. It stands for Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services.

KALAHI-CIDSS runs in 184 municipalities. Its projects include, among others, basic social services (water systems, school buildings, health stations, day care centres, electrification and shelter), basic access infrastructures (farm to market roads, small bridges, access trails), community production, economic support facilities (pre-post harvest facilities, small scale irrigation, community transport, enterprise training) and environmental protection and conservation (drainage, river/flood control, sea wall, slope protection and sanitation facilities.

Camilo Gudmalin

National Project Manager, Kalahi-CIDSS, Department of Social Welfare and Development

INTRODUCTION

Conference Workshop
May 24, 2009

Dir. Camilo Gudmalin stands quietly in the middle of the conference hall, intently following the preparations being done by the DSWD staff as they attend to the final details of the upcoming workshop on Bridging Leadership for Local Government Units in Zamboanga City. He is in a good mood. In a few hours, participants from two of their three pilot municipalities will arrive. His team has outdone itself and he is proud of them. He smiles and says, "You have to understand from the very beginning that the DSWD is an agency that gives and keeps on giving."

Not one to call untoward attention to himself, he understands when to trust the decisions of his staff and when to step in to offer advice and direction. He continues, "Much of the success of the DSWD it owes to the passion and drive of the people in it. I see myself as a mentor and facilitator, rather than a director." The call to serve and respond to the needs of the disadvantaged is the common thread that binds the people in the agency who, in spite of the challenges, continue to work on uplifting the majority who are poor and vulnerable.

Today is no different. Chief executives, department heads, and members of the respective Municipal Councils (MCs) of the two of the poorest municipalities in Zamboanga peninsula will attend. The realities in their areas are dire and the work is serious, but the mood in the conference hall is encouraging and hopeful, reflecting Gudmalin's personal outlook and the potential he sees for his organization and its various stakeholders.

BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

At a young age, Camilo Gudmalin discovered that he was a naturally good at teaching, coaching and inspiring people. He believes that his purpose in life is to serve to others, helping them to help themselves. He recalled his college days, describing himself as a "scrawny little kid – the smallest in my ROTC platoon" which did not stop him from excelling academically. Through hard work and persistence he aced his engineering subjects when most of his classmates and platoon members failed.

He narrated, "One day, members of my platoon approached me and asked for my help. I began organizing coaching sessions for my classmates in order for them to bring up their grades. I would demonstrate how to solve complex problems by simplifying the concepts behind them, making them easier for other people to understand."

In return for these extra lectures, his platoon members helped him out during ROTC practice.

"So you see everything turned out well for all concerned! They were pretty thankful that they didn't have to repeat the subjects again, and I had an easier time during ROTC." He laughed.

Lessons from that simple time were not lost to Gudmalin. After graduation and as soon as he assumed a position of responsibility—as project engineer in the Department of Agrarian Reform in Zamboanga City where he supervised and managed infrastructure projects and worked with rebel returnees, he knew he had to develop the same kind of relationship with his peers, subordinates and staff. "I find it necessary for people around me to understand the whole process before getting to the details. This facilitated the achievement of my unit – they understood why things must be done accordingly. Only when we are in the same boat can we work together towards a common goal."

As more and more leadership opportunities[1] came his way, it became clearer to him how much better people responded to the tasks at hand when they understood the importance of each step taken towards the bigger goals of the collective. To achieve this, constant mentoring and engaging with his internal stakeholders was necessary.

This need became even more important when he became part of DSWD in 2003.

Having spent 22 years at DAR, Gudmalin was surprised when Dr. Aris Alip—a recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service and a former mentor of his—invited him to take his place as National Project Manager of Kalahi-CIDSS program of DSWD. He recalls his reaction then, "I was surprised. After all I am an engineer, not a social worker."

However, with his years of leadership experience, a solid record of accomplishment in project implementation and the desire to teach and learn, it was not surprising that this engineer was able to transition smoothly into development and social work. Having seen for himself the situation in Mindanao–the poverty, constant presence of armed conflict and people in need of basic services–Gudmalin became more convinced about the need to bridge the divide.

But before he could create reforms on the outside, he knew change needed to happen from within the agency itself. He observed how DSWD was weighed down by old practices that resulted in tensions between its national and regional offices. The physical and emotional demands of fieldwork compounded by the strained relationship between the national and regional offices took its toll on the employees. "The old practice was that of deficit monitoring, which means that the national office would look for what was not done, instead of looking at what has been accomplished. Naturally when you set out to look for mistakes, people begin to feel uncomfortable and defensive towards you," Gudmalin explained.

By patiently engaging his staff he realized that those in Manila needed to communicate strategies effectively to their regional counterparts. In order for the region-based staff to improve their outputs, they needed coaching on addressing specific issues they encountered in the field. He realized that communication and constant mentoring could help his staff break through the traditional paradigms they were moving in.

The coaching sessions paid off. He saw his staff move from monitoring to assistance, from tension to more

This write-up was written by Maria Meliza Tuba of the AIM TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership under the supervision of Philip Dy.

1 Director Gudmalin was promoted to Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer on January 1988 where he led a 7-man team in the implementation of the agrarian reform program. He became Chief of Project Development and Implementation Division in February 1990. He assisted the Regional Director in planning and implementing the Department's programs on land acquisition and distribution as Director III/Assistant Regional Director for Operations. He became Head of Operations at the Office of the Secretariat at Quezon City in January 1996. From March 1998 to September 2003, as Program Manager, he supervised multi-million peso projects where he designed and implemented integrated development projects with sustainability mechanisms and saving-credit operations.

open communication. "It is a balance," Gudmalin noted, "Minsan ang pagturo, pag hindi kailangan (Sometimes when it is not necessary, teaching), becomes an imposition. But when everyone understands why we do the things we do, only then can we begin to see improved results."

In 2007 another challenge confronted Gudmalin. He noticed several key projects were not coming up with the results as expected. He had already invested several trips to the areas and had spent considerable time talking to and coaching the regional employees but to no avail. He went through his targets and noted that there was simply no way he could scale up what he presently had in order to come up with something substantial by the dates he had set for himself.

Being the pro-active learner that he is, Gudmalin sought out the answers to his dilemma the best way he knew how. "When I don't understand something, I always make a point to ask about it. I've been lucky to have supervisors who ended up mentoring me in one way or another," he said. He approached Professor Ernesto Garilao who had been one of his mentors at the Department of Agrarian Reform, for advice. At that time, Professor Garilao had been achieving positive results from the AIM Team Energy's Bridging Leadership Program and word about this innovative leadership approach had spread quickly. Gudmalin had heard good things about it from Mr. Vlad Hernandez (Cohort 2) but it was Professor Garilao who deepened his understanding of the potential of Bridging Leadership for himself and his programs.

"I got involved with Bridging Leadership even before I took on the fellowship." He explained, "I spent some of the best years of my life in DAR, and in the process, I was lucky enough to have worked closely with Professor Garilao. He was the one who told me that I had to go back to the root of what we were doing, otherwise the staff might get burned out and I will not be able to get what I need from them–which was exactly what was happening to us then!"

Through focused group discussions held during a workshop for Kalahi-CIDSS Regional Project Managers, Gudmalin was able to confirm that five years of meeting deadlines and targets left most of the Program Managers' spirits frayed and exhausted. With those findings, he packaged a proposal for a Bridging Leadership course for selected national and regional KALAHI-CIDSS staff. The workshop brought the participants to their original disposition when they first began social work, back to when the project was their life's mission and the "longing of their hearts and souls". The Project Managers concluded the workshop with a renewed sense of purpose.

They didn't have to wait long for the effects of the workshop to reach other staff members. This "domino effect" was enabled by the Project Managers themselves who echoed Bridging Leadership to their regional staff, including some staff from the local government units they worked with. Gudmalin is proud to have been part of the team that introduced Bridging Leadership to different regions. He served as resource person in CARAGA and in Regions 9 and 12, but he did not stop there. In his capacity as National Project Manager, he organized his technical staff into a core group that facilitated training programs in the regions. Core groups were then organized in every municipality to work closely with local government units and come up with more ways of improving local governance to address poverty.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE POOREST OF THE POOR

The divide of poverty took a more personal turn for Gudmalin when sat before the interview panel for a fellowship position in the AIM-Team Energy Bridging Leadership for Muslim Communities Program. "It was then that I realized how personal this has become for me."

Staying true to his Kalahi-CIDSS background, the issue Gudmalin sought to address was poverty. He explains, "With a diverse population, Mindanao is a cultural melting pot, where the most vulnerable groups are the minorities – the indigenous tribes and the Muslims. These sectors are small, voiceless and powerless and become easy prey for armed bandits. If we are not careful, these poor municipalities will become the next hot points of armed conflict–something that could seriously undermine the drive towards development."

Being relatively new to the development field he had very little social capital to work with, a challenge that added a new dimension to his leadership journey. A self-described introvert, he had to get out of his comfort zone to build relationships with the people who could help him make change happen. "To address the issues of the vulnerable, there is a need to strengthen the leaders. Leaders must be able to address the seriousness of the divide–which is particularly glaring when you visit the barangays[1]."

The absence of adequate roads, lack of access to potable water, and children suffering from malnutrition–these are only some of the conditions that plagued the poorest barangays, which until recently were voiceless and virtually invisible to the outside world. Save for the handful of DSWD social workers who regularly made the difficult trek to engage the communities in dialogue and social preparation for Kalahi-CIDSS, no one had really bothered to listen to what they had to say.

The Kalahi-CIDSS' initial approach involved engaging the most helpless and the hopeless at the barangay level. Gudmalin and his core group sought to "build demand first" by bringing development to the people in the grass roots and changing those who are at the first layer of poverty. In the beginning, they thought that, "If we directly injected help into and relied heavily on the municipalities, we might end up helping those who do not necessarily need our help." Also, by helping the barangays its members would have a voice. Once the barangays have that voice, they should be able to make the people in the municipality–their elected officials and members of its bureaucracy–realize that they can make demands and make themselves heard.

By talking to and engaging the barangays directly, communities developed self-esteem and became more confident, and barangay leaders became more responsive to the needs of their constituents. Mentoring, now on a bigger and wider scale, opened up more possibilities for the program and infused a new mentality in Gudmalin's team: "We cannot continue rowing just by ourselves; we have to teach others to row as well. We must assume a new role now – that of steering the ship."

The people began to own the programs that were being implemented. Gudmalin shared a story about the expansion of a school building funded by Kalahi-CIDSS.

> "One portion of the school was built by a contractor almost at the same time as the annex building which was built by the members of the community themselves. A year after the building's completion, the contractor-built portion was poorly maintained and already looked run-down. The portion that the people made however was very well maintained and the people made sure that repairs were undertaken regularly. Amin ito (This is ours), the people would often say."

After the communities were empowered to voice their demands, the next question for the Kalahi-CIDSS team was: Who can make these demands possible?

For Gudmalin it became very clear that the necessary element in building support for the barangays was in the ability of the LGU to adopt the community-driven processes initiated by Kalahi-CIDSS that was already integrated by local communities into the local development planning activities of the municipalities.
To him, this was precisely why engaging local government units is important. When you engage the people below without preparing the over-all governance structure, you create friction. Barangays start to demand what is due them. And when the municipality is ill-prepared to accommodate their requests, it is rendered powerless to provide their constituents with real development.

"Then the culture of distrust begins anew," said Gudmalin, "when the Sangguniang Bayan or the bureaucrats have different priorities or personal biases, these can ruin a good program. This situation happens when not everyone is on the same boat."

Getting everyone on the same boat became his next challenge.

MAKAMASANG TUGON

Government As Main Stakeholder In Community Driven Projects

The most common reaction Gudmalin gets when he shares his stories is: "You did all of that?" He shakes his head when people say that, but he understands their initial disbelief. Kalahi-CIDSS has been quelling whispers of disbelief for the past six years, and the project has been steadfast in its campaign even in the most daunting of circumstances.

> "Of course, at first glance it would all seem so flawless and so easy. But getting to the results we have now was a long and painstaking process. It most definitely was not easy," he recalled. Once the barangays were on board, the

1 Village.

next step was to engage the local chief executives–a task easier said than done.

In the course of empowering the barangays, Gudmalin noted that they had apparently neglected to develop the local government units which are mandated to ensure that the barangay projects are provided with adequate funds and are successfully carried out. And now, the barangays were voicing their demands but were met with local government units that were ill-prepared to accommodate them. "Supports from the LGUs are an integral part of the development puzzle. The local chief executives and other LGU agencies need to be engaged if the projects are to succeed," said Gudmalin.

In Kalahi-CIDSS practice and in the interest of project continuity, responsibilities in sustaining the projects are given to the communities and LGUs. Community driven development (CDD) technology, such as participatory local development planning and resource allocation and social capital formation, needed to be embedded into the local governments' planning and development cycle.

In practice, the local planning and budgeting processes prescribed in the Local Government Code are not always followed faithfully by LGUs, which results in local plans and budgets that are sub-optimal, where priorities are often not responsive to the needs of poor communities. This is a recipe for enduring poverty and disempowered citizens who feel powerless to change their present circumstances.

To respond to these challenges, the Gudmalin and his team conducted a series of consultations with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) that which affirmed the need for closer collaboration between the two departments. This facilitates and harmonizes established local government planning and budgeting processes, mechanisms and timelines, and the highly participatory CDD processes developed by the Kalahi- CIDSS project. From there, a Joint DSWD-DILG Sub-committee was formed to further define this harmonization and guide the implementation of a pilot harmonization process in selected Kalahi-CIDSS areas. Thus, the Makamasang Tugon Pilot Initiative of the Kalahi-CIDSS Project was born.

One of the primary goals of Makamasang Tugon was to address the capacities of the local government units and to embed their existing systems with the principles of governance–participation, transparency, and accountability. Makamasang Tugon aims to consolidate the gains acquired from engagement with Kalahi-CIDSS in poverty alleviation, enhancement of local government, and community empowerment by harmonizing Community Driven Development within the Local Planning Process.

"After all, we are not aiming to transform, but to reform the present system," Gudmalin added.

In the beginning, the town mayors were sceptical. As local chief executives, they usually focused on the projects and had little concern for the processes that went on behind these projects. Kalahi-CIDSS had the burden of showing that its system was a sound one, and that most of all, it was a system that worked and delivered results.

Barangay Assemblies were invaluable in showing local mayors how to better engage their constituents in developing programs and services that directly address their needs.

He cited a story shared to him by Mayor Randy Climaco from Tungawan, in the province of Zamboanga Sibugay:

> "Ngayon ko lang nalaman, through the Barangay Assemblies, na ang problema ng munisipyo ko ay tubig (It is only now, through the Barangay Assemblies, that I realized that the problem in my municipality is water)," particularly access to clean and potable water. He was surprised at the result because this concern was not reflected in their Municipal Development Plan. The MDP, which was prepared by the municipality's engineers, was peppered with other projects like road maintenance, but never touched on the issue of water. When he was finally able to speak to his 23 barangay captains, 15 of them reported the need for potable water. Closer interaction with the barangays also enabled the mayor and other Sangguniang Bayan members to travel to the farthest barangays–a scenario that used to be impossible because of the highly volatile peace and order situation. But because the mayor directly coordinated with the captain of the barangay, the latter was able to assure his safety and for the first time ever, a local chief executive was able to reach the far flung barangay."

Once the mayors saw the results for themselves, the Kalahi-CIDSS projects were seen as perfect opportunities for municipal development. Mayors began to recognize how effective the Kalahi-CIDSS programs were and started to participate actively in the processes.

THE CASE OF TUNGAWAN, ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY

When Director Gudmalin chose three of the poorest municipalities in Zamboanga and Lanao del Norte as his Bridging Leadership project areas, he knew he had his work cut out for him. Turning their situations around was by no means easy feat. If he was to succeed, he would need the unwavering support and commitment of his staff, the local chief executives of the municipalities, and the bureaucratic support. Leaving one's comfort zone and making the effort to collaborate and engage with his different stakeholders are among the most important lessons drawn by Gudmalin from the Bridging Leadership program. Gudmalin was both strategic and lucky in his choice of local partners.

Randy Climaco, the youngest of the three mayors he is working with, first met Gudmalin during Kalahi-CIDSS' first cycle of implementation. A first-term mayor, Climaco was eager to get his municipality on track. The mere mention of Tungawan once conjured unpleasant images to people. Climaco describes the Tungawan of old as a "no man's land" where many constituents turned to carrying arms for the MNLF because of poverty. While conditions have improved since, the stigma is still there and it is an uphill battle for those working tirelessly for development to flourish in the municipality.

Tungawan remains one of the poorest municipalities of Zamboanga Sibugay–but the young mayor is undaunted. He says he is inspired by Gudmalin, who first struck him as "someone professional, straight-forward, focused, nd was someone who listened well." Like Gudmalin he believes that slowly, change is coming to the municipality. With the entry of Kalahi-CIDSS, people began to claim ownership over the projects implemented in their locales.

The commitment of the people to the projects is unmistakable–"On their own initiative, people would repair farm-to-market roads even without pay," Climaco says. This has significantly eased the burden on the municipal government, which is now able to focus on other matters such as improving the peace and order situation in the municipality. Because of regular consultations through the Barangay Assembly, problems of the people on the ground surfaced and enabled the municipal government to allocate its meager resources more strategically.

"But what I am most impressed and thankful to Kalahi-CIDSS for is that corruption has been greatly diminished," Climaco added. "Because project selection and bidding have been gradually returned to the people there is less opportunity for others to take advantage."

Taking a cue from Gudmalin, whom he considers his mentor, he realizes the importance of getting everyone in his team to be on the same page. Mayor Climaco, some members of the Sangguniang Bayan, and his department heads participated in a 5-day BL training organized by DSWD that invisioned to improve local governance and to make the LGU more responsive to the needs of its constituents.

Gudmalin concluded,

> "How does the Project motivate poor people to participate in the development processes despite claims of being tedious, long and cumbersome? What drives participation, based on our experience, people long to be informed especially on issues that affect or benefit them; they need to be heard. This simple act of consulting and the willingness of government to listen motivate people to participate in the affairs of the village. The opportunity to participate in decision-making enhances their social capital and standing in the community. It is good for their self-esteem and self-respect. And finally the opportunity to put into action their cherished sub-project reinforced the feeling that despite being poor, they have the ability to make a difference in the community.
>
> Kalahi-CIDSS opened up spaces for community leaders and volunteers to engage local government units through their active involvement in village and municipal development councils. I believe the test of an empowered community lies on its ability to engage the government."

Brigadier General Rustico Guerrero

Commander
Task Force Comet
Armed Forces
of the Philippines

The write-up was written by Cecille Joyce Lao under the supervision of Philip Dy of the Asian Institute of Management Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership.

"When the Filipino Muslims start to trust the government and the Philippine Constitution more than the ASG, there is hope for peace and development in southern Philippines."

Joining the military was a childhood dream of Guerrero. As a kid, he was amazed with the pomp and pageantry of the armed forces parades, but more than these, the heroism it championed. He would spend hours in front of the television watching war films and military drills. In 1977, he was accepted in the Philippine Military Academy (PMA). While in the academy, he learned discipline as a source of personal development.

Guerrero graduated from the PMA in 1981. After completing the Naval Officer's Qualification Course, he volunteered for the Philippine Marine Corps. He completed a number of assignments in Central and Western Mindanao, Central Luzon, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) General Headquarters before becoming commander of the 1st Marine Brigade in Basilan in August 2007. He also trained and specialized in a number of courses in the country and abroad before heading the Marine Corps Training Center in Fort Bonifacio and Cavite, the premier training institution of the Marine Corps.

As he rose in rank, the number of local government units, communities, and other stakeholders he needed to engage has also grown proportionately, as well the scope of the projects he worked with them. He shared,

> "When I first became a Lieutenant, the military was already dealing with the insurgency problem. The response used to be a purely military solution, a simple case of managing a violent environment. But the AFP has since realized that longstanding conflicts are multi-dimensional, so they need a multi-faceted approach as well. Insurgency thrives in a society where basic social and economic needs are not met. Poverty and the discontent it causes can lead to its politicization and, in some cases, to violent actions against political objects and actors."

The recognition of the military of the many dimensions that shape the conflict in Mindanao has led it to acknowledge the importance of working with other actors for reasons other than just gathering intelligences. "They've realized that the military alone can't solve the peace and order issue–everyone with a stake in the problem needs to get involved. We are not the solution. It is everybody's concern, all the stakeholders."

Called to Duty

On July 10, 2007, 14 Marines were killed after a day-long encounter, 10 of them beheaded by the ASG and some breakaway members of the MILF. Another major clash occurred on August 18 as the AFP stepped up efforts against the lawless groups to eliminate kidnapping and terror activities in the area. The operation resulted in numerous casualties from both sides. Guerrero was appointed Brigade Commander of the 1st Marine Battalion in Basilan, 4 days after the operation, Although He admitted that his preparation for the assignment was inadequate, he took the transfer in stride. "Since there is a job to be done and as a good Marine, we obey orders even at the most extreme circumstances."

Guerrero's unit was in-charged with restoring peace in the province and delivering services to the people that promote socio-economic growth. Clearly, this meant neutralizing the armed threat in the area so that the police could take charge of the safety of the residents of the province once again. Aside from combat, the Marines also had the additional responsibility of supporting local development efforts, primarily through infrastructure and education projects.

This was not the first time Guerrero would have to confront the ASG, so he knew the mission would not be easy. The rebel group was deeply entrenched in Basilan, with many variables working in their favor.

Access to the interior of Basilan remains limited. There are few roads, most of which turn into bogs during the rainy season, and thick forest cover makes aerial reconnaissance impossible. Whatever advantages government troops have, such as their more superior number and equipment, did not give them wide lead over the rebel.

Basilan's socio-economic conditions encourage the existence of groups such as the ASG. Insurgency thrives in communities where poverty and discontent are widespread, and Basilan's people have much to be unhappy about. Lack of education and illiteracy are problems compounded with inadequate classrooms and materials, frequent disruptions of classes because of armed conflicts, and teachers who are too frightened to go to remote areas. Health services available to the people in the province are limited; most hospitals lack even the most basic facilities.

Ownership of business establishments is also concentrated to a small number of rich Muslim and Chinese-mestizo families. As a result, wealth distribution tilts in favor of a few while the majority of the populace lives below poverty line.

The huge disparity in the province's living standards opens up a space for anti-government movements to draw discontented individuals to their cause. The ASG has tried to take advantage of this through raising support by touting Islamic fundamentalism as a way out of the people's suffering. The group still acquires most of its funds using illegal means. It relies on the support, voluntary or coerced, of the communities in their area of operations by extorting monthly taxes from residents, teachers, businessmen, and illegal loggers, aside from engaging in kidnap-for-ransom activities. Local residents comprise most of the ASG's hostages nowadays (as opposed to foreign nationals before). The fear prevalent among the majority of the populace caused them to side with the ASG over the government. It is thus also important to consider these individuals and communities as critical factors in the fight to eliminate the ASG.

Finally, the ASG is also inextricably tied to life and politics in the communities of Basilan. Most members had come from these same barangays[1] and municipalities, and so were always somebody's child, sibling, cousin, in-law, husband, father, or friend. This alone made it unlikely that people would give them up. Moreover, but many had also developed ties with local leaders that gave them an added layer of protection.

In 2008, the Marines traced back weapons they had found after skirmishes with the ASG to one of the mayors in the province. This was after their efforts to disarm Basilan's local officials in order to contain the power struggle that the death of Wahab Akbar, a Basilan strongman, triggered.[2] While some local officials denied any alliances with the ASG, it was likely that they had lent the rebels support to derail military campaigns.

On the other side, absentee mayors also pose problems for the military. When mayors are not present to do their jobs, services suffer and communities become vulnerable to the influence of the ASG.

For Guerrero, all these factors emphasize the complexity of the situation in Basilan and, thus, the inadequacy of a combat-only approach to the problem. Although the physical security of the province remained the primary mission of his unit, there needed to be just as much thought and effort invested in the civic aspect of their operations.

1 Villages.

2 Wahab Akbar was a Filipino politician who served three terms as governor of Basilan. Later elected as representative of the lone district of Basilan in the House of Representatives, Akbar was one of 5 people killed in a bomb attack at the Batasang Pambansa on November 13, 2007. Police suspected that the attack was directed at him. The blast also killed the driver of another legislator and 3 others, including one of Akbar's own aides.

Failure to address the socio-economic problems means that whatever peace the AFP wins through combat will not last long. The ASG (or other groups like it) would simply continue recruiting disgruntled citizens and regain strength once the military pulled out of Basilan. Without stabilizing the peace and order situation in the province, development efforts will not have the space or the time they need to flourish, thus restarting the cycle of poverty and violence. More than just building roads and escorting doctors, this meant that Guerrero and his men would have to engage with the different stakeholders in the province. These included everyone from the civil society organizations (CSOs) and the religious to government line agencies and elected officials. He did not believe that the consultations and dialogues should remain at the top-level, among the Commanders, the Governor, the mayors, the imams, and the heads of the CSOs. To regain the community's trust, to convince them that the military was sincere in its desire to help and make the changes made sustainable, it would have to permeate down to the frontlines, at the level of the barangay captains, concerned citizens, and Guerrero's lowest-ranked Marines. This decentralized approach is consistent with the hierarchal set-up of the military, where delegation filters through to the lowest unit leader.

Civil-Military Operations and Stakeholder Engagement

Guerrero and his unit began their civil-military operations (CMOs) in Basilan in September 2007, just as soon as the situation on the ground was stable enough to allow them. Civil-military operations refer to the non-combat activities that the AFP engages in to help achieve its overall objectives in an area. Interaction with different stakeholders is one of the primary components of CMOs. Guerrero's unit conducted almost all of their CMOs in tandem with government and non-government groups in Basilan. This emphasis on collaboration is part of their strategy and goal for a number of reasons:

First, the brigade did not have the resources to conduct all of those projects on its own. Because its primary mission remains securing the safety of the communities, it had little funds available for these programs. What it did have, however, was manpower and the ability to stabilize the peace and order situation in most barangays. Collaborating with local government units, line agencies, CSOs, and other groups not only gave the brigade additional feedback on the communities' needs, it allowed it to maximize its resources and expand the impact of its work. The brigade's projects on infrastructure, environment, and health all benefited from this collaboration, as in the construction of two Area Coordinating Center buildings in Lamitan funded by the US military and build by the Philippine and US Navy engineers. Supplies for similar activities typically came from local officials, the US military, and various funding agencies, while the Marines themselves rendered the labor.

Another example was the post-conflict operations of the unit in Basilan's towns that were hit worst by the war. In situations where displacement of the residents was unavoidable, the Provincial Social Welfare Office, Provincial Health Office, NGOs, and the AFP worked together afterwards to distribute relief goods and provide other assistance to affected communities.

Second, collaboration provided them with a way to sustain their gains in the province. From the start, Guerrero understood clearly that the AFP only gives assistance in whatever way it can to address gaps in basic services in affected communities. It was not its responsibility to take over the functions of the local government units or various line agencies

Most of the solutions they offered were short-term ones. Partnership with other organizations, including groups with the mandate to provide for such services, allowed them to place their activities within longer-range strategies to address Basilan issues that have to do with education, health, and environment. It also made it easier to turn over projects to communities and local government units and ensure their continuation given their shared sense of ownership over the intervention.

More fundamentally, however, collaboration gave them way for communities and groups to regain their confidence in themselves and transform their relationships with each other. One of the effects of the continuing underdevelopment of the province was the detachment that the people felt from the government. Life was difficult, and when even their leaders seemed incapable of helping them improve their lives, they became vulnerable to the pull of groups like the ASG. To address this, the military and other government units needed to go beyond combat operations and development initiatives; they needed to recover the goodwill of the people.

As a part of their strategy, the Marines took on this challenge and became the means for other leaders to come together. Local commanders would encourage mayors, barangay captains, and other officials to function by involving them in all crisis and peace and order decision-making and implementation efforts. In areas lacking development efforts, Marines came in to trigger them using various CMO programs.

Depending on the needs of a community, a unit's civil-military operations can include anything from road repairs to medical missions to mangrove reforestation. For the most part, however, the 1st Marine Brigade kept its CMO efforts focused on just a number of programs. These activities were organized following Guerrero's campaign plan for the province but were mostly initiated by the units under his command. He explained, "I was responsible for the provincial level while my officers engaged with the mayors and the barangays. We each had our own roles and tasks." Guerrero's commanders understood the long-term strategy of the AFP for Basilan, but they still have to get feedback from the community. This made delegation useful not only in distributing work, but also in ensuring that CMOs remained responsive to people's needs on the ground.

In addition, they also had the advantage of having worked with local communities before. According to Guerrero, the military's perspective on civil-military operations is something that has evolved over the years. When he first graduated from PMA, few commanders saw reason to make use of such activities. Field assignments were usually just about combat, training, or intelligence. Today, however, a more holistic approach to peace has gained ground within the AFP. In the Marine Corps in particular, civil-military operations now comprise 80% of their work and this new perspective has been built into their curriculum. As a result, officers are now being sent to their assignments with a greater appreciation for the value of these activities and a clearer understanding of how best to conduct them.

Because of the situation they found in Basilan, education became one of the brigade's priority CMO programs. They had found that a significant number of ASG members are very young and that the ASG routinely targets the youth for recruitment, particularly the poor and the illiterate. The Department of Education (DepEd) had had a hard time addressing the problem because of the peace and order situation in the area as well as their own issues with personnel and funding, so Guerrero's unit found ways to help. They sourced funds and materials from local officials, various funders, and even the United States military and used these to put up new classrooms, renovate existing school buildings, build more desks, chairs, and blackboards, and distribute textbooks and reference materials to the children. In areas like Barangay Amaloy where there were no schools or teachers, they went a step further. They partnered with DepEd to establish Learning Centers where soldiers served as teachers so children could start on their lessons again.

Guerrero's unit also conducted many medical (MEDCAP) and dental (DENCAP) civic action programs in response to the poor health conditions in the area. They asked help from the Philippine and US military medical personnel, provincial and municipal health personnel, and volunteers from civic organizations for medical and dental missions. They then provided residents with free consultations, check-ups, medicine, and personal hygiene items that had been donated by various groups.

One of the highlights of this program was a special project for patients with cleft lip in the province. With assistance from the Jerome Foundation in Zamboanga City and the US Armed Forces, Guerrero's unit facilitated the free surgery on more than 70 individuals from some of Basilan's remotest areas. He narrated, "All of our units were directed to look for those suffering from cleft lip, particularly the children, and then to bring them to Zamboanga City with their parent or guardian where they would be examined and then subjected to surgery for one day in three participating hospitals. After their surgeries, they would be escorted back to their homes in Basilan. Most of the patients could not even have afforded the transport fare from their residence to Isabela City, so we used military vehicles to transport them to and from their homes or provided them with the fare."

The events were both inspiring and sobering for the soldiers and the medical and dental professionals that had participated in them. On the one hand, they were happy to have been able to help the people. However, as thousands of patients flocked to their events, it also became difficult to ignore the lack of good health services in the province, especially for the

3 Rido is a form of conflict typically found in certain areas of Muslim Mindanao. It refers to a type of feud between families, clans, and even communities that is characterized by sporadic outbursts of retaliatory violence between the parties involved. It can occur in areas where the government or a central authority is weak or where there is a perceived lack of justice and security. It is considered a major problem in Mindanao because of the numerous casualties, the destruction of property, the crippling of the local economy, and the displacement of families.

poor. Guerrero shared, "Some of the people had not even seen or consulted a doctor before."

Another major aspect of the CMO programs of the Marines was the resolution for rido[3] in the province. Disputes between and among families and tribes in Basilan could make the situation in communities deteriorate very quickly, so when the police could not settle the problem immediately, it fell to the military to coordinate with local leaders to help settle the issue.

This was how Guerrero found himself mediating between two clans in Tipo-Tipo and Tuburan in early 2008. To prevent the outbreak of violence in their respective communities, Guerrero held dialogues with both sides, coordinated with the LGU, and asked for assistance from religious leaders and the elders in the area. Their combined efforts led to the setting up of an Intervention Committee that helped manage the conflict and offered alternative solutions to families to prevent further conflict. The settlement of feuds requires a certain amount of patience and skill. With conflict resolution becoming part of their peace initiatives, they took the time to learn from each settled case. One of the battalions under his command even developed a manual for Marine leaders in-charged with settling rido in their respective areas of operation.

Under Guerrero's leadership, the Marines also carried out infrastructure and environmental rehabilitation activities in Basilan. Aside from working on school buildings, they built and repaired mosques and madrasas that had been damaged due to war and old age, sheds and other structures for public use, and installed water tanks and systems in various barangays to help make life in these areas easier. They also planted trees and reforested mangrove areas to help address the livelihood needs of the communities. Fish, lumber, and rubber are some of Basilan's most important resources, and the Marines' conservation efforts were meant to protect these sources of income of the people.

When Guerrero and his men first began approaching the different stakeholder groups in Basilan, they drew some very mixed reactions. He shared, "Some sectors were cooperative and receptive. They still had hope that the military would perform a big role in bringing about peace and development in Basilan. Other sectors were quite aloof and even unreceptive to the presence of the Marines."

There were LGUs, for example, that were not very welcoming to the military when they first were approached. They were afraid of being caught in cross-fire between the AFP and the MILF and the ASG. Many more were afraid because of the stories they had heard about the military from other people.

The mayors and city counselors were not the only ones who thought of the AFP as unprofessional, immoral, and prone to abuse; the Provincial Board members, a former mayor's wife, several barangay captains, numerous CSOs, and members of Basilan's religious organizations shared this view.

Nevertheless, whether they viewed the military with suspicion or not, Guerrero and his men persisted in engaging them. They initiated CMOs such as school repairs and medical missions and participated in dialogues and multi-sector meetings. They also provided security assistance to groups requesting them. Furthermore, Guerrero made it a point to attend meetings with Pagtabangan Kawman, a multi-stakeholder consortium geared towards peace building initiated by the CSOs in Basilan, and with the local monitoring teams and Peace and Order Councils of the different LGUs in the municipal, city, and provincial levels. When he could not make it to these gatherings himself, he made sure to send his deputy to represent him so he could be kept abreast of the different plans and concerns of the group. As he put it,

> "My dialogue with the religious, the CSOs, the business sector, barangays, and concerned citizens are the most important and precious moments that I consider vital in bridging the gaps and building alliances to help bring peace to Basilan. These kinds of engagements kept us updated and aware of the people's concerns and sentiments. It also allowed us to correct and improve our units and individual Marines based on the comments and feedback of other stakeholders."

They built the community's trust through constant engagement. It also helped that Guerrero insisted the Marines remain professional in their dealings with people. "When our soldiers commit mistakes, we don't tolerate them. We impose immediate punishment on erring Marines and reward those who do well. I am very proud to say that my unit had very few infractions against civilians."

In time, as local officials and CSOs became more familiar with Guerrero and his men and witnessed their sincerity, their confidence in the military likewise increased and it became easier to organize succeeding activities. Moreover, Guerrero knew that they had made significant progress when Basilan's mayors themselves chose to convene their Municipal Peace and Order Councils without prompting from the military. Some even joined Guerrero's unit in pursuing kidnappers and other lawless elements, even at the risk of direct threats from these groups. In addition, community volunteer groups, community watchmen, and other local officials offered their time and support in guarding their respective communities to complement the AFP's security efforts.

Guerrero and his commanders welcomed these as a sign of the people's changing perception of the military. Nevertheless, it was not just the locals' perception of the military that had begun to shift, so had the soldiers's perception of the locals.

At the start of the unit's civil-military operations, a number of soldiers were hesitant about the activities. They did not expect to be building schools or repairing roads when they enlisted or assigned, particularly since the 1st Marine Brigade is a fighting unit instead of an engineering one. Guerrero took the time to explain to his soldiers how the military could not win peace alone and how important it was for them to understand the context they worked in and to work together with the communities. He also initiated the addition of new activities into his unit's regular training program for both old and newly deployed Marines as well as CAFGU active auxiliaries, civilian volunteers, and disaster response organizations, like in Isabela and Lamitan. These included sessions on Bridging Leadership for Small Unit Leaders and on conflict resolution and management that were further complemented by lectures on understanding the Muslim culture for new Marines. All of these served to emphasize the importance of reaching out to different stakeholders and sectors in a context like Basilan's, where the causes of the conflict were complex. As one soldier put it, "We have to accept we are not Superman in action, rather, we should be men who know how to work with others."

Another significant difference in the way Guerrero's unit conducted its CMOs is the expansion of their partners and the deepening of their engagements. They made a conscious effort to include NGOs down to the barangay level in their consultations, "… so we had more activities and projects because our network widened. Co-ownership was emphasized in order to sustain our gains and avoid 'white elephants', or projects that are not based on the needs of the communities."

As the soldiers witnessed how the communities began to open up to the military with this approach and viewed them with respect rather than fear, they also learned to appreciate the value of a holistic approach that involved different stakeholders. Many of the soldiers understood the communities they lived in, coming from poor backgrounds themselves. In fact, many had come from Mindanao, so they were no stranger to the issues in Basilan. Guerrero shared, "I could understand the fact that the people viewing them with suspicion and anger when they were risking their lives to protect them made them feel frustrated and angry themselves." Bringing the soldiers into these communities for CMOs and giving them the chance to engage the people in a constructive manner also allowed them to see the people's positive reactions to their work. At the most basic level, it made them feel appreciated for their work and be more in tune with the people they were risking their lives for.

Bridging Leadership

Guerrero joined the Bridging Leadership (BL) Fellows Program on October 2008, a little over a year after his assignment to Basilan. He quickly recognized the value of BL to his work as a way to streamline his interactions with the different sectors in the province. He said, "It is a systematic way of working with stakeholders that allows me to optimize my engagements." In particular, he appreciated BL's VMOKRAPI exercise as a tool to address key program areas with greater focus and direction and its emphasis on building trust and relationships as a foundation for shared action.[4]

When he brought together various stakeholders in 2009 for his Core Group Building Workshop, he passed on the same framework to them. Guerrero's Core Group included various members of the Provincial Government and the religious sector in the province.

One of the most important accomplishments of the workshop was increasing the levels of trust and openness between the core group members and the military. Previously, "they may have been my acquaintances because of several official meetings before, but the

4 Rido is a form of conflict typically found in certain areas of Muslim Mindanao. It refers to a type of feud between families, clans, and even communities that is characterized by sporadic outbursts of retaliatory violence between the parties involved. It can occur in areas where the government or a central authority is weak or where there is a perceived lack of justice and security. It is considered a major problem in Mindanao because of the numerous casualties, the destruction of property, the crippling of the local economy, and the displacement of families.

BL workshop for the core group members really did change their attitude towards the military, us in particular." The workshop helped them see that the AFP's CMOs were worthwhile and not mere propaganda. In turn, Guerrero showed his interest in listening to and working with the government and the religious sector. BL also became useful for the group as a platform for collaboration. They used the framework's technique of analyzing context, identifying common vision, and then breaking this down into specific goals, strategies, and activities to help set up mechanisms for planning, coordination, and dialogue between the different parties to prepare for disasters and help improve the peace and order situation in Basilan.

The core group mostly moved at their own pace within their own areas of responsibility to contribute to the thrust of the group. Vice Governor Sakkalahul, for example, addressed the crises that befell the province through the Crisis Management Committee and the Provincial Peace and Order Council. Father Libot continued advocating the involvement of other stakeholders in peace initiatives while influencing Basilan's youth through his College.

Aside from his Core Group, Guerrero also maintained a close working relationship with the CSOs in Basilan. The partnership was a result of his regular participation in Pagtabangan Kawman's coordination meetings, the joint relief operations, and MEDCAPs. At the start, Guerrero kept himself distant from these groups. He was professional. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the CSOs had preconceived notions about the military, he also carried his own biases against them. In particular, he viewed them as anti-government and overly critical, and so he was very careful in his dealings with them. Constant exposure to these groups, however, and BL's emphasis on collaboration instead of difference, soon allowed his attitude to shift. He shared,

> "They displayed genuine interest and effort in addressing the problems of the conflict areas and the need for peace and development in the province. More or less, we have the same aspirations for the province in terms of the desired security environment and socio-economic development."

The Challenge of Peace

Guerrero's efforts to contribute to peace and development in Basilan were not devoid of challenges. The environment he and his men worked in was a complex one, and with his main function as a Brigade Commander in Basilan–the neutralization of the threat that the ASG and other lawless elements presented to the province–taking up much of his attention, his ability to pursue collaborations with other groups were at times severely limited. He shared "BLFP made my approach more systematic, but I have to admit that it was difficult at the start for me to embark on a new track while attending to my military obligation as a Commander."

In fact, time is a challenge that he faced until the very end of his engagement in Basilan. On September 2009, Guerrero was reassigned to Sulu to head Joint Task Force Comet, an anti-terror unit in the province. He admitted the promotion came at a time when his unit's engagement with other stakeholders in Basilan was finally ripe for bigger and strategic collaborations to resolve more issues. While Guerrero's personal commitment to change and progress in the province impressed all of them, the pursuit of peace is a slow and continuing process, and time is an important element.

One variable that worked in their favor is the way that the AFP has begun to institutionalize a holistic approach to peace that emphasizes collaboration and information more than combat engagements. Referring to the AFP's new triad concept, he explained,

> "Following Major Geneneral Sabban's ratio of 80% CMOs and 20% combat, all CMO and combat operations shall be intelligence driven, employing small unit special operations to hunt down armed enemy groups followed by larger Marine Combined Arms Formations when the combat engagement escalates. This also reduces displacements and collateral damage to non-combatants."

That was where Guerrero got his overall strategy for Basilan. He is optimistic that the Brigade Commander who took over his position would pick up where he left off and perhaps even forge ahead with greater vigor.

If it is to last, peace is something that all stakeholders must want and be willing to work for. While Guerrero was no longer in a position to implement key programs and pursue the gains he helped make in Basilan, his partners certainly were, as were the Marine commanders that had served under him. If they truly found value in Guerrero's work and wanted it to continue, then they were not without means to follow through on the work that they had started together.

Hadja Pombaen Karon-Kader

Assistant Secretary of the Department of Social Work and Development

This write-up was written by Maria Ayn Jella Villanueva under the supervision of Philip Dy of the AIM Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership.

On February 23, 1973 war broke out in the Christian municipality of Lebak, Sultan Kudarat (then under the Empire Province of Cotabato[1]) that changed the life of the young Pombaen Kader as she was driven to go underground along with her family. "At the time, my father was the only Muslim councilor. He was a well-respected man – a linguist who could converse with his constituents in their own language. Prior to the war, we were living harmoniously and in good relations with our neighbors."

Within the year, Kader would find herself and her family in a life caught in a war between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front[2] (MNLF) that continues to deprive Kader and those who live in many parts of Mindanao the dividends of peace.

Drive to Excel in War and in Fragile Peace

Much like her father, Pombaen Karon-Kader had always been in good relation with rest of the community. During her elementary years, although she was the only Muslim student in the first section, she consistently garnered academic honors and was elected to lead her classes in various organizations such as Women's Scouting Regimental Command. Because of her diligence and competence, she was highly regarded by her peers and teachers.

When war broke out in February of 1973, her family was forced to leave the town proper, so Kader was unable to graduate. She recalled, *"Before the war, my uncles were all professionals: farmer, doctor, lawyer, teacher (but) because of the war, everyone in the family became rebels. My family joined the struggle and my siblings and I stopped (going to) school."*

That war a defining moment in Pombaen Kader's life. She served as MNLF's underground first aid provider under the training of her aunt. It was a period of immense character and leadership building in the most difficult of conditions. While going about her duty of aiding the injured, a powerful bomb exploded few meters away from her. *"A bomb was dropped and my ears began to bleed, leading to my hearing disability (and) because we*

1 The original Cotabato Province known as the "Empire Province of Cotabato" used to be the largest in the country in terms of land area until November 22, 1973 when Presidential Decree 341 was issued creating the new provinces of Sultan Kudarat and Maguindanao. Earlier, South Cotabato separated. What was then North Cotabato was renamed Cotabato under Batas Pambansa 660.

2 The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is one of the two liberation movements for the Bangsamoro people of Mindanao. Headed by Nur Misuari, MNLF emerged during the height of Martial La in the 1970s. The MNLF proclaimed itself a Filipino Muslim liberation movement and proceeded to start the Islamic insurgency in the Philippines in the hope of achieving independence or at the very least, regional autonomy for the Southern Philippines.

were underground and had no access to medicines or medical care for my injury," she shared. It was also during this time that she lost one of the most important figures in her life: her father.

The loss of Kader's father was a deep blow to the family. He was the administrator of their properties and was the one sending his younger brothers to school. His death caused their family to be at the core of the liberation movement in fighting oppression. It was a reflection of what was happening around them: families fighting against oppression with little or no understanding of the ideals or reason for the struggle of the MNLF. *"My family was inflamed to fight by personal reasons – fight first, indoctrination later,*" Kader shared.

Return to Education

Two years later, Kader's life took a drastic decision. Her love for knowledge and strong belief in the value of education led her to leave the MNLF and to return to school. Her family did not take this decision lightly. They criticized her choice because it is against the laws of MNLF to obtain an education, as they believed that getting an education would cause a person to be biased for the West. *"I had to leave my family for school. Western and Christian education is barred by MNLF. But that did not stop me from studying. I rebelled against my only family.*" Despite the challenges, she decided to obtain help from an uncle and took up a two-year secretarial course at Notre Dame University, Cotabato City.

Pombaen Kader was quick to return to her diligent and studious ways. She focused on her education and found ways to send her brothers and sisters to school; however, two of her younger brothers remained in the MNLF. *"My brothers died of a heart attack because they were too young when they were trained,*" she recalled with a heavy heart.

In 1978, Kader began work as a stenographer for the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (now Department of Education) in Maguindanao. Two years later, she decided to take an exam with the Office on Muslim Affairs[3] (OMA) and passed. Shortly afterward, she was transferred to Cotabato City to work as a cashier. Her time on the battleground had marked in her character a strong will to live and excel, and to have a deep social consciousness, but this time, in the service of her Muslim community, in peace.

The Challenge of Leadership in Post-War ARMM

Pombaen Kader, driven as she was, rose until she was promoted officer-in-charge of the Administrative Division. Although her professional career in the government flourished, the situation became precarious for her family. Two of her uncles died in an encounter in Maguindanao as fierce fighting between the MNLF and Government resumed once more. *"It was another sugat (wound). The more that they hurt us, the more that my people fight, "*she said.

Several years later, the fighting finally subsided. In September 1996, the MNLF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) forged the Final Peace Accord. This gave birth to the enactment of the Republic Act 9054 or the Expanded Autonomy Act[4].

Due to her extensive exposure to the areas of ARMM, she was appointed as ARMM's Assistant Regional Secretary of the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD). It was not without trepidation that Kader accepted the post. The then ARMM Governor Nur Misuari goaded to accept the post, telling her that each of them had to make sacrifices to be able to make peace and development a reality in the region. Assistant Secretary (Asec) Kader also felt honored to be working with DSWD ARMM Secretary Bainon Karon, a respected Moro woman leader and key MNLF figure.

The tandem of Bainon and Kader helped improved the conditions of the poor in ARMM. The DSWD before the two accepted the posts suffered from credibility problems, particularly when it came to the effective use of the funds for internally displaced persons. The DSWD also dealt with issues of decentralization (which has a different character in ARMM compared to other regions in the country). In ARMM, employees were assigned to the Municipal Local Government Units, but in fact, they are staff of DSWD-ARMM. Because of this, there was a lack or absence of funds for personnel and the mandated services of the department. This meant that the people were not getting some, if not most, of the services that the department was supposed to deliver.

Because of the Peace Agreement and the work done by Bainon and Kader, not only did the national office of DSWD release money directly to DSWD-ARMM, foreign donors also started working directly with the department. Programs on humanitarian protection, disaster management, child protection, women and youth, livelihood, among others, received funding from the different donors now committed to peace building. This gave DSWD the much-needed resources for programs that can contribute to poverty alleviation in the region, whose provinces remain the poorest in the country. The staffs, which were initially wary of having MNLF cadres at the helm, saw the sincerity of Bainon and Kader and decided to support them in delivering the programs of the agency.

Years later, Asec Kader found herself as the only MNLF leader occupying a high level position in ARMM. Her Women Welfare Program (WWP) specialist, Violeta Jennylen Yap, disclosed, *"She is high ranking, but that does not stop her from going to communities and talking to ordinary people. She is also very determined in her work. I guess these come with her being with the MNLF. She can talk to people in positions of power and to the people in the communities. She brings community concerns to decision-makers and makes sure they act on them.*"

Driven by her passion to further develop her capacity to help others, Asec Kader decided to apply for the Bridging Leadership (BL) Fellowship program of the Asian Institute of Management. *"I joined the BLF program to improve how I lead. I wanted to share what I've done and learn more from others.*" Her involvement with the BLFP led to the formulation of Asec Kader's vision and mission for ARMM in line with the community work: Poverty Alleviation through community empowerment.

Development: Community-based and demand-driven

The efforts of Asec Kader in strengthening and healing the fractured communities in ARMM came in the form of community-level programs. Kader assumed the position of Component Manager of the Community Development Assistance (CDA) program that included projects for capacity building. CDA is a World Bank funded project that aims to provide community-based infrastructure (CBI) through a community demand-driven process. Thus, the people themselves are involved in determining the priorities of their neighborhood. They were given funding to build multi-purpose halls, grain silos, and the likes.

Asec Kader vowed to do her job well and promised to practice transparency, accountability and participation. Her work at DSWD and CDA were consistent with her struggles as a member of MNLF. *"We have been fighting for our people for as long as I can remember. My family and relatives died for our cause. This is part of my struggle and I will live up to it"*

For the CDA implementation, Kader formed and worked with a core group[5] first before they went down to the community. Through continuous dialogue, she was able to establish co-ownership of her vision with her immediate group. They reviewed the targets of CDA and the challenges that DSWD-ARMM faced as lead agency. Equipped with knowledge of realities in the field, the group was ready to deal with the challenges of alleviating poverty in a place that has known it far too long.

Ensuring greater participation, transparency and accountability was difficult, if not impossible, in the region where *datuism*[6] and nepotism are deeply entrenched. Questioning how public funds are used may provoke attack on one´s life, lead to being ostracized by the community. Kader exhausted all means, strategies, and tactics known to her to make sure that these principles are followed. She understands the *datu* culture very well and she uses that knowledge in her work. Protocol requires that she or her staff clear the entry of the project in any place with the mayor or governor, who is also a *datu*. This is the opportunity for her to explain the project at length, emphasizing the important

3 The Office on Muslim Affairs (OMA) was created by Executive Order No. 122-A dated January 30, 1987 as amended by Executive Order No. 295 with the mandate of preserving and developing the culture, traditions, institutions, and well-being of Muslim Filipinos in conformity with the country's laws and in consonance with national unity and development.

4 The strengthened and expanded Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The ARMM remains an integral and inseparable part of the national territory of the Republic of the Philippines where the Regional Government will govern ARMM.

5 Core group is the working group of the Fellow under the Bridging Leadership Fellows Program (BLFP). They were selected by the fellow herself to help her implement her program for her identified divide.

6 Datuism is a system of government that is still being practiced today by some locals who revere the datu as the dispenser or lawgiver of death. This system developed Muslim culture and kept Muslim united in their struggles against colonizers.

details (i.e., how the funds will transferred, who will manage it, and how it will be used) and expounding on the very important role of the *datu* for the success of the project. When problems arose, she went back to the *datu* and used their pre-project implementation agreements as the reference point.

Coordination took place through a municipal team convened and empowered by the DSWD-ARMM that extended technical assistance to community-based infrastructure projects. This team included a social worker, municipal engineer, and municipal development officer. In addition, the positive feedback and acknowledgment that CDA interventions are good projects also benefited the LGUs so that government also gained credibility and goodwill in the community. Because of the inclusive efforts, the negative reaction of the LGUs to the CDA projects within ARMM was minimized.

Furthermore, the mayors of the 102 municipalities were given orientation sessions that led to their formulation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to support of the project. This is a tool that Asec Kader has used in going around local politics that sometimes interferes with the project. Apart from this, she also conducted surprise visits to the localities to ensure the proper implementation and monitoring of the projects in accordance with the MOA. Asec Kader is firm on her stand: *"Do not make the mistake of being corrupt here. This is the money of the Bangsamoro[7]."*

One of the key factors that led the success of CDA is the sense of ownership of the projects exhibited by the beneficiaries. The community and other stakeholders are involved in the project process thereby generating enough communal sense of ownership to protect it. This is one of the key insights that Asec Kader has gleaned from working in an area of conflict. In armed encounters, CDA projects enjoy a privileged sense of protection because both the MILF and the military are engaged in these community development programs. The MILF refuse to damage community projects because of their involvement in its development. Project ownership has led to sustainability and progress in these rural communities. She said,

> *"There have been cases when I had visited a community that had been burned down by the MILF. The project infrastructure remained intact. They do not burn down the community center or the multipurpose hall that has been built by the project because they have this feeling that the project belongs to them. They worked for it in the bayanihan (cooperative endeavor) spirit. It is a success story."*

Kader is proud to share that when the CDA was placed under DSWD-ARMM, it surpassed expectations. *"Projects are sprouting like mushrooms all over ARMM,"* she noted. *"It helps to fight the negative impression that all of ARMM is corrupt. It was hard in the beginning but I am proud and happy with what we have done. We have determined the process for CDA and developed a manual. We have trained people, involved the local government and the community. Our projects are community demand-driven. And we have been rated "satisfactory" twice by the World Bank. It shows that ARMM can do it."*

Building a better ARMM for women

Still another challenge is the low status accorded to Muslim women. Most of women do not go to school and have little access to livelihood, information, and opportunities. Many had accepted their status as *"pambahay lang" (only for housework)* in a world restricted to home and family. They did not know what rights they have as women and did not participate much in community affairs.

Asec Kader showed her commitment to her vision of Poverty Alleviation through Community Empowerment. She engaged women in capacity building. She brought to the community some of the DSWD activities that were relevant to the needs of the women, such as raising their awareness of their rights and the existence of R.A. 9263 or Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children Act[8]. To institutionalize her goal, Kader pioneered a women-oriented activity entitled Learning Livelihood and Food Sufficiency (LLFS).

Aside from promoting livelihood, LLFS has formed a community among the 20,000 women who are involved in the program. The project reaches out to 100 women in every community across 102 municipalities and 116 barangays[9] in ARMM. Each woman is taught basic skills for functional literacy and enterprise, such as reading, writing, and simple mathematics.

The participants of the program are mostly mothers who availed of the 150 hours of training. These sessions are conducted for four hours each on Saturdays and Sundays as the women take care of their children and the household during the weekdays. The modules used for training women on functional literacy are injected with values based on the principles of Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA). This holistic development enables women to enhance not only their functional and entrepreneurial skills, but also to imbibe in them cultural and community principles.

Besides functional training, the women also receive micro-financial assistance, which amounts to Php 1000 per participant for *kabuhayan* or livelihood. Asec Kader explained, *"That P1000 is part of the income-generating activity. Sometimes the group will have their own gardening, food processing, or bakery projects. If they are a group, tutubo talaga ang pera nila (they will definitely earn profit). They have PhP 25,000 and will use it as capital for their projects. Now there are available pugon (oven), peanut butter, atsara (papaya salad), or fried fish in the barangay. You cannot expect them to be rich from that minimal funding, but what is important is that they are educated and have learned from the process. It is fulfilling to see it."*

The Badak Story: building a better future through bridging leadership

Assistant Secretary Pombaen Kader is in a position to leverage her leadership skills for the development of ARMM--especially the multicultural communities. She recalled a history of the Moro and *T'edurays*[10], both indigenous peoples (IPs) in the area,

> *"I believe that Moro and T'edurays have the same ancestors: Manobo brothers Mamalu (a fisherman) and Tabunaway (a forest food gather), both living in the lowlands of what is now known as Central Mindanao. Oral tradition has it that when Shariff Kabungsuan, a Muslim missionary came to propagate Islam in Mindanao, Mamalu left and moved to the mountains near the Pulangi River because he did not want to be converted, while Tabunay agreed to be a Muslim. The Mamalu clan gave birth to the Manobo tribe of today and the Tabunaway clan is now known as Maguindanao."*

Kader always looks for opportunities to help heal the wounds and rebuild relations among people with multicultural backgrounds. *"I love my work where I get to help indigent locals, empower women, and help the community improve their situation"*.

Badak, where the population is a mix of Maguindanaon, *T'edurays,* and settlers (Tagalog and Bisaya), has the highest incidence of poverty in the six barangays in the town of Datu Odin Sinsuat. Aseca saw herself bridging the poverty gap in this lace by empowering women in the area, key components in any poverty alleviation strategy.

Badak is primarily a coastal community where most people rely on fishing for their daily subsistence. The mountainous part of Badak produces copra and charcoal from coconut trees, and some banana and corn are grown on the hillside.

There were no elementary schools in Badak. The children went to neighboring barangays if they wished to pursue elementary education. Women are raised to be housekeepers. Moro and *T'edurays* did not trust of each other, thus, the *T'edurays* stayed on the hilly parts of Badak, away from the plains where the Moro and settlers were. It was only recently that the *T'edurays* built their houses in the lowlands, near the coastal areas but only if they feel they can live peacefully with the others.

It is clear to Kader that she wanted to

7 Bangsamoro was originally home to the Muslim sultanates of Mindanao such as Sulu and Maguindanao. These sultanates resisted Spanish colonial rule and were therefore not fully integrated to the rest of the islands. Two decades after the Philippines reclaimed its independence from the United States of America, the area was claimed by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) who wanted it to become the "Moro homeland" separate from the Republic of the Philippines. However, claims were suspended due to a peace agreement in 1996. Currently, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) seeks to establish an independent Islamic state in this area.

8 This punishes any act or a series of acts committed by any person against a woman who is his wide, former wife, or against a woman with whom the person has or had a sexual or dating relationship, or with whom he has a common child…which result in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering or economic abuse including threats of such acts, battery, assault, coercion, harassment, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

9 Villages.

10 T'edurays, also known as Tirurays are indigenous people who settled in the coastal and forested areas of South Cotabato. T'edurays share a common legendary ancestry with the Maguindanao.

help address poverty, empower women, and saw the opportunity to do so, among others, in Badak and its tripeople context. While she could rely on whatever is available in CDA for Badak and the guidelines for its implementation, she still met with the group to discuss how the project could be best implemented in Badak. She also ensured the timely release of resources, monitored their utilization, followed up on the results of the project.

Kader talked with the barangay leaders for both the CBI and LLFS, and then to the 100 LLFS participants in a more focused way. With her core group, she helped the community which was not used to participation and demanding accountability, to go through the consultative process of CDA and make decisions on the projects and fund management, as a community and later, as a people's organization. Barangay Chairman Sinsuat shared,

"Ang gusto namin sa project ito ay yung tinatanong kami at pinapakinggan kung ano ang kailangan namin at ano ang dapat gawin. Ang mga tao rin ang nagpatakbo ng project; sila ang nagtayo ng center at trumabaho sa driers. Alam din ng lahat sa PO kung magkano na ang perang nabigay at saan ginastos. May Barangay Development Plan na rin kami. Nagagamit din namin sa barangay lalu na kapag may gustong tumulong. Sa akin mismo, malaki ang naitulong ng CDA. Dati, mahiyain ako; di ako nagsasalita sa meeting tulad nito, pero ngayon, maingay na ako. Magsasalita ako para sa aking barangay.

("What we like about the project is that we are consulted; we are able to express what we need and how proceed with it. We too are given the opportunity to run the project, the people built the center and are the ones working on the driers. All the POs know how much the project makes and where the funds go. We also have a Barangay Development Plan which we are able to follow. Personally, the CDA has been a great help to me. Before, I was shy; I wouldn't speak or contribute during meetings like this. Now, I am more articulate, I share more. I am now able to speak for my barangay.")

To date, the Community Based Infrastructure (CBI) projects have provided four solar driers and one multipurpose center. The driers were built in four different locations to make these accessible to different clusters of barangays. These driers provided a local facility for farmers, reducing production costs. The center also earned when used for private gatherings such as weddings and other functions. The Badak People's Organization, formed as a requirement of ARMM Social Fund Project (ASFP), manages the two projects.

Kader has a clear strategy to sustain the efforts in Badak, which she has conveyed to her core group, who supported the strategy, that is, convergence. Starting with the CDA resources made available for Badak, she brought in regular programs of DSWD that are relevant to the needs of the place and as identified in its Barangay Development Plan (BDP). This will also encourage other line agencies in Maguindanao to complement these efforts in the spirit of convergence.

She is moving fast – on January 27-28, a barangay assembly was held in Badak with these line agencies and where pledges were made such as alternative learning system by the Department of Education, farming assistance by the Provincial Agriculturists' Office, and fruit processing technology training by the Department of Science and Technology.

Kader's passion for service moved the heart of her core group. The core group gets inspiration from her who leaves her air-conditioned office and joins them in the field. The participatory nature of the ASFP program is not only limited to the people in the community since it is also being practiced in the core group. The BL program has taught Asec Kader to lead on-the-ground work. Kader said,

"I now personally conduct municipal stakeholders' forum. I do it myself instead of assigning it to someone so that I can be more hands-on. I understand now how hard it is to immerse. For seven months, we worked in an evacuation and displacement center to serve the evacuees and we took care of so many things. I am happy to work with my people, serving my own. I am continuing the struggle in a peaceful way. I know now that somehow it can help. It contributes to development and the alleviation of poverty to have projects such as easy transportation, solar dryers for farmers and the education of the children. You will not see it instantly. Yet there is a legacy that will be left behind as we strive hard peacefully."

Challenges in project implementation

The five year-CDA project ended in June 2010. Some projects had been put off till after the elections. One of the major challenges has been politicking which has, in fact, tested Asec Kader's skills in negotiation. She noted that, *"Partner organizations and mayors will take sides. It is in this aspect that I have been able to test the dialogue and conflict management framework of the BL. Yet, this is not a project to be politicized. It is the people who are implementing this and failure to do so will be reported."*

Another challenge is the cultural differences within the region. Different tribal communities have different strategies and cultures. The Tausug and Maranao, for instance, can have divergent priorities. *"As a bridging leader, I meticulously observe and learn how to deal with these idiosyncrasies of culture and tradition,"* she noted. To deal with this, the constituency must be well-informed and the leader should be aware of the ARMM strategy to ensure that there is consistency throughout. Asec Kader shared that in dealing with this, she has realized that, *"It is a tough decision-making process. You cannot just be nice. There are situations where you directly decide and it measures your leadership. Honesty and truthfulness are important. We only have our name to uphold. When you say yes, you mean yes without a hidden agenda."*

Insights from the bridging leadership program

Asec Kader's leadership has been a source of inspiration in her community. Yet, she attributed the success of her projects to the participatory and transparent nature of the programs that were implemented. She credits the involvement of the people, saying that, *"The people can see where it goes because it is there. They have a sense of accountability because it is released directly to the partner organizations that are trained to manage the money."*

Apart from the involvement of the community, Asec Kader also credits the BL program, which she believes helped to strategize about some of the problems relating to LGUs. As a BL fellow, she walked through the process of bridging people's organizations in addressing problems. This helped reduce problems that arose because projects were often co-terminus with the Mayors that supported them. The incoming mayors would often drop these programs of the previous town/province head. Asec Kader noted, "BL is very important to me. I have left all my programs to attend this. I have been committed and have promised to attend. This is what is important to me because I know that it will help me in managing my projects. It improves my strategy and approaches."

In addition, Asec Kader modestly and respectfully gives credit as well to her peers in the BL program. She has learned, through her experiences, the importance of building relationships. The experience with the BL program has helped her to realize the value of working with other regional leaders in initiating projects for the development and progress of ARMM.

Indeed, Asec Kader has remained humble despite her success. She shared that, *"I am happy even if it will end. The project life has been five years. It ended on May 30, including June for the terminal reports. I am happy because somehow, our struggle – the struggle of the MNLF for our Bangsamoro people – has been realized through the implementation of the projects. There is fulfillment in knowing that I have served our community."*

Aurora Sonia R. Lorenzo

Mayor

San Isidro, Nueva Ecija

This write-up was written by Philip Dy under the supervision of of Prof. Ernesto D. Garilao, faculty at the Asian Institute of Management.

Aurora Sonia Lorenzo, mayor of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, is widely credited for the fast-paced development of the municipality. She is one of the six fellows who belonged to the first batch of the Mirant Leadership Fellows Program. This is her story as a Bridging Leader:

Leadership Capital: Drive, Trigger, and Sustaining Factor

> "I can attest to her outstanding reputation as a professional leader and executive competence. As the Chief Executive of one of the municipalities in the 4th District of Nueva Ecija, she championed the cause of the marginalized sector by subscribing to the government thrust of addressing poverty alleviation…" – Rodolfo W. Antonino, Representative of the 4th district of Nueva Ecija, (2005).

As a child, Sonia was trained to face challenges and do her best in every situation. At a young age of seven, she was already pushed by her relatives to excel in school. Her aunt, who was a teacher, always reminded her to maintain her high grades and that she should always be at the top of her class. Whenever she joined competitions, she was always expected to win first place. This was how she worked her way through formal education. In 1967 she graduated from the University of Sto. Tomas with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering.

She married Victorio Lorenzo of the Lorenzo family, a known family of politicians based in San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. In 1992, her husband was elected representative of the 4th district of Nueva Ecija. During her husband's term, Sonia became involved in public service by implementing many community projects her husband supported.

She proved effective in this role so that in 1998, four days before the local elections, after the party successfully convinced Sonia, she was drafted by her husband's political party to run for mayor of San Isidro to replace a disqualified candidate of her party. Thinking that she would not win anyway since there was no time to campaign, she accepted the nomination and ran.

To her surprise, she won. Sonia found herself at the helm of a local government unit that was in financial disarray, with bloated and demoralized bureaucracy, and a municipal hall that was in shambles.

"It was in a sorry state," she recounted. The LGU produced no outputs and even had budget deficit from all the debts that the previous administration left behind. "So what do I do about it?" She asked herself then.

It was a challenge she took seriously.

Societal Divide: The Challenges of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija

When she first sat in office, San Isidro was a 5th class municipality. It consists of nine barangays[1] and covers a total land area of 7750 hectares, 80 percent of which is agricultural land. In 2005, the population was estimated at 45,000.

1 Villages.

There was a very low standard of living especially for the farmers in the area. "The greatest divide was poverty," Mayor Sonia recounted. This was not to say that nothing was being done about the situation. As was typical of areas in Central Luzon, farmers in San Isidro have been exposed to community development activities since the time of the Hukbalahap (after the Second World War) organized through the Samahang Nayon, and in the latter years, through farmers' cooperatives. However, these included a significant number of failures especially in the management of the cooperatives. Of the estimated 50 cooperatives in San Isidro registered with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA)[2], only nine cooperatives were active and operational in her first term. Mayor Sonia recalled,

> "In the early 1980s, San Isidro was one of 3 pilot sites (the other 2 were in Pampanga and Pangasinan) to implement an integrated farming system.[3] Out of the PhP 12 million funds allocated for the 3 sites, San Isidro cornered PhP 10 million owing to the excellent performance of its borrowers. The program's reach expanded from one barangay to several others including in the neighboring municipalities. It improved farmers' income but increasing costs of commodities necessitated further borrowing. After 5 years, funding for the program ended. The farmers then organized themselves into a cooperative to avail of financing from Land Bank and other institutions. Mismanagement of coop funds however led to the failure of the initiatives in many instances. The farmer leaders attributed this to the failure in leadership and followership."

The presence and persistence of the cooperatives hinted the struggle of the people to uplift themselves from the poverty. But these cooperatives failed to address the development needs of the community.

The local government has a crucial role in addressing these problems, but it had its own share of problems as well. The employees had low morale; they worked independent of each other. The LGU had no programs on basic services and just waited for whatever projects the wind blows its way. The municipal hall, which served as a fort during the Spanish time, had certainly seen better days, some parts of its structure were under threat of collapse.

A "dole-out mentality" was prevalent. For a time, people formed long lines extending from the mayor's office on the second floor all the way past the gates of the municipal hall in hopes of getting alms or money

Mayor Sonia used to ask herself, "Bakit hindi magawa-gawa ng mga mayor yung kadali-daling bagay katulad ng basic services?" (Why couldn't the mayors do such an easy thing as providing basic services?) But when she took on the role herself, she found out that things were easier said than done. She labored to form programs that would address the needs of her constituents and bring them down to the local level for implementation, but these did not successfully materialize. There was something wrong in the structure that stopped the programs from filtering down its benefits to the ground. She spent two terms in office trying to get things to work out. Then she finally joined the Mirant Leadership Fellowship.

Analysis of the Divide: Lack of Ownership and Skills Caused Program to Fail

> "The BL workshop was an experience that made a difference to me. Being a mayor for six and half years, I thought I have experienced all kinds of events and have met all types of people. Listening and interacting with other fellows have given me the inspiration that I can do better. The lectures taught me how to do my best in what I was doing. It was so comforting to know that I have my mentors to help me and who understand that I get tired and burned out also. I believe the BL training course should be a requirement for all LGUs and leaders of the community." - Mayor Sonia, July 25, 2005 Logbook Reflections

With training inputs, tools, and seminal discussions with her peers and mentors, she was able to further analyze the societal divides of San Isidro. She identified two main causes of the failure program implementation. First, there was no ownership of the projects implemented on the ground as there were no consultations done with the people in the community. Second, the people who implemented

2 The CDA is mandated to promote the viability and growth of cooperatives as instruments of equity, social justice, and economic development in fulfillment of Section 15, article XII of the Constitution.

3 In this system, farmers plant rice and other crops and raises animals to maximize income.

the programs had no skills with which to view the problem and address it from a systemic point of view.

The second cause was immediately more relevant to her and the LGU. For example, improving the physical condition of classrooms is not enough to improve the quality of education, unless principals and teachers are trained in terms of competence and curriculum development. Also, in matters of health, sick people would always get sick and ask for medicine unless the health personnel teach them how to keep themselves healthy.

Something has to be done in order to systematically address these factors. Mayor Sonia quickly realized that despite the challenges that she had to overcome in her organization, she was in the best place to effect necessary changes.

The Unique Role of the LGU

> "Governance implies wielding of power, authority and resources to resolve and meet problems, needs, and demands… As the duly elected chief executive of the Municipality, the performance [of one's] duly established development roles and responsibilities to [one's] constituencies are of paramount concern…" Mayor Sonia, Logbook Reflections

In order for San Isidro to develop, she believes the municipal government has to practice effective governance. Its people need to learn fiscal management, efficient domestic resource generation, and build capacity to undertake local planning and development for programs on basic services. These plans and programs should respond to urgent needs of the community. The employees needed to be empowered, and the residents be given the chance to participate in the changes that were to take place.

But first, she had to change herself.

The Personal Response: Transforming Herself and her Institution

"I am reminded of my role as the Local Chief Executive of our town. I have to work harder to bring about the realization of our dream." – Mayor Sonia, May 26, 2006 Logbook Reflections

When she first took her office, Sonia was unprepared for the responsibility and tasks that it entailed. "I had no background in public administration," she shared. "but I knew it was only a matter of management strategy." She decided to hone her vision and concept of public service. She put to use the management skills she learned from her involvement in her family businesses. She became involved in other organizations and learned their structure. She held several offices in different civic organizations in Nueva Ecija and worked on issues such as governance (League of Municipalities) and women in development (Samahang Ina ng Kababaihan at Pantahanan (SIKAP). She also actively participated in various training programs that tackled issues on good governance, solid waste management, managing livelihood projects, literacy and education, health, among others.

It was during this time that she attended Bridging Leadership Training Workshops at AIM. As early as then, she thought that the program was what she needed to be effective in what she does. This pushed her to apply for the fellowship program.

When she was chosen as fellow, she brought the issues she faced to the table. Sonia's vision was to ensure a better quality of life for the people of San Isidro. She deemed it her role to capacitate the local government of San Isidro in implementing and sustaining socio-economic development and did so through collaborative programs involving the residents.

She re-energized her bureaucracy and broke away from the traditional LGU culture of pride and patronage politics that hinder it from performing its functions effectively.

When asked what her experience was with the traditional system, Mayor Sonia shared that other mayors tend to think that they are above others. They did not want to listen and were not open to dialogue with their constituents. LGU projects have always been done through a "top-down" approach, ignoring the reality that these programs may not necessarily respond to the needs of the community.

Mayors are also used to "taking care" of their people by giving them money especially during the elections and/or appointing them to offices even if they are not qualified for the post. These harmful practices often push the mayors to appropriate public funds to sustain and reinforce the ties of dependency.

She sought and demonstrated a way of governance that is different from the ingrained practice. In order to do so, all these needed to change.

Armed with what she has learned, she set about the task of reorganizing her bureaucracy.

The Collective Response: Formation of CCSI

> "After explaining the role of BL advocate, every participant visualized where they stand in the community. It was very gratifying to listen to their views and insights. Finally I found myself in these people."- Mayor Sonia, January 18, 2006 Logbook Reflections

It became clear to Mayor Sonia that she should expand Bridging Leadership approach to others. She looked for ways to promote collaboration among the different groups and sectors involved. She also became convinced that the program implementers should also be bridging leaders.

In January 2006, Sonia invited the AIM-Mirant Center to give a two-day Bridging Leadership seminar to the multisectoral leaders in her municipality. The participants included farmers, women, youth, educators, local Gawad Kalinga team, municipal line agencies from agriculture, health, social development, human resource development, and members of the Sangguniang Bayan[4]. She selected participants who held leadership position in a group or organization and showed willingness to work with other groups. They were also required to have programs that were currently implemented.

The seminar resulted in the formation of the Critical Coalition of San Isidro (CCSI), a group of farmers, members of the academe, youth, women, business, religious group, NGO & LGU leaders advocating Bridging Leadership through collaborative action in order to achieve a shared vision. CCSI defined their shared vision as "a better quality of life for the people of San Isidro through the collaborative efforts of different sectors". The shared mission was to improve the capacities of institutions to plan and implement collaborative socio-economic programs and to improve the capacities of the constituency to effectively participate in the governance of San Isidro. When asked about the experience, Mayor Sonia said,

Figure 2: The CCSI Structure and its Members

> "The BL workshop in Calaba was a success… . I felt I have a group that I can depend on in terms of development programs. I feel also that they know what I am talking about… . The workshop has motivated and inspired me to push the development of San Isidro with the groups' collaboration."

Members of the CCSI organized themselves into different committees to tackle key programmatic concerns–education, health, livelihood, housing—but eventually expanded into peace and order, environment, and values after another BL workshop in July 2006. Each committee met monthly to discuss ways to work together and became a venue to deepen their understanding and reflection on being a Bridging Leader.

Since its formation, CCSI came up

4 Municipal legislative body.

with new programs, followed-up with old ones, evaluated them, and solicited for advice on what should still be added thus democratizing the internal processes in the municipal government. The committees took planned, reviewed, supervised, monitored, and evaluated the projects of the municipality. The the CCSI became the "arm" of the Local Special Bodies that would implement and handle the projects on the field. They make project decisions on the ground and inform the mayor of their decision after.

A typical monthly meeting of a CCSI committee started with individual storytelling on the Bridging Leadership experiences of the participants. This was followed by inputs and discussion of relevant materials. During these sessions, they made it a point to maintain an atmosphere of openness and dialogue throughout the session. In one of the sessions, Mayor Sonia recalled,

> "For 5 hours in sharing, discussion, and fellowship I noticed that everyone was high in spirit, joyful, and talkative. The result was amazing when we spent time in storytelling and hearing reaction from listeners before the readings and discussions. We have journeyed together and became a part of everyone's problem, solution, and success."

Cesar, a farmer leader and a councilor in his barangay related to the group,

> "The farmers needed gravel for the road to their fields and also to repair the drainage system. I initiated a dialogue with the farmers and we agreed to do a bayanihan by collectively sharing on the required PhP 17,000 pesos and collecting the farmers' share after the harvest. I also used my social capital as a councilor by asking the mayor to be a partner in the barangay work."

Leo, a recently-elected president of a farmers' cooperative, narrated,

"I accepted the presidency because BL made me aware of my personal qualities. The community (Mangga) is divided because of politics. In one of the activities of the barangay, I suggested to the barangay captain to call an assembly to get the consensus for the barrio fiesta. Nagulat ako,(I was surprised)100 people attended. I told them, "I can't do this without you. I need you to help me." I broke the tradition by introducing a system in planning for the event. I am the youngest of the group but gained the people's trust and got their cooperation by being transparent, flexible, and open to their suggestions. I also listened instead of doing the talking. I learned self-mastery in BL. I started a new trend in a very traditional culture of celebrating the fiesta and collected money more than enough for the expenses we needed. The fiesta celebration was a success. I hope this will be tuloy –tuloy (sustainable).

For the CCSI members, the Bridging Leadership perspective affirmed what many of them have been doing in the past. Moreover, undergoing the Bridging Leadership training together gave them a common language to relate their experiences.

Moving Towards Co-Creation

> "I realized that there was a process: the BL process, which made possible the need for people to go through a process where they will co-own the issue and co-create… leading to empowered citizenry and responsive institutions." – Mayor Sonia in a Recent Speech

The new arrangement of the CCSI led to changes in the way the projects are handled. The people chose the projects and pushed for more outputs through the CCSI. Even without her prompting them to do so, they look for projects that benefited the community. They also learned to prioritize projects that come to them instead of blindly implementing them like before. One example is a project worth PhP 500,000 that proposed to build an arc to mark the border of the municipality of San Isidro. This was not pursued. One CCSI member said they can always defer the construction especially since it's too costly, and they're not learning anything new from it anyway.

To rationalize projects, each committee in the CCSI comes up with its own Key Result Areas and Performance Indicators for its sector. Each began to push for output not only for themselves but for others as well. In fact, committees criticized those who were not performing and no longer wanted to work with those who did not deliver outputs. Mayor Sonia reflected, "I see my BL advocacy working in different sectors through these people. The divides of the town are made narrower through their own understanding of how they can bridge…their own efforts."

Within the LGU, the improved relationships resulted in faster action on projects. A friendly competition took place between the different departments and fueled their drive for output. They were careful to keep the relationship complementary and collaborative.

Multi-stakeholders Engagements: Governance with the People

> "Strong citizen's participation and added skills in addressing societal divides enabled us to implement efficiently and effectively… to respond to the growing needs of the community. These programs became our capital in forging partnerships with stakeholders."

The government has limited resources that are not enough to address all the needs of the community. Support such as financial resources, expertise, work force would have to be tapped from external institutions or from the community itself. Mayor Sonia realized that if she had to gain the trust of stakeholders she had to first start with the largest group of her constituents: the farmers.

She began a series of consultation and dialogue with the different groups. In one such instance, she was undeterred by the weather and continued the meeting talking at the top of her voice (because of heavy rains) while her feet were immersed in floodwaters.[5] She realized later that this won for her the respect of the farmers. This became the entry point of the agriculture office in organizing the farmers into a cooperative and their eventual integration into DAR.

Another important group that she worked with was Gawad Kalinga (GK) that has villages in San Isidro. GK addresses the need for socialized housing of farm laborers in San Isidro. Farm laborers head families who used to settle along the irrigation canals, and belonged to the poorest in the community.

It is with this sector that she experienced the greatest difficulties in engaging.

Dialogue as an Important and Effective Tool: The GK Experience

> "When I am in meetings, dialogues, or assemblies, I noticed that I have changed in my style of engagement. I now consider the outcome of the issue more than my opinion of the subject. I learned to write what I hear and decide based on what I have written. The outcome is tremendous. People I dialogue with thank me and leave with smile on their faces. This is a clear indication that BL is working." - Mayor Sonia August 16, 2006 Logbook Reflections

Gawad Kalinga is a benefit to most communities; however, its presence in some municipalities led to division. This happens whenever GK stakeholders (team, beneficiaries, and others) find themselves at odds with their local government. In San Isidro, much frustration was felt in the early period of the engagement between LGU and GK. Mayor Sonia shared that there was difficulty because GK did not seem to understand the processes and dynamics of the local government unit. Mayor Sonia wrote:

> "The GK-CFC and LGU divide is wider than I expected. The expectations from our foreign funder partners are very high. The national team on the other hand, does not address the issues or complaints of the funders with the LGU. My impression is that the CFC team wants to resolve the problem by themselves to avoid confrontation and demoralization or has not accepted the LGU as part of the team. CFC priority is transformation of everyone involved in the project while LGU priority is making the programs work for the beneficiaries of the GK village. The divide resulted from the differences of culture; CFC is spiritually motivated while LGU is motivated by Vision-Mission of a development plan."

The Gawad Kalinga program pulls resources to the communities it is in. This, however, come with expectations from and accountability to their foreign funders especially. The resources it pulls in are enough to make municipal mayors interested, but this does not guarantee actual support from LGUs.

Mayor Sonia believes that GK needs the support of LGUs in order to ensure its sustainability. She expresses her concern that the Couples for Christ (CFC), which is behind GK, focuses more on faith and passion. The group lacks technical skills to implement and sustain the projects. The work of LGUs is more extensive and long term especially since they are the one who will make sure that the projects stay and the beneficiaries continue to be a community. LGUs will eventually support programs on health and education in GK communities.

In order to have a smoother relationship between GK and the LGU, Mayor Sonia insisted that they meet regularly and discuss programs and concerns. "My course of action is to engage the CFC team in more dialogue and come up with a system that is focused on the status of the beneficiaries to comple-

5 Some consider Mayor Sonia an elitist because of the way that she carries herself, having married into an established political family in Nueva Ecija.

ment the volunteerism strategy of the CFC," Mayor Sonia shared.

She collaborated with the CFC team, and their activities eventually fostered a working environment that transformed the once tension-filled relationship into a better and harmonious one. In one important meeting, they agreed to settle whatever difficulties they would encounter at their level to lessen the conflict first before going down to the communities.

They now have better coordination; the CCSI Committee for Housing meets with GK regularly. The CFC group has even created committees or teams that coordinated with the LGU. Despite the different government structures present in GK communities, (GK itself, the villager's or homeowner's structure, the LGU, the national government) there is now harmony among these systems.

Cost of Leadership: Risks of the Trade

> "Paying my way out would have been easier and faster but that would be against my principles and a grave violation of the advocacy I am working hard for." - Mayor Sonia, July 17, 2006 Logbook Reflection.

Mayor Sonia reflected that as Bridging Leader, there were many difficulties that she had to face. As the local chief executive, she has to make sure the needs of her constituents are given enough attention and time. As she engaged other stakeholders, she had to continually build and maintain relationships with individuals and institutions. As a politician, one of the most difficult challenges she faced were political power plays that threatened to remove her from office.

In June 2006, Sonia faced a political crisis when the Commission on Elections (Comelec) reversed an earlier decision of the Regional Trial Courts and declared his opponent the winner of the last election. Commissioner Borra of the First Division of the Comelec ordered Mayor Sonia to immediately relinquish the duties and functions as mayor to the other party upon the finality of the decision. But Mayor Sonia turned this hindrance into an opportunity. She recounted,

> "…my opponent used this decision to create tension and political instability in San Isidro. I opted to address this crisis by fighting for what I believe is right and just, instead of yielding to the "lagay" being asked from me by the first commission. Paying my way out would have been easier and faster but that would be against my principles and a grave violation of the advocacy I am working hard for. However, my crisis situation gave me the opportunity to test my bridging leadership."

She used her relationship capital extensively, approaching lawyers, revisers, the Senate, the Congress, the governor, the business groups, the media, the religious sector, and the people of San Isidro to defend her cause. Mayor Sonia recounted,

"I asked them to help me explain that I won fair and square by distributing the court decision and a personal statement… I spearheaded a collaborative action on the problem --in protecting the programs and the image of the town we are building."

The response was overwhelming. Support from various sectors came but she made it clear that the fight was not about her but for the LGU programs that were on-going. The different multi-sectoral groups mobilized support for her. There were even those from both ends of the spectrum in the religious sector who banded together and organized prayer meetings in her name. Mayor Sonia said,

> "The community took my political crisis as their own and made moves to counter the bad campaign of my opponent. One of the CCSI member said, "Your political crisis becomes our crisis and we will help to protect the work we are doing." Even the Ombudsman cooperated by finding Commissioner Borra liable of the Comelec computerization issue."

The Comelec subsequently ordered to defer any action on the instant Motion for Execution (of the previous order) pending Motion for Reconsideration and elevated her case to the Commission en banc.

In recounting the incident, her lawyer, Atty. Aspiras, had this to say regarding the situation,

> "Comelec insiders, including a former Commissioner, have been congratulating me these past few days for succeeding in preventing the First Division from installing Villareal as Mayor of San Isidro on the basis of faulty, erroneous decision. Those who know that we did not pay, nor succumb to the pressure to bribe, were even more elated, saying that this is one of those rare exceptions when principle triumphed over money at the Comelec… . I am aware that in not a few occasions, the good Mayor was approached and offered the services of lawyers, intermediaries, and point men who claimed to have great connections at the Comelec and the "magical" ability to deliver everything she wanted-all for a fee, of course… I am happy that Mayor Lorenzo never yielded to the temptation of going for what appeared to be the easy way out."

Someone from the other camp who questioned her legitimacy had even shared they were surprised when they realized that what they had done was an unpopular. "Bridging Leadership," Sonia said, "can make the difference." She was able to finish her term without further interruptions.

New Institutional Arrangements: The New Face of San Isidro

> "We had to do things differently. We had to revise the old things that had to be done. People were now involved, we looked for actual results, we needed partnerships, programs had to be new innovations."

> "Mam, maganda talaga pala ang nagawa natin. Malalaking tao na ang kumakausap sa amin." - Cely Franco (San Isidro Budget Officer) to Mayor Sonia Lorenzo, said after the August 15, 2006 Public Presentation of the Fellows at AIM.

Sonia's persistence and good work and the effectiveness of CCSI have started to show tangible results for the municipality.

San Isidro has now become a 4th Class Municipality. Because of co-ownership, participation from different sectors is now integrated into municipal programs. The method of program implementation has also changed because of participants. The income of farmers has increased through integrating social and economic development in their Livelihood CCSI Committee.

Year Covered	Families Enrolled	Annual Premium LGU Share	Co-sharing of Beneficiary P200/yr	Capitation from PhilHealth	RHU Additional Salary 20% of Capitation
1	2	3	4	5	6
2004-2005	2,203	264,360	241,396 48.6% of families enrolled x 200	660,900	132,180
2005-2006	6,347	761,640	583,924 46% of families enrolled x 200	1,904,100	380,820
2006-2007	8,157	978,840	597,200 48% of families enrolled x 200	2,447,100	489,420
TOTALS				5,012,100.00	1,002,420.00

Annual Net Income for Farmers	
2001	69,174.00
2002	127,917.00
2003	141,032.00
2004	160,705.00
2005	151,768.00

Table 1: Annual Net Income for Farmers

Annual LGU Budget Amount for San Isidro	
1998	18,050,934.00
2001	24,541,391.00
2004	42,049,815.00
2007	55,196,824.00

Table 2: Annual Budget Amount for San Isidro

Along with the income of the farmers, the municipal government also increased its revenue. San Isidro has the second highest business tax collection of the 28 municipalities in Nueva Ecija. They experienced 186.65% growth as of March 31, 2006. It also has the fifth highest collection in terms of fees and licenses in the province. She was also able to increase the internal revenue allotment and income (see table 2 on page 119).

She shared, "I attribute my success in increasing the budget to the efficient and effective implementation of projects and programs. The constituencies trusted my administration and are happy with my performance."

Health Programs

The Rural Health Unit in partnership with PhilHealth addressed the health needs of almost 9000 families in San Isidro. San Isidro is the 77th member municipality of PhilHealth and ranked it as one of the four best performing municipalities in the country for innovation, which is not a small feat considering it is a 4th class municipality. In fact, its health programs are now being replicated in municipalities all over the country.

The municipality has a complete staff of two nurses, two doctors, two dentists, two medical technologists. One of the current projects in San Isidro is the computerization of the health database systems. Mayor Sonia shared that this is due to the improvements in PhilHealth and the fact that the largest portion of IRA of the municipality goes to health (10%).

Education Programs

Ateneo Center for Educational Development (ACED) has made the town a pilot area for its countryside undertakings. It worked with all the 15 public schools in San Isidro to strengthen community ownership and participation in schools management. This program with ACED addressed the 90% literacy goal of CCSI's Education Committee. PATHWAYS for Higher Education and Synergia Foundation also come in for an intervention on the tertiary education of the students in the area.

Another project is the School-Based Management System that DepEd will pioneer in San Isidro wherein the community itself would manage the school. The project will run in Sto. Cristo School but will be replicated in other schools in the municipality and, if successful, nationally.

Livelihood

Apart from the increase in the number of cooperatives, the Philippine-Israel Center for Agri Technology (PICAT) has chosen San Isidro as one of the two pilot areas in Central Luzon for technology transfer and improving farming methods using modern technology and giving of post harvest facilities.

Housing

As the relationship with GK improved, so did its involvement. GK has now proposed to build houses not only for select villages but also for the whole town of San Isidro (township development In fact, CFC has even decided to do a case study on their engagement and work in San Isidro. They want to document what CFC has done and is currently doing in San Isidro that enabled them work harmoniously with the LGU and be successful in their projects. The result of the study may be helpful in coming up with models for other provinces.

Re-election and the Transformation of the Electorate

> "I have to stand on my own integrity... I should be able to win or lose on the basis of character and performance."

In the May 2007 elections, Mayor Sonia's party conducted an information-drive campaign where they reported what the community has accomplished and what they still plan to do together. The following is an excerpt from their "Ulat sa Bayan",

> "Ang pagsulong sa kaunlaran ay kailangan ng sama-samang kalinga at responsibilidad ng gobyerno, simbahan, mga sekta ng relihiyon, mga organisasyon, pribadong sektor, at buong pamayanan… . Ang mga magagandang balita ay bunga ng maayos na pamamalakad ng Pamahalaang Bayan ng San Isidro. Namulat tayo sa tamang pamamaraan ng pagpapaunlad ng ating bayan: ang pakikiisa ng bawat mamamaan sa mga programa ng ating pamahaan, ang panatiliin ang katahimikan ng ating kapaligiran, at ang pag-iisangtabi ng sariling interest para sa kapakanan ng taong bayan."

She also prohibited vote buying and convinced the people that; "Tayo ang ehemplo, panindigan at prinsipyo… . Simulan na ang magtanim ng mabubuting gawain, dahil sino pa ang aani, kundi tayo, tayo rin." Her platform of government was sustaining the collaborative effort of the people. Mayor Sonia shared, "In all my talks, I informed my constituents that what we have accomplished is the outcome of people empowerment and by upholding fairness, transparency, and accountability in all the institutions involved." She continued to do this despite rampant stories of vote-buying by the rival political party to the mayoralty office. She held her faith and did not sway in her convictions.

It came as a welcome relief then when

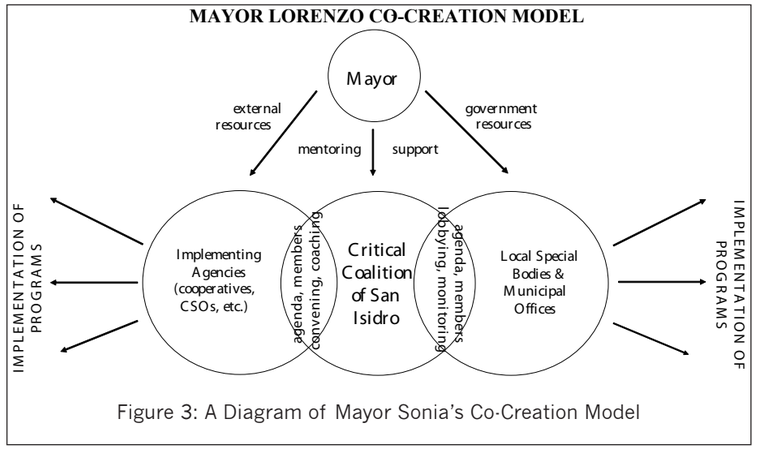

Figure 3: A Diagram of Mayor Sonia's Co-Creation Model

Mayor Sonia copped a landslide victory against her opponent. She led her closest opponent by 3000 more votes in a voting population of 30,000.

"The recent election is the best indicator of my BL application…." she shared later on. "People worked hard to campaign in an atmosphere of love and trust. It was this strategy that resulted in an overwhelming victory." She further shared, "In the end the people reelected me because they wanted to continue the kind of governance we are having." But above all, she believed that "... this, more than anything, means that there has been a transformation with the electorate due to the collaborative work that we have done so far."

Sonia's Journey as a Bridging Leader

> "I have not changed my beliefs and convictions that faith in God comes first. But in 12 months I learned to be effective by sharing my thoughts and listening to the thoughts of others and then consolidating.

Mayor Sonia believed that she underwent a deeper transformation within herself before she was able to change those around her. "It's true that transformation should start with the CEO of the community," Mayor Sonia reflected on the Bridging Leadership process. "The municipal employees being co-owners should adopt the new system of collaborative work."

She started by improving her skills. As a Mirant Fellow, exposure to the Bridging Leadership framework and to the other fellows allowed her to effectively work on her chosen divides,

> "I feel lucky my divides are within my circumstance and workable through well planned strategies. The road map is a convenient guide for my implementation. It is easier for me to locate where I am and should be in my work. It is a perfect tool to keep one focused. In the lecture of Prof. Ned Roberto on social marketing, the segmentation principle is the most applicable for our community. Segmentation is more manageable and easier for the barangay health workers to understand."

The mentoring sessions were also very helpful, especially in giving direction to her work. She shared this piece of advice that made an impression and enabled her to focus on her work more,

> "Prof. Titong Gavino said, "Don't enter all open gates. Be selective by considering what I want myself to be doing 20 years from now." I have never evaluated myself as such. I do things as task and take opportunities as a good chance to improve present work. I guess I have to turn down the TV hosting of Arlene of NET 25, and doing too many advocacy. This is the first time also that I realized that when I do my work, I only consider the programs and projects. Learned from Prof. Gavino that putting the names of people behind the programs/projects will make my work more interesting."

And then she built the CCSI to democratize the internal processes of the LGU, improve the mechanism of implementation, and build a core of Bridging Leaders in her municipality.

Finally, this improved their capability to do collaborative work that led to the successes that San Isidro is enjoying today.

> "I learned the importance of the process in engagement that resulted to a collaborative action. I enjoyed the art of journeying with the people who made me a part of them. I gained the confidence to work "out of the box" and the importance of focusing when ideas kept on coming. I have maintained my credibility by being honest in what I say and do. Most of all I realized that programs and projects can be sustained if each

person in every sector is made aware that he or she is an integral part of the whole. BRIDGING LEADERSHIP has made all of these possible."

Among the other changes that she noticed within herself, was that she increasingly began to take uncompromising stances. She further reflected that if you don't compromise and do the right thing, "… it becomes a harder battle, your reputation is placed in line, but you become stronger and eventually things will fall into its place. There is no substitute for doing what is right."

She has learned to say no to political pressure applied to her from both the Congress Representative and the Governor. This happened in the case of a company (Westech) that wanted to convert a piece of land in San Isidro into a memorial park, whose approval for business she vetoed. The governor has already signed the proposal approving it. The congressional representative in her area even gave her a call in order to make her agree. However, she persuaded him to leave the matter to her and let her handle it.

She convened the stakeholders first and talked about it. She maintained her stance of not allowing the business proposal because there have already seven cemeteries in San Isidro and the 2 newly constructed ones are not even full yet. She shared that cemeteries do not bring development or progress; there are no production on those lands, and no taxes can be collected from the dead.

Continuing the Journey with Others: Toward a New History of San Isidro

"In advocating these programs we have been exposed to a high standard of governance. Then suddenly we find ourselves wanting to do more. And then we learn the true meaning of servant-leadership. That 'in serving the poor we become a symbol to our people.'" - Mayor Sonia, March 9, 2007, the end of a speech given at Saint Mary's University in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya.

Despite the costs of leadership, Mayor Sonia finds solace in the fact that she is not alone. After the difficulties in creating a new reality, a next stage came when the people not only journeyed with her, but began protecting her.

She recalled that whenever she visited outlying farms or other faraway settlements, a crowd would form and follow her. This also happened when she visited locations outside her municipality. She disliked traveling with armed bodyguards, and only kept company of unarmed men after prodding from her husband. One time when she asked her staff why she was being followed around by people, the staff unsuccessful at turning them away, replied that the people insisted on following her in order to protect her. They said they did not want anything bad to happen to her so they took it upon themselves to ensure her safety.

These layers of protection provided by her constituents are their way of sharing the burden for her to continue the good work that she has begun. She recalled later on: "My fellowship in the Mirant Leadership Fellows Program came at a time when there was a great need to respond to the basic needs of our people, especially the poor in San Isidro." She further reflected:

"I could not have done any program alone. It is the shared vision and collaborative efforts of the community that led to the success to the programs. We implemented the programs to respond to the needs of the people most especially the poor. And we did a resource mobilization by bench marking and partnering with stakeholders that responded to the program.

This participation and ownership of the problem and the solution of the problem through projects went hand in hand with the empowerment of the people. God has given me a mission." Mayor Sonia said in her graduation from the Mirant Leadership Fellows Program last May 2007. "I began this work and I will continue to be an advocate of Bridging Leadership to the local government units by building a new world and a new history in San Isidro… . Thank you for giving us the opportunity to address the need of our poor, and for allowing us to become agents of change."

In the future, her dream is for San Isidro to receive an award that will state:

"Given to the community of SAN ISIDRO for being able to contribute to the nation building thru a SHARED VISION and COLLABORATIVE ACTION of STAKEHOLDERS that brought about the IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN SAN ISIDRO."

Dr. Alinader Minalang

Integrated Provincial Health Officer
Lanao del Sur,
ARMM-Department of Health

This write-up was written by Marcia Czarina Corazon Medina under the supervision of Mr. Philip Dy and Prof. Nieves Confesor of the AIM Team Energy Center for Bridging Leadership.

"Hindi ako mayor or governor. Wala akong ganoong position in government. (I am not a mayor or governor. I do not have such position in government.) But I learned that leadership capital can be built. When you build relationships, you get trust. Then together with your stakeholders you have to deliver results so your leadership will be credible."

This is how Dr. Alinader Minalang, Integrated Provincial Health Officer (IPHO) of the Department of Health (DOH) in Lanao del Sur described his personal leadership journey.

Minalang was born in Madalum, Lanao del Sur to a humble family, with most of his relatives working as farmers. They lived in poor health conditions due to lack of facilities and access to medical care in the area. But realities did not seep into Minalang's consciousness until tragedy struck his family twice.

He was in sixth grade when his baby brother died of tetanus infection. As a common practice when giving birth in Lanao del Sur, his mother was assisted by a "panday" (traditional birth attendant). A week after the baby was born, it suffered from high fever without receiving medical intervention. The nearest hospital from their home is in Marawi City, roughly two days on foot. When the family tried to bring his brother there for treatment, it was already too late. The tetanus infection had already spread through the baby's body. Minalang said of the incident, "Naaalala ko yun clearly. Mismong family ko nga noon walang access sa health facilities at sa doctor. Kaya gusto ko noon pa lang makatulong na para magka-access sa health ang mga taga-Lanao del Sur. (I can remember it clearly. Even my family did not have access to health facilities and doctors. That is why as early as then I already wanted to help give the people of Lanao del Sur health access.)"

Years later, when he was in his youth, his 18-year-old cousin suffered from typhoid fever that resulted in a complication of the brain. "He was sent to traditional healers. Hindi alam ng mga tao noon kung ano ang tamang gawin. Ang akala nila may masamang spirit sa pinsan ko (He was sent to traditional healers. The people did not know what the right thing to do was. They thought evil spirits possessed my cousin)," said Minalang. As he predicted, the traditional treatment was of no success. His cousin died in a few days. Minalang recalled,

"If only my brother and cousin were seen by real doctors at the proper time, those would not have happened. Pero sa amin noon (But in our place then), there wasn't any doctor, or a skilled health worker at least, who was available for consultation. I can imagine those things didn't happen only to me and my family. Those were common experiences of pain for the people of Lanao del Sur."

Minalang then wanted to become a doctor, so that he could contribute in improving the health system in his hometown. Later on, he took up Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology

in Far Eastern University-Manila, and a Doctor of Medicine degree in Mindanao State University, Iligan City. After Minalang finished medical school, he became a resident physician at a hospital in Marawi City in 1996. From there, he took up a specialization so that he can earn more as a doctor.

However, he said, "Pero ilan lang ba ang problems na maayos ng isang doctor? Ilan lang ba ang mati-treat ng isang doctor? Konti lang. Sistema ang kailangang baguhin para lahat matulungan. (But how many problems can one doctor address? How many can one doctor treat? Just a few. It is the system that needs to be changed so everyone can be helped.)"

Minalang decided to become a public servant to address the issue of health. Public service was not new to him because his father used to work as development management officer in the Office of Muslim Affairs. He described his father as a "very dedicated public servant" even if he was, "simpleng empleyado lamang (not a high-ranking employee)" and influenced him to have a positive work attitude and be enthusiastic in serving others. These characteristics, he said, helped his father to be regarded highly in their community. To prepare for his long-term commitment to serve, Minalang took up a Master's degree in Public Health from the University of the Philippines-Manila, which he finished in 2001.

Minalang served under the Regional Health Office of ARMM-DOH first as chief designate in 1996 and 1999, and as head executive assistant from 2002-2005. Since 2005, he is serving as provincial health officer of the Integrated Provincial Health Officer (IPHO) of Lanao del Sur and the ARMM-DOH.

LANAO DEL SUR	
Capital	Marawi City
Population (2007)	1.14 M
Human Development Index (2006)	0.45 (73rd in the country)
Poverty Incidence (2006)	52.5% (6th in the country)
Doctor-Patient Ratio (2008)	1:34,501 (Ideal: 1:10,000)
Infant Mortality Rate (2008)	3.48 per thousand births

Context and Divide

Lanao del Sur is one of the provinces of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). It has 39 municipalities and 1,158 barangays. In 2006, Lanao del Sur ranked 6th of the poorest provinces in the country, and 73rd in the country in terms of Human Development Index. (See Table: Lanao del Sur[1]).

"Nakita ko na noong naging provincial health officer ako (When I became the provincial health officer), the problems that I saw as a child were the same ones in front of me," Minalang said. Although there were health centers, facilities were lacking, and there was insufficient number of doctors. The work force and budget was not enough.

Minalang saw the divide as both systemic and cultural in nature. He observed that most of the health programs enacted were merely adaptation of centralized health plans—blind to the contextual realities in these communities that are crucial in the effectiveness of their execution. Minalang said,

> "Kapag ibinababa lang ang programs from the central [government] (When programs from the central government are simply enforced in the ground level), sometimes it does not really fit the values and lifestyles of the people. They don't easily accept the programs if they are not tailor-fitted to them. That's why the challenge is to make the programs sensitive to their cultural values while at the same time [to slowly educate] the people to make them more accepting of the programs."

He cited that implementation of reproductive health programs in Lanao del Sur. It was difficult to apply because residents equate it with a specific method (i.e., vasectomy), which is against their Islamic beliefs. Minalang said that awareness then should be raised about the other methods of family planning that will not compromise people's faith.

Most residents still rely on traditional healers as part of their cultural practice, which was partly responsible for the death of Minalang's brother and cousin. Minalang said that without awareness of available health services, people associate even the slightest of sicknesses such as fever to bad spirits Addressing the practice is complicated, Minalang said, "Sasabihin naman ng mga healers, 'Bakit mo sasabihing mali ito eh ganito namin pinagaling ang tatay mo, ang lolo mo, ang mga lolo ng lolo mo?' (The healers would say, 'Why are you saying that this is wrong when this was what we used to cure your father, your grandfather, and those who came before them?') And they are supported by most people out of habit."

Minalang explained that poverty and traditional interpretations of Islamic values have contributed to the prevalence of traditional healing in the province. This awareness has helped him address the problem as IPHO. Traditional healers receive no payment for their services and attend to the sick with "tender loving care," as Minalang described. They sometimes even cook for the sick, and wait on them all night in their own homes. On this problem, Minalang said, "It's not easy to solve that, kasi (because) it asks that we solve the deep problem of poverty. What we did was to try to provide free medical assistance to those in need, but it solves temporary problems."

Moreover, Minalang said, people are reluctant to show their bodies to the doctors (or the nurses in the hospital), especially women patients. He explained that Muslim women are comfortable in showing their body only to their husband, as prescribed in Muslim faith. Most of the panday are women, so it is of no consequence when the panday stays at the home of the sick and attend to them while giving birth, for instance, accompanied by the husband of the patient.

Minalang saw a mismatch between supply and demand. There was a supply of programs from the government, but there was very low demand from people to avail of the programs. He observed the pervasiveness of "fatalism" where people think being sick is a matter of destiny. He said, "While I fervently believe in the Islam faith, I also believe that you can do something to change destiny. And that is consistent with what the Qu'ran says."

Minalang's awareness of the dynamic relationship between structure (in terms of interventions) and culture enabled him to initiate programs that were well received by the people of Lanao del Sur. He said, "I understand that the programs before were done in good intentions, but the management and the execution needed improvement. It's a case of a weak health service delivery system."

Knock-Out Tigdas Campaign

Minalang observed that, aside from being not culturally sensitive, the DOH had been the only mover in implementing projects in the area. This was because DOH had limited workers and resources, and therefore could not implement projects with as much impact as desired. In his initiatives, Minalang involved health workers, local government units, people's organizations, and the traditional healers as well. His core group consisted of his immediate staff in the IPHO and the municipal health officers. His core group played a support role for Minalang while he reached out to groups who can understand and own the health issue with him.

In September 2006, he implemented the "Knock-Out Tigdas" project, which gave anti-measles vaccines to at least 95% of all children aged 1-5 years old in the province. "It was a huge task considering that we had to cover 39 municipalities with more than 200,000 targeted children," Minalang described. In doing so, he had to devise innovative ways to address the lack of work force and resources, as well as the difficulty of reaching far-flung barangays[2].

Minalang tapped chief executives at the provincial and municipal levels for support. At first, he said, it was difficult to ask for commitments from the local chief executives because, "Health is always an intangible investment in their eyes. It's not like building roads or other infrastructure where they can put their names and show the people that they have projects. It's part of the political reality." Aside from this, Minalang observed that there was still a negative impression on projects coming from the national government. "Nandoon pa rin yung (There is still the) impression na (that) whatever comes from national government is anti-Mindanao, anti our religion," he said.

1 Sources: National Statistical Coordination Board; "Doctor-patient ratio" and "infant mortality rate" from "Summary of Baseline Study Results" of the *Technical Assistance to the Mindanao Health Sector Policy Support Programme*. The ideal doctor-patient ratio is set by the national DOH.

2 Villages.

Minalang explained to the local chief executives how good health could increase productivity and decrease the outbreaks of diseases in the locality. Although health can be intangible as a project, its benefits translate to concrete indicators, as healthy people are "more productive". According to Minalang, some of the local chief executives adjusted policies in their municipalities to accommodate the program, while others promoted the program to their constituents. Financial support was also given, even at the level of volunteer support, such as snacks and transportation.

He also mobilized volunteer health workers through the cooperation of people's organizations in the locality. The volunteers conducted the health education component of the program through community visits and door-to-door campaigns.

In the beginning, Minalang observed that families with educated members were the first ones to avail of vaccination. "It helps that someone in the family can explain that vaccination is really helpful. Maganda (It's good) that it comes from them," Minalang said. However, he knew that they would not be able to reach their targets if they would rely on this alone. They had to find a way to reach more people at a faster rate.

Consequently, Minalang tapped the traditional healers as well since they have the most established network in the villages. The presence of traditional healers also appealed to the people's culture and perceptions because they can use the same "tender loving care" to patients while practicing a "more modern" health program, as Minalang described. The program was introduced to the traditional healers through seminars to help them understand that health services are not necessarily challenging their position in the community. "Instead, we can work together. There are points na hindi na traditional medicine ang ginagamit, especially sa cases ng possible outbreaks (There are points that require more than just the intervention of traditional healers, especially in cases of possible outbreaks)," he said. Minalang observed it was easier to approach and encourage people to participate in the vaccination program when traditional healers in the communities were involved.

Minalang looked back at the project and said, "The coordination work did pay off as we were able to surpass the target by getting more than 97% that made our province one of the top performers nationwide in that campaign." His stint as IPHO and his performance in the "Knock-Out Tigdas" project earned him the "Outstanding Provincial Health Officer" award given by the Philippine Media Association in June 2006, and the "Outstanding Public Servant" award given by Mindanao Inquirer in May 2008.

Despite the success of the program, Minalang was reminded of the underlying root of the outbreaks and the health crises in the province: the weak health service delivery system. Although active collaboration among groups can produce excellent results as far as the experience with the "Knock-out Tigdas" is concerned, it "does not necessarily address the problems in the long term."

This realization was one of the reasons that urged Minalang to apply in the Bridging Leadership Fellows Program (BLFP) of the AIM-Team Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides.

Fourmula One for Health

Minalang started his fellowship under the BL program[3] in 2008. In the early workshops and mentoring sessions, he identified a crucial learning that defined his leadership journey. Minalang said, "Leadership is not based on position, but on influence and relationships." In order to change institutional dynamics, he improved on his leadership capital through building partnerships and commitments from partner groups.

He adopted the "Fourmula One for Health", the implementation framework of the national DOH for health sector reforms in the Philippines covering 2005-2010. It is designed to implement "critical health interventions as a single package, backed by effective management, infrastructure, and financing arrangements."[4] Driven by what he learned from his experience as IPHO and the "Knock-Out Tigdas" program, Minalang campaigned for the adoption of a "life cycle approach" in health. This means, from the moment an individual is conceived, to his childhood, and until old age, the health system should be able to sufficiently and efficiently provide for him services.

Commitment-building with stakeholders

In pursuing the "Fourmula One for Health" program, Minalang needed to establish relationships and gather commitments from potential partners. His core group consisted of his same staff from the IPHO, and Minalang considered this practical, since his staff served the same office permanently. They are knowledgeable of the health conditions and existing programs in Lanao del Sur.

Although Minalang had a stable core group he had been working with from his previous projects, he realized that members of his core group, as he described, "should also own the issue as much as I do. We cannot achieve our goals if we don't have the same vision." He considered this as one of his personal challenges as a bridging leader.

Minalang met with his core group in February 2009 to discuss the BL framework and to work on their vision and mission. They used the Provincial Investment Plan for Health to determine their Annual Operational Plan, which they would revisit twice a year for assessment. Their meetings included six district health officers, who in turn, have their respective teams. The structure allowed them to have a multiplier effect on the activities.

However, the transition that his core group went through did not go easily. Minalang observed that the core group was used to very lenient working conditions. The core group members acknowledged this as they recalled "recycling" reports before Minalang became their superior–"changing the date" of reports and submitting them as new ones. They said, "Hindi pwede yung ganon kay IPHO [Minalang]. Nakikita nya at tinatanong sa amin kung bakit ganon ang mga report… . So siyempre we had to change our ways. (That cannot be the case with Dr. Minalang. He sees the discrepancies and asks us why the reports are as such. So of course we had to change our ways.)"

Minalang described his journey with his core group as one of "pakiramdaman (sensing)". He said,

> "Noong nagsimula ako, even when we were working on our earlier projects, pinapakiramdaman ko sila (When I started, even when we were working on our earlier projects, I was sensitive with them). Hindi naman pwedeng biglain ko lang sila (I cannot just force them to change immediately) and say [that] what they're doing is not productive… . They have been used to it, so I need to work with their pace, then saka i-introduce yung bagong style (that's when I introduce the new style). It was a process that we went through… Kinakausap ko sila, pinapakita ko yung advantages ng mga changes sa working style, and then the impact of them. (I talk to them, show them the advantages of the changes in working style, and then the impact of them). Example if they keep on recycling reports, the regional DOH will reflect that statistics. The national DOH and the government will use the statistics to represent ARMM and the Philippines. I helped them understand that even the smallest things they do go a long way."

The members of the core group talk about the constant challenge of working with Minalang, as he urged them to always, "think out of the box." They expressed difficulty in doing this because they have been used to working under superiors who, "were very lax on dealing with our deliverables". They also said, "Maybe hindi lang kami talaga kasing galing ni IPHO (Maybe we are just not as good as IPHO [MInalang]." They appreciate the BL framework and Minalang's strategy of challenging them to constantly improve, but they also note that, "Sana ma-BL din kami, para maintindihan namin kung paano sya nag-iisip. Siguro pag nakapag-BL din kami na katulad nya, kaya na rin naming mag-think out of the box palagi (We hope we can also be taught of BL, so we can understand how he thinks. Maybe if we do BL like him, we can also think out of the box constantly)."

The core group members, however, appreciated the working style of Minalang especially because their contributions to the planning and execution

3 The program covers a one-and-a-half-year of intensive training, mentoring, and application geared towards increasing the capacity of selected leaders to address their selected societal divide. Fellows learn to improve their ability to identify and understand a problem and its complexity, and develop a collaborative response to address the problems. The selected leaders are then able to induce change within the context of their involvement.

4 The overview of the program is discussed in the Department of Health website (www.doh.gov.ph). Fourmula One for Health is described as: "[It] engages the entire health sector, including the public and private sectors, national agencies and local government units, external development agencies, and civil society to get involved in the implementation of health reforms. It is an invitation to join the collective race against fragmentation of the health system of the country against the inequity of healthcare and the impoverishing effects of ill-health… . Fourmula One for Health is aimed at achieving critical reforms with speed, prevision, and effective coordination directed at improving the quality, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of the Philippine health system in a manner that is felt and appreciated by Filipinos, especially the poor."

were given more importance unlike the set-up before. One of them narrated, "Dati kasi directive lang, ito gagawin, ganito gagawin. Dati medyo ganoon din si IPHO, pero sa pag-B-BL nya, ngayon nag-de-delegate na sya. Syempre ako, I feel important kasi may nagagawa talaga ako. (Previous IPHO officers were directive only; 'this is what we do; this is how we do it'. Before [Minalang] was also a bit like that, but with the BL, he now delegates work. On my part, I feel important because I really have a part in what we do.)"

One core group member added, "Parang aware sya at ni-re-remind nya ang kanyang sarili na i-consider kami palagi (He is aware and it seems he constantly reminds himself to consider us [in the processes and decision-making].)

But given the sentiment on the pace of work, Minalang looked forward to having the core group attend more BL sessions, aside from those already undertaken. One of which is the Health Summit conducted on March 10-11, 2009 with the theme "Moving towards a Healthy and Peaceful Lanao del Sur through Collaboration, Convergence, and Innovation". During the summit, local government heads, health workers from barangays (villages) to the provincial levels, members of the academe, Muslim religious leaders, traditional healers, and development partner donors raised issues and concerns all directed towards improving the existing health system. The core group said that this was when they "really saw what a BL approach can do," for it was the first time that such scale of consultation and sharing has been done in the province. As USAID reported,

"A Health Summit was conducted with technical support from SHIELD, TBLINC, Health Promotion and Communication (HealthPro) and Private Sector Mobilization for Family Health (PRISM) Projects. The summit was participated in by key stakeholders headed by the Secretary of Health of DOH-ARMM, the Provincial Governor of Lanao del Sur, the Sangguniang Panlalawigan Chairperson for Health, seven Municipal Mayors, the 30 Municipal Health Officers and their staff, and the technical staff of the Provincial Health Office. The Health Summit showcased the best practices being implemented in Lanao del Sur, such as the USAID supported Community Health Action Team's contribution in increasing the coverage of Vitamin A supplementation and other health services on Maternal and Child Health Programs. The local chief executives spearheaded by the Provincial Governor expressed support and committed to contribute by increasing the share of the Provincial Health Office on the capitation fund from PhilHealth."[5]

Minalang saw through the sharing of the summit attendees that the health problem is "multi-factorial in nature". Although providing facilities and equipment is a good way of addressing the key concerns, one group alone cannot accomplish it. For instance, improving a health center does not necessarily mean that people will automatically go there for health services, especially when there are no decent roads they can use. Minalang said, "If we really want to improve the system, the collaboration would have to be taken to another level because we can't leave these concerns out."

But the summit's most successful outcome, according to Minalang, were the commitments offered by the groups. The renewed awareness of the interlocking problems on health has enabled the groups to have a joint vision.

He said, "Na-move sila… . They understood na hindi lang kami sa DOH ang makagagawa nito… . At dahil doon….hindi na kami nahihirapan mag-explain sa mga politicians or sa mga tao dahil may kasama na kami in the campaign. (They were moved. They understood that we in the DOH are not the only ones who can do this… . And because of that… we didn't find it hard to explain to the politicians or the people because we already had partners in the campaign.)"

When the preliminary commitments were established, Minalang, his core group, and all the stakeholders proceeded in working on the different components of the "Fourmula One for Health": Health Governance, Health Service Delivery, Health Regulation, and Health Financing.

Health Governance

The national directive on health governance sought to improve health systems performance through introducing interventions in governance of local health systems, coordination across local health systems, private-public partnership, and national capacities to manage the health sector.

For this component, Minalang and his team improved the management system by conducting regular meetings with the district and municipal officers and encouraging the district hospitals and rural health units to conduct monthly meetings as well. They also set up review systems for program implementations. According to the core group, this has not been done prior to Minalang's efforts. Previously, meetings were irregularly scheduled, and there was not enough dialogue to tackle pressing issues as perceived by stakeholders on the ground.

This also included a monitoring system for personnel and records. According to Minalang, "Reviewing records is very important because they go to as far as the national levels." Because he observed that hospital and health unit personnel did not take record keeping seriously before, special attention had to be given to it.

There was also a case when Minalang facilitated the transition of the chief of hospital of Balindong Rural Municipal Hospital. He narrated that the former Chief of Hospital did not report to the hospital regularly, which set a precedent for the staff and personnel. The staff and personnel confirmed this, and said that transactions were not transparent, which became grounds for cases to be filed against the former chief of hospital. However, the cases were not sufficiently responded to. In mid-1990s, the chief of hospitals became sick, and Minalang took the opportunity to convince him to resign from the post.

Minalang then proceeded with evaluating and screening potential candidates for the vacant post and eventually awarded the post to a rural health physician from Tugaya. Dr. Asnawi Dalidig is now the chief of hospital in Balindong, and has accomplished significant changes in collaboration with Minalang.

The Balindong hospital staff and personnel underwent a one-week team-building activity in Cagayan de Oro in October 2009, through the assistance of USAID's Sustainable Health Improvement through Empowerment and Local Development (SHIELD) project. The activity produced a list of recommendations for health governance and operating procedures agreed-upon by the attendees. The last quarter of 2009 served as the adjustment period for the personnel and staff of Balindong. The plan was fully implemented in January 2010.

Included in the new arrangements are transparent systems in hospital transactions. Dalidig said that priority was also given to disbursement of allowances and benefits of the hospital staff and personnel. They also created a supply officer position, which is in charge of checking hospital procurement.

As a result, the working attitude of the personnel and staff has significantly changed. They are now reporting to work regularly at the proper office hours and have become more involved in the DOH programs in the different barangays, aside from their duties in the hospital itself.

Similar strategies were implemented in other municipalities in the province. Minalang initiated re-planning activities, workload distribution mechanisms, and formal job descriptions guidelines to facilitate the accomplishment of the deliverables of the staff and personnel. They were also subjected to output-based evaluations.

Furthermore, Minalang and the team installed several recognition and rewards system to encourage better performance of personnel. During meetings and conventions, plaques were given to "Employees of the Month" and other top performers who were able to deliver targets. Minalang explained,

"It allows us to reinforce positive work, and it encourages the others to work better kasi sino ba naman ang ayaw magka-award (because who doesn't want to receive an award) in front of many others in the conventions. Of course there is competition involved among them, but [it is a healthy one]… .It also enables us to do more work without increasing the payments of the personnel, because now they do the work because they are motivated."

Meanwhile, another aspect of health governance was setting up effective information systems, which included surveillance and scanning of health indicators. In this regard, province-wide trainings for rural and municipal health workers were conducted to allow them to use the software for encoding data that were acquired in the last quarter of 2009. Computerization addressed the delay in reporting, inconsistencies, and unvalidated data that earlier existed in the province.

However, according to the core group members, there are still difficulties they faced in data collection. First, they estimated that around PhP 1 million has to be spent for reproduction of survey forms that are to be reproduced and updated regularly. Second, they are working with limited work force, as some barangays only have a few volunteers to get all the data from the entire village population regularly. In the meantime, they mobilize people from other municipalities to assist in the data collection.

Health Service Delivery

The interventions on health service

5 Lifted from "USAID Activities in Lanao del Sur and Marawi City, as of March 2009)" Provincial Briefers, link at http://philippines.usaid.gov/map_lanao_ds_3.html.

delivery were to improve the accessibility and availability of basic and essential healthcare, covering all public and private facilities and services. It ensured the availability of providers of health services in localities, designated providers of specific and specialized services in localities, and intensified public health programs in targeted localities.

Reaching far-flung barangays required strong relationships and commitments from stakeholders coming from the barangays themselves. One of which is a group of volunteers, the Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) organized as part of the DOH program in the late 1990s. Under Minalang's leadership, groups called the Community Health Action Teams (CHATs) were organized in every barangay, through the support of the USAID-SHIELD project. Each village CHAT group was composed of BHWs in that area, staff from the rural health units, mothers, fathers, traditional healers, barangay officials, and Muslim religious leaders. Most of the CHAT volunteers have been working with Minalang since his "Knock-Out Tigdas" program prior to his BL Fellowship.

As of September 2009, more than 50% of the 39 municipalities have functional health teams, the model of which Minalang aims to be replicable for the other municipalities and provinces in Mindanao.

The BHWs and CHAT volunteers served as the ground-force of the DOH programs such as free vaccination and medical missions, reproductive health campaigns, and general awareness campaigns on available health services in rural health units and municipal hospitals. According to the volunteers, prior to their involvement, people did not know what services are provided by hospitals, hence producing a low turnout on health projects.

Moreover, people hesitated availing of these programs because of misconceptions. For example, mothers did not want to have their children vaccinated because, "nagkakalagnat ang mga anak namin dahil dyan (our children get fever because of that)." They were also hesitant about family planning, because they think all methods were going against Islamic faith.

The BHWs and CHAT volunteers employ education campaigns through formal sessions in barangays, or through what they call "tumpukan". In the tumpukan, the volunteers informally chat with mothers during their everyday activities like doing the laundry and discuss the health programs with them. Barangay officials attend sessions in the villages and encourage people to go to health units and hospitals for medical services. Traditional healers are also involved in the campaigns–a model borrowed from "Knock-Out Tigdas" program.

In the case of reproductive health programs, Muslim religious leaders from the barangays engaged people in dialogues to clarify that certain methods (i.e., natural calendar method, pills, condoms) are consistent with the Islamic faith in providing the best possible quality of life for every person.

In Bubong, a group of women organized themselves to serve as "models" of the reproductive health campaign. They refer to themselves as "satisfied users". According to one of these models, "Sinasabi ko sa kanila simula noong nag-family planning kami, hindi na ako nagkakasakit… . Tapos may oras na ako para sa aking sarili… . Sabi din nila mukha raw akong bata dahil hindi na ako mapayat. (I tell them that since I used family planning, I no longer get sick… . Then I also have time for myself… . They tell me I look young because I am not as thin as I was before.)"

As a result, more people from the barangays actively go to rural health units and hospitals to get medical services or to volunteer in the programs themselves. There has better organization on the ground for health programs, and information dissemination is nearly self-sustaining, using "word-of-mouth" as the strongest campaign mechanism.

In these activities, operational support must be provided. The volunteers, as their involvement suggests, are unpaid, but as much as possible, Minalang said, the IPHO would like to find ways to provide allowances and answer for their transportation costs. Since the provincial DOH worked with a limited resource, Minalang constantly tried to gain the support of the local chief executives to augment the costs of volunteer work.

Fortunately, in some areas such as in Ragayan and Wao, the local chief executives supported the health program. In Ragayan, the current mayor is the former ARMM-DOH Secretary Lampa Pandi; Minalang said he didn't have to make so much effort to convince him to own the health issue. According to the Ragayan municipal health officer and volunteers, Pandi constantly provided financial support for the operations of the BHWs and CHAT. For the municipality of Wao, the mayor allocated funds for health services, facilitated and endorsed PhilHealth enrollment for indigents, and augmented labor in health activities.

However, all local chief executives did not always guarantee active support for health programs. On this matter, Minalang tried to provide support to the volunteers through other means. For instance, refrigerators were allocated to rural health centers to properly store vaccines and other medicines. He said of this, "Volunteers recognize naman even the smallest efforts you do in order to assist them with their work… . Kailangan mo ring magbigay ng something tangible (You also have to be able to give something tangible)."

Continuous capacity building must also be conducted for the volunteers as their number increased over time. In 2007, Minalang was able to acquire financial support for trainings of the then-newly established CHAT groups from the UN Population Fund. He also recently garnered pledges from USAID for capacity-building support.

The awareness campaign has achieved significant results. For instance, the ARMM-DOH reported that vaccinations against dengue and information dissemination about its preventive measures have decreased the number of dengue cases in Lanao del Sur from 137 cases in 2007 to 24 in 2008.[6]

Health Regulation

The health regulation component of the "Fourmula One for Health" sought to assure access to quality and affordable health products, devices, facilities, and services through harmonizing licensing, accreditation and certification, issuance of quality seals, and assuring the availability of low-priced quality essential medicines commonly used by the poor.

For Lanao del Sur, Minalang and the team focused on two main programs: (a) building of Botika ng Barangay units, and (b) accreditation of health facilities.

Botika ng Barangay (BnB) units were installed in key areas of the province to provide quality but low-cost medicines to the poor. Initially, Minalang and his team aimed to instate 20 units, but as of September 2009, 30 units have already been put into place. "Mas accessible ang mga botikang ito (These pharmacies are more accessible) in terms of distance and time, so [those in need] don't have to go very far just to be able to get sometimes even the most basic of medicines," Minalang said.

Part of the installation of the BnBs is the training of the operators in order to sustain the operations of each unit. Each BnB originally has PhP 25,000 worth of medicines provided by the national DOH. Support has also been acquired from the UN Population Fund setting up the BnB units. The funds for the BnBs were part of the grant that Minalang was able to secure for Lanao del Sur.

BnB operators from barangays Muntian and Rogero said that the pharmacies benefit the people not only in terms of accessibility, but also through the provision of cheaper medicines. The pharmacies also serve as a business for the operators as they receive a percentage of the pharmacy's income. According to the operators, the most common medicines purchased by the people are those for fever, infections, and diarrhea.

The operators also cited instances that their fellow villagers would knock on their doors in the middle of the night in order to make purchases. They sometimes feel, they said, that they are "like doctors" as well, for being on-call any time of the day. The operators said they felt the difference that the BnBs created in their communities. "Wala nang gaanong nagkakasakit nang matagal... . Hindi na kami gaanong nag-aalala na hindi matugunan yung mga nagkakasakit kahit gabi… . Saka iba yung nakakatulong talaga kami sa mga kasama namin. (There are very few people who get sick for a long time… . We are also no longer worried that people who get sick on the middle of the night cannot be attended to… . And the feeling is different knowing that we are helping our co-villagers.)"

Minalang also aimed that the hospitals and local health units be accredited under the DOH standards to ensure the quality of the care and service provided. When a facility is accredited, it would have license to operate and build infrastructure. The team has initially targeted 10 rural health units (RHUs) accredited, and met this goal before September 2009. Minalang said they would venture building more RHUs.

Accreditation requires investment on facilities and equipment. For this, Minalang tapped stakeholders for support. For instance, the Ragayan Rural Health Unit was a UN Population Fund beneficiary for the acquisition of

6 From "State of the Regional Health Address" by ARMM-DOH Sec. Tahir Sulaik, delivered July 2009.

beds and other equipment. Moreover, the unit was also recently given a fetal Doppler (used to listen to the fetus' heartbeat), which they use in the medical missions in the barangays. In 2010, Ragayan Rural Health Unit officer, Dr. Dianarah Disomangcop looked forward to receiving a newborn screening kit from the national DOH.

According to Disomangcop, the presence of the equipment "impresses" the people who come to the health unit for services,

"Nakikita nila na hindi mukhang pamprobinsya yung health unit namin. Syempre natutuwa silang bumalik dito… Kapag dinadala naman namin yung Doppler sa mga barangay, naku tuwang-tuwa yung mga mothers. Mas nagiging excited sila na magpa-check-up at kumuha ng mga vitamins. (The people see that our health unit doesn't look like the usual ones. They become eager to come back here… When we bring the Doppler to the village, mothers are enthusiastic about [listening to their fetus' heartbeat]. They become more excited to have check-ups and to get supplements.)"

Minalang and the health officers continue their efforts to have more hospitals accredited in 2010.

Health Financing

The health financing component of the "Fourmula One for Health" aimed to secure better and sustained investments in health through mobilizing resources from extra budgetary sources, coordinating local and national health spending, focusing direct subsidies to priority programs, adopting a performance-based financing system, and expanding the national health insurance program.

ARMM PhilHealth Enrollment (households)	
Lanao del Sur	63,576
Maguindanao	13,826
Tawi-Tawi	5,500
Basilan	1,742

From the health summit, Minalang encouraged local government heads to enroll 80% of their constituents to Social Health Insurance program, by paying for premium for PhilHealth accounts. Minalang said that the problem is not with the employed, since the law mandates that employers facilitate the PhilHealth application of all their regular employees. The challenge lies in assuring that the unemployed sector could be enrolled as well.

While Minalang is able to convince several municipal executives to introduce an Indigency Program with PhilHealth in their areas, the core group said that there is still a need to improve further health facilities and have more hospitals accredited under the PhilHealth standards to maximize the capitation spent by the local government. This leads back to the resource limitation on health spending for the province.

For this, Minalang tapped external stakeholders to capitalize on health spending. His resource mobilization efforts was able to secure a seven-year program support from the UN Population Fund-AusAID, a PhP 29 million grant from the European Commission and continuing support from the USAID. Some of these donors have been working in Lanao del Sur for many years, and Minalang re-engaged them by showing the concrete outcomes of earlier interventions in the health system. Minalang's core group also said that he is always on the lookout for possible grants, both local and international.

The impact of the collaborative efforts is reflected in Lanao del Sur's statistics. In a DOH regional report on the "Fourmula One for Health", Lanao del Sur is the leading province in the region in terms of PhilHealth enrollment (See Table: ARMM PhilHealth Enrollment[7]).

Meanwhile, meetings are held with PhilHealth officers in the province to intensify their marketing strategies with the local chief executives, and assist in the enrollment of more indigents.

Challenges and Insights

> "The BL framework taught me how to be more analytical and more disciplined in observing the multi-stakeholder approach. Ang [insight] talaga sa amin (The insight for us really) is that we have to go back to where the people are. We have to know what they want. We should understand what they think and feel are important to them."

Although Minalang was exhibiting some form of multi-stakeholder approach during the "Knock-Out Tigdas" project, the involvement of the other groups were at the implementing stage. He said that his leadership style then was "more aggressive" in nature. "Noon ako lang ang nag-iisip. Ako lang mostly nasusunod. Siguro dahil na rin fresh ako noon from my Master's degree in Manila, kaya may kaunting yabang (Before I was the only one who made decisions. I was the one followed. Perhaps it was because I was a fresh graduate from my Master's degree in Manila, which made me act with pride)," he said. But through the BL framework, he became more aware of his actions and decisions and kept himself in touch with the people's perception of situations.

Being a native of and educated in Lanao del Sur helped Minalang establish leadership capital. When he assumed the position of PHO, he realized that position and descent of locality were not enough to develop collaborative efforts with partners. The quality of relationships built with these groups contributed to his leadership capital. He said talking to stakeholders and then linking them together allowed him to gain their trust, and that trust is "one of the most important things in leadership". He was able to realize these through his learning and insights from the BL workshops. Minalang said,

"I learned to take risks, to be more confident in my leadership. I have become more engaging, responsive, and innovative in my leadership… . I have started and continued to create better relationships and more realistic and effective institutional arrangement within the organization that I lead. This conscious transformation I believe contributes and will certainly facilitate effective execution of our plan and sustainability of our efforts. Based on the VMOKRAPI[8] that we have formulated, I am already seeing the attainment of targets and hopefully in due time, we can achieve our set goals and objectives. I am seeing more support and participation from the local government units, development partners, donors, religious and other sectors, and the community people themselves."

Such support from local government units became the key element in securing the sustainability of the programs that Minalang and the stakeholders have worked on. Municipal mayors exhibited different levels of support for the health program, and this directly affected outcomes. The areas in which health service delivery and volunteer activities have been most effective were those are actively supported by mayors.

Given his experience Minalang believes that the most effective way of securing support from stakeholders is through sharing the health vision with them. He has done this before with some mayors by personally approaching them, identifying the health challenges in their area and coming up with solutions with them. After establishing a relationship with stakeholders at a personal level, Minalang invited the mayors to the health summit where they seal commitments. He said he would employ the same strategy in getting more local chief executives on board, especially in view of the planned BL Workshop for Mayors in early 2010.

Aside from this, Minalang also encouraged his team and Municipal Health Officers (MHOs) to directly engage local chief executives. He said that some MHOs already have good working relationships with municipal mayors, hence convincing the mayors to co-own the health issue would be easier if the MHOs would talk to them. He said, "It's easy to identify the problems, pero mas mahirap yung sino gagawa, paano gagawin… (but the greater challenge is identifying who will address the problems and how it will be done). And in this case you have to empower your subordinates, like the municipal health officers… . There are instances that they are more likely to be listened to by the mayors, so yun ang strategy na gagamitin dapat (so that should be the strategy used)."

Ultimately, Minalang said, the commitment of the stakeholders can be achieved when the community exerts pressure to demand delivery of health services. "The demand will exist when the community owns the issue… . And they can only exert pressure if they are organized. Kaya kami may (That is why we have) community organizing efforts through the

7 From "State of the Regional Health Address" by ARMM-DOH Sec. Tahir Sulaik, delivered July 2009.

8 VMOKRAPI is an acronym for Vision, Mission, Objectives, Key Result Areas, and Performance Indicators. This is one of the tools used by the Fellows under the BL program.

volunteers," he said. Minalang hopes that the community, through their people's organizations, can later on approach the mayors and show them that health is a very important issue for the people.

And when small victories are achieved, Minalang said they must be shared to all the stakeholders. Such gestures reinforce the commitment of partners and stakeholders, that tangible results can be seen after their collaborative efforts.

But Minalang noted, "The more na may nagagawa (The more we accomplish things), the more na may demand for more. It's a constant realization that we are far from the ideal. But even if we haven't reached our ideal targets, I don't find it frustrating. . . . At least may (there is) improvement. . . . It's very encouraging."

Conclusion

YEAR AFTER YEAR, STATISTICS CAPTURE THE INEQUITY that characterizes much of the world. Despite the number of initiatives to address them, Human Development Indicators (HDI)[1] continue to show marked differences in the quality of lives of people across the world. Given the enormity of the challenge at hand, nations clearly need bridging leaders who can rally their people toward closing these gaps.

In the past four years, the Asian Institute of Management, with the support of Team Energy, has endeavored to develop leaders who will embrace the task of eliminating pervasive societal divides through the Bridging Leadership Fellowship Program.

The program strives to create leaders who will achieve more than just outputs—those that track what organizations and institutions have done—and aspire for societal outcomes, best seen in the quality of people's lives.

The Bridging Leadership Fellows program aims to mold men and women who can transcend the gap from being a principled manager concerned with merely keeping stability through order, predictability and efficiency, to become a true leader concerned with change, innovation and improvement. It aspires to create leaders who can rally stakeholders around the goals that can transform society and take it from where it is to where it has never been.

How, then, has the Bridging Leadership Fellows program helped in the attainment of social outcomes? How has it created and enabled leaders to reduce disparity in the lives of people around the world, so that a child born in Tawi-Tawi may at least enjoy the same living standards as a child born in Thailand?

A journey begins

Four years is a short time to eliminate divides that took hold and grew roots over decades, even centuries. Given this, the Bridging Leadership Fellowship Program is still very much a work in progress. It does not claim to have reduced societal divides; its greatest impact could very well lie in its having altered the way of thinking of leaders and their stakeholders, which is needed to begin the process that would take years to complete.

In many ways, the program process has triggered the transformation of the fellows as well as that of their stakeholders, an internal change which serves as the first step in addressing societal issues. The process of building bridging leaders imbues them with newfound strengths and provides important lessons that will serve them well in dealing with existing and emerging issues on the ground.

A unique approach

The program's strengths derived from its unique approach to leadership building. For one, the Center was focused on seeing the Bridging Leadership framework play out in actual practice, and drove the implementation of the fellows' programs. It was part of the fellows' leadership journey as a co-implementor, and the fellows appreciated that.

Its greater emphasis on fellowship instead of training differentiated the program from others. Fellows knew they were among leaders they could trust, and that clearly mattered to them and their learning process.

The program's generative framework was also a strength in itself. The Bridg-

1 The summary measure of human development that seeks o measure the average achievement in a country in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living; an index of 1 signifies a perfect HDI.

ing Leadership framework is a process frame that required the fellows' personal inputs for it to work. How the fellows used the Bridging Leadership framework came from their own analysis of societal divides as it applied to their circumstances. In effect, there was co-ownership of the framework between the Center and the fellow as it applied to addressing realities on the ground.

Choosing leaders

Leadership begins in the mind and heart of a person, which is why the selection of Bridging Leadership Fellows, a highly competitive process, has always been a critical part of the program. Fellows were chosen for their experience and personal understanding of the issues they hoped to address. Most importantly, they had to be in a position to act on these. One could not come without the other.

"As a strategy, we did not choose people who were young or who were not in a direct position to deal with the issues on the ground. This is not to say that others were not worth investing in, but only that we had to choose those who can achieve maximum impact for the resources that we put in," said Prof. Jacinto Gavino, one of the program directors.

Fellows understood the need for a demonstrated record of commitment in choosing prospective fellows. "I believe that commitment to become a bridging leader is very crucial because we have to continue the work beyond our areas of responsibilities. I also think that a faith-based leadership is needed to give meaning in our work & will keep us going. The applicant should be a leader who has owned his/her divide already or has identified the issues to be resolved," said Sonia Lorenzo, former mayor of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija.

Growing among leaders

As a result of the rigorous selection process, fellows that came into the program were leaders who had struggled with various issues and who had much to share about these. At the same time, they were hungry for answers from others who, like them, have actually experienced the day-to-day challenges of leadership under the same circumstances. This created an environment that fostered learning. Adrian Manahan (position here) noted how the fellows looked forward to sharing their thoughts with one another, and the sense of safety that the fellowship provided.

Gavino concurs: "The fellows found strength in each other. They learned from each other and could comment on what each one was doing because they knew the perspective from the ground level. Many of the fellows said they could not speak the way they did in the classroom when they were in the conflict area. They shared the same passion and commitment, which further strengthened their commitment to the program." In finding strength in each other, the fellows also learned from each other.

In fact, the program was seen to be very heavily slated toward developing leaders and building relationships, so much so that one of its most valuable outcomes is the vastly improved relationships between the fellows and other stakeholders.

Personal discoveries

Beyond rhetoric, the program took fellows on a journey of self-discovery, enabling them to understand themselves better—a critical step that allowed them to analyze issues better, and move on from a personal to a shared response with other stakeholders. Quiet time was especially prized by the fellows. They appreciated how this allowed them to think things through, and how it brought about important realizations about themselves and the needs of society. Instead of simply getting things done, the sessions allowed them to step back to ask "what is going on?" and "why is this important to me?"

"It was a process that brought me back to my senses. It brought me to more discernment about the inner part of myself in search for answers about who really I am. It gave me total acceptance of myself, internalized the greatest potentials I have as a leader and made me better prepared for the responsibilities I have to perform for the society," said Lt. Col. Francis Alaurin of the AFP Command and General Staff College.

Fellows appreciated every opportunity to understand themselves better. "The genogram technique and the lessons on the healthy family system have guided me to see my family roots and appreciate the 'whys' in my characters and personalities," said Dr. Abdullah Dumama, Director IV at the Department of Health Center for Health Development in Region XII.

This learning journey was made richer by the continuous sharing of insights with peers who have gone through the same process of personal self-discovery. This spirit of sharing among learning companions engendered a sense of community that fellows said inspired and empowered them to do their work better. It is hoped that this sense of community would lead to collaborative action in the future.

Bridging Leadership on the ground

Fellows especially valued the opportunity to bring their knowledge and insights to their workplace and apply these for an actual learning-in-action experience. "I think the main strength of the BL Program is that we are able to apply what we learn in our work and at the same time we are able to bring what we experience to our classes, seminars and discussions. I think this is a very effective methodology since we are able to easily apply in real life what we learned," said Harvey Keh, Director of the Ateneo School of Government's Youth Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship units.

Interestingly, it was shown that there are usually many bridging leaders in the Bridging Leadership process. Some of these bridging leaders may not wield any formal power or authority, but are able to convincingly rally people toward a cause.

The program also revealed that the multistakeholder process is a multi-layered, multi-phased process with various aspects. Most often, building co-ownership was the most difficult part of the framework, especially since there were political, religious and cultural realities that had to be taken into consideration.

Learning from mentors

Fellows were not left on their own as they tried to bring the Bridging Leadership framework to life in their respective communities. Experienced development practitioners and experts held their hands all throughout the process to make the learning journey meaningful not only to the fellows but to the communities as well. The mentoring process provided fellows with the direction and guidance to successfully identify critical issues and collaborate with stakeholders to address these. "It has been very helpful. My mentor's sincerity to extend help is very evident. His encouragement and remarks help me analyze the context of the plans and finalize appropriate programs for the target clientele," said Dr. Lorna Dino, Director III at the National Educators Academy of the Philippines.

Presentation to the publics

Recognizing that ultimately, the Bridging Leadership program seeks to address the needs of the fellows' constituencies, and that their ownership of the program is key to its success, fellows were expected to present their work to them. The presentation to constituents aimed to validate the fellows' work, elicit additional feedback, and at the same time, enlist their support.

Beyond the Fellowship

Indicative of the Bridging Leadership program's success is how it has gained a life of its own beyond the fellowship, and how it is continuously propagated by the fellows themselves through their work and their interaction with others.

Through their initiative, fellows have developed other bridging leaders in their areas of responsibility, as they interact with each other, within and across sectors and geographies, building and sustaining a critical mass of bridging leaders who can bring about the societal and economic outcomes that nations need. This process continues each day within the military and among local government officials, and in oft-forgotten provinces like Basilan and Sulu.

Mayor Sonia illustrates how the Bridging Leadership concept has propagated itself outside of the fellowship. Through her work, the Critical Coalition of San Isidro, a multisectoral group of leaders representing farmers, the academe, youth, women, business, the religious sector, non-government organization and local government units, now advocates the Bridging Leadership process to achieve collaborative action and attain a collective response toward a shared vision.

There is also a greater demand for the Bridging Leadership program, not only among stakeholders, but also among international development organizations—a symbolic recognition of the work that the fellows and the Center have done.

To achieve broad outcomes, stakeholder engagement is critical. Because outcomes cover how quality of life improves for society as a whole, it cannot be achieved by one person, organization, or sector working solely on its own. It would need the collaboration of different stakeholders, who should embrace it as a shared responsibility, and the Bridging Leadership fellows have demonstrated this clearly.

Moving forward

No doubt, the Bridging Leadership framework has begun to play a role in creating the leaders that can bring about the change that have eluded communities for so long through the processes it uses and its emphasis on these leaders' personal development. Societal outcomes may not have been achieved yet, but indicators show that the process for attaining these has started.

Moving forward, it is useful to ask how the process of developing bridging lead-

ers—demonstrated to have changed the perspectives of fellows and several others--contributes to societal outcomes. Over the past four years, there has been evidence that the process of building bridging leaders has brought about changes that, over the course of time, can lead to the decline in societal inequity. However, the framework's link to impact should be established, with appropriate baselines set. At the same time, the impact of the relationships that the program established is also worth analyzing.

Clearly, more qualitative measurements of these changes are needed. The program will greatly benefit from further research to ensure its effectiveness and greater acceptance. Peer reviews are necessary, as are research on success indicators for the program; measurements of outcomes due to the leadership development intervention; and its links to Filipino identity and culture. Changes in relationships between and among stakeholders may be looked into, as improved relationships may well result in improved programs and eventually, better indicators.

The platform for collaborative action among the fellows should also be established. For now, collaborative action undertaken by fellows is sporadic or opportunistic. The fellowship program also has no sectoral or issue focus, which may have succeeded in bringing the Bridging Leadership concept to more people, but which may have diminished impact.

The sustainability of the Bridging Leadership program, as well as the work started by the fellows, also deserves attention. Otherwise, the momentum of the program will be lost.

Most importantly, the political dimension of leadership deserves utmost attention. The Bridging Leadership program has worked on the assumption that good leadership should be politically rewarding in the belief that the electorate would vote for those leaders whose works have led to tangible changes in their lives. Yet some fellows who did good work failed to win elections despite the good work they have done. Clearly, the program could not ignore the political dimension and should look at how it could parlay good leadership into political capital. It is also essential to identify which institutions have the biggest impact on the process.

The program process could also be strengthened for better results: mentoring could be made to be more purposeful, and more mentoring visits may be in order to ensure the success of the programs being undertaken by the fellows. The management of transitions should also be studied. Mentors pass implicit knowledge which is passed or learned in the process. When the program ends, there should be a way for the fellows to go through the transition process with the Center's assistance.

Obviously, the role that the Center will play in all this has to be established. It cannot remain as a mere teacher, but rather, as a stakeholder that is equally involved in the process of reducing inequity.

Fellows could be guided in choosing the divides that they will endeavor to address, taking into consideration their competencies.

Finally, systematic monitoring of all of the fellows' works post-fellowship is also in order to determine if indeed, the program is achieving its objectives. This could be done by a third party and could contribute to knowledge management.

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